

THE TEACHING OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH

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The
TEACHING
of the
CATHOLIC CHURCH

*A Summary of
Catholic Doctrine
arranged and edited by*

CANON **GEORGE D. SMITH, D.D., Ph.D.**

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The majority of the essays here presented as a composite work were published originally as separate volumes in the *Treasury of the Faith* series, now for some time out of print. It is felt that re-edited in two volumes they not only fulfil better the intention with which they were designed but also lend themselves more easily to be used as a work of reference. They appear now almost exactly as they were first printed, with such abridgements only as have appeared necessary where the same ground is covered by more than one writer. Even so, a certain number of repetitions, almost inevitable when the closely knit fabric of Catholic doctrine is woven successively by different hands, have been suffered to remain if the fuller treatment thus afforded has seemed useful and illuminating. Still less has it been considered necessary or even expedient to eliminate permissible differences of view from this combined presentation of the teaching of the Church; such divergencies of theological opinion within the unity of the faith are a mark of the true liberty of the children of God.

Of the original contributors some have died since the *Treasury of the Faith* series was first published. Those still living have since received various degrees of ecclesiastical preferment, three of them—the present Archbishop of Liverpool, the Bishop of Lancaster, and the Bishop of Lamus—having been raised to the episcopate. It has nevertheless been thought fitting to describe them here by the titles that they held at the time of writing. To all of them I take this opportunity, the first hitherto afforded, of recording my sincere thanks. No editor could have been blessed with more willing and friendly collaborators.

G. D. S.

St. Edmund's College,
Old Hall, 1947.

Walden

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FAITH AND REVEALED TRUTH

§ I: INTRODUCTORY

“ I so run, not as at an uncertainty ; I so fight, not as one beating the air.”¹ The Catholic, strong in faith, might well describe his attitude towards life in these confident words of St Paul. He is in no doubt as to his destiny, nor as to the manner in which he must achieve it. God, his attributes, his providential designs in man’s regard, man’s own duties to his Creator and to his fellow men—all this, and much more, he knows with a certainty that is supreme. These religious truths are the basis of his life ; his appreciation of them determines the whole course of his existence ; and if concerning them he had the slightest real doubt, his outlook would be radically changed. He is certain that there is a God, his Creator and Lord, whose loving friendship he must at all costs retain ; did he doubt it, his obedience to what he conceives as divine commands would falter. He is certain that there awaits him a life after death in which, if he has been faithful, he will enjoy God’s eternal embrace ; did he doubt it, his life on earth would be deprived of all meaning and purpose.

If, therefore, a man is to lead a religious life—and a religious life is synonymous with a good one—he must have firm and sound convictions concerning God and his duties in God’s regard. He must have convictions, otherwise his life will be purposeless ; they must be firm, else he will be inconsistent in practice as his theory is vacillating ; they must be sound, for upon them depends the success or the failure of his life. The Catholic has certainty on these vital matters because God has revealed them to him. His hope rests upon the firm foundation of God’s word. “ Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for.”

But to judge the value of revealed truth merely by its use in action would be to estimate it incompletely. Revelation extends the field of our knowledge, and this itself is a perfection of the mind, the noblest faculty of man. By revelation we receive something of the inner radiance of God’s glory ; by faith we learn divine truths of which humanly we should never have dreamed. By faith we are given a foretaste of the wonders which will be fully disclosed only when we see God, no longer “ through a glass in a dark manner,” but face to face. In the meantime the radiance is too bright for our finite minds. We adore, but we cannot see. “ Faith is the evidence of things that appear not.”

¹ 1 Cor. ix 26.

To display the riches contained in revelation is the object of the subsequent essays. In this, the first, we must study the meaning of revelation itself, and the act of faith by which we accept it.

§ II: RELIGION AND HUMAN REASON

*Validity of
human
reason*

THE Catholic theologian sets out with the supposition—which as a philosopher he is prepared to vindicate—that the human mind is able to know truth. If anyone, therefore, in that unhappy state of mind which despairs of attaining certain knowledge upon any subject whatever, should hope to find in this essay a philosophical proof of the validity of mental processes, then he is doomed to disappointment. The sceptic, before he can approach the study of theology, or in fact of any science at all, must first find his remedy in a sound and true epistemology. Nor is it within the province of the theologian as such—although again as a philosopher he may be well equipped—to justify the first principles of analytical reasoning, to prove that the conclusions which issue from the application of those principles are valid, even though they may lead the mind into a realm of reality of which no actual experience is given, and thus cannot be verified by experiment. The demonstration of these and kindred truths belongs to a branch of knowledge which is antecedent to the science of theology.

*Anti-
intellectual-
ism*

I venture to hope, however, that those who read this series of essays have remained unaffected by the wave of scepticism and agnosticism which has swept over Europe during the last two or three centuries. It is an interesting phenomenon of religious history that the heresy of Luther, taking its rise in a proud rebellion against the teaching authority of the Catholic Church, issued in a pessimistic theology which, exaggerating the effects of original sin, presented human nature as intrinsically corrupt. The human will, bereft of freedom, was radically incapable of pursuing the good, the human reason was powerless to know the truth. As man's broken will must submit passively to the grace of God, so must his mind now, darkened by sin, allow itself to be led by an occult and irresistible force, a blind and unreasoning faith. The agnosticism of Kant and his disciples, which, denying the validity of metaphysical argument, takes refuge, in order to justify religious belief, either in the dictates of the practical reason or in an unreasoning religious sense, is an essentially Protestant philosophy; and of this tendency to rely upon a blind instinct in religious matters the modern forms of exaggerated—and therefore false—mysticism, the systems of religious pragmatism and sentimentalism, so common outside the Church, are the more or less direct descendants.

From all such attempts to disparage the powers of the human reason the Catholic Church has remained ever aloof. Some of her children, it is true, have not been immune from the anti-intellectualist

atmosphere of their time ; but they have been solemnly warned and, when occasion demanded, condemned by the ever-watchful guardian of Divine Truth. Thus the Traditionalists of the nineteenth century, convinced by the German agnostics that the foundations of religious belief and practice, such as the existence of God, the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, could no longer be justified by an appeal to reason, had recourse to the inheritance of truth which the human race has received by tradition from antiquity, and ultimately from God. The suggestion was well-intentioned and, like most errors, contained a considerable measure of truth. The Traditionalists rendered valuable service by emphasising the great part played by human authority in the acquisition of knowledge ; it is true, moreover, that we receive much of our religious knowledge from divine revelation. But these faint-hearted apologists, by denying to human reason the power to prove the existence of a God who reveals, rendered all faith in him unreasonable. To save the ship they cast away the compass ; and the Church was not slow to reject this ill-judged compromise with scepticism.

More recently certain restless spirits within the Church, anxious *Modernism* to reconcile Catholic doctrine with the so-called exigencies of "Modern Thought," formed the school known as Modernism. Rejecting with Kant all rational demonstration of religious tenets, and borrowing from his disciple Schleiermacher "the religious sense" as a criterion of truth, the Modernists found the source and the explanation of all religion in a subconscious "need of the divine." Thus the revelation which the Traditionalists (rightly) sought from God the Modernists (wrongly) thought to find within the nature of man himself. From this the way lies open to pantheism, to the rejection of all dogmas, and indeed of all objective religious truth. It would be beyond the scope of this short essay even to enumerate the manifold errors which Modernism involves ; it was rightly stigmatised by Pope Pius X as "a compendium of all heresies."¹

The teaching of the Catholic Church on this all-important subject *Attitude of the Church* is stated clearly by the Vatican Council : "Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God, the beginning and end of all things, may be certainly known by the natural light of human reason by means of created things."² The terms of the oath against Modernism render impossible any misunderstanding of this definition. By "created things" are meant, not merely human testimony, not merely a subconscious religious sense, but the "visible works of creation" ; and lest there should be any doubt as to the manner in which our knowledge of God is acquired, the formula tells us that it is by applying the principle of causality to the data of experience : "God . . . can be known as a cause through his effects."

¹ I write of Modernism in the past tense, because for Catholics it is a thing of the past. Nevertheless the tendency is still strong outside the Catholic Church.

² *Const. de fide cath.*, chapter ii.

The Church, in thus vindicating the power of human reason to know God, is but reaffirming what St Paul had said in his Epistle to the Romans : " The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." ¹ But the power of the human mind is not limited to the mere knowledge of the existence of God. Man is able unaided to know much concerning the nature of God ; he can know many of his own duties in regard to his Creator, duties of worship, love and thanksgiving ; he can learn naturally much concerning his own nature and destiny, his duties to himself and to his fellow men. There is, in short, a whole body of religious truth—the truths of the natural order—which man is able to acquire with certainty by the normal use of his natural powers.

*Necessity of
revelation*

But while the Church is solicitous to vindicate the just rights of the human reason, while she has no sympathy with those who unduly disparage it, she strenuously resists the claim of Rationalism that it is " the sole judge of the true and the false . . . that it is a law to itself and sufficient by its natural powers to procure the good of men and peoples." ² She asserts the essential soundness of the human mind and its radical capacity for learning all natural truth ; but she is mindful that man is in a fallen state, that disordered passion and the manifold distractions of material things hamper and retard him in his pursuit of religious knowledge. What I have called truths of the natural order can be known and demonstrated by the proper application of the principles of reasoning ; but such a process requires a special type of mind, it needs leisure, concentration, an environment conducive to thought. Experience shows that not all men have the ability to follow reasoning, be it of the most elementary kind ; some men have a practical rather than a speculative bent. Many who have the ability have not the leisure for these studies. The practical difficulties become more evident when one considers that the rational proofs of such truths as the spirituality of the human soul, the freedom of the will, if they are to stand the test of modern objections, require as a preliminary a long and arduous study of metaphysics and psychology. Add to this that religious knowledge is of paramount importance for man's daily life, necessary especially in youth, when the character is in process of formation, necessary precisely at the time when, through mental immaturity and lack of concentration, he is least likely to be able to acquire it.

Thus if we view mankind as a whole, if we consider the difficulties with which men are beset, it is clear that, left to their own resources, very few would gain adequate knowledge even of the truths of natural religion. Nor does human authority offer an adequate solution of the difficulty. History shows that the great thinkers of antiquity—not to speak of more recent or contemporary philosophers—have been unable to impose their doctrine beyond a certain school. The

¹ Rom. i 20 ; *cf.* Wisd. xiii 1-9.

² Syllabus of Pius IX, n. 3.

clamour of diverse views, the difficulty of the subject-matter, the lack of authority in the teacher to impose belief upon those who cannot understand his reasoning—all this rendered, and still renders, merely human teaching authority powerless to supply the need of mankind for religious instruction. On this subject above all man needs an omniscient and infallible Teacher.

Hence, even though the field of religious doctrine were confined to "natural" truth, man's need of divine aid is apparent. But it should be carefully noted that this need arises, not, as the Traditionalists contended, from the radical impotence of the human mind as such, but from other circumstances of human life which render it practically impossible for all men to discover these truths for themselves with any sufficient degree of accuracy and certainty. Briefly, just as in the practical order grace is morally necessary in order that each man may observe all the precepts of the natural law, so is revelation necessary so that all men may reach a sufficient knowledge of the truths of natural religion.¹ The exaggerated claim of Rationalism is thus seen to be unreasonable.

But here again, in a most important particular, the Church opposes the Rationalist. According to the latter, not only can the human mind unaided know all natural truth, but natural truth is all that there is to know. The Church, on the contrary, teaches that there is an order of reality above that of nature, an order of reality which is beyond the reach of the human mind: the supernatural order.

And that such an order exists does not seem *a priori* unlikely. God, as St Paul tells us, has left traces of himself in his handiwork, and man is able from the consideration of created perfections to learn much concerning his Creator. Even the little that we naturally know of God would lead us to conjecture that there is much more of which we know nothing; that there are divine perfections of which no clear trace appears in the works of creation; that besides the natural truths of religion there may be hidden truths concerning God and things divine, "mysteries"—*i.e.*, truths which must remain God's secret unless and until he vouchsafes to make them known.

The supernatural order, therefore, by its very character is outside the scope of our natural knowledge and comprehension. We can know nothing of it unless God wills to reveal it. The impotence of human reason in respect of supernatural truths is physical and absolute. Natural truth is within the reach of the human mind. The reasons which show an adequate and universal knowledge of this order to be morally impossible without revelation are concerned not with the powers of the human mind itself, but with such concomitant circumstances as lack of ability, or time, or concentration. But no course of study, however long, however arduous, could bring the human—or indeed the angelic—mind to the discovery

¹ Cf. Essay xvii: *Actual Grace*, pp. 589 ff.

of a supernatural truth. This calls for a special intervention of God, for the inauguration of a divine intercourse with man whereby he communicates knowledge otherwise unattainable; in other words a supernatural revelation.

Man's need of revelation is therefore twofold. He needs it for ease and security even in the sphere of natural research; he needs it absolutely if he is to know God's secrets. The first need God might have supplied by help of the natural order, by an enlightenment or an inspiration which would have been included in God's natural Providence in man's regard. God, however, has willed to destine man for a supernatural end, and every help that he grants is bestowed with that end in view. Man's twofold need is met by one divine revelation which is supernatural in character, and in its content partly supernatural and partly natural. By one and the same revelation he supplies a remedy to man's natural weakness, and discloses truths which no finite mind could ever have learned.

§ III: SUPERNATURAL REVELATION

*Meaning of
revelation*

It is important for a proper understanding of our subject to have a clear idea of what is meant by divine revelation. The word "revelation" is used in many senses. In common parlance it often means the disclosure of a fact hitherto unknown: "What you say is a revelation to me"; and in theology the word sometimes has this meaning. Or, again, it is said that God has "revealed" himself in the works of creation; and in this sense the Psalmist sings that "the heavens tell forth the glory of God." Moreover, God may manifest some truth to man by an interior enlightenment of his mind in such a way that the favoured soul is unaware of the origin of his knowledge; he simply begins to know what he did not know before. Of such a kind was the infused knowledge granted to many of the saints. Such a mysterious illumination also may be called a revelation. The Modernists used the word in a special sense. By revelation they meant the manifestation of a religious truth made in consciousness by the religious sense; for them it was nothing else than a personal religious experience.

But when the Church uses the word "revelation" in connection with faith, it has the definite meaning of a *divine testimony*. Revelation is the act whereby God speaks to man, making a statement to the truth of which he testifies. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past by the prophets, last of all in these days hath spoken to us by his Son."¹ Hence the Vatican Council describes faith as a "virtue whereby . . . we believe that the things which he has revealed are true . . . because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, and who can neither be deceived nor deceive."² The oath against Modernism, to exclude

¹ Heb. i 1.

² Chapter iii.

the perverted sense given to the word in that theory, uses even clearer terms. Faith is there defined as "a true intellectual assent given to a truth received *by hearing* from without, whereby . . . we believe to be true the things that have been said, testified and revealed by a personal God, our Creator and Lord."

Revelation, then, is not an interior emotional experience; it is a statement of truth made to man in a definite place, at a definite time, by a personal God who is outside and distinct from the recipient. Moreover it is essential to the concept of revelation as understood by the Church that the statement in question be authenticated: the statement is received by the believer as made by God, and accepted because it is made by God. Infused knowledge, therefore, unless it is infused with clear notification of its divine origin, is not the revelation which faith presupposes. Furthermore, this revelation is distinct from the manifestation of his perfections which God has given to us in creation. It is true to say that God "speaks" to us in the works of nature, inasmuch as those works "reveal" his presence and activity; it is true, but it is metaphorical. Revelation properly understood implies a personal intercourse between God and man, wherein God truly speaks—*i.e.*, makes an assertion, which man accepts on God's personal authority.

Hence revelation is supernatural—supernatural not only because it contains supernatural truths, but also because the very act whereby God reveals is beyond the ordinary course of nature. In the ordinary course of nature God teaches us through created things, through the voice of conscience, through our own conscious needs and desires. By supernatural revelation God teaches us himself. "All thy children shall be taught of God."¹

*Supernatural
character of
revelation*

I have said that God's revelation contains supernatural truths. The essence of revelation does not demand that what is revealed should be hitherto unknown or otherwise unknowable. Much of what God has revealed man may already have discovered by the natural light of reason; in which case the authority of divine teaching but confirms the conclusions of the human mind. But even if the truth revealed is a mystery properly so called—that is, a truth which the human reason itself is incapable of discovering or of comprehending when it has ascertained it—yet it contains an element which is not new: the terms in which the revelation is made are familiar. It is not true to say that the mysteries of our faith are unintelligible. The unintelligible, the meaningless, precisely because it is meaningless, can have no relation to the human mind. Thus an unknown language is unintelligible, because it conveys no meaning; it corresponds to no idea in consciousness. A mystery is incomprehensible, if you will, but it is not meaningless; it conveys a very definite meaning. The proposition that Jesus Christ is both God and man, that he is one person who has two natures, the human and the divine,

Mysteries

¹ Isa. liv 13.

is incomprehensible indeed ; but it is not without meaning. It is full of meaning, so full that man with his finite mind will never exhaust it.

If divine revelation is supernatural in character, if it is beyond the ordinary course of nature, it follows that man can have no natural title or claim to it. It is a grace, an entirely gratuitous gift of God. Hence, although, as we saw in the previous section, the conditions of human existence indicate the need of some help from God for a universal and sufficient knowledge of religious truth, yet we cannot argue from this to the existence of a *supernatural* revelation. Apologists rightly point out how wonderfully revealed truth harmonises with the intimate needs and desires of mankind. But it is too little to say : " This is exactly what we needed." It is far in excess of what we had any right to expect. In this as in all else God has been more than just, he has been generously bountiful to his creatures.

*Manner of
revelation*

And how has this supernatural revelation been made ? Its history may be given in the inspired words of Holy Writ : " God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days hath spoken to us by his Son." ¹ " And Jesus spoke to his Apostles, saying : Going therefore, teach ye all nations ; . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." ²

Undoubtedly, had God so willed, he might have communicated his testimony directly to each member of the human race as soon as he was capable of receiving it. The contention of Protestantism is (or was) that he does so. There is no need to insist here on the inconveniences of such a method, had it been adopted ; it would have led to hallucinations of every sort. Sad experience has shown how easily men may be led to think that they are inspired. But apart from any other reason, an individualistic revelation seems antecedently improbable because it would not be in keeping with what we know of God's providential dealings with mankind. God deals with man according to his nature ; and man is naturally social. This being so, we should have expected God to make his revelation to men as a body ; and such in fact was the case.

" God spoke to the fathers [*i.e.*, to the ancestors of the Jews whom St Paul was addressing] by the prophets." Whether by visions, or by an interior illumination of the mind, or by the ministry of angels, God entrusted his message to certain chosen men, who in their turn were to deliver it to God's chosen people. Of that chosen people would be born Christ, the Word Incarnate, who was to complete the divine message and found on earth a universal kingdom in which God's word would be carried to the ends of the earth until the end of time.

¹ Heb. i 1.

² Matt. xxviii 18-20.

But God's message must be authenticated, his messenger must present his credentials. In vain will the seer claim divine authority if he cannot vindicate his mission. Hence that all men might know that the words of the prophet were the words of God, he marked their teaching with unmistakable signs of its divine origin. "They will not believe me," protested Moses,¹ "nor hear my voice, but they will say: The Lord hath not appeared to thee . . . And the Lord said: Cast thy rod down upon the ground. He cast it down, and it was turned into a serpent . . . that they may believe, saith he, that the Lord God . . . hath appeared to thee." Leaving to its proper place² the discussion of miracles and prophecies as motives of credibility, we must remark here on the consistent appeal made by God's messengers to these irrefragable evidences of their divine authority. Suffice it to quote the words of the greatest of all the prophets, the Son of God himself: "Go and relate what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them."³ In answer to the Jews who ask him to say plainly if he is indeed the Christ, he says: "I speak to you, and you believe not; the works that I do in the name of my Father, they give testimony of me."⁴ Finally, we read of the Apostles of Christ who "going forth preached everywhere; the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed."⁵

*Authentic-
ation of
divine
message*

The revelation which God made to his chosen people was a *Revelation* gradual one. Speaking to them "at sundry times," he suited his *gradual* message to the degree of culture and the condition of his hearers. The promise that God would send a Redeemer was made at the very beginning, and that hope, fostered by repeated revelations through the Patriarchs and Prophets, was the heart and centre of the Jewish religion. Belief in the one true God was safeguarded by constant divine warnings against the idolatry of the surrounding nations and by detailed instructions for the manner of divine worship. The precepts of the natural law were fully expounded in the Commandments and enforced by legal sanctions. Gradually in the books of the Old Testament beliefs concerning the future life, at first fragmentary and crude, become more and more detailed and definite. Of the great mysteries of Christianity, the Incarnation and the Trinity, we find little more than mere traces—traces, however, which become clearer and clearer as the fulness of time approaches. It was a period of preparation and expectation, during which truths were successively revealed according as they served to prepare men's hearts to receive him who was to come. But this progressive unfolding of God's providential plan was not to be indefinitely prolonged. At last Christ came, and with him the completion of God's message of mercy.

¹ Exod. iv 1.

² P. 13.

³ Matt. xi 4-5.

⁴ John x 24; cf. *ibid.*, 37-38; xi 41-42.

⁵ Mark xvi 20.

*Definitive
revelation in
Christ*

The Son of God became man and, living in the midst of men, showed by his fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies that he was indeed the divine messenger whom all generations had expected ; and of his divine mission he gave still further proof—if further was needed—by the wonders that he worked. The prophets of old had conveyed God's word to the chosen people alone ; Christ's message was for the whole world. Their revelation was but partial, to be supplemented by those who should come after ; his was definitive and complete. They were the creatural mouthpieces of God ; he, while truly man, was God himself.

To the Jews first he preached his gospel, to the nation which throughout its history had been so signally favoured by God ; and by these he was rejected. But from the beginning of his ministry he laid the foundations of his Church, collecting a chosen band of disciples who were to be witnesses of his gospel, not merely in Palestine, but throughout the whole world ; they were his twelve Apostles. These with infinite care and patience he trained for their important mission ; to these he revealed "the mysteries of the kingdom of God" so far as they were then able to bear them, promising that when he should leave them he would send the Holy Ghost, who would teach them all truth. To these, under the primacy of Peter, he gave special powers : a teaching authority such that to hear them was to hear Christ himself, that they might preach in its integrity the doctrine that they had received from his lips ; powers of jurisdiction over all believers, that they might govern Christ's spiritual kingdom on earth.

*Committed
to the
Catholic
Church*

In this way the Catholic Church was instituted, the visible, infallible society in which and through which the revelation of Christ was to be preserved and propagated. The Church, the mystical body of Christ, was to perpetuate his work, to bear witness to the truth until the consummation of the world. As the doctrine of Christ was the doctrine of the Father who sent him, so the teaching of the Church is the teaching of Christ who instituted her. Just as Christ had proved his divine mission, so the Church bears in the sight of all men the manifest marks of her divine origin. "The Church herself," says the Vatican Council,¹ "by reason of her wonderful extension, eminent holiness and inexhaustible fruitfulness in all good things, her Catholic unity and invincible stability, is . . . an irrefutable witness to her own divine mission."

§ IV: PRELIMINARIES TO FAITH

*Faith man's
assent to
revelation*

HAVING studied the need, the nature and the manner of divine revelation, we now possess the elements necessary to understand the act whereby that revelation is accepted, the act of faith ; and if in the pages which precede points of doctrine have been touched upon

¹ *Loc. cit.*, chapter iii.

which are treated more fully elsewhere in this essay, it has been in order to provide data for the solution of the problem before us.

In fact, the nature of the act of faith has already been implied in what has been said about revelation. Revelation is a divine testimony. But if God has spoken, if he has testified to the truth of a statement, then it is man's bounden duty to accept it by an act of belief, by an act of faith. For our present purpose, then, it will be sufficient to describe the act of faith as that act whereby, on the authority of God, we give mental assent to a truth which he has revealed. All that is involved in such an act will form the subject of the succeeding section, but here it should be noted that the motive of assent is not the intrinsic evidence of the statement itself, but the authority of God who makes it; in other words, I believe simply because God has said it. Already it becomes clear that the act of faith cannot be made without certain preliminaries. A motive, before it can give rise to an act, must first be perceived by the mind; the authority of God, then, must be known before I can make an act of faith. I must know that there is a God, and that he has the authority—*i.e.*, the knowledge and the veracity—which is to command my assent. Moreover, by the act of faith, I give my assent not merely to a vague generalisation—"whatever it may be that God has revealed"—but to a definite truth, or body of truth, which I know to have been revealed. A further preliminary, therefore, is to know "the fact of revelation"—*i.e.*, that God has revealed this or that truth to which I am required to give my assent.

We begin to see, then, that the act of faith is no "step in the dark." Faith is not an unreasonable credulity; still less is it a blind instinct to believe whatever one is told. Man is a rational being, and God does not call upon him to do anything ill-befitting his nature. It is reasonable, prudent, to believe what one is told by a trustworthy witness. It is imprudent, and even foolish, to believe a statement purporting to be made by one whose existence is unknown, or at the best doubtful, or of whose knowledge and veracity, even if he exists, one has little or no guarantee. St Thomas Aquinas has been accused of being a Rationalist, but indeed he only vindicates the just rights of a reasonable being when he says: "Man would not believe (revealed truth) unless he *saw* that he must believe it."¹ Hence, before a man can reasonably and prudently believe a statement, that statement must be credible to him; he must have "evidence of credibility." That evidence of credibility he obtains from the knowledge of those preliminary truths which we have enumerated, called for the sake of convenience the "preambles of faith."

How are we to know these preambles? Should we not, some *Fideism* have suggested, rely for this knowledge on the authority of God himself, so that not only the act of faith but also its foundations should rest upon the firm ground of God's infallible truth? Even

¹ *Summa Theologica* II-II, Q. 1, art. 4 ad 2.

granting for the sake of argument, say the Fideists, that the existence of God and the fact of revelation can be discovered by the unaided human mind, yet even the Catholic Church is forced to admit that without revelation man finds it practically impossible to learn natural truths with certainty. Is our faith, then, to rest upon so insecure a foundation? It needs little reflection to see that such a process involves a vicious circle, and, far from strengthening the foundations of faith, removes them altogether. How can I reasonably rely upon the authority of God when he reveals to me his existence, his omniscience, his veracity, the fact that he has revealed this or that truth, unless I am antecedently and independently of that same authority convinced that the revealing and truthful God exists? Others have had recourse either to a blind instinct, or to an act of will, to bring about adherence to these preliminary truths.

All such systems betray that distrust of the human reason to which we referred in our second section. The Church, we repeat, has no sympathy with those who disparage the powers of the human mind; nor is there any antagonism between reason and faith. In the words of a famous preacher, "they are two sisters who dwell together in the same home. The hospitable doors of our soul are opened to receive these two daughters of God. Faith dwells on high, reason a little lower. But faith will never kill her sister; she will not betray the hospitality accorded her to reign alone in the palace of them both."¹ "The use of reason," says the Church in condemning Traditionalism, "precedes faith and must lead us to it."²

The human mind, then, must discover for itself the truths which are the basis of faith, and these must be known with certainty. It is not enough to conjecture with some degree of probability that there is a veracious God who has made a revelation. While doubt concerning the preambles of faith remains the act of faith cannot be reasonable. No man believes reasonably unless he sees that he must believe.

But how are all men to acquire this certainty? In the first place it is to be remarked that the existence of God, at least, can be certainly known by the light of human reason. In fact, so clear are the indications of this truth that the Gentiles were upbraided by St Paul as inexcusable for failing to recognise it. Moreover, the arguments which prove the existence of God show also that he is all perfection, and therefore omniscient and incapable of deceiving. As to the third preamble, the fact of revelation, we have seen that God accompanied his message with clear signs of its divine origin, particularly by miracles and prophecies, and that, moreover, the Catholic Church, founded by Christ for the specific purpose of teaching men what God has revealed, bears upon her unmistakable marks of her divine institution.

¹ Monsabré : *Introduction*, Conf. II.

² Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, 1626.

To set in full relief the arguments which show the divine origin of the Christian religion—to expound, in other words, the “ motives of credibility ”—is the function of the apologist, and therefore lies outside our scope. These motives are many and varied; among them are some which alone are fully convincing, others which convince only by their accumulated force; some will appeal to all minds, others will appeal only to a few. It is just, therefore, to that extent, that the apologist should accommodate his procedure to the mentality of those whom he seeks to persuade. But of the absolute efficacy of at least one motive of credibility no Catholic may doubt, since it has been made the subject of an infallible definition in the Vatican Council, namely, miracles worked in confirmation of a divine mission. “ Anathema to him who says . . . that by miracles the divine origin of the Christian religion is not rightly proved.”¹ In the corresponding chapter the Council goes further; it declares that miracles and prophecies² “ are most certain signs of divine revelation, and suitable to the intelligence of all.” They are suited to the intelligence of the learned as to that of the ignorant, to that of the scientist as to that of the layman, to the modern mind, too often supposed to be infallible, no less than to the mind of the ancients, too often presumed to be lacking in common sense.

That a miracle, granted the existence of God, is possible is shown elsewhere.³ If a true miracle, which is the work of God alone, is performed by a man *as a sign that his teaching is divine*, it argues an extraordinary intervention of divine power to vindicate his claim, and, since the true God cannot confirm falsehood, the argument is peremptory. His statement is thus rendered credible on the divine authority. It may not, however, be superfluous to add that the miracle as such does nothing more. It is not an intrinsic proof of the statement made; it is a completely adequate motive of credibility.

The human mind, then, is able to learn with certainty the existence of God; is able, by the proper investigation of the facts, to conclude that Christ is the bearer of a divine message, that he founded an infallible Church for the purpose of propagating that message; and finally, by the process indicated in apologetics, to conclude that the Catholic Church is that divinely appointed teacher of revelation. These things, I say, can be known and proved, and by those who have the requisite leisure, opportunity and ability, are actually known and proved with all the scientific certainty of which the subject is patient. The preambles of faith, therefore, rest upon the solid ground of human reason.

¹ *De fide*, can. 4.

² I make no distinction here between miracles and prophecies, since the value of each, *mutatis mutandis*, is equal in showing the divine mission of the wonder-worker or the prophet. In fact, a prophecy is simply a miracle of the intellectual order.

³ Essay vii, *Divine Providence*, pp. 226 ff.

*Relative
certitude*

But while the human mind *can* satisfy itself by rational demonstration of the existence of God, and by historical investigation of the "fact of revelation," it remains true that for a great proportion of the human race such a process of scientific demonstration is a practical impossibility. A secure conviction that a good God exists is obtainable by all men, and by the large majority is actually obtained. But how many are able, besides justifying that conviction to themselves, to construct a scientific proof of the existence of God which satisfies all the demands of human reason, with all the apparatus of objection and answer which is needed by the modern apologist? Most men believe in the existence of God because they have satisfied themselves, by reasons which for them are sufficient, that God really does exist. Again, the divine origin of the Christian religion, the divine character of the Catholic Church, being attested by so many motives of credibility, is known by all Catholics, can be recognised by non-Catholics. But relatively few Catholics have either the leisure or the ability to investigate the historical documents, to sift for themselves the evidence required for a scientific historical demonstration: relatively few non-Catholics would have the opportunity of thus verifying the claims of the Catholic Church. Moreover, the difficulty in the way of such scientific certitude is infinitely increased when we consider the condition of the uneducated and the young. Can these make no act of faith until they have completed a course of philosophy, until they have satisfied their minds by answering every objection that can be made against the existence of God, proved the divinity of the Christian religion by a rigid demonstration, and thus arrived at perfect evidence concerning the preambles of faith?

Such perfect scientific evidence is unnecessary. The reason why one must, before believing a statement, be convinced of the existence and trustworthiness of the witness who makes it, is that otherwise the assent given would be unreasonable, imprudent. Thus it is imprudent to believe a statement supposed to have been made even by a most knowledgeable and trustworthy person, if there is reasonable doubt as to his having made it.

I say, advisedly, if there is reasonable doubt, because there are doubts which are unreasonable, imprudent. Nowadays, at any rate, whatever may have been the case years ago, it is unreasonable to doubt the safety of travelling by rail. It is unreasonable to doubt a proposition which you have clearly demonstrated simply because an objection is made to it which, by reason of your lack of ability or technical knowledge, you are unable to solve. Briefly, without going into the vexed question of certitude and its various kinds, we may remark that there is a state of mind which a reasonable man demands before he will engage upon any serious undertaking. Call it moral certitude if you will; I prefer to call it a prudent conviction. Complete scientific evidence in many cases, either for circumstantial or personal reasons, he cannot have. He asks those who are competent

to know, in whose judgement he has full confidence, and with the conviction thus obtained he sets out upon his task. Absolutely speaking, he may have been deceived; but in the circumstances he acted prudently; it would have been imprudent, unreasonable to doubt.

And here follows a consequence of vital importance for the solution of our question. What is prudent in some circumstances is imprudent in others; what is prudent for one person is not prudent for another. This state of mind, which I have called "prudent conviction," is not absolute but relative.¹ So, for example, it is prudent for the unlearned to believe implicitly the teaching of those who "ought to know." A child acts prudently on the advice, however misguided, of his mother. School-children believe what their teachers, however incompetent, teach them; and to act upon such information is prudent and reasonable—for children. In fact, they would be imprudent to act otherwise.

And now let us apply these principles to the question before us. In order to make a reasonable act of faith the prospective believer must achieve a prudent conviction concerning the preambles of faith: a conviction—*i.e.*, he must be convinced of the existence of God and the fact of revelation: a *prudent* conviction—*i.e.*, there must be no reasonable doubt. Such a state of mind, then, is compatible with unreasonable doubts such as we have exemplified above. Thus a child who learns from his teacher, or from his catechism, that there is a God who has revealed certain truths through his Church, of which the parish priest is an official representative, has a prudent conviction regarding the preambles sufficient for a reasonable act of divine faith. Again, motives of credibility which would not convince the scientist, to the unlearned may carry a conviction upon which he could prudently rely. Hence, a scientific demonstration of the preambles, so far from being a necessary preliminary to a reasonable act of faith, is in most cases impossible; in those cases, therefore, it would be *unreasonable* to demand it.

Nevertheless, in all cases the legitimate demands of reason are met. Reason demands that no man believe a thing unless he *see* it to be credible. Even in the case of the child, even in the case of the unlearned, whatever be the objective reliability of his grounds for admitting the existence of God or the fact of revelation, the conclusion to which he is led—namely, the judgement of credibility—is perfectly evident. He concludes that it is evidently reasonable to believe on the authority of God a truth, or a group of truths, which he is prudently convinced that God has revealed. But it should be carefully noted, even now, that the motives which have led to the

¹ Obviously this view has nothing in common with the theory of "relative truth," according to which a proposition objectively true to one is false to another. I am speaking here not of objective truth but of a subjective state of mind.

“judgement of credibility” are not the motive of faith. The act of faith remains yet to be made, and its motive is quite distinct; it is the authority of God who reveals.

*Other factors
in the
approach to
faith—The
function of
the will*

When the inquirer has reached the stage at which he regards revealed truth as “credible,” when, further, he has realised his obligation to believe, he is on the threshold of faith. But before we consider the act of faith itself, we have still to take into account other important factors in the approach to it. In what has been said hitherto we have considered only the intellectual activity of man; and we have purposely confined our attention to this aspect of the question in order to stress the essentially reasonable character of submission to divine revelation. But man is not a mental machine. When he thinks of a subject he does so because he wills to think of it. As we shall see later, the will plays a prominent and essential part in the act of faith itself. But also in the preparation for faith good-will is absolutely necessary. Moreover, man has various emotions and desires which to a greater or less extent are under his control; these too must be taken into account. It is not simply the human mind that prepares itself for faith; it is the whole man, a vital unity, with all the complex interaction of his mental, volitional, and emotional powers.

The first thing necessary in the approach to faith is attention to the subject of religion; the inquirer must first make up his mind to think about God and his duties in God’s regard. And here, besides the effort of will, the emotional factor may well enter to attract or to repel. Some have begun their inquiry simply out of affection for a Catholic friend whose good opinion they valued; others have desisted when they saw that such inquiry would lead to self-denial. Some have been first attracted to the Catholic Church by the beauty of her ceremonial; others have been repelled by the squalor of an ill-kept church. Thus the most insignificant circumstance may exert its effect, inclining a man this way or that; but finally it is the will that directs the mind to God.

It is not only in the initial impulse, however, but throughout the preliminary stages too, that these factors exert their influence. Distractions must be firmly set aside that the mind may devote its attention to a serious and difficult subject; prejudices must be overcome so that the full force of the motives of credibility may be appreciated; the temptation to dally with sophistical objections when they are seen to be groundless must be suppressed; unworthy considerations of self-interest, pride and human respect must be excluded lest they interfere with the earnest inquiry after truth. In short, there are innumerable ways in which desires and feelings may help or hinder man in his preparation for faith. The will cannot make a thing to be true which is false; the will cannot give force to an invalid argument. But it can and must prevent extraneous considerations from obscuring the issue, and exclude from the mind anything that may

distract a serene and unbiassed attention to the arguments proposed. In the study of a purely speculative subject there is little danger of such interference; one is not liable to unreasonable prejudices in the solution of an algebraic problem. But religion is vitally connected with man's moral duties, and for that very reason a purely unprejudiced and rational study of it is particularly difficult. If a man is to devote himself to it wholeheartedly and with unruffled mind, he needs above all things good-will.

There remains the last, and yet really the first and most important factor. With the intellect of a Plato, with the iron self-control of a Stoic, with all the good-will of which man is capable, he can do nothing to prepare himself for faith without the help of God's grace. "No man cometh to me unless the Father draw him." Man's destiny is a supernatural one, entirely beyond his natural powers to achieve. His acts, to be salutary—that is, to be conducive to his eternal salvation—must be supernatural, must have a quality, a modality, which raises them above their natural power and value, making them proportionate to a supernatural end.¹ It is by the act of faith that man first sets himself in the path of salvation, and, as will be seen, that act must be supernatural. But even before this vital step is taken man must be guided by God's grace. God's supernatural providence, which wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, watches over all men, guiding them gently, but surely, to himself. The child who learns his religion from his mother, whose mind is gradually opened to the wonders of God's revelation, is acting under the impulse of God's grace. The unbeliever who becomes conscious of a desire to know God, who earnestly and perseveringly, in spite of obstacles, seeks after the truth, is being led, enlightened and inspired by supernatural grace. The eloquence of St Paul would not have converted a Lydia had the grace of God not opened her heart to hear his words. The Apostle may plant the seed and tend it carefully, but it will not grow unless God give the increase.²

In all these preliminaries, therefore, man must do his part. He must endeavour, with good-will, to see that God's truth is credible; it is his duty and his right as a rational being. But he must not rely upon himself. "Our sufficiency is from God."³ His very good-will must derive from him who "worketh in us both to will and to accomplish."⁴ The urge of passion, a deep-seated prejudice, a whole complex of circumstances for which he may be but partly or even in no degree responsible, may blind him to the truth. For such a one the grace of enlightenment is at hand, if he will but accept it. His prayer must be that of the blind man: "Lord, that I may see." The answer and the result will be the same: "And immediately he saw, and followed him."⁵

¹ See Essay xvii, *Actual Grace*, pp. 595 ff. ² Cf. Acts xvi 14; 1 Cor. iii 4-6.

³ 2 Cor. iii 5.

⁴ Phil. ii 13.

⁵ Cf. Matt. xx 30-34.

§ V: THE ACT OF FAITH

Definition of faith

IN the previous section we accompanied the believer in his progress towards the act of faith until the stage at which, having acquired a firm conviction concerning the preambles of faith, he forms an evident "judgement of credibility": "This truth, which I am convinced has been revealed by God, is to be believed on God's authority." Passing to a judgement of the practical order, he says: "I must believe it." Then, and not till then, he proceeds to give his assent to the revealed truth: "I believe this truth because God has revealed it." This assent is the act of divine faith which we must now study.

The subject is of such vital importance that our definition of the act of faith must be taken from the infallible pronouncement of the Vatican Council. The Council directly defines the virtue of faith, but in doing so it necessarily defines the act: "Faith . . . is a supernatural virtue whereby, inspired and assisted by the grace of God, we believe that the things which he has revealed are true; not because the intrinsic truth of the things is plainly perceived by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, and who can neither be deceived nor deceive."

Motive, the authority of God

Faith, then, is an act whereby we believe something to be true. It is an assent to truth, and therefore an act of the intellect: for truth is the object of the intellect.¹ There is, however, this important difference between the assent of faith and the assent of immediate knowledge. The assent in the latter case is caused by the perception of the intrinsic truth of the statement; so that when it is made I say: "I see; of course, that must be so"; and, when once the truth is seen, nothing further is required to gain my assent. In the case of faith, I see indeed—otherwise there could be no assent—but I do not see within the truth itself. I understand the terms of the revealed proposition, but neither the analysis of those terms nor my own experience assures me that they should be connected. The ground, or the "motive," of my assent to the proposition is extrinsic to it, and that motive is the authority of God, who tells me that it is true. In both cases there is evidence: in the former the evidence is intrinsic, in the latter it is extrinsic. The believer sees the truth, says St Thomas, "as credible; . . . for he would not believe unless he saw that he must believe."²

The will in the act of faith—a free act

I have said that when once the inward truth of a proposition is seen, nothing further is required to evoke the assent of the mind; it is drawn of necessity to adhere to its connatural object. But without that internal evidence the mind, of itself, is powerless to

¹ Cf. the oath against Modernism: "Faith . . . is a true act of the intellect."

² *S. Theol.*, II-II, Q. 1, art. 4 ad 2.

assent. "Faith," says St Paul, "is the evidence of things that appear not."¹ Revealed truth is not seen in itself; it is seen as credible, as clothed, so to speak, in the garment of divine authority. Invested with such authority, it becomes indeed a fit object for intellectual acceptance; but the intellect alone, eager to "read within" (*intus-legere*) the truth, makes no spontaneous move to accept it. It is here that the intervention of the will becomes necessary. It has been seen in the previous section that the will has an important function in the preliminaries to faith. To arrive at the judgement of credibility the believer must focus his attention upon the motives of credibility and set aside all that might distract from their unbiassed consideration. All this needs a firm and constant effort of will. But in these preliminary stages the will has no direct causative influence upon the assent of the mind.² The intervention of the will in the act of faith itself is of a different and more direct character. The act of faith, though, as we have seen, it is elicited by the mind, is *caused* by an act of will. By faith, says the Vatican Council, "man yields a *voluntary* obedience to God himself." The mind sees the revealed truth as credible, and the will bends the mind to accept it.

Now it is important at once to preclude a possible misunderstanding of the function of the will in the act of faith. The will cannot make the mind believe anything it chooses; it is not that "the wish is father to the thought." Before the mind can accept a statement, even at the behest of the will, the statement must be "credible"; it must be attested by a trustworthy witness; and, moreover, it must not be nonsense. Nonsense is meaningless and can have no relation to the mind. Briefly, a revealed statement *can* be accepted by the mind provided that it fulfils the conditions necessary to render it credible—*i.e.*, fit for intellectual acceptance. It is seen to be not unfit for acceptance because it has an intelligible meaning; it is seen to be positively fit for acceptance because it is attested by an infallible witness. In fact, since the witness in this case is God himself, who has a right to our homage and obedience, the fitness is presented as a positive duty.

The will therefore now deliberately intervenes and commands the assent of the mind to revealed truth; and the motive of the act is the authority of God who attests that truth. This motive, it should be remarked, is one which appeals to both mind and will, but under different aspects. To the mind it appeals as endowing the statement with credibility; to the will it appeals as a divine perfection to be worshipped: his love in revealing to be repaid by a loving acceptance on our part, his wisdom and his veracity to be

¹ Heb. xi. 1.

² This, of course, is true only of those preambles of which rational demonstration is given. If the preambles are accepted—as they often are—on human testimony, then the function of the will is the same as in every act of faith, whether human or divine.

*Motive of
faith
further
explained*

adored by an unquestioning homage.¹ "Since man," says the Council which is our infallible guide in this matter, "is utterly dependent upon God as upon his Creator and Lord, and since created reason is absolutely subject to uncreated Truth, we are bound, by faith in his revelation, to yield him the full homage of our intellect and will." ■ Hence, although the act of faith is an intellectual act, yet it is also an act of homage which is in the power of the will to withhold. By faith "man yields *free* obedience to God." To explain the freedom and other properties of faith, it is necessary to examine a little more closely the precise nature of its motive, the authority of God.³

It might seem at first sight that if a man is firmly convinced that a statement has been made by one who is certainly telling the truth, then he cannot possibly withhold his assent to it; nor is it apparent that such assent would be an act of homage to his informant. If a man accused of murder admits a fact which is damaging to his case, the jury—granted that they find no other reason for his admission—cannot but believe his testimony. And apart from all discussion as to the freedom of such an assent, by no conceivable standard could such belief be termed a homage to the veracity of the witness. The jury accept his statement because they know that in the circumstances it must be true. Of a like nature is the credence that we may give to an historian whom, however otherwise unreliable, we have proved by the application of tests to be here and now telling the truth. Critical students of history rely upon human testimony, but their acceptance of it implies no personal compliment to the narrator of the event. They believe that this happened because, and in so far as, they know that he is saying what is true. Is not the case the same with the act of divine faith? I know that God has revealed the Trinity. I know that God is Truth itself. Surely the logical conclusion is inevitable: the Trinity is true.

¹ The act of faith, therefore, involves an act of *trust*, of confidence in God's authority. But this trust is not the act of faith itself; it is anterior to it because it belongs to the motive of my assent. As a consequence of my faith in what God has revealed I may then make a further act of confidence in God that he pardons my sins; this is an act of hope. The Protestant error concerning the "faith that justifies" consists in confusing hope with the faith which it presupposes. But see Essay xvi: *Sanctifying Grace*, p. 550.

² Chapter iii.

³ Here a preliminary remark may not be out of place. As in many matters of theology, where it is a question of explanations, so in this matter theologians differ. The explanation of the act of faith involves the science of psychology which, although, or perhaps because, it deals with ourselves, is full of difficulties and mysteries. It is fair, therefore, to warn the reader that while all Catholics are agreed—as they must be—that the motive of faith is the authority of God, not all are agreed as to the manner in which this should be explained. The view here put forward appears to the writer a reasonable one, and is held by many theologians of repute.

Here is no free acceptance of God's word, no free homage to his Person. I am forced by the laws of evidence.

But there is a radical difference between the assent of divine faith and the assent given under the circumstances above described. The jury believe the witness, the historian believes his informant, because and in so far as they know him to be relating what is in conformity with reality. The motive of their assent is the evidence that they have of the truth of the statement; and such assent is probably not a free act; it is certainly no personal compliment to the witness. The believer accepts a revealed truth not precisely *because he knows* that God has revealed it and *knows* that God is infallible. This knowledge is the necessary condition, but it is not the motive, of his faith. He believes because *God*, who is infallible, has said it. The difference is perhaps subtle, but it is important. The motive of the act of divine faith is not *my knowledge* of that authority as accrediting revealed truth, however certain, however evident that knowledge may be, but the divine authority itself. My knowledge is finite, my knowledge is fallible. God's authority is infinite; God can neither deceive nor be deceived. If, when I believe, I rely upon my knowledge, I rely upon what is human; if I rely upon God's authority I rely upon what is divine. In the act of divine faith the believer abstracts from the arguments which have led him to the judgement of credibility. They were a necessary preliminary; they were, if you will, the tinder that lit the torch. But the torch burns now by its own brilliance; the light of God's authority illumines revealed truth with its infinite radiance; and this is the motive of faith: I believe because God has said it. Reason has led me to faith. Reason has told me that God's revealed word is credible, and in accordance with her advice I freely and unreservedly submit myself to the guidance of his Truth.

An instructive incident in the life of our Lord illustrates the nature of divine faith. The Pharisees, as is well known, were constantly rebuked by our Lord for their unbelief. They had seen, as others had seen, evident signs that Christ spoke the words of God; and yet they stubbornly refused to believe him. One day after they had made one of their frequent attempts to discredit him,¹ he took a little child and said: "Amen I say to you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, shall not enter it."² The act of divine faith has more in common with the trusting belief of a child in his mother than with the assent of the critical historian. For the child it is enough to know that his mother has said it, and he believes on that authority. His assent is a prudent one, for he has motives of credibility which for him are sufficient; everything leads him reasonably to suppose that his mother knows everything and would not deceive him. But when he believes, he believes

¹ Matt. xix 3.

² Mark x 15.

simply and solely because his *mother* has said it. He does not advert to the reasons which have led him to regard his mother as trustworthy. His belief is an unaffected and trusting homage of love to his mother. So also in the Act of Faith which every Catholic child recites: "O my God, I believe . . . because thou hast said it, and thy word is true." To the motives of credibility the child does not advert; he has probably forgotten them. But the motives of credibility are not the motives of his faith. He relies not upon them, but upon the authority of God itself. What is true of the child is true of the Christian adult; and this the experience of each will confirm. When he makes an act of faith, he thinks not of the proofs of the existence of God, not of the miracles which Christ worked, but of the authority of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

This is why faith is a "theological" virtue, this is why faith is an act of free obedience to God; this, finally, is the reason of its sovereign certitude.

*The certitude
of faith*

The certitude of faith is supreme because the believer's assurance rests upon a ground more secure than all human science, upon the infallible authority of God. "If we receive the testimony of man," says St John,¹ "the testimony of God is greater"; infinitely, unspeakably greater, since God is very Truth. But, as in regard to the freedom of the act of faith so also in regard to its certitude, a difficulty often arises from a misconception of the precise motive of faith. It is sometimes urged that since no chain is stronger than its weakest link, therefore the assent of faith can enjoy no greater certitude than the assent given to any of the preambles of faith which are its foundation. Metaphors are misleading here. Even the word "foundation" may lend itself to misunderstanding. The preambles of faith are the foundation of faith in the sense that they are a necessary prerequisite. But they are not its foundation in the sense of supplying the security of the edifice. The metaphor of the chain is no less fallacious. There is no continuous "chain" of reasoning that leads from the first argument which proves the existence of God to the truth, for example, that in one God there are three Persons. If the act of faith were the logical conclusion of such a chain, then evidently that conclusion could have no greater weight than is warranted by the series of arguments that lead to it. But the act of faith is not an inference from preceding arguments.

The series of truths which we have called the preambles of faith leads logically to the judgement of credibility, but no further. I aver, in view of my previous reasoning, that it is reasonable, prudent, in fact obligatory, to believe that, *e.g.*, there are three Persons in one God. I then proceed, impelled not by my previous reasoning, but by God's authority, to believe it. I believe it, not precisely because and in so far as I know that God has revealed it, but

¹ I John v 9-10.

because God has revealed it. Hence the firmness of my assent is measured not by the cogency of any one, or indeed of the sum, of the reasons which led me to judge the truth as credible, but by the infinite weight of the divine authority which is the motive of my faith.

But although the certitude of faith is supreme, supreme as is the divine authority upon which it is based, yet the mind of the believer is not completely satisfied. Under the influence of the will it holds firmly to the truth; but within the truth it does not see; and nothing save vision can satisfy the mind. Faith is an evidence—*i.e.*, a firm conviction—but it is a conviction “of things that appear not.” As long, then, as intrinsic evidence is denied, the mental assent is not spontaneous and requires the concurrence of the will. Hence it is misleading to compare the state of mind of the believer with the complete repose of the mind in a truth clearly demonstrated, or with the evidence of the senses. In the latter case there can be little or no temptation to doubt. The believer, on the other hand, precisely because he does not see within the truth, may be subject to many such temptations. But temptations are not doubts, and the believer is able by an effort of will to dispel them, to concentrate his attention upon the infallible motive of his faith, and thus to achieve a state of security from error as superior to that of human knowledge as the Truth of God infinitely transcends the fallible reason of man.

The whole process of the act of faith, such as we have described it, does not seem, absolutely speaking, to exceed man's natural powers. If we consider those powers in the abstract, there seems to be no reason why, granted that God has made a revelation, man should not be able for himself to investigate the preambles of faith, naturally to recognise his obligation to accept it, and finally to believe on God's authority the truths that he has revealed. But even if we grant this to be physically possible, we have seen that the difficulties which occur even in the preliminary stages are such as to render it extremely unlikely of achievement, without the help of God's grace. When, moreover, we consider that the act of faith, being the initial step in man's progress towards his supernatural end, must itself be supernatural, the need for grace becomes quite imperative.

We must now, therefore, give our attention to those words of the Vatican definition which we have hitherto neglected. “This faith,” says the Council, “which is the beginning of man's salvation, is a *supernatural* virtue, whereby, *inspired and assisted by God's grace*, we believe,” etc. And later in the same chapter, quoting the Council of Orange (529) the Council asserts the absolute impossibility of a salutary faith “without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who gives to all men sweetness in accepting and believing the truth.”

Grace is necessary for the act of faith, in the first place, to make it supernatural; to give it that quality which makes it conducive

to a supernatural end, in other words, to make it salutary. If that supernatural character is needed—as we have seen that it is—even in the preliminary steps to faith, still more is it needed in the very act by which man submits to God's authority. "By grace," says St Paul,¹ "you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God." For faith man must strive to his utmost; he must use all human endeavour to learn the truth and to submit to it. But all his striving, all his endeavour, would be utterly useless without the grace of God. He might even—we have surmised that it is not impossible—make an act of faith unaided; but that act would not serve for his salvation unless it were made under the inspiration and assistance of God's grace. It must be *inspired* by grace. God does not wait until man conceives the desire to believe; he puts that desire supernaturally in his heart. It must be *assisted* by God's grace. In the very act of submission to God's truth, the mind is enlightened, the will is strengthened by God, who works in us "to will and to accomplish."

The grace of God is essential; but to none is it ever lacking. If even during man's progress towards faith God enlightens the mind and strengthens the will, anticipating every act with his grace, still more abundantly, when the act of faith itself is to be made, will God give his supernatural help. It is not the lack of grace that man should dread, but rather his own power to resist it.

But grace does more than make the act of faith supernatural; it renders it easy and delightful. The Holy Spirit gives "sweetness in believing." Grace enlightens the mind, setting in vivid relief the desirability of paying intellectual homage to God, giving to it a supernatural insight into the meaning even of mysteries, and into the treasures of grace and glory which will be the reward of our faith. Grace helps the will to adhere firmly to God's word, putting aside all considerations of self-interest, all distractions of worldly things, to cleave to God, the inexhaustible source of every good.²

In the fullest sense of the term, therefore, faith is God's gift. Hence it is for man to treasure and preserve it. Until we see God face to face the mind will be restive, and temptations to doubt will be frequent. The will must be prompt to reject them, and in this task man has always the abundant help of God's grace. He who has once committed himself to the keeping of God's Truth need not fear that he will be deserted in time of temptation. But he must do his part. He must take all those measures which are humanly possible to guard his treasure against attack. The mind of man is fickle; error seduces by its very novelty, sophistical reasoning by its display of ingenuity. The Church, therefore, while she en-

¹ Ephes. ii 8.

² The effects which, in those who have the supernatural virtue of faith, proceed from that virtue are produced in others by actual grace. Cf. Essay xviii: *The Supernatural Virtues*, p. 643.

courages her more learned children to study, in order to refute, the written works of those who attack the faith, wisely forbids the dissemination, and above all the indiscriminate reading, of such books. She knows well that many who have the intelligence to understand an objection have not the ability to find, or even to understand, its answer; that not all the faithful have the leisure or the power to meet reason with reason and learning with learning, and to rebut the objections so lightly made.

Those of the faithful who are troubled with such difficulties will do well to meditate upon these infallible words of the Vatican Council: "Although faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason; since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, and God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth. The false appearance of such contradiction is mainly due, either to the dogmas of faith not having been understood and expounded according to the mind of the Church, or to the inventions of opinion having been taken for the verdicts of reason."¹

A further duty regarding perseverance in faith arises from what was said in the previous section. It was there established that in order that the act of faith may be reasonably made it is sufficient to have a conviction concerning the preambles which, relatively to the circumstances of the individual, is prudent. But what is the duty of the child, for instance, when he grows to manhood and discovers—as he may—that the motives upon which he relied for his judgement of credibility no longer satisfy him? Is he to give up his faith until he has once more gone over the preliminary ground and satisfied himself concerning the preambles?

The answer of the Church as far as Catholics are concerned is peremptory: a Catholic can never have a just reason for abandoning the faith that he has once embraced. And the first reason of this is that the Catholic has constantly before him an absolutely, and not merely a relatively, sufficient motive of credibility—namely the Church herself, divinely instituted, and assuring her children "that the faith which they profess rests on the most secure foundation."² The second reason is that faith is not only a supernatural gift of God, but is accompanied by the graces necessary to preserve it. God's providence will not allow the faithful to lack the helps which they need to protect their faith. The ever-watchful Father, to whom his children daily pray, "Lead us not into temptation," will never allow them to be in such circumstances that the loss of their faith would be inculpable. Whatever be the greater or lesser degree of blame that may attach in individual cases, whatever be the mysterious means that God may use to protect his faithful ones, it is certain that "God does not abandon us until we first abandon him."³

¹ Chapter iv.

² Vatican Council, *loc. cit.*, chap. iii.

³ St Augustine, *De natura et gratia*, c. 26.

It is clear, then, that in this matter the Catholic has serious duties. Not only must he avoid temptations against the faith, not only must he pray for an increase of faith, but he is bound to take care that his mental development in secular branches of study shall be accompanied by equal development in the knowledge of his religion. If he feels difficulties regarding fundamentals it is his duty to inquire of those who are able to solve them; and here he needs a humility of mind which recognises that what he does not know is well known to many others. There can be little doubt that many defections from the Church are due to a culpable lack of knowledge—culpable because the ordinary means of information upon this important matter, whether they be Catholic books, sermons, or instructions, have been culpably neglected.

But it is otherwise for those who belong to non-Catholic religious bodies. None of these possesses, or indeed claims exclusively to possess, those characteristic marks of divine institution which so clearly distinguish the Catholic Church. Although members of such bodies may indeed assent by divine faith to some truths which are revealed by God, yet that very grace of faith, which strengthens Catholics in their adherence to the Church which Christ has instituted as the pillar and the ground of truth, will lead others to correct their errors and to submit to the infallible teacher of God's word. The essential difference in this matter between the position of Catholics and that of others is that whereas other religious bodies do not claim to be divinely instituted as the only infallible teacher of divine revelation, Catholics by their very faith profess that the Church is their divinely appointed guide. As Tertullian said to the unbelievers of his day, "We need no curious searchings, when we have Jesus Christ; we need no further inquiry, when we have the gospel. When we believe, we need to believe nothing more. For this we believe at the very beginning, that there is nothing more to believe."¹

*Necessity for
salvation*

A word in conclusion on the necessity of the act of faith. That in all adults a supernatural act of divine faith is necessary as an indispensable means of salvation is the doctrine of the Catholic Church, and may be readily inferred from all that has been said concerning faith and supernatural revelation. The primary truth of that revelation is that man is called to a supernatural destiny which consists in the vision of God face to face. Of this destiny man could know nothing without revelation, and knowing nothing could never strive for it. Hence, in all who are able to act rationally and to think for themselves the first and indispensable step towards salvation is their recognition, by an act of divine faith, of God as their supernatural end. "Without faith," says St Paul, "it is impossible to please God."² That act of faith, it is clear, must embrace at least implicitly every truth that God has revealed, for the motive of faith,

¹ *De praescr.*, c. 8.

² Heb. xi 6.

the authority of God, applies equally to them all. As to the minimum that must be known, and therefore believed explicitly, so that even its inculpable ignorance would exclude from the hope of salvation, it is commonly held that the two truths mentioned by St Paul¹ are sufficient: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and is a rewarder of them that seek him." But however few, however many be the truths believed, they must be accepted by an act of faith strictly so called. It is not enough, therefore, to hold, simply because one thinks it reasonable to hold, that there is a God who will reward those who seek him. It is necessary for salvation to hold this *because God has revealed it*, whatever be the means by which God's word has been made known. And the reason is that the reward which is in store for man is a reward which he could never have expected without God's revelation.

But apart from exceptional cases, it is normally necessary to know and to believe explicitly far more than the two truths mentioned, for Christ has instituted his Church to teach all that God has revealed. And this brings us to the subject of the next section.

§ VI: THE CHURCH AND THE OBJECT OF FAITH

A NECESSARY condition for the act of faith, as we have seen, is that the believer should know what God has revealed; the object of faith must be presented to him as credible on the divine authority. But it is evident that, so far as the act of divine faith as such is concerned, it matters little by what means it is thus presented. The study of Jewish and Christian literature simply as historical documents may convince a person that certain doctrines are revealed by God; in that case he is bound to believe such doctrines on the authority of God's word. There are undoubtedly many outside the Catholic Church who, inculpably rejecting or not knowing her claim to be the infallible guardian of divine truth, yet believe some Christian doctrines by a supernatural act of divine faith. They have their motives of credibility, they have the assistance of God's grace; they have, in short, all that is necessary for the act of divine faith which we have described.²

*The Church
the appointed
teacher of
revealed
truth*

But—and the antithesis is to be noted—these are exceptional cases. They presuppose inculpable ignorance of the Catholic Church, the divinely appointed means for the teaching of revealed truth. Although by God's admirable mercy many outside the Church are enabled providentially to believe some small part of that divine doctrine, yet these must be content, as it were, with crumbs from the table of that rich repast which is spread for those who dwell within. "That we may be able to satisfy the obligation of embracing the true faith and of constantly persevering therein, God has instituted the Church through his only-begotten Son, and

¹ *Loc. cit.*

² See Essay xvii: *Actual Grace*, pp. 605 ff.

has bestowed on it manifest marks of that institution, that it may be recognised by all men as the guardian and teacher of the revealed word.”¹ This, then, is the way of approach to God’s truth which Christ himself has ordained : a visible Church with a living teaching authority, infallible because the Holy Ghost is with her, preserving her from error.²

*Revelation
complete in
Christ*

The revelation made to the Apostles, by Christ and by the Holy Spirit whom he sent to teach them *all truth*, was final, definitive. To that body of revealed truth nothing has been, or ever will be, added. The duty of the Apostles and their successors was clear : to guard jealously the precious thing committed to their care and to transmit it whole and entire to posterity. “ Therefore, brethren,” says St Paul, “ stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle.”³ “ Hold the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and in the love which is in Christ Jesus . . . The things which thou hast heard of me by many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men who shall be fit to teach others also.”⁴ Hence this important consequence : when the Church teaches that a truth—*e.g.*, the doctrine of original sin—is revealed by God, she does not mean that God has just now revealed it to her ; but, in virtue of her office as the infallible custodian and interpreter of God’s word, she declares that this truth is contained, and always has been contained, in the deposit of revelation committed to her care. In other words, when the Church teaches a revealed truth she draws upon the “ sources ” of revelation.

*Sources of
revelation*

What are these sources ? It would be true, in a sense, to say that there is but one source of revelation—namely, divine Tradition—understanding thereby the body of revealed truth handed down from the Apostles ; and it is in this sense that St Paul uses the word when he urges Timothy to “ hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle.” Nevertheless, since a great and important part of that tradition was committed to writing and is contained in the inspired books of Holy Scripture, it is the custom of the Church to distinguish two sources of revelation, Tradition and Scripture, the former name being reserved for that body of revealed truth which was not committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but has been handed down through the living teaching authority of the Catholic Church. We must deal briefly with each.

*Tradition
and its
organs*

And first, that oral tradition is a source of revelation distinct from Scripture there is little need to demonstrate. The manner in which Christ instituted his Church is a sufficient indication of this. He instituted a visible society to the rulers of which he gave power to teach infallibly ; in other words, he founded a living teaching

¹ Vatican Council, *loc. cit.*, chap. iii.

² Cf. Essay xx : *The Church on Earth*, pp. 711 ff.

³ 2 Thess. ii 14.

⁴ 2 Tim. i 13 ; ii. 2.

authority. He may indeed have given his Apostles instructions to write some account of his life on earth, and of the chief points of his teaching ; but the Gospels themselves do not tell us so. At any rate not all of them did, or if they did their writings have not come down to us. But he told them explicitly to *preach* the gospel to every creature ; and the accounts that we have of the early apostolic ministry—and the Pauline texts above quoted—show that it was by oral instruction that the revealed word of God was chiefly propagated. St Paul, in fact, presupposes as a necessary prerequisite for faith the *hearing* of the word and the *preaching* of the gospel.¹

The Tradition which is a source of revelation is divine Tradition ; and this differs from human tradition not only because it is of divine origin, but also in that, unlike its human counterpart, it is divinely guaranteed against corruption and alteration. Daily experience offers examples of statements which, made to one person and by him related to another who, in his turn, relying partly on a faulty memory and largely on a vivid imagination, relates them with embellishments to a friend, are brought back to the original speaker mutilated, mangled, and unrecognisable. Divine Tradition is authoritative and infallible ; infallible because authoritative—that is, transmitted through the teaching authority of the Church, under the assistance of the Holy Ghost.

Circumstances may demand that the Church should exercise her teaching office in a solemn manner, either by an infallible pronouncement of the Head of the Church, by the definitions of an Oecumenical Council, or by the authoritative proposition of some creed or formula of belief ; all such statements of doctrine form a part of divine Tradition. Ordinarily, however, the Church teaches the faithful through their more immediate legitimate pastors, and their universal consensus on a point of doctrine—expressed either in official pronouncements, in catechisms issued by episcopal authority, or through other channels—is an organ of divine Tradition. Similarly the universal practice of the Church, if it essentially implies a dogmatic truth, is a source of divine revelation. Thus St Augustine rightly pointed to the universal practice of the Church of baptising children as an indication that the doctrine of original sin is divinely revealed. Moreover, many of the theologians of the early centuries of the Church, conspicuous for their sanctity and learning, are called “Fathers.” The consensus of these, similarly, considered as witnesses to the general belief of the Church, is an indication that the truth which they unanimously hold to be divinely revealed is in fact a part of the deposit of faith. The same is true of the consensus of later theologians. For although neither Fathers nor theologians *as such* represent the teaching authority of the Church, yet they are witnesses to the universal belief of the faithful which is the result of that teaching. Hence, finally, the belief of the faithful themselves,

¹ Cf. Rom. x 14-17.

expressed unanimously, is a further indication that a truth is contained in the deposit of faith. For the faithful, considered as a body, believe infallibly what they have been infallibly taught.

Holy
Scripture

The other source of revelation is Sacred Scripture. The books of the Old and New Testaments are held by the Church as sacred, not merely because they contain revealed doctrine, not merely because they are free from error, but because they are the work of God himself. God is their author. This is not the place in which to deal with the important subject of inspiration; it is treated fully elsewhere in this work.¹ Suffice it to note here that inspiration is a supernatural work of God. Hence we can know nothing of it except from revelation. No natural perfection of a book—*e.g.*, the fact that it contains true and holy doctrines, that its perusal gives rise to pious thoughts—can show it to have been written under the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit. We can know that God is the author of a book only through the testimony either of God himself, or of the writer whom he has used as his instrument, provided that he was conscious of being divinely inspired. In the latter case, unless the sacred writer is able to present divine credentials for his assertion, the testimony is but human and fallible. Whether, therefore, in regard to inspiration in general—that there do in fact exist divinely inspired books, or in regard to the canonicity of the sacred books—that this or that book is divinely inspired, our sure and infallible knowledge can come only from divine revelation. Now we have seen that the complete divine revelation is transmitted to us from Christ through the Apostles in the divine Tradition of the Church. Hence the only certain guide as to the inspiration and canonicity of all the books of Sacred Scripture is the authoritative pronouncement of the Church. “I should not believe the gospel,” says St Augustine, “unless I were impelled thereto by the authority of the Catholic Church.”²

Moreover, since the Church is the divinely appointed custodian of revelation, it is evidently her office to preserve not merely the letter of the Scriptures, but also their meaning. The Church,

¹ Essay v: *The Holy Ghost*, pp. 166-179.

² *Contra ep. fundament.*, c. 5. With regard to some books of Scripture that revelation may be found in Scripture itself, where we find the testimony of Christ and his Apostles to the inspiration of many of the books of the Old Testament. Moreover, it may still be not unnecessary—although it has been done so often before—to point out that the Catholic is not guilty of a vicious circle in arguing “from the Bible to the Church and from the Church to the Bible.” The Catholic apologist does indeed argue (partly, not entirely) from data found in the Bible to the divine institution of the Catholic Church; but at this stage he does not use the Bible as inspired, but simply as a trustworthy historical document. The logical sequence, therefore, is not simply “from the Bible to the Church and from the Church to the Bible,” but rather from a trustworthy Bible to a divinely instituted Church. Then follows an act of faith (made on the authority of God and under the direction of his Church) in the *inspiration* of the Bible.

therefore, is the authentic and infallible interpreter of Scripture. Nevertheless, this intimate connection between Tradition and Scripture does not imply that the inspired writings are not a source of revelation distinct from the oral Tradition which transmits them to us. The Church, infallibly assisted by the Holy Ghost, tells us what God has revealed. In the Scriptures it is God himself who gives us his revelation. But so deep is the reverence in which the Church holds the inspired word of God that she guards it most jealously, encouraging scholars, indeed, in their endeavours more profoundly to penetrate its meaning, but keeping upon them a salutary check, lest human ingenuity should corrupt the wisdom that is divine.

These, then, are the two sources of divine revelation : Tradition preserved by the living and infallible teaching authority of the Church, and Scripture, the inspired word of God : sources of truth which the Church preserves pure and undefiled, and from which she derives that divine revelation which she proposes for belief in all ages.

What the Church, therefore, teaches as divinely revealed, that *Dogmas* most certainly is revealed by God and must be believed on the divine authority. These truths, revealed by God—*i.e.*, contained in Tradition or in Scripture, or in both, and taught by the Church either in her solemn definitions or in her ordinary teaching—are called by the technical name of *dogmas*.

A little reflection will serve to show that the act of faith by which *Divine and Catholic faith* a Catholic believes the dogmas of the Church does not differ essentially from the act of divine faith. The motive of faith is always the authority of God who reveals. Yet such an act of faith has an additional perfection, in that, besides accepting the authority of God, it includes also submission to the Catholic Church as the infallible and authentic interpreter of revelation. This act of faith is therefore called by the special name of “divine and catholic” faith. It is divine because its motive is the divine authority ; it is catholic because the truth is accepted as divinely revealed on the authority of the infallible Catholic Church.

But the infallible authority of the Church is by no means confined to the teaching of “dogmas.” The Church is not only the teacher of revealed truth, she is also its guardian ; and in the office of protecting God’s truth against error she needs to pronounce infallibly upon many matters which, although they are not formally revealed by God, are nevertheless intimately connected with revelation. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that Catholics are bound under pain of grave sin to believe the truths thus infallibly taught by the Church. They are not dogmas, indeed, because in themselves they have not been revealed by God. Hence the motive of the assent which we give to them is not the divine authority. We believe them on the authority of the Catholic Church, inasmuch as she is exercising her office of guardian of revealed truth, an office *“Secondary truths”*

committed to her by God himself. Evidently, therefore, refusal to believe them would be a serious sin against the virtue of faith.¹

*Further
explanation*

Having thus duly stressed the strict duty of Catholics in this matter, we may now proceed, without fear of being misunderstood, to explain more fully the important distinction between what for purposes of convenience I will call these "secondary truths," and "dogmas" in the proper sense of the word. The distinction is important for at least three reasons, for upon it depends the understanding (1) of what is meant by "heresy," (2) of what is meant by the "immutability" of Catholic dogma, and (3) of the restrictions placed upon theological discussion. The third point will be dealt with in the last section; of the first it is sufficient to say that "heresy" is the wilful denial of a dogma; ² with the second we must deal here more fully.

A dogma, then, as opposed to a secondary truth, is a truth contained "in the word of God, written or handed down, and which the Church, either by a solemn judgement or by her ordinary and universal teaching, proposes for belief as having divinely been revealed."³ That the sources of revelation are two has already been sufficiently emphasised. Two points, however, in this definition need to be explained, since the neglect of either may lead to the exaggeration or to the undue limitation of the field of dogma.

In the first place the truth must be *contained* in either of the sources of revelation. That is to say, it must have been revealed by God either expressly or in equivalent words—*i.e.*, as the theologians say, "formally." Hence from the field of dogma properly so called are to be excluded those truths which are only connected—however intimately—with revelation. Thus a truth which is deduced by human reasoning from revealed truth—a theological conclusion—even though it may be infallibly taught by the Church and therefore binding on our assent, is not a dogma. Thus varying practical or devotional applications of revealed truths are not dogmas; the infallible decisions of the Church on points of historical fact, such as the oecumenicity of certain Councils, though they are closely connected with revealed truth, are not, properly speaking, dogmas. Nor does the use of certain philosophical terms in the proposition of revealed truths consecrate as a dogma any tenet proper to that philosophical system.

On the other hand, a truth, to be a dogma, need not be contained expressly in the sources of revelation. It is sufficient that it be revealed at least in equivalent words. Thus if two statements are revealed which together involve a third, then that third is revealed equivalently. If, for example, it is expressly revealed that man has free-will, and that Christ has a true human nature, then it is equiva-

¹ Cf. Essay xviii: *The Supernatural Virtues*, p. 645. Since the motive of this assent is the authority of the Church, such faith is called "ecclesiastical."

² *Ibid.*, p. 644.

³ Vatican Council, *loc. cit.*, chap. iii.

lently revealed that Christ has free-will. In this and many similar instances the third proposition is not deduced by human reasoning, but gathered directly from the meaning of what God has revealed.

In the second place, it is to be observed that to be a dogma a revealed truth need not be solemnly defined by the Church. It is sufficient, as the Church herself has repeatedly declared, that it be proposed as being divinely revealed in her ordinary official teaching. But this at least is necessary. Hence, regularly, a private revelation—*i.e.*, a revelation made by God for the benefit of one individual or group of individuals—binds only those to whom and for whom it is made. It is not intended for all the faithful, it is not accompanied by any divine guarantee that it will be transmitted to others without adulteration, nor is it, as such, contained in the deposit of faith committed to the Church. The approbation granted by the Church to these revelations means nothing more than “permission, given after due examination, to publish them for the edification and utility of the faithful.”¹ Moreover, by such approbation the Church does not—at any rate infallibly—guarantee even their authenticity.² Truths so revealed form no part of the dogmatic teaching of the Church.

Having thus, so far as space allows, cleared the ground of mis-
conceptions, we may now answer the questions: What is the mean-
ing of the immutability of Catholic dogma? Does it in any way
develop?
*Immutability
and develop-
ment of
Catholic
dogma*

The answer to the first question is contained in what has already been said. The revelation of Christ is definitive. He, with the Holy Spirit whom he sent, has revealed to his Apostles all truth. But a dogma, as we have seen, is a truth which is contained in that revelation. Therefore dogma, in the sense that it proposes for belief no truth which was not thus revealed to the Apostles and by them handed down to the Church, is immutable.

But undoubtedly a certain development is to be admitted. The subject is most complex and demands a far fuller treatment than can possibly be accorded it in the present essay; we must be content with the merest outline. In the first place clearly any “development” must be excluded from dogma which would result in the adulteration of the original meaning of God’s revealed word. This would be incompatible with the immutability already established. Thus the view that dogmas, being mere symbols to represent the evolution of the universal religious consciousness, may in course of time come to mean the opposite of what they meant before; the view that dogmas develop in the sense that they are re-stated—and this often means contradicted—to suit the practical or scientific needs of the age; these and similar views must be definitely rejected as incompatible with the essential immutability of divine revelation.

¹ Benedict XIV: *De Beatif.*, etc., lib. 2, c. 32.

² Pius X: *Encyclical Pascendi.*

How, then, does dogma develop? Albertus Magnus¹ succinctly describes this development as "the progress of the faithful in the faith, rather than of the faith within the faithful." In other words, the whole of revealed truth is contained in the sources of revelation, but in the course of ages it has undergone, and still undergoes, a process of "unfolding," whereby the faithful, under the infallible guidance of the Church assisted by the Holy Ghost, arrive at a fuller understanding of the truths which God has revealed. Of this "unfolding" process, however, the cause is not the understanding of the faithful, but the infallible teaching authority of the Catholic Church.

It is inevitable, in the nature of things, that a body of truth committed to human understanding should undergo a process of development. The truth is apprehended by the mind now under one aspect, now under another; every new point of view is a development. A universal truth contains implicitly its application to many individual cases; every such application is a development. The human mind relates one statement to another by a logical sequence, and thus is enabled more fully to understand them both; the fuller understanding of truth is a development. Such development occurs in every science. But there is this important difference in regard to revealed truth, that whereas in human science progress is made from the totally unknown to the known, often from error to truth and *vice versa*, in the development of dogma there are no such vicissitudes, because the only cause of development in Catholic dogma is the infallible teaching of the Church.

Theologians may study revealed truth, may find new modes of expression, may discover or set into clearer relief new implications thereof; the denial of a truth by heretics may orientate discussion towards aspects of the truth hitherto but little studied; old formulas may be found to be not false, but no longer adequate, in consequence of misunderstanding or misconstruction, for the controversial needs of the day; the devotion of the faithful may lead to a greater emphasis being laid upon certain aspects of the truth. But when all is said and done, it is the Church, assisted by the Holy Ghost, that unfolds the truth, since, until she has embodied in her official teaching the results of theological study or of devotional impulse, there is no development in Catholic dogma.

To illustrate this development of revealed truth "in one and the same doctrine, one and the same judgement,"² many examples might be taken from history. One characteristic instance must suffice. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Lady was solemnly defined by Pope Pius IX in the year 1854. It was defined, not as a conclusion drawn from revealed doctrine, but as being con-

¹ Quoted by Franzelin: *De Divina Traditione* . . . p. 260.

² Vatican Council, *loc. cit.*, chap. iv, quoting Vincent of Lerins: *Common.*, n. 28.

tained in the revealed word of God. And, in fact, if we examine the sources of Revelation (Scripture and Tradition) we find that this is so. In the Scriptures, as interpreted by Tradition, this truth is implicitly contained in the statement that Mary is "full" of grace, that between her and Satan there is complete enmity, such that she could never have been under Satan's power. During the first three centuries we find in Tradition the constant teaching—as a doctrine divinely revealed—that Mary is the new Eve, that she plays a part in the Redemption analogous to that which Eve had played in the Fall—*i.e.*, that she is ever on the side of the Redeemer against sin. Hence the Fathers teach that she is all-pure, so much so that St Augustine, in spite of his insistence against the Pelagians upon the natural sinfulness of mankind, yet refuses to mention the name of Mary in connection with sin. With the impetus given to devotion to our Lady by the Council of Ephesus we find lyrical outbursts, especially among the Eastern Fathers, extolling the purity of our Lady, and—from the seventh century onwards—not infrequent mention of the feast of her Conception. Differences of opinion among the theologians of the Middle Ages as to the precise essence of original sin prevented many of them from explicitly exempting our Lady from this hereditary taint; but with the clearer understanding of that doctrine came the explicit statement and universal belief that not for one moment of her existence was our Lady stained with original sin.

The history of this dogma is very instructive as showing how a particular truth, implicitly contained from the very beginning in a more general one, may, under the successive influence of theological study, devotional impulse, and even theological disagreement, come to be explicitly understood, universally believed, and, in the end, solemnly defined by the Church.

But the dogmas of the Church, though they are the most important part of her doctrine, form but a part of her infallible teaching. Besides dogmas strictly so called, our heritage includes a wealth of doctrine derived from revealed truth, the fruit, in great measure, of the loving meditation of our forefathers in the faith and of the devoted study of theologians.

§ VII: THEOLOGY

THEOLOGY may be briefly described as the science of revealed truth. *Definition* Presupposing revelation and faith, it applies the scientific method to the study of revealed truth. The theologian not only accepts the truths which God has revealed, but he links them together in their logical sequence, showing the connection of one with another, their mutual harmony and their analogy with the conclusions of human reason. Nor does he deal only with revelation as such; by applying to revealed truth the principles of human reasoning he deduces

conclusions, and these in their turn he links up with other conclusions and with other revealed truths, thus forming a complete and harmonious system.

Sources and Method

The chief sources used by theology are, clearly, the sources of Revelation: Scripture and Tradition. The theologian shows how the various dogmas of the Church are contained therein, traces their development from implicit to explicit belief, the different aspects under which they have been studied at different periods of the Church's history, and deals with the heresies and the controversies that have arisen in regard to each. But he does not confine his study of Tradition to the truths which have always been believed as revealed by God. He investigates the conclusions which in the past have been drawn from revealed truth, testing the consensus of Fathers and theologians concerning them as a criterion of their accuracy, and as indicating the common belief of the faithful on matters closely connected with revelation.

Like other sciences, theology has its subsidiary sources. Chief among these is philosophy, by means of which the theologian is able not only to demonstrate the preambles of faith, not only to show that the data of revelation are in perfect harmony with the conclusions of human reason, but also to gain a most "fruitful understanding even of mysteries." These must, of course, remain veiled in a certain obscurity as long as we walk "by faith"; yet by the aid of philosophy the theologian vindicates their reasonable character, defends them against the accusation of absurdity, and is able to learn much of their meaning. As we have already seen,¹ the terms in which mysteries are revealed are familiar to us. Philosophy enables the theologian to define more accurately the meaning of those terms, and in this way to acquire a better understanding of the mystery itself.

But philosophy, though useful in theology, is subsidiary, and must take a subordinate place. There comes a stage in the study of mysteries where the philosopher must bow his head and be content, and even rejoice, to walk by faith alone. Moreover, he must submit to learn from revelation the limits of his own science. If a philosophical tenet is found to be in contradiction with a revealed truth, then the philosopher must retrace his steps to see where he has wrongly reasoned. To this extent the theologian must always argue *a priori*. If a truth is certainly revealed by God—and that, through the infallible teaching of the Church, he can always ascertain—then any human conclusion or hypothesis, whether it be philosophical, historical, or scientific, which contradicts it, is most certainly erroneous. The theologian, on the other hand, must beware lest in such matters he himself introduce confusion by expounding the word of God otherwise than the Church understands it.²

¹ P. 7.

² Cf. above, p. 25.

Similarly other sciences, especially history and the natural sciences, are used as subsidiary in theology. These are valuable as supplying knowledge concerning the created universe, and particularly concerning the nature of man, the most noble of God's visible creatures. But they too must be used under conditions and safeguards analogous to those already described. It has been said before, but it is worth while repeating, that between the natural revelation which God has made of his perfections in the universe and the supernatural revelation which he has given us through his Church, there can be no real contradiction. In God's providence the one is complementary to the other.

One important observation must be made before we conclude. Theologians are fallible and therefore they differ. In the essays of the series of which this is the first, there will be set forth not only the dogmas of the Church, not only quite certain theological conclusions which, since they are taught by the infallible Church, must be accepted by "ecclesiastical" faith,¹ not only more remote conclusions which, by reason of the common consent of theologians, it would be "rash" to deny, but also other statements, intended to explain, to amplify, or philosophically to justify some doctrine of the Church, statements which have not the same infallible certainty. On these matters, in which the integrity or the security of revealed truth is not in question, theologians enjoy freedom of discussion. Upon such controversies, since the sincere object of the participants is the fuller understanding of revealed truth, the Church looks with no unfavourable eye, solicitous ever to promote charity among the disputants with that single-minded desire for truth, and loving appreciation of the word of God, which are the heart and soul of theology.

G. D. SMITH.

¹ See above, p. 32, n. 1.

II

AN OUTLINE OF CATHOLIC TEACHING

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

CATHOLIC doctrine is not a series of disjointed statements. It is an organic body of religious truth, in which one dogma cannot rightly be understood save in its relation to the others, a part cannot be denied without rejecting the whole. Hence the utility—perhaps even the necessity—in a work of this character, of a brief outline of the whole of Catholic teaching.

The space at the disposal of the writer does not allow of lengthy explanations ; these are to be sought in other essays. It may well be, therefore, that some of the truths here stated will appear difficult, some of the terms used require elucidation. But it has seemed opportune, even at the risk of some obscurity in matters of detail, to deal in its broad outlines with the whole doctrine of the Church, so that the truths of our faith may appear in their proper perspective, each in its connection with each of the others, as an integral part of an harmonious whole.

§ I: THE DIVINE TRINITY

*The three
divine
Persons*

WHEN we were baptised three august names were pronounced over us—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—and in the name of these three we were made children of God. At the beginning and the end of every day, before and after meals, whenever we enter or leave a church, whenever we make the sign of the Cross, these same three names are on our lips. When, finally, we breathe our last, it is in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost that the Church will speed us on our journey to eternal life.

Who are these three Persons with whom the whole Christian life is so intimately and essentially connected ? They are the one God whom we worship. Who is the Father ? He is God, who from eternity begets the Son. And the Son ? He is God, eternally begotten of the Father. And the Holy Ghost ? He is God, the Spirit from eternity breathed by Father and Son. They are really three, really distinct ; distinct, because the begetter is not the begotten, the breather is not the Spirit breathed ; distinct by their reciprocal relations, and yet in nature, in Godhead ineffably one. One in nature, not as you and I are one, united by the bond of our common human species, under which we are classified together as individuals. Your human nature is not mine, nor is mine yours, and therefore we are not one man, but two. Father, Son, and Holy

Ghost are not three Gods, but one God, because the divine nature which the Holy Ghost eternally receives from Father and Son, which Son eternally receives from Father, is numerically one and the same. One Person is not greater than another, one is not before another; all three are equal and co-eternal. Seek no perfection in the Father which is not equally in the Son, no perfection in these which is not in their Holy Spirit; their perfection is their Godhead, which is identical in each. They are distinct really, but merely, by their reciprocal relations. Think of no time in which Father was without his Son, or Father and Son without their Holy Spirit. Father, Son, and Spirit are the one God, without beginning or end, changeless, eternal.

And of this Godhead, one in three Persons, what can we say? *The Godhead and divine attributes*
 "We shall say much, and yet shall want words: but the sum of our words is: He is all."¹ By what name shall we call him? He has told us his name. He is Being. "I am who am."² He is all perfection, limitless, infinite. Read upon the face of the universe which he has made, and there you may see some reflection of the Maker. The sun that rises and sets, the trees that with the change of the seasons pass from death to life, and from life to death, the animals that are born to die, man himself, "who cometh forth like a flower and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow and never continueth in the same state,"³ all speak the same language, all say that they are made, that they have received their being from another, that they were not, and now are, that they owe their being to him who is not made, but makes all that is, who receives being from none, whose essence is to be, who is the necessary Being, God.

Whatever is good and beautiful in the work of his hands, that you may say of him, provided you do not limit or disfigure his perfection. He is not material; for a body has parts, a body changes and tends to dissolution. God is supremely one and simple; he is a Spirit. In him is no transition from one state of being to another, no lack of anything, no capacity unfulfilled; he is changeless. But, for God, to be without movement is not to be quiescent, inactive. To act is his very being; he is essentially active. But his acts do not succeed one another; he has no beginning and no end. What he is and does, he is and does outside of time; for him there is no "before" and "after," but one all-embracing "now." The creatures and their activities which succeed each other in time to him are ever present. God is eternal. And where is God? He is everywhere. To all things that are, God is present, because he is the cause of their being. And yet the universe cannot contain him; his power, infinite as all his perfections, extends immeasurably beyond the limits of the things that he has made. "If heaven," cries Solomon,⁴ "and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have built!"

¹ Ecclus. xliiii 29.

² Exod. iii 14.

³ Job xiv 2.

⁴ 3 Kings viii 27.

The fount of life is himself most perfectly and infinitely living. But the life of God is not, like ours, dependent on external objects. We cannot live without some material upon which to nourish our vital activity. The divine life is infinitely self-contained, supremely immanent. His life is the life of Spirit, of mind and will. God is subsistent, essential mind, and the object of his contemplation is himself. He is immediately and immutably conscious of the infinite perfection of his being. There is nothing that gives him knowledge, for his being is the all-sufficient reason of his mental activity, the adequate object of his thought. Of the creatures that he has made he has most perfect and intimate knowledge, but he knows them in knowing himself, the First Cause of all being. Nothing is hidden from his all-seeing eye, which with one eternal glance comprehends in the Source of all being everything that in any way is, has been, can or will be. The thoughts and intentions of man, so jealously hidden from others, lie open before God, who knows what is in man; the future holds no mysteries for him to whom all things are present; not a leaf falls, not a seed shoots, not an atom changes, but with the knowledge of him who is the Cause of all.

X To know the good is to love it. God is subsistent Will, and the necessary, all-sufficient object of that will is himself. In God, to will, to love is not to desire, for he lacks nothing that is good. In him is only joy and delight; he is infinitely happy in the contemplation of his goodness. As his mind needs nothing to give him knowledge, so his will needs no other being upon which to lavish his infinite love; he alone is truly and totally self-sufficient. Creatures have their being, creatures have their goodness and their beauty; but they have it from him who is Being, who is Goodness, who is Beauty. It is not because they are that God knows them, not because they are good that God loves them. God knows them, and his knowledge creates them; he loves them, and his love, freely bestowed, gives them some faint reflection of his infinite goodness.

These truths concerning the nature of God are mysterious indeed, and the human mind would be other than it is could it fully understand them, could it ever fathom the depths of the Infinite Being. But, mysterious though they are, man recognises that God must be so, and rejoices in the knowledge which human language is but ill-fitted to express. But of the Trinity of Persons, of that mystery of the life of God, belief in which may be said to be the touchstone of Christianity, man could have known nothing, had God not willed in his mercy to reveal his secret. Where all is simple and indivisible, we should have thought that there is place for nothing but unity. Yet there—wonder of wonders—is a Trinity of Persons. The divine life of mind and will is fruitful, productive, and the one eternal God is not one Person, but three. We cannot understand this mystery; but yet, enlightened by faith in God's revelation, we

strive to find in our own life of mind and will some analogy by which we may illustrate the adorable life of the Trinity.

God the Son is called the Word; he is "the image of the invisible God,"¹ "the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance."² Is he not, then, the eternal subsistent thought, the Word conceived by the Father, wherein he perfectly expresses himself, the object of his eternal contemplation? And the Holy Spirit, is he not the subsistent breath of divine love, proceeding eternally from the Father and his Word? We lisp like children when we speak of things divine. But we are destined one day to know the answer. We are called to share in that divine life, in that inter-communication of knowledge and love, which is the life of the Blessed Trinity. Until God's face is openly revealed, we adore by faith in his word.

§ II: GOD AND CREATURES

INFINITELY happy in the contemplation of himself, in the mutual knowledge and love of the three divine Persons, God has no need of anything apart from himself. Nothing, therefore, could constrain him to create, to produce other beings. *Creation, its freedom and purpose* That act of divine love, whereby he eternally decrees that creatures shall begin to exist, is perfectly and supremely free. By an exercise of his almighty power God willed, commanded, and creatures began to be. There was nothing out of which he might make them—not from his own substance, which is simple and indivisible—and apart from him there was nothing. "He spoke and they were made, he commanded, and they were created."³ He cannot increase his perfection, for it is infinite; then he will manifest it. There shall be beings distinct from him, and yet in some manner resembling him, for they will each show forth something of the infinite perfection of their Maker.

That infinite perfection we have tried to contemplate and to describe; but our minds are as impotent to grasp as our language is inadequate to express it—it is as if we tried to gaze upon the noonday sun. Yet look at the western sky when the sun has dipped below the horizon, and see how each tiny cloud portrays a different tint, how the sun's white brilliance is reflected now in a gorgeous variety of colour; it is the glory of the setting sun. The divine perfections, as mirrored, participated in by creatures, are the external glory of God. He has freely willed that the supreme perfection which in him is one, simple and undivided, should be reflected in myriads of beings, each having its own goodness and beauty, each manifesting in some degree the goodness and the beauty of its Maker, each dependent entirely upon that Maker for all that it has and is.

The result of that eternal decree is the universe, the finite mirror of God's limitless beauty, the visible pledge of his infinite *Angels*

¹ Col. i 15.

² Heb. i 3.

³ Ps. xxxii. 9.

love. Supreme in the hierarchy of created being are the angels, pure spirits, separated indeed by an abyss from the infinite simplicity of God, to whom they pay homage as their Creator, yet most perfect among creatures because they are pure intelligences, most like to the great Spirit who is the cause of all. Over these death has no power, matter has no hold. Untrammelled by bodily limitations, their intellect needs no laborious reasoning to arrive at the truth, but reaches it by simple, immanent acts, receiving its knowledge by a mysterious radiance from the eternal Sun of Truth. Their will-activity is proportionately perfect, free and unconstrained, but decisive and irrevocable, with none of the groping hesitancy of our human deliberations. Their name describes their office; they are God's messengers, the ministers of his power, the bearers of his commands. Their life and their joy is to sing in spiritual canticles the praises of their God.¹

Lowest in the scale of being are inorganic material substances; and yet in these what wonderful variety and harmony are discovered by the scientist, what immense, uncharted spaces have been revealed by the astronomer! Such is the awful majesty, the splendour, the beauty of the heavens, so clear is the voice with which they "tell forth the glory of God" that many have been led to see there, not the works of his hands, but the Maker himself. "With whose beauty, if they being delighted, took them to be gods: let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they. For the first author of beauty made all those things."²

More perfect in their order than these are the innumerable forms of plant-life with which land and sea have been adorned by the unstinting generosity of the Creator. They are living beings; a higher force has entered into matter and formed it into the living cell. Here in its least perfect form is animate existence. The plant assimilates the inorganic matter around it and grows unconsciously, but vitally, to its own perfection, transmitting its life to others of the same species.

Higher still in the scale are the animals, which in addition to the functions of plant-life possess an even more perfect activity. By sensation they perceive their object, and, desiring it, move spontaneously in search of it, in this manner knowingly seeking and securing what they need for their growth and propagation.

Finally, at the very centre of the universe, all the perfections of created being meet in the "microcosm," "the little universe," man himself, in whom a body, immeasurably superior in beauty and proportions to that of the other animals, is animated by a principle whose essence and activity are unbounded by the limits of matter; man is endowed with a spiritual, immortal soul. In this noble being the perfections of the spiritual and of the material spheres, of the visible and of the invisible worlds, are wonderfully combined. With

¹ Isa. vi 1.

² Wisd. xiii 3.

Various orders of being

Man—his nature

inanimate material substances he has in common ■ body; with plants he shares vegetative life, whereby he absorbs nourishment from without for his development and begets others like himself to propagate his species; like other animals, he has the faculties of sense and instinct—but what raises him far above all these is his spiritual soul, whereby he is like the angels.

And yet man is a unity. It is by virtue of the one spiritual principle that he lives and moves, feels and sees, knows and wills. He has not three souls, but one—a spiritual soul, whereby he exercises all his functions, both those which he has in common with other creatures and those which are proper to himself. Like the animals he receives sense-impressions, but with his immaterial intellect he elaborates them, purifies them, disengages them from their material conditions, forms spiritual and universal ideas, and is able by these to rise above matter and to live in the world of the spirit. His feet are upon the earth, but his head soars to the heavens. Dependent in all his vital operations upon material things, he is yet able to lift himself beyond them. He alone of visible creatures has the conception of moral good, of his duty to his Maker; he alone is able to know God, to rise from the contemplation of visible things to the knowledge—imperfect indeed, but how precious!—of the invisible Creator of all.

Side by side with intelligence he has the faculty of free will. Man is not drawn of necessity to embrace any of the finite goods that he apprehends. They are arraigned before the judgement-seat of his intelligence, they are weighed in the balance. Desiring the good, he chooses between the various means that present themselves as conducive to it, and in this choice consists his freedom. He is material, but not wholly so; then he will satisfy his material needs, but only in so far as they assist in his spiritual development. He is spiritual, but not wholly so; then, while attending primarily to his spiritual development, he will not neglect the needs of the body. By his free will man is master in his own house and, for good or for ill, freely directs his own activities.

“Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast set him above the works of thy hands.”¹ The whole material creation is subject to man. The new splendours, the immense spaces, the overwhelming vastness of the material universe that are being daily revealed to us by science—these may indeed make us exclaim with the Psalmist: “What is man that thou art mindful of him?”² We may wonder the more at the prodigal generosity of the Creator who has made all these things for man, but none may take from him the glory and the honour with which God has crowned him. It is not for man to abdicate his throne. The vastest planet is as nothing compared to the mind of man that studies its evolutions; the whole of the material

¹ Ps. viii 6-7.

² Ps. viii 5.

universe is less in God's sight than the tiniest child endowed with intelligence, upon whom the light of the Lord's countenance is signed.¹

Man is lord of the visible universe ; but he is also its priest. For no other reason have all things been subjected to man than that he in turn may offer them to God. God has created all things for himself, since he who is the First Cause, the First Mover, himself unmoved, can have no other motive. If man, the "pontifex," the bridge-builder between matter and spirit, has been crowned with glory, that glory is not his own, but God's ; it is to God, then, that he must offer it. "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power ; because thou hast created all things, and for thy will they were and have been created."²

*God the end
of all
creatures*

The object, then, that creatures are to achieve is the external glory of God ; and it is in achieving this object that they achieve their own perfection. All creatures are destined to "serve God" ; not that they can give anything to God, from whom they have their very being and all that they possess ; but they are to serve God by showing forth in their own finite perfections something of the infinite goodness and beauty of their Maker. In this see how the sublime self-love of God is supremely disinterested. Receiving nothing he gives all ; creating all things for his own glory he thereby perfects all creatures. Creatures themselves, in fulfilling the purpose of their existence, which is to manifest the goodness of God, thereby perfect themselves ; for the more perfect they are, the more do they redound to the glory of him who made them.

God, therefore, is not only the beginning, he is the end of all creatures. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God."³ From God all creatures come, to him all creatures tend. He is the sovereign Good, the first source of all good ; in whom, then, if not in the Author of their being, can creatures seek their ultimate perfection ? It is this fundamental truth that we express whenever we speak of the "universe" : it is "towards one" that all created things, diverse though they are in their nature, varied in their activities, must ever tend, towards him from whom, in whom, and to whom are all things⁴ that are made.

*Divine con-
servation and
co-operation*

That same eternal activity that creates them, that preserves them in being, that co-operates with their every movement, also directs them providentially to their end. The material elements that act and react according to their nature, the heavenly bodies that move unswervingly on their appointed course, the tiny seed that swells in the soil and reaches out roots to absorb nourishment for its growth, the animal that with sure instinct finds the food that it needs, that mates with its similar to propagate its species, that tends and cares for its young—all these are obeying, each according to its respective nature, the law of him who made all things for himself. A creature

¹ Cf. Ps. iv 7. ² Apoc. iv 11. ³ Apoc. i 8. ⁴ Cf. Rom. xi 36.

may suffer loss, but it is for the perfection of a higher ; a part may seem to fail, but it is for the good of the whole. In the decree of God's Providence there is no chance. All is according to plan ; all is directed to good.

Men and angels too, free agents though they are, are none the *Providence* less subject to the all-wise Providence of God. That infinite Wisdom, which "reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly,"¹ respects the noble gifts that he has given to intelligent creatures, and the law of nature, which others fulfil unconsciously and of necessity, becomes in them the moral law, recognised by the mind and freely obeyed by the will. Man knows that he can do wrong, but he knows also that he ought to do right. He sees in his duty the obligation, not merely of acting in accordance with the proper aspirations of his nature, but of submission to the will of his Creator. He knows that he can, if he will, act as though created joys were the ultimate object of his existence, but he knows too that by inordinate indulgence in such pleasures he disobeys the law of him who is his supreme Good, his last End. He can choose between the creature and the Creator ; but, whatever his decision, he remains subject to God's law. If with full deliberation he rebels, then he rejects the Sovereign Good, he renounces his own perfection and his happiness which can be found only in the God whom he has spurned. He can rebel, but yet he cannot frustrate the plan of God's Providence ; for in that eternal decree it is ordained that Justice will punish all who refuse to submit to his merciful and beneficent law.

In God, therefore, consists man's final perfection. Earthly joys, however noble, however spiritual, cannot content the longings of his immortal soul for a good which is all-inclusive, limitless, and indefectible. God alone can satisfy man's infinite desires ; in him alone who is self-existent Truth, the measure of all truth, can his mind have complete repose ; in him alone, the Sovereign Good, the standard and cause of all good, can his will find peace and full delight.

And how will he attain his end ? What destiny awaits him beyond the darkness of the grave ? Were we left to rely for our answer solely upon human reasoning, if in order to learn the truth we had as evidence only man's nature as we know it and God's generosity as we can conjecture it, then we might have said that, when death had put an end to the time of probation, when man's body had crumbled in the dust, then the soul, spiritual and immortal, would live on to be delighted with the contemplation of still more perfect creatures, of beings in whom the beauty of their Maker would be more clearly resplendent and, by an indefinite progress through unending life, would continue more and more perfectly—yet never completely—to know and love God in the mirror of his creatures ; that the body, too, faithful companion of the soul on her earthly pilgrimage, essential

¹ Wisd. viii 1.

part of man's composite nature, might perhaps be raised by God from corruption to share this unending bliss. . . .

All such conjectures, reasonable though they are, fall far short of the truth. God has dealt more generously with his creatures than the mind of man could ever have conceived.

§ III: THE RAISING OF CREATURES TO GOD

*Beatific
Vision, man's
supernatural
end*

WHILE we admire the almighty Power of God which gives being to everything that is, while in the universe, this pageant of beauty, this harmonious blending of every conceivable perfection, we adore his infinite Wisdom, still there is one divine attribute which outshines all others in the works of his hands ; it is his infinite Love, his insatiable delight in giving. And yet we have scarcely begun to tell the story of his benefits.

God, in creating, has communicated many and marvellous perfections to his creatures ; but the greatest of these is yet infinitely distant from him who is essential goodness. He has created beings who resemble him, for the artist cannot but reproduce something of himself in his work. He has communicated to them a likeness of himself, but he has not communicated himself. Man especially, it is true, is made in the image and likeness of God, for in him are intellect and will whereby he presents some reflection of the spiritual life of God. God lives by knowing and loving himself ; man too can know and love God. But what a difference ! Man's nature is such that by his natural powers he can never know God immediately and directly ; he can know him only in the mirror of his creatures, in the imperfect—necessarily imperfect because created and finite—image of the divine perfections which is the universe that he has made. Intimate though this knowledge might become in that state of natural beatitude at which our reason has conjectured, it must ever remain imperfect, immeasurably inferior to that knowledge whereby God sees himself face to face.

Our knowledge, which is nothing else than a spiritual representation within ourselves of the objects that surround us, must be conditioned by our nature. That nature is compounded of body and spirit, and hence our knowledge of the spiritual world, though true and objective, is necessarily imperfect and inadequate. At the very best our concept of God must be a limited idea, by which we represent singly and separately the infinite perfections which in God are one and undivided. Every finite concept, therefore, whether in men or in angels, must be of an infinitely lower order than God, and for that reason infinitely incapable of representing God as he is in himself. To know God directly and immediately, to contemplate in all its radiant beauty the Divine Essence, to see all loveliness in its first fount and origin—this is the life of God himself, this is the eternal life of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the life of the Blessed Trinity ;

and from that life the creature, because he is a creature, is naturally for ever excluded.

Yet it is this divine life that God decreed to communicate to intellectual creatures. The limitations of the creature set no limit to the Creator's delight in giving. The vision of God, which is the essence of the divine activity, is beyond the natural power of any finite being; yet it is to this "supernatural" end that God has destined us. Creatures are to be made "partakers of the divine nature,"¹ sharers in his life; we are to be made "like to him; because we shall see him as he is"²—no longer groping after the light of God in the dim twilight of created beauty, no longer seeing him "through a glass in a dark manner," but "face to face,"³ bathed for ever in the light of eternal Truth.

This, then, is the ultimate perfection of man, in this will all his faculties receive perfect satisfaction: "I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear."⁴ God the Son, eternally begotten of the Father, image of the invisible God, will be the firstborn of many brethren, for creatures will be made conformable to his image.⁵ He indeed is the Son of God by nature, true God of true God, while men will be but adopted sons, by God's free will given the right to a heritage which naturally could never be theirs, remaining for ever distinct from God and immeasurably distant from his infinite perfection; but yet they are to be admitted within the sanctuary of the Trinity, within the divine Holy of holies, to partake of the divine vision. They are to be adopted by the Father as brethren of his Son in the love, the charity, the sanctity of the Holy Spirit. It is no longer a likeness of himself that he communicates to creatures; it is his very Self.

But it were a poor generosity on the part of God to destine us to an end which we are quite incapable of attaining, did he not also raise our nature to a proportionate state of perfection. Our nature, while remaining essentially the same, must yet be transfigured, supernaturalised by gifts which will adapt it for so high and glorious a destiny. Nor is it enough that in the moment of attainment God should elevate our nature; he willed that by our own acts we should merit our reward, that our works should have a real relation and proportion to our supernatural end. Already in this life we must be "sons of God." Let us see the loving Father at work.

To Adam, the first man, from whom the whole human race was to be descended, God gave, in addition to his natural powers, all those supernatural and preternatural endowments which were to fit him for his noble destiny. To his soul was given "sanctifying grace," a real spiritual quality that raised his nature, transforming it after the likeness of God, giving to it a real participation in the nature of God, enabling him to perform supernatural acts meritorious of his supernatural reward, making him an adopted son of God. He was

¹ 2 Pet. i 4.

² 1 John iii 2.

³ 1 Cor. xiii 12.

⁴ Ps. xvi 15.

⁵ Rom. viii 29.

thereby given a new life, not substituted for, but superimposed upon his natural life. His natural faculties were reinforced, etherialised, so to speak, by the infused virtues, by reason of which his acts took on a new and infinitely higher value, for they were supernatural; they were, if we may say so, the recognised currency with which man might purchase his supernatural end.

An even more wonderful effect of this grace: the three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, came to dwell within the soul of man, consecrating it as a temple with a special and sanctifying presence. It is of this mysterious presence that Christ says: "If any man love me . . . my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our abode with him."¹ By grace God dwells in the soul as friend, guest, and lover; already by grace is begun that intimate union between God and the creature which will be consummated in the glory of heaven.

Enlightened by faith to know his supernatural destiny, strengthened by hope to have confidence in God's aid to attain it, his will adhering by charity to God the sovereign Good, every power of his being elevated and ennobled by the infused moral virtues, man was now no longer merely a servant but a son of God, partaking already of the divine life, capable by his acts of meriting the fulness of his inheritance, when it should please God to call him to his final reward.

Preternatural gifts But there is more. The nobler faculties of man have been richly endowed; but what of the body, what of his senses? Will not the demands of his lower self distract him from the thought of his high destiny? His soul is spiritual, but his immediate needs are material; is there not a danger that in satisfying these he may forget those of the spirit? His very spiritual faculties are conditioned by sense; may it not be that his senses take an inordinate part in his life? We are but too familiar with these difficulties, and St Paul in a well-known passage² has given a description of them which will be famous for all time. But in the first father of the human race such difficulties, natural though they are to man, had no place. It is natural to man, composed of matter and spirit, that his body should tend to dissolution; God gave him the privilege of bodily immortality. It is natural to man that he should be subject to pain and sickness; Adam was by God's gift preternaturally immune from them. It is natural to man that there should be conflict between the desires of the flesh and those of the spirit; there was no such conflict in Adam, endowed with the gift of "integrity" whereby the surge of passion was quelled. The whole of his nature was thus in perfect equilibrium; his sentient faculties in complete subservience to his mind and will, and these subjected by grace to God.

From the body of Adam God formed Eve the first woman, whom he similarly endowed, to be a worthy helpmeet to the father of mankind. It was then that God instituted and blessed the sacred bond

¹ John xiv 23.

² Rom. vii 14-25.

of matrimony, whereby the human race should be propagated. From this pair should be descended a blessed progeny ; all men would receive as their birthright the same gratuitous endowments that adorned their first parents—a birthright due, not to the nature of man, but to the lavish generosity of the Creator who, not content with leaving man in his natural state, had willed to raise him to a destiny nothing short of divine. Their life on earth would be a happy one, the future unclouded by the shadow of death, their daily labour a joy and a delight, their leisure spent in sweet and intimate converse with God, until they should be rapt immortal to his eternal embrace.

§ IV: THE FALL OF CREATURES FROM GOD

It might well have seemed that our first parents, in a state of perfection such as has been described, could not have failed to achieve their end, that God in his generosity had given all that was necessary for the fulfilment of his beneficent plan. And, indeed, on God's part nothing was lacking to assure the happy issue. But among the natural prerogatives of man there is one which, while it is his greatest dignity, was also the source of his downfall ; man has free will. The whole of his being, in that state of " original justice," was in complete subjection to his will—within himself there could be no rebellion ; but his will, adhering indeed to God by grace and charity, had yet lost nothing of its freedom and defectibility. The service that Adam was to render to his Maker was in his power to give or to withhold. Through the wiles of Satan and by the suggestion of his consort he withheld it.

The angels had been raised by God to a destiny identical with that of mankind ; they too, after a period of probation, were to enjoy the vision of God. Called upon to recognise the supremacy of their Creator, many of them, led by Lucifer, rebelled. For them there could be no repentance ; such is the perfection of the angelic nature that their decision between good and evil, though free and unconstrained, is final and irrevocable. Cast out for ever from God's sight and condemned to a just and eternal punishment, the rebel angels would spend their existence in endeavouring to drag mankind with them in their fall. To others God would entrust the task of protecting men against their crafty machinations. The great drama was about to begin.

The head of the fallen angels approaches the head of the human race—not directly, but through the woman Eve. " Ye shall be as gods." Such is the bait with which he tempts her. And Eve first, and then her consort, deceived by the glamour of an impossible independence, rebel against the supreme authority of their Creator—they sin. This was the first in that long series of revolts which has continued through the ages, whereby to God, his last End and supreme Good, man prefers the finite, created good which is himself,

Fall of the angels

Temptation and fall of Adam and Eve

whereby the creature sets himself in the place of the Creator. In this consists the awful malice of sin, that the sinner, weighing up in his mind the comparative merits of the creature and of the Creator, decides in favour of himself. Sin, in the words of St Augustine,¹ is "the love of self to the contempt of God."

*Effects of sin
in them*

With one act of disobedience, prompted by pride, our first parents wrecked that edifice of supernatural beauty and harmony which the loving hand of their Father had built. Charity departed from their souls, for how could they love God above all things when they loved themselves in his despite? With charity were lost grace and the noble array of infused moral virtues; lost, in fact, were all the supernatural gifts with which they had been endowed to reach their destiny; they had ceased to be the sons of God. The Trinity withdrew its holy presence from that desecrated temple, from the souls in which they were dishonoured guests.

And now, with the rebellion of the spirit against God, there began at once in man the insubordination of flesh to spirit. The preternatural gifts given to our first parents in order that without difficulty and distraction they might devote the whole of their energies to the loving service of God—these gifts were now withdrawn, for they had ceased to serve their purpose. They began to feel the weaknesses inherent in human nature. Those inordinate desires that come to us unbidden, those tendencies that seem to carry us away before we can advert to their presence, those base cravings that draw us to evil and hardly suffer control, the importunate stings of concupiscence that give no peace till we assent to them—of all this they tasted the first bitter experience after their sin. Unruly passion, held hitherto in check by the gift of integrity, reared itself unrestrained; the mind, hitherto clear and serene, became clouded with uncertainty and error; the daily toil that had been man's pleasure now became a painful task; the natural forces that make for the dissolution of the human body were now allowed full sway, and man's life became the path to the tomb towards which he wends his way, reminded daily of his mortality by the stimulus of pain and disease. All these are natural defects, but man had not been intended to experience them; the purely gratuitous endowments which had obviated them had been lost through man's sin; they are natural, and yet also the penalty of rebellion.

But lamentable and painful as were these natural infirmities, they were as nothing compared with the loss of supernatural grace. In this was the great tragedy, in this essentially consisted the state of sin. With the loss of grace man was in a state of enmity with God. Destined for an end far in excess of his natural powers, he remained deprived of all supernatural gifts, totally incapable of attaining the object of his existence. His nature remained in its essentials intact, but, compared to that former state, what a ruin! Seek as he might

¹ *De civ. Dei*, xiv, 28.

to serve God in future with his natural powers, his acts could have no proportion to the exalted destiny of the sons of God; repent as he might with bitter tears to atone for his offence against God, no act of his could make reparation for that insult to God's infinite majesty. Man was now a purposeless thing, like a rudderless, dismasted ship at the mercy of wind and waves, bound for a port which she has no conceivable hope of reaching.

The first sin of Adam, tragic in its consequences for him, is tremendous in its effects upon us; for his sin is our sin too. All men who are naturally born receive their nature from Adam, the fountain-head of the human race; and together with that nature they inherit his sin. We cannot inherit his wilfulness, we cannot inherit his responsibility, but we inherit the state of sin which he induced by his sinful act. *Transmission
of original
sin*

God had designed that the natural means which he had instituted for the propagation of the human race should fill the earth with men who, from the first moment of their existence, would be endowed with grace and integrity; they were to be born men, yet immortal sons of God. The supernatural and preternatural gifts which we have described were to be attached to man's nature as a specific human property, so that to be a man would involve—by God's bounty—being also the adopted son of God. Of all these precious gifts Adam, by his sin, despoiled his nature, and in that state of privation he transmitted it to us. We have lost nothing of the essentials of our nature; we have lost gratuitous privileges. But the lack of grace means a state of sin, a state of enmity with God. For man, destined to a supernatural end, constituted from the beginning in the state of "original justice," to be without that supernatural rectitude which should be his normal condition, is to be in the state of "original sin."

If all men must die, it is because Adam, by his sin, forfeited for himself and for us the gift of bodily immortality; if man is condemned to a painful and laborious existence, if in his search after truth he is hampered by error and discouraged by ignorance, if his will is in conflict with inordinate desires, if, with St Paul,¹ he sees another law in his members fighting against the law of his mind, if "concupiscence," child and father of sin,² is the lot of all men in their daily lives—all this is due to that first sin which brought death and sorrow to mankind. "Unhappy man that I am," cries St Paul, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The answer comes as a joyous echo: "The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

¹ Rom. vii 23-25.

² Cf. *ibid.* and Jas. i 14-15.

§ V: PLAN AND PREPARATION OF REDEMPTION

If the limitations of the creature could set no bounds to the generosity of God, neither could the malice of the sinner baulk the designs of his mercy. Man had sinned, he had stripped himself of the precious garment of grace with which the loving hand of God had clad him ; he was an outcast on the face of the earth, shut out from the intimacy to which God had willed to admit him, the enemy of God who had loaded him with benefits. The glory of God's love has appeared in his lavish gifts ; we have seen his wisdom and his power in the works of his hands. Surely the moment had come in which he would manifest the perfection of his justice by casting man out forever from his sight ?

The Redeemer promised

His justice, indeed, will appear, but infinite mercy will attend it. The condemnation of man is accompanied by the promise of salvation ; the sentence of death is mitigated with the promise of life. As the man and the woman stood trembling before God's offended majesty, they heard that there would come another man and another woman who should undo the work of the triumphant demon ; a woman and her seed should crush the serpent's head. Sin, far from thwarting God's beneficent design, will be the occasion of a still greater manifestation of his goodness. Out of the darkness of sin shines forth the bright figure of the Redeemer.

Meaning and necessity of redemption

The sin of Adam was disastrous, whether we consider man in himself, or in his relation to God. In man himself it meant the loss of all that made possible the attainment of the supernatural end to which he was destined. That loss, as far as man was concerned, was irreparable ; he could do nothing by his own act to merit its restitution, for the very quality which could make his acts meritorious was the gift of supernatural grace which he had lost. What was his condition in the sight of God ? He had offended God ; he had withheld from him the honour that was his due ; he had preferred the creature to the Creator. The insult, the offence was in a manner infinite, infinite as the majesty of God against whom it was committed. He had offered an insult for which he was powerless to make adequate satisfaction ; for if the gravity of an offence is to be measured by the dignity of the person offended, the value of the honour paid in compensation is proportionate to the worthiness of the offerer. Man could commit an "infinite" offence ; he could not make infinite atonement. Nothing could make condign satisfaction for sin save an infinite act of adoration, and that no creature could offer.

To repair this twofold ruin : to restore to man the gifts that he had lost, to make condign satisfaction to God for the offence committed against him ; this is the work of "Redemption."

But might not God have waived his right to satisfaction, and have condoned man's offence ? Might he not have accepted the

poor satisfaction that man himself could contrive to offer by his tears and lamentations? Might he not have reinstated man immediately in his supernatural dignity, treating him as if he had never sinned? To our puny human minds there seems to be nothing in such suggestions incompatible with the perfections of God. But to no human mind could it ever have occurred to conceive the plan by which Redemption was actually to be accomplished; it was such as only an infinite wisdom could devise. In this plan, infinite justice is satisfied, infinite mercy is displayed, God's power, his wisdom and his love find most perfect and marvellous expression. Let us glance at it now.

Divine justice demanded adequate satisfaction such as no finite being could make; none but God can give infinite honour to God. Then God himself, the second Person of the most Holy Trinity, will become man in order to give it. Man, he will offer prayer, adoration and sacrifice to God, and because he is also God his offering will be of infinite value. By his sacrifice he will appease divine justice, he will merit for man the grace that he has lost. He, the Son of God, will be the second Adam. Through the first came death, through the second will come life. All mankind born of Adam are born to sin by virtue of their solidarity with him; all who are reborn in Christ, by reason of their mystical union with him, will be reborn to grace. From the Son of God made man, as from a fruitful vine into its branches, will flow into all men united with him the grace that makes them once more the sons of God and heirs of eternal life. Man had cast away his birthright as son of God; God the Father will not spare his own Son that his adopted sons may be restored to their inheritance. God will become man in order that man may be restored to his share in the nature of God. Can we be surprised that the Church, celebrating this wonder of God's mercy and goodness, this mystery in which "mercy and truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed,"¹ does not hesitate to cry: "*O felix culpa!*" "O happy sin that gave us so noble a Redeemer!"

No sooner is the promise made than the salutary work of Redemption is begun. He, the Redeemer, will not come until the time appointed for his advent, but already the Sun of Justice has appeared above the horizon, already he is present in the expectation of men, and through faith in the Saviour to come they are sanctified by his grace. First to profit by the fruits of the Redemption were our parents, who by their sin had rendered it necessary. But to them now, as to all men henceforth, grace was given as a personal gift, and not as a legacy which they might transmit to their children. It is no longer by carnal generation from the first Adam, but by spiritual regeneration in Christ, that men will be made the sons of God.

The promise made to Adam and Eve, handed on by them to their children, is treasured through the ages, and with the dispersion

*Preparation
of re-
demption*

¹ Ps. lxxxiv 11.

of men over the face of the earth the Redeemer becomes "the expectation of nations."¹ The fall of our first parents was followed by a gradual moral and physical degradation of the human race; sin took its toll of the spiritual and bodily health of mankind, and the hope that had shone so brightly in the earliest times became neglected and obscured. But nowhere, even among those nations in which error and vice especially prevailed, was that primitive revelation entirely lost. In the chosen people, the race of whom the Redeemer himself was to be born, the hope of a coming Saviour remained ever green; in them, in spite of their inconstancy and repeated delinquencies, God kept alive the faith in him who was to bring salvation to mankind. Their heroes are types of the coming Redeemer; their religious hymns are filled with inspired references to the Messiah; their religious rites, their sacrifices, are types to foreshadow his great sacrifice which should redeem the world.

Why was his coming delayed? God was awaiting the fulness of time, until men had learned by long and bitter experience how weak their nature is, until the pride that had given birth to Adam's sin should be humbled in the dust, so that men might cry out for a Saviour; the world must be prepared to receive the Son of God made man.

As time goes on, the expectation becomes more and more clearly defined. The Holy Ghost, speaking through inspired writers and prophets, announces that the Redeemer will be of the seed of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob; he will be the son of David. With Isaias and Jeremias the prophecies become still more detailed regarding the origin and the life of the Redeemer to come. Every woman of Israel had cherished the hope that she might be his mother. Isaias announces the providential decree that he will be born of a virgin: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel (God with us)."² "A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace . . . he shall sit upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to establish it and strengthen it with judgement and with justice, from henceforth and for ever."³

*The Immaculate
Mother of
the Redeemer*

And now, when the fulness of time was come, the grace of the Redeemer, whose merits are ever present in the sight of God, that grace, which had sanctified the souls of all men of good will since the fall of Adam, was poured out in the greatest abundance upon her whom God had eternally chosen as the Mother of the Redeemer. The woman whose seed was to crush the serpent's head, the woman between whom and Satan there was to be complete enmity, the second Eve, who by her co-operation with her Son the second Adam was to repair the ruin brought about by our first parents—this was

¹ Gen. xlix 10.

² Isa. vii 14.

³ Isa. ix 6-7.

Mary. She alone ¹ of all the children of Adam was preserved immune, through the merits of her Son, from the stain of original sin. She, who with her Son was to overcome Satan, should not for one moment be subject to his dominion. Mary was to be the Mother of the Redeemer; it was fitting that she should be most perfectly redeemed. She was to be the Mother of God; it was right that she should ever have been a child of God. She was to be the Mother of the spotless Lamb; it was just that she should be spotless, untouched with the slightest stain of original or of actual sin. The first Eve had been formed pure and holy from a pure and sinless Adam; the second Adam should take his immaculate flesh from an ever-immaculate Mother.

The world was ready for his coming, the pure womb that was to bear him was prepared. The great and awful event awaited by men since the moment of that first promise may be worthily recorded only in the inspired word of God: "Behold" (says the Angel Gabriel to Mary), "thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High. . . . The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: and therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." ² *The Annunciation*

Centuries before, a malignant angel had come to a woman upon an errand of death, and the woman's disobedience to God's command which had ensued was the beginning of the sin of the world. The Archangel Gabriel came to Mary with the message of eternal life, and the ready obedience of the second Eve gave us him who is the fount of all grace. Mary, who had designed to know no man, had been troubled at the announcement of the angel that she should conceive and bear a son. Her fear was groundless; the Holy Ghost was to be her Spouse, and Mary, still clad in the white veil of virginity, was yet to wear the crown of motherhood. "And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word." The obedient submission of Mary gave to the world the divine Redeemer. In that moment "the World was made flesh and dwelt amongst us."

§ VI: THE REDEEMER

By creating, God communicates an image of himself. By raising creatures to the supernatural order he gives himself, his own infinite beauty and perfection, to be the object of their supernatural knowledge and love, that they may see and love him as he is; he makes the creature a partaker in his own intimate life.

¹ Christ, since his body was miraculously formed in the womb of his Virgin Mother, is not a child of Adam in the sense in which we are, and was therefore not subject to the law of sin.

² Luke i 31-32, 35.

To create was an act of disinterested love ; to raise creatures to the condition of adopted sons was infinite liberality, beyond anything that man could have conceived, beyond any legitimate yearning of his nature. Made in God's image and likeness, man had been crowned with glory ; made a son of God, he had received a greater glory still. And yet God's love—it seems incredible—had a more wonderful gift in store. Not content with the intimate embrace of man's knowledge and love, he has deigned to become personally one with him, so that there is one divine Person who is both God and man. The Incarnation is the culmination of man's glory, the supreme act of God's love. " We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery," says St Paul,¹ " a wisdom which is hidden, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." More than this—we have the authority of God's own word—he could not give. " He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also with him given us all things ? " ²

*The
hypostatic
union*

" The Word was made flesh." The second Person of the most Blessed Trinity, God the Son, became man. Has God, then, ceased to be God ? Impossible ; for the changeless cannot change. Eternally and immutably God, he began at a moment of time to be man also. Becoming man, he lost nothing of his Divinity. Nor yet did he become richer by assuming humanity. Just as by creation nothing was added to God's infinite perfection, so God incarnate is not more perfect by reason of his manhood. When God creates it is the creature that is perfected. When God assumed a complete and real human nature, a body formed by the power of the Holy Ghost in the most pure womb of the Virgin Mary, a soul created and infused into it by the same divine power, he conferred an unspeakable dignity upon that humanity, because it began to exist, not as a human person, but as the human nature of God the Son ; but God himself remains unchanged.

The Person of Jesus Christ, then, is one : the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. In him subsist two natures, really distinct—the Divinity, uncreated, eternal, almighty ; and a human nature, created, temporal, mortal, passible. Of Christ we may say with equal truth that he is God and that he is man, that he is eternal and that he died, that he is our Creator and that he redeemed us with his blood. He who is eternally begotten of the Father is the same Person who was born at Bethlehem of the Virgin Mary. The Son of Mary is God ; Mary is the Mother of God.

Jesus Christ is God, and we adore him. We adore the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, and from our worship we exclude nothing of what is personally united to him. We adore his humanity, not because it is human, nor yet because it is perfect, but because it is his ; we adore his sacred body and soul because they are the body and soul of the Word made flesh. We adore his Sacred Heart

¹ 1 Cor. ii 7.

² Rom. viii 32.

because it is the human heart of God incarnate, because with every beat it speaks of the infinite love of God for mankind. We adore Christ because he is God, and adoring we revere all that belongs to his Person.

If the Word is man without prejudice to his Divinity, the man Jesus Christ is also God without detriment to his true humanity. The two natures, ineffably united in the one divine Person, remain distinct and physically unaltered by each other. That sacred body, formed from the virgin flesh of his blessed Mother, is a true human body similar to ours. The tiny fingers that clutched at Mary's hand were alive with the sense of touch; ears, eyes, and the rest functioned as our organs function. In him, as in us, shines the light of intelligence, and he acquired knowledge by the same means as we. He willed, even as we do, and his will is free. Human feelings, human affections and sentiments of joy and sorrow, human desires, all the natural yearnings of man were in him, for all these are good and pertain to the perfection of our nature.

His humanity, then, in all essential respects is the replica of our own. But words fail when we attempt to describe its perfection. *Christ full of grace and truth* "We saw his glory," says St John, "the glory as it were of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."¹ Full of truth because that human intelligence is the mind of God made man. The man Jesus Christ is humanly conscious from the first moment of his human life that he is God, and from that first moment with his human mind he contemplates the Godhead face to face. Not for one instant, even while his soul was sorrowful unto death, even during the awful desolation of Calvary, was the glorious light of God's countenance withdrawn from his human understanding. During the whole of his life on earth he enjoyed the beatific Vision, and in that Vision all his pain and sorrow—and these were greater than man can tell—appeared to him no longer as an evil, but as God's justice to be appeased, his infinite love to be manifested, his glory to be consummated by the salvation of human souls. In all his agony his soul rejoiced.

He is full of truth because he is the Word of God, Truth itself, who is come to bring truth to mankind; he is "the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world."² He speaks what he knows, he testifies what he has seen;³ his doctrine is the doctrine of the Father who has sent him.⁴ He alone has seen the Father, for he is in his bosom; he alone has revealed him to mankind.⁵ He is full of truth because as man he is the Judge to whom all judgement has been committed by the Father;⁶ he reads the heart, he knows what is in man,⁷ and will judge every man according to his works.

Jesus Christ, full of truth, is also full of grace. We, by grace,

¹ John i 14.

² John i 9.

³ John iii 11.

⁴ John viii 26-28.

⁵ John i 18.

⁶ John v 22.

⁷ John ii 25.

are the adopted sons of God. He is not the adopted son, for he is the Son eternally begotten of the Father ; the grace that is abundantly in him is his birthright as God's own Son. It is from him that all men receive grace ; and the fount of grace is itself overflowing.¹ If St Augustine,² speaking of the holiness of Mary, refused to have the word " sin " even mentioned in her regard, how much more is a like silence imposed when we revere the sanctity of the God-man. The human mind that contemplated the beauty of the Godhead could find no good in the creature save what was ordained to God's glory ; his human will, while supremely free, is yet infallibly and completely subject by grace and charity to the will of God, so that the two wills in him, the human and the divine, may, in a sense, be said to be one. The Holy One of God experienced, as we have said, all the affections, all the yearnings of man's nature, but he was never swayed by these ; he was subject to them only in so far as his perfect will allowed.

His virtues

He, indeed, is the Model of manhood, in whom every virtue after which we so laboriously strive is found in the highest degree of supernatural perfection. Let us pause in our summary description to admire the all-wise and loving Providence of the Father who, having destined men to be his adopted sons after the likeness of his own divine Son, in the charity and communication of the Holy Spirit, has willed to send that Son in human flesh, that in him, our brother—doubly our brother now, because a man like ourselves—we might see and copy in our lives what God desires that his human sons should be.

His sufferings

Dearer, perhaps, to our hearts, because they are our own familiar experience, are the human limitations of the Saviour ; for as the truth of his Divinity is no bar to the reality of his manhood, so the perfections of that manhood do not exclude human infirmities. Some of these, natural to man, yet also the penalty of sin, are so closely allied to sin itself that they could find no place in him who is full of grace and truth. Thus disordered desire, or " concupiscence " could not be in him, for his will held full sway over all his natural feelings, over every movement of his being ; in him flesh was completely subject to spirit. Christ is " full of truth " ; no error, no ignorance clouded the human mind of the Light of the world.

But to all the other penalties of the sin of our first parents he willed to be subject. He who came " to take away the sin of the world " assumed them to make use of them for our sake. They are the consequence of sin ; it is by their means that sin will be destroyed. Manual toil is consecrated, for he worked with his hands at the carpenter's bench. The poor are blessed, for poverty was his lot who possessed all the riches of the Godhead. He suffered hunger and thirst, and had no place to lay his head. He suffered mental anguish beyond what we are able to appreciate, because we cannot fully understand the perfection of his mind and will, a perfection which must have increased his every suffering. What must the

¹ John i 16.

² *De natura et gratia*, c. 4.

sight of sin have been to the Holy One of God! Nor was his suffering mitigated, as is ours so mercifully, by the limitations of his knowledge; the sorrows of the past—and still worse, those to come—were ever present to his mind. Of the bodily pain which he suffered during his Passion we need not speak—it is so often the subject of our meditation; suffice it to say that the exquisite sensibility of that soul must have added a refinement to every torture. Last of all, he willed to suffer death. He who was without sin, the immaculate Lamb of God, willed to suffer the penalty of sin for our sake; in the vivid words of St Paul: “Him that knew no sin, for us he hath made sin, that we might be made the justice of God in him.”¹

The deep significance of the human limitations of Jesus cannot be better described than in the inspired words of the Epistle to the Hebrews: “Because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner hath been partaker of the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the empire of death—that is to say, the devil. . . . Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God, that he might be a propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that wherein he himself hath suffered and been tempted, he is able to succour them also that are tempted.”²

One other aspect of the humanity of Christ we must yet consider *His power* before we can understand the function and the work of the divine Redeemer; it is his miraculous power. The human nature of Christ is the instrument—joined with the Godhead in unity of Person—whereby God gives grace to man and works those miracles which are at once the sign of his divine mission and the necessary means for the accomplishment of the Redemption. God, it is clear, is the sole source of the divine life; he alone can be the first and principal cause of grace. He alone, too, can neutralise by an exercise of almighty power the forces of nature of which he is the Author; miracles can have only God for their principal cause. Yet this power resides in the human nature of the Word Incarnate; it is there, communicated from the Godhead, and used by Christ at will. It is the man Christ who forgives sins by the power of the Divinity which is personally one with him. That same divine power, working through his human nature, healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, commanded the winds and the sea so that they obeyed him. By the same power our divine Saviour, as he hung bleeding upon the Cross, brought at length to the utmost limit of human endurance, his body reduced to that state of feebleness in which the soul could no longer naturally animate it, was yet able, had he so willed, to retain his life. Freely he laid it down, as freely as after three days he took it up again.³

These acts of our Saviour are human, and yet they are divine. *Theandric actions*

¹ 2 Cor. v 21.

² Heb. ii 14-18.

³ John x 18.

They are human because they proceed from a human nature ; they are divine by reason of the power that pervades them. Indeed, not only those actions of Christ which are the vehicles of God's miraculous power, but every act of the Word Incarnate is in a sense theandric, human and divine : human by reason of his human nature, divine by reason of the Person in whom that humanity subsists. They are the human actions of the second Person of the Blessed Trinity ; human and yet of infinite dignity, infinite as the dignity of God who performs them.

Christ, therefore, is truly and perfectly God, truly and perfectly man. He is man without losing anything of his Divinity, God without prejudice to his humanity. While the manhood assumed by God the Son is as perfect as manhood can be, yet Christ did not disdain to be subject to the weaknesses of our nature. Finally, side by side with the natural and supernatural perfections of his manhood, in which he presents himself as our Model, we discern others—his extraordinary knowledge and his miraculous power—which are bound up with the peculiar condition of one who is both God and man, and with his functions of Teacher and Redeemer of mankind.

Mediator

From this necessarily brief description of the adorable Person of our Redeemer, it will be seen that no name more aptly describes him than that of "Mediator." "One is the mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus."¹ By reason of his twofold nature the God-man is the natural Mediator between God and man, uniting as he does the Divinity and humanity in his own Person. He is the cornerstone who has made both one. With this thought in mind let us study the work of the Redeemer.

§ VII: THE WORK OF THE REDEEMER

As the Person of the Word Incarnate may be best described by saying that he is the natural Mediator between God and man, so also it is under the general office of Mediator that his functions in man's regard may most conveniently be grouped.

I

Christ as Teacher

The primitive revelation of divine truth which had been made to man through our first parents had been obscured by sin and error and in great part lost. God had, indeed, brought man once more to some knowledge of himself by a gradual manifestation to the chosen people. But the fulness of revelation came with Christ. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days hath spoken to us by his Son." "He is the light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world."³ Christ is Prophet and Teacher.

¹ 1 Tim. ii 5.

² Heb. i 1-2.

³ John i 9.

It is no mere human prophet who teaches us ; it is the Word himself, the personal Image of the Father, who comes to bring divine revelation. And what is the doctrine that he came to teach ? He came to reveal that Trinity of Persons whose divine life we are destined to share. " No man hath seen God at any time ; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." ¹ He revealed the Father, not only as his own Father by nature, but as the Father of us his adopted sons. He revealed his Holy Spirit, not only as the Spirit proceeding from Father and Son, but as the Spirit by whom, if we possess him, we are made the adopted sons of the Father, ² made conformable to the likeness of the Son, ³ filled with the supernatural love of God, which by that Spirit is poured forth in our hearts ; ⁴ as the Spirit in whom we are reborn to the divine life of grace. ⁵

The three divine Persons working—nay, dwelling—in the souls of men and raising them to a participation in their divine life—this is the compendium of Christianity. The whole teaching of which I am endeavouring in this essay to give some account is nothing else than the story of how man once received, then rejected, and finally, through the Incarnation of the Son of God, received once more those great and precious gifts by which he is made partaker of the divine nature. ⁶ To recognise this truth, that we by grace are made the adoptive sons of the Father, this is " eternal life." The Word of God, who alone has the words of eternal life, ⁷ has said it : " This is eternal life, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." ⁸

But it is not merely a speculative doctrine that Christ teaches us. He is not only the Truth, he is also the Way and the Life. If he teaches us that we have been raised to the dignity of sons of God, it is in order that we may live worthily of so high a vocation. Raised by grace to this noble destiny, man must achieve his salvation by his own works. The love of God that Christ demands of us is a practical love, a love which is shown by our observance of his commandments. He came not to destroy the moral code which had been given under the Old Testament, but to fulfil it, that is, to perfect it, to render it more detailed and more exacting. The standard of perfection at which Christ asks his disciples to aim is nothing short of divine : " Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." ⁹ And lest we should despair, lest we should think that such perfection could not be found in man, he shows us, by the example of his own life, what the life of a son of God should be. He is the model of every virtue, and he points to himself as the example which all Christians are to follow.

When we consider the authority with which he spoke, the un-

¹ John i 18.

² Rom. viii 15 ; Gal. iv 6.

³ Rom. viii 29.

⁴ Rom. v 5.

⁵ John iii 5.

⁶ 2 Pet. i 4.

⁷ John vi 69.

⁸ John xvii 3.

⁹ Matt. v 48.

wavering certainty—so far removed from the hesitancy of human teachers—which characterised his utterance, the simple yet sublime language in which he solves those problems which had ever exercised the human mind—deep problems concerning the origin, the nature, and the destiny of man—when we see that his doctrine is signed and sealed with the divine approbation through the working of miracles, when, finally, we contemplate the grandeur and the harmony of that doctrine itself, then we can well understand how the Samaritans could say, “We ourselves have heard him and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world,”¹ and the exclamation of those who had witnessed his wonderful works: “A great Prophet is risen up amongst us, and God has visited his people.”²

2

Christ as Redeemer

But it is in the work of Redemption strictly so called that the office of the Mediator is especially apparent. The doctrine that Christ taught, even the example of his life, might conceivably have been given to mankind by purely human agency. God might have used a man specially inspired, as were the prophets of old, as the bearer of his revelation. But the divine plan of Redemption, such as we have briefly described it above, could be fulfilled by no other than the God-man.

We have seen that Redemption involves two elements: that of satisfaction, whereby adequate atonement should be made for man's offence; and that of merit, whereby grace, which man had lost by sin, should be restored to him. Now such satisfaction, such merit, is completely beyond the power of a mere man. The atonement offered by a creature could have no proportion with the magnitude of an offence against God's infinite majesty. And how could man merit grace, when the very grace which he lacked was necessary that his acts might be meritorious? Only the God-man could offer infinite satisfaction; only the God-man, who, as the only-begotten of the Father, is full of grace by right of his divine Sonship, could gain merit sufficient, and more than sufficient, for the whole human race.

Only the God-man could redeem us. But it is clear from what we have said of the adorable Person of our Redeemer that his merest act would have sufficed. Every human act of Christ during his life on earth was the act of a created, finite nature, and as such, could be, and was, an act of homage to God the Creator of all. But each of those acts was also, as we have seen, the act of God; for the Person of Christ is one, the second Person of the most Holy Trinity. It is God who is born of the Virgin Mary, God who is subject to his human parents at Nazareth, who preaches divine truth in human words, is rejected, suffers, and dies upon the Cross. Each of these

¹ John iv 42.² Luke vii 16.

acts, therefore, is human and yet, because it is the act of a divine Person, is of infinite, divine value. A sigh, a tear of the divine Child would have been sufficient to redeem the world. But the infinite Love of God—we have seen it again and again—is not content with what is merely sufficient. His infinite Wisdom had devised a nobler plan. His infinite Mercy had provided for man's every need.

There are many ways in which we can show our love for our fellow-men, but there is one proof, the greatest of all, which even the most sceptical cannot gainsay; it is to die for another. Christ, who came to show by his human acts how great is the love of God for men, chose to give this supreme proof—to lay down his life for his friends. He gave his life "a redemption for many."¹

Suffering and death, but for sin, would never have afflicted mankind. These evils, the punishment of sin, were to play a central part in the all-wise plan of Redemption. Our Redeemer would use the very penalty of sin as the means by which to destroy it. Pain and sorrow would be sublimated by the pain and sorrow of Christ, and would become the means of man's perfection for all who unite them with his.

The need of man was for an all-sufficient sacrifice. Man needs to express by this external act his homage to God, his will to atone for sin, his thanksgiving for divine benefits, his petition for divine assistance. But how could sinful man offer a sacrifice that would be acceptable in the sight of God? What victim could he offer that would be worthy of God's infinite majesty? Christ would offer an infinite sacrifice by his Passion and Death on the Cross.

For these reasons, then—and for others which Christian piety has discerned—Christ, who might have redeemed us with a prayer, willed to redeem us by his Passion and Death. Calvary is the throne of the King of Love, the school of Pain and Sorrow, the scene of the great Sacrifice. Freely laying down his life, our High Priest offered the all-sufficient sacrifice, and the Victim is none other than himself. Greater homage God himself could not demand, more worthy thanksgiving God could not receive, fuller atonement for sin, more prevailing petition could not be offered than the infinite Sacrifice of Calvary. By that Sacrifice our Redeemer blotted out the handwriting of the decree that was written against us,² and merited once more for us all the grace that Adam had lost. By his death on Calvary he accomplished the Redemption; by his death he consummated the supreme act of his Eternal Priesthood.

3

Christ, our Teacher, our Priest and Redeemer, is also our King. *Christ as King* He is King by reason of his eternal Divinity; but he is King also as *King* man. Assuming a human nature, the Word Incarnate received from

¹ Matt. xx 28.² Col. ii 14.

the Godhead the royal dignity as the rightful attribute of his humanity. The angels are commanded to adore him, the winds and the sea obey him, every creature does him homage, because he is the Word Incarnate.

But he is King of men by a special title, for we are his subjects by right of conquest. Under the domination of Satan, reduced to the servitude of sin from that fatal moment in which Adam sinned, involving us all in his ruin, we have been freed by Christ from captivity, and we are now justly subject to his salutary rule. "As King," says St Augustine, "he fought for us, as Priest he offered himself for us. . . . He is our King, he is our Priest, in him let us rejoice." ¹

The Kingship of Christ, spiritual in character, is exercised "by truth, by justice, and above all, by charity." ² By truth he subjects the minds of all men to himself, for all must believe by faith in his word. By justice he will punish in the world to come all those who have refused in this life to submit to his dominion. By charity, by love, by his grace, he draws all hearts to himself, bringing them "mightily and sweetly" ³ to union with God.

Upon Christ, therefore, Mediator, Prophet, Priest, and King, all things converge. To him all creatures, and in a special way all men, are subject, and he, uniting in his own Person humanity—which is itself a compendium of all created perfection—with the Divinity, as King and Priest offers all creatures to his Father. "All things," says St Paul, "are put under him . . . and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then the Son also himself shall be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." ⁴

4

*Head of his
Mystical
Body*

There remains, finally, to be considered what is in many respects the most important of all the functions of Christ the Mediator. It consists in this, that he is the Head of his Mystical Body.

Christ has made full satisfaction for the sins of mankind; he has merited abundant grace for us all. But that atonement, that merit, that grace, is not ours—it is his. The atonement of Christ can become our atonement, his merits our merits, his grace our grace, only in so far as we become in some manner one with him. This principle of solidarity we have seen verified in the case of original sin. We did not commit original sin; yet because we receive our nature from Adam, in that sense being one with him, we inherit a sinful nature. It is in virtue of a similar solidarity with Christ, the second Adam, that mankind partakes of the fruits of the Redemption.

As Adam was in a sense the whole human race, being the fountain-head of our human nature, so Christ is mystically, but really, one

¹ Comment. on Ps. cxlix.

² Pope Leo XIII, Encycl. *Annum Sacrum*.

³ Wisd. viii 1.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv 28.

with all who partake of his grace. "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive."¹ "As by the offence of one man, unto all men to condemnation, so also by the justice of one, unto all men to justification of life."²

Christ having died for our sins, rose again for our justification.³ Death has no longer any power over him; ⁴ he is the living, glorious Christ. It is the living, glorious Christ of whose "fulness we have all received"; ⁵ he is the Head, from whom the divine life of grace flows into all the members of his mystical body.

But of that mystical body we must treat apart in a special section.

§ VIII: THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

I

It is not uncommon to give the name of "body" to a number of persons who are banded together under an authority for a particular purpose; and if, when we speak of Christians as a "body," we had in mind nothing more than the ordinary meaning of the term—namely, that of a properly organised society—then it would be scarcely necessary to insist especially upon the propriety of such an expression, since it may be applied with equal justice to any group, under whatever authority and for whatever purpose it may be formed.

*Meaning of
the
expression*

But when Christians are called "the body of Christ," the term is used in a special sense, to indicate a unity far more intimate, far more real than that which it commonly designates. The bond that unites the members of any human society can never be other than external. Each member lives his own life, and the only sense in which he can be said to be one with his fellow-members is that, in common with them, he desires the same end and is subject to the same authority. The bond which unites the members of the mystical body of Christ is an internal, a vital bond; the members of Christ are one with Christ—and with each other—in the sense that each lives the same supernatural life of grace which he receives from the Head of the body, the living Christ. As in the body of man it is from the head, from the nerve-centres, that his vital activity is set in motion, so in the mystical body of Christ it is from the Head that every member receives that grace by which he lives the divine life.

This mystical union of the redeemed, of which St Paul so often speaks under the symbol of a body, is taught by Christ himself under a slightly different figure. He is the vine and we are the branches: "he that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing."⁶ The essential meaning is the same; the member that is cut off from the rest of the body is dead, inactive; the branch that is cut off from the stem of the

¹ 1 Cor. xv 22.

⁴ Rom. vi 9.

² Rom. v 18.

⁵ John i 16.

³ Rom. iv 25.

⁶ John xv 5.

vine can bear no fruit because it can no longer receive the sap that gives it life. It is in this sense that St Paul speaks of the faithful as being "grafted in Christ" as branches in an olive-tree.¹

The necessity of a real union with Christ, if we are to partake of his grace, becomes apparent also if we consider those passages of the teaching of Christ and his Apostles in which our reception of grace is described as "regeneration," as a new birth. It is by reason of our birth "in Adam" that we inherit original sin; it is by re-birth, regeneration in Christ, that we are to receive grace. And just as natural descent from Adam, or, if we may say so, "incorporation into Adam," is the indispensable condition of our receiving human nature with its dread heritage of sin, so incorporation into Christ is the necessary means whereby we may be re-born and made partakers of the divine nature.

2

*Life of the
mystical
body*

It will be convenient here, before we proceed to study further the nature of Christ's mystical body, to examine more closely the life which animates it. Briefly, the life which we receive in virtue of our incorporation into Christ is none other than a participation in the life of God, which, in its inceptive state during our earthly pilgrimage, is sanctifying grace; in its perfect and consummated state, is the glory of the Beatific Vision.

*Sanctifying
grace and
virtues*

We have had occasion already, in describing the original state of our first parents, to explain that sanctifying (or habitual) grace is a spiritual quality ennobling the soul, elevating man's nature to a new order of being, making him the adoptive son of God and heir to eternal life. It has been said also that this grace is accompanied by other supernatural habits—the infused virtues—which perfect and elevate the natural faculties of man, enabling him to perform supernatural acts of virtue, proportionate to the reward which he is to merit. By the virtue of faith he is enabled to give a supernatural assent to the truths of God's revelation, by hope to place full confidence in the divine assistance, and by charity to love God as his sovereign good, to whom, as his supreme end, his whole life is to be directed. In addition to these "theological" virtues, the soul is endowed with infused moral virtues and other gifts perfecting it in the supernatural order.

Here I should like to insist upon two very important points. The first is that these gifts, although they perfect and bring about a real change in man's nature and faculties, do not destroy or replace them. It is an axiom, which should never be lost sight of, that "grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it." Man must cooperate by his own acts in the work of his salvation. Raised by these gifts to the supernatural order, he remains in all the essentials

¹ Rom. xi 23.

of his nature unchanged. He lives a supernatural, a divine life ; but he lives that life with his natural powers elevated by grace and the supernatural virtues. The act of faith, the act of love is supernatural, and meritorious of a supernatural reward ; but that act of faith, that act of love is impossible without the act of intellect or of will which is, so to speak, its substratum. It would be a pernicious error to suppose that God's supernatural operation in the soul supersedes man's natural activities. Those natural powers, although of themselves they have no proportion with man's supernatural end, are nevertheless in themselves good, and, in spite of original sin, intrinsically unimpaired, and their exercise is necessary for salvation even as, on the other hand, is the assistance of God's grace.

The second point to which I would draw special attention is that, *Actual grace* since man's end is a supernatural one, the whole work of man's salvation must begin and end with the grace of God. If he had been left in his purely natural state, it is clear that, given his natural faculties, given God's providential co-operation—without which no creature can exist or act—man would have been able by the use of those powers, without any further special aid from God, to achieve his salvation. But since his end is one which surpasses his natural powers, therefore his motion towards that end must have its first impulse from the supernatural grace of God. Hence the first thought, the first aspiration of the will towards God in the supernatural order, must be the effect of grace.

In addition, therefore, to the permanent gifts already described, man needs to receive from God a supernatural illumination of the mind, a supernatural inspiration of the will, in order that he may freely turn to God, the source of his sanctification. This transient enlightenment and inspiration is called actual grace. But here, too, is verified the same principle of co-operation. Invited by God to become his adoptive son, man can refuse to answer the call ; urged to repentance, he can oppose to grace the resistance of his will.

Man's salvation, then, is in his own hands, and yet it is completely *Predestination* in the hands of God. Eternally God has prepared the gifts of grace ^{tion} that will call all men to himself, that will assist them in times of stress and temptation ; for all he has prepared the grace and the virtues by which they may merit their supernatural reward. Some will answer the call, others will reject it. Those who have answered, by God's grace, truly merit their reward ; but they owe it to God, who has called them that they might hear. Not only the call, but also man's answer to the call, is God's gift ; man has nothing that he has not received from God's bounty ; his very merits are the gift of God. And what of those who reject the call ? Their failure is their own, in that, when they might, had they so willed, have corresponded with grace, they refused to do their part. In this free consent of the just to God's grace, in this wilful rejection of God's call on the part of the impious, lies the mystery of Predestination. While leaving to its

proper place a full treatment of this subject, let me say only this : man's malice is but too apparent ; of God's abundant mercy we have had ample proof. The mystery, therefore, may bewilder, but it cannot appal us.

Sin

The life of grace—in this not unlike the natural life of man—becomes intensified by the activity of him who lives it. By good works done in the state of grace the members of the mystical body of Christ increase that grace within themselves, becoming more and more closely united with God by charity, partaking more and more fully of the divine life. But if this be the effect of good works, what will be the effect of mortal sin ? By that dread act the son of God rebels against his Father ; he sets his heart upon a creature in the place of God. By sin he loses the virtue of charity, and with charity are lost grace and the other supernatural virtues which depend upon charity for their being. There remain only—unless the unhappy sinner has rejected his belief in God's word or his trust in God's mercy—the supernatural habits of faith and hope, two slender strands which still hold him to the body of Christ, of which, however, now he is but a withered member. Although still able by his natural powers to do some good works, yet he cannot by these merit eternal life, for he has lost sanctifying grace, which gave his works their supernatural value.

Forgiveness of sin

This being the effect of mortal sin, it is clear that the forgiveness of sins, or justification, involves a real change in the soul. When God forgives sin he does more than merely overlook man's past offences ; he gives him life once more. Moving him by actual grace to repentance of his sin, he enriches his soul again with sanctifying grace and the virtues, reinstating him in his dignity as the son of God, generously restoring to him every gift that he had lost.

Soul of the mystical body

The life of the body of Christ is sanctifying grace together with the supernatural gifts which accompany it ; the head of the body is Christ, from whom that life is communicated to all its members. But a living body has a soul, and the soul of the mystical body is none other than the Holy Ghost. It is through the Holy Spirit that the charity of God is poured out in our hearts ; it is because we possess the Spirit of his Son that we are able to call God our Father ; it is through the work of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us that we are made in the likeness of the Son. Dwelling in the souls of each of the just, the Holy Ghost pervades with his life-giving presence the whole of the mystical body. He is the Spirit of life,¹ and the Church proclaims her belief in this truth daily as she recites the Creed : " I believe . . . in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life."

¹ Rom. viii 2.

St Paul, in speaking of the mystical body of Christ, which is the *Merit* Church, uses a very significant expression. He says that it is "the fulness" of Christ.¹ The mystical Christ, then, is the complement, the prolongation of the physical Christ, of the Word Incarnate. To the physical Christ nothing can be added, but the mystical Christ is in a state of growth, of gradual development. It is to grow until it has reached "the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ."² And, just as the physical body grows by its own life and activity, so the mystical body of Christ will develop through the works of its members performed under the vital influence of Christ the Head.

The merits, the satisfaction of Christ are superabundant, and to them nothing is wanting. And yet something is lacking to the accomplishment of the Redemption. There is lacking the appropriation by each member of the human race of the merits which Christ has gained for all. Incorporated into Christ, living his life, as he lives the life of the Father, we make those merits our own. They are his merits and they are ours—ours because we are one with him from whom we receive our supernatural life. Our works are meritorious and have satisfactory value, but that merit, that satisfaction adds nothing to the merits and atonement of Christ; for the life of the member is not distinct from the life of the head. In this sense, then, we "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ,"³ that by becoming members of his body we make his life our own, and by our good works multiply our merits and intensify in ourselves the life of grace.

But it is not only ourselves that we perfect by our good works. *The* Precisely because we are not isolated units but members of a body, *communion of saints* our actions have their repercussion upon the other members of that body. Each member of the body of Christ takes his part in circulating the divine life among the other members. We are able to help one another by our prayers and merits. In this manner we can assist one another on earth; the saints in heaven—and particularly the blessed Mother of God—can assist us; and both the saints and we are able to help the souls in purgatory. Not only are we members of Christ, but, in the words of St Paul, we are "members one of another."⁴ This inter-communication of prayers and merits is known as "the communion of saints," and it is upon this doctrine that rests the Catholic practice of praying to the angels and saints, and of interceding for the souls of the faithful dead.

After these general considerations concerning the mystical body of Christ it remains now to study the Church more particularly in her various stages.

¹ Eph. i 22-23.

³ Col. i 24.

² Eph. iv 13.

⁴ Rom. xii 5.

§ IX: THE CHURCH ON EARTH

*Visibility of
the Church*

SINCE the Church on earth is the "fulness of Christ," the prolongation on earth of the Word Incarnate, we should expect to find verified in her that combination of the human and the divine, the visible and the invisible, which is the proper note of the Incarnation. It is peculiar to the mixed nature of man that he perceives the things of the intellect through the medium of the senses, the things of the spirit through things material, the invisible things of God through the things that are made. Hence God in his loving wisdom sent his Son in human flesh, that through him we might be brought to the knowledge and love of the invisible God. This incarnational or sacramental dispensation he has willed to continue to the end of time, and it is in the Church of Christ that it is embodied.

As it is of the essence of man to be body and soul, as in Christ the visible human nature and the invisible Divinity were personally and indissolubly united, so in the Church of Christ there is the human and the divine, the visible and the invisible. It is of the essence of the Church that her members live by the invisible, divine life of grace. It is equally essential to her that her members are visibly united by external bonds, subject to the same visible authority. The same conclusion—that the Church is essentially visible and invisible—follows from the general considerations that we have made concerning the mystical body of Christ. We are not isolated in the work of our salvation; our redemption is social and organic in character. If we human beings are united with Christ and with each other in receiving the fruits of the redemption, then we form a visible society; for it is natural to men to be grouped together by visible means, to be governed by a visible authority. God deals with men according to their nature; and a society among men is naturally visible and external.

*Hierarchical
constitution*

What we might have been led to expect is actually the case. Christ willed that his mystical body on earth should be a visible society, governed by a visible head, its members united by visible links of communion. He, the invisible Head, would be represented on earth by a visible head, Peter—and his successors—whom he himself appointed. Subject to the head, but divinely appointed too, and endowed with real authority over the members of his body, are the Apostles—and their successors, the hierarchy of bishops, pastors of the flock of Christ. As he had been sent by the Father, so he sent these to continue the work of salvation—nay, to continue on earth his very self, for to hear them is to hear him, to despise them is to despise him. Hence the inevitable—and vital—consequence: to be a member of that living organism which we have described, to belong to the mystical body of Christ, is nothing else than to be a member of the visible Church on earth which Christ has founded. As it is impossible for the branch to live which is not

united to the stem, so outside the body of Christ, outside the Church which he has founded, there can be no salvation.¹

That the Church of Christ is One none can doubt who has understood the organic nature of the body of Christ. It is as essential to the Church to be one as it is essential to her to be the body of Christ. But since she is visible, that unity is not only a unity of life—which is invisible—but a visible unity consisting in subjection to the same visible authority, in a common faith in the teaching of that visible Church, in a common worship, manifested in the use of the same external rites instituted by Christ.

*One, holy,
Catholic,
apostolic*

The Church, because she is the body of Christ, is holy; holy because she lives by the divine life which she receives from her Head; holy because union with Christ and with God is the essence of her being; holy because apart from her there is no holiness.

Because all who are members of Christ's body are the children of God, because all are one in Christ, so that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free,"² therefore the Church is Catholic or Universal, with the mission to teach all nations, to preach the Gospel to every creature.

"Built upon the foundation of the Apostles,"³ fulfilling the mission entrusted to the Apostles, her members recognising as their head the Pope, the successor of St Peter, Prince of the Apostles, the Church is Apostolic.

The Church which, by reason of the twofold element in her—the human and the divine, the visible and the invisible—continues the person of the God-man, continues also the work of the Redeemer. The Church fulfils the functions of Christ as Teacher, Priest, Head, and King.

I

The revelation brought to man by Jesus Christ is definitive. "Last of all he hath spoken to us by his Son."⁴ To the truths taught by Christ nothing new is to be added. It is the office of the Church, therefore, in fulfilling Christ's function as teacher, not to make new revelations, but to guard from error the deposit of faith, and authentically, authoritatively to proclaim and interpret the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "Going therefore, teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ;

*Teaching
Authority of
the Church*

¹ To some that Church has not been made known, to others she has been made known, but inculpably they have not recognised her for what she is. In their case we may be sure that God will take account of their good faith, of their sincere desire to please God, and will make it so that they receive grace from the life-giving Head. He will take the will for the deed, and those who are in inculpable error will be united "by desire," though not in fact, to the visible Church of Christ.

² Gal. iii 26-28.

³ Eph. ii 20.

⁴ Heb. i 2.

and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." ¹

The teaching authority of a visible society resides, not in its individual members, but in its visible head. The subject of that authority, therefore, is first the visible head of the Church, the Pope, and secondly the hierarchy of bishops under that head and considered as forming one with him. The teaching of the Church is to be accepted by her members, not as a matter for discussion, but as the word of God himself; for through that living voice it is Christ himself who speaks. To the insistent questionings of man: Whence do I come; what is my nature; whither do I go? the Church returns unhesitating and infallible answer. Of the law of God, concerning which man is so often in doubt, the Church is the authentic interpreter, the unequivocal teacher. It is as necessary that she should be infallible in her teaching as it is impossible that Christ himself, the Word of God, should err; for the Church is none other than Christ the Prophet, living and teaching in his mystical body.

2

*Priesthood in
the Church*

The sacrifice of Calvary, by which Christ our Priest consummated the work of the Redemption, is all-sufficient, and no further sacrifice can be needed. Is the religion of Christ then—alone of all religions—to have no external rite, whereby its adherents may daily express to God their worship and their thanksgiving? Are the members of Christ to be content with the mere memory of a sacrifice that was offered long ago? The loving Wisdom of God has provided also for this need. No other sacrifice can be pleasing in God's sight when our High Priest has offered himself, the immaculate Victim. Then that same Sacrifice will be continued to the end of time. The Church, the mystical body of Christ, continues the function of his eternal Priesthood.

The night before he suffered, our Redeemer, as he sat at table with his Apostles, took bread and broke it, saying: "This is my Body"; and then, taking wine, he said: "This is my Blood. . . . Do this in commemoration of me." By virtue of the words of Christ, the bread, though to all appearances still bread, was not bread but his Sacred Body; the wine, though to the senses it appeared to be wine, was his most Precious Blood. In this manner Christ instituted the Sacrifice of the New Law, the Eucharistic Sacrifice, in which the true Body and Blood of Christ, under the appearances of bread and wine, are offered to God for the remission of sins. It is more than a mere commemoration of the sacrifice of Calvary; it is that sacrifice itself. The Victim is none other than Christ, really, though sacramentally, present. The Priest is Christ, though he

¹ Matt. xxviii 19-20.

offers now in his mystical body, through the ministry of his priests, who from him have the power to work the eucharistic miracle. The Sacrifice of the Mass differs from that of Calvary solely in the manner of offering.

Daily, therefore, ascend to God the infinite honour and thanksgiving that are due to him; daily to each of the members of the mystical body, who with Christ and in Christ offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice, are applied the fruits of the Redemption, the inexhaustible merits and atonement of Christ our Saviour. As the sacrifice of Calvary was the supreme act of the life of Christ on earth, so the Mass is the supreme act of worship in the Church. In the Eucharist, where our Redeemer is really present under the sacramental veils, the whole life of Christians must ever be centred.

In the sacrifice of Calvary is the whole efficacy of the Redemption. Hence it is around the Eucharistic Sacrifice that we must group all those external rites which Christ has instituted as the means of our sanctification.

3

Fulfilling on earth the function of Christ the Teacher and of Christ the Priest, the Church fulfils also his function of life-giving Head by the administration of the Sacraments. God might, had he so willed, have distributed invisibly the grace which Christ had merited for mankind; he might have decreed to bestow the fruits of the Redemption directly and immediately in answer to man's prayer. But it was in keeping with the nature of man, with the incarnational dispensation of which we have spoken, that the invisible grace of God in the soul should be signified—and produced—by visible, external rites. These external rites, seven in number, instituted by Christ to signify and to produce grace, are the Sacraments. God the Son, as we have seen, used his humanity, personally united with him, as the instrument of grace. The Sacraments are the instruments which Christ himself, through human ministry, uses to communicate the divine life to the members of his mystical body.

Most noble among them all is the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which contains Christ himself, the author of grace. Really present as the Victim of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, he invites all men to partake of the Victim. To eat the Body of Christ, to drink his Blood under the sacramental species—this is the principal means of our incorporation into Christ. "He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me."¹ We are solemnly warned that unless we partake of this Sacrament, we shall not have life in us.² As all grace flows from Christ the Head, as it is by the sacrifice of Calvary that we are redeemed, so does the efficacy of all the Sacraments depend

¹ John vi 58.

² John vi 54.

upon their essential relation to the Eucharist, in which is Christ the source of all sanctification. "From this sacrament as from a fountain is derived the goodness and the perfection of all the other sacraments."¹

But before we can eat of the food of life we must be born, before we can be nourished with the food of the strong we must be strengthened. Washed in the waters of *Baptism* we are cleansed from original sin and, dying to the old Adam, are re-born to the new, incorporated already into the mystical body of Christ by the rite of regeneration, which destines us to eat of the living bread. Anointed with the oil of *Confirmation* we are strengthened in faith, that we may be valiant witnesses to the truth of Christ's teaching, and be prepared to suffer and, if necessary, even to die in its defence. But such is human weakness that even though we have been nourished with the heavenly food of the *Eucharist*, we may yet fall away and offend God grievously. For this calamity Christ has provided a remedy in the Sacrament of *Penance*. He has given to his priests the power to forgive sin. Humble and contrite confession, with the will on our part to make satisfaction, together with the sacramental absolution of the priest—these are the elements of the sacrament by which Christ restores the life that we have lost. The contract of *Matrimony*, blessed already by God in the very beginning, is now raised by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament, giving grace to those who are to be parents of more members of Christ's body. So holy is this union that it is compared by St Paul to the union between Christ and his Church. When death is imminent, and our powers are weakened by disease, the grace of God is at hand in the Sacrament of *Extreme Unction*, to destroy the remnants of sin that are still in us, to strengthen us against the final efforts of Satan, and to prepare us for our final journey to God. More evidently connected with the Eucharist and with the Priesthood of Christ is the Sacrament of *Holy Order*, by which Christ has provided for the continuation in some chosen men of the power of his Priesthood. At their word the bread and the wine become the Body and Blood of Christ; by their power the bonds of sin are loosed or retained in the members of his mystical body. To the bishops the priesthood is given in its fulness, that, subject to the successor of St Peter, they may rule the flock of Christ and, by communicating to others the powers of the priesthood, provide unfailling succession of ministers in the Church of God.

These are the means by which Christ, the invisible Head, communicates his life to his visible members. Man is sanctified by the means most adapted to his nature. A material thing, a visible rite, is used by Christ to produce in man a spiritual, invisible effect, and the visible Church lives by the invisible life of God.

¹ Cat. Council of Trent, Part II, ch. iv, n. 48.

The Church, then, is the Kingdom of Christ on earth. Here Christ reigns visibly as King over the minds of men; to subject one's mind to the Church by faith is to acknowledge the reign of Christ, King of Truth. Here, too, the King of Love rules the hearts of men by the grace which, by visible means and through his human ministers, he communicates to all the members of his body. The Pope, the head of the Church, exercising his boundless spiritual jurisdiction over all the faithful, is the earthly representative of Christ the King. *The kingdom of Christ on earth*

To the King of Truth and of Love many have not submitted, perhaps will never submit. But over these also Christ must reign, for no man can withdraw himself from his universal dominion. Those who resist the attractions of his grace will not escape the punishment of his justice, when the day comes in which he will offer all things to his Father.

It is time now to consider the Kingdom of Christ in its consummation.

§ X: CONSUMMATION

RESTORED by the grace of Christ to the condition of sons of God, we remain none the less subject to those ills which are the penalty of original sin. The sting of concupiscence reminds us that, sons of God though we be, we are still the children of Adam. Pain and suffering are our daily lot in this life, though we are destined to a joy of which no man can tell. And before that joy can be ours all must suffer the penalty of death. *Death*

But while our Redeemer has not freed us from these evils, yet he has transformed them. The rebellion of the senses has no terrors for the Christian who is strong in the grace of Christ; for in overcoming temptation by the help of God, which is never lacking, he wins a more glorious crown. Suffering and death, since Christ has suffered and died, have taken on a new meaning. Uniting his suffering and his death with the Passion and Death of Christ, the Christian appropriates the atonement of the Saviour and becomes more and more formed to his likeness; like St Paul he glories in his tribulations for Christ's body, which is the Church.

At length, then, the body, worn out with age or disease, is unable any longer to co-operate with the soul in its vital functions; and the immortal soul departs from it, leaving it to crumble in the dust. *Particular judgement* The time of trial, the time during which, by struggling with temptation and corresponding with God's grace, we may store up merit of eternal life, finishes with death. At the moment of dissolution man has already made his final and irrevocable decision; after death there is no repentance. He has chosen as his sovereign good either God

or the creature. If the former, then he is in the state of grace, and he has merited his eternal reward. If the latter, then he is in the state of sin, supernaturally dead, and he can have no part in the inheritance of the sons of God. In that moment the disembodied soul is judged; its eternal doom is pronounced.

Hell

Upon the unhappy fate of the lost soul there is little need to dwell. The heart falters at the thought of the immortal soul, made for God and unable to find contentment save in him, doomed to live for all eternity and to yearn for God with a gnawing hunger that can never be appeased. Then at length the emptiness of creatures becomes apparent, when the soul, cut off from God for ever, turns for solace to them and to itself, only to be cast back, still unsatisfied, upon the God whose countenance is eternally withdrawn. In the creatures where man had expected to find satisfaction he will find only his torment, and especially the torment of an ever-consuming, yet never-destroying fire. Hitherto we have contemplated the infinite love and mercy of God. Of his justice, let it suffice to say that it is infinite too; and we adore it in that dread sentence: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire."¹

Purgatory

We turn willingly to consider the lot of those who die in peace with God. Among these will be some who in God's sight are entirely guiltless, or, if they offended him, have completely atoned. There is nothing to delay their eternal reward. Others there will be who, by reason of venial sins, or of atonement due to mortal sins whose guilt has been forgiven, have yet to make full satisfaction to God's justice. These souls must undergo after death a period of suffering in purgatory, until the last remnants of sin have been removed which keep them from their Father's loving embrace.

Heaven

Of the reward of the blessed one would be happy to write. But if St Paul, who was rapt to the third heaven, tells us that "eye hath not seen nor ear heard what God hath prepared for them that love him,"² then it were folly for the writer to attempt to describe it. We must be content with what little God has revealed. In heaven the life of grace blossoms into the life of glory. Each soul, in proportion to its merits, receives a new supernatural gift—the light of glory—adapting and strengthening it for the vision of God. And then at last they look upon God's face. It is no longer a feeble image of God that the human mind conceives; it is God who immediately and directly shows himself to the soul. "We shall see him as he is." Faith has given way to vision, darkness to the brilliance of the mid-day sun; and the mind is not dazzled, but illuminated, by the brightness. The life of God in the Trinity of Persons is no longer a mystery, for in that life the blessed have, and now fully enjoy, their share. The sons of God have entered into their inheritance.

The human mind, in its search after truth, has now reached its goal, for it sees all truth in Truth itself. Man's will has ceased to

¹ Matt. xxv 41.

² I Cor. ii 9; cf. Isa. lxiv 4.

desire the good, for he is in complete and eternal possession of the Supreme Good, apart from whom nothing can be desired. For him now, as for God eternally, to will is not to desire, but to love, and in that love to find his eternal delight. Faith and hope are no more; there remains only charity, the greatest of all. As God infinitely surpasses the creature, so does the joy of heaven infinitely surpass the most exquisite joy of earth. The happiness of the blessed is none other than the happiness of God; for, in what else is God happy but in the eternal contemplation of his infinite Self?

This visible world will have an end. The moment appointed by God will come in which the earth and the heavens will be destroyed, and all men who are then living will pass through the gates of death to immortality. The heavens and the earth will be renewed, and then the Saviour will make all men sharers in his triumph over death. The bodies of all who have died, from Adam to the last child who is born, will rise again from the dust to partake of the eternal lot of the soul. The body that has been the soul's partner in sin will rise again to share in its everlasting torment. The body that has worked with the soul for sanctification will rise to share in its glory. The glorious body, perfectly subject to the soul in all its actions, will now no longer suffer pain; completely subject to the commands of the spirit, it will annihilate space by the agility of its movements; and if, even on earth, the happiness of the soul can transform even the most homely human countenance, then the glorious body will shine with light and be resplendent with a supernatural beauty, as it reflects the perfect bliss of the soul.

Then the Son of Man will come "with much power and majesty."¹ The triumphant Redeemer will come at last to judge all mankind. The doom that has been pronounced upon each at the moment of death will then be publicly proclaimed, and, in the gathering of all mankind before the judgement-seat of Christ, the love, the mercy, and the justice of God will receive solemn vindication. Then all who have wilfully rejected the grace of the Redeemer will be cut off for ever from his body, and Christ will present the "glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing . . . holy and without blemish,"² to his Eternal Father.

* * * * *

I began this account with the names of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Three who are ineffably One.

Man's life is a search after unity. His mind is not content until he has reduced to an harmonious unity the multiple phenomena of experience. That unity he will find, but only in God, the first Cause of all. Men have dreamed of unity among themselves. They have lamented the discord of wills which sets man against man,

¹ Matt. xxiv 30.

² Eph. v 27.

family against family, nation against nation. The unity which will combine all men into one great family is also to be accomplished ; but only in God. Sin is the origin of discord ; the bond of perfection is charity. The unity which mankind is destined to achieve is none other than that which unites the three Persons of the Godhead—the unity of one divine life in which all men share under Christ the Head of his body. That this unity may be consummated is the last prayer of Christ to his Eternal Father :¹

“ All my things are thine, and thine are mine ; and I am glorified in them. And now I am not in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them in my name whom thou hast given me ; that they may be one as we also are. . . . And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me. That they all may be one, as thou Father in me and I in thee ; that they also may be one in us. . . . And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given to them, that they may be one as we also are one ; I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.”

G. D. SMITH.

¹ John xvii 10-26.

III

THE ONE GOD

§ I: GOD THE ONE SUBSISTENT BEING

THE supreme fact naturally known to man is that the ultimate reality is a self-subsistent Being. We realise that there is some reality which is altogether uncaused, which exists of itself, having and requiring no antecedent whatsoever. The ultimate being has not *become* itself, or received existence as an event, it simply *is*, and never has been otherwise. It is in every respect independent of all else, because it embodies in itself all the fulness of which being is capable. That is to say, its existence is not an activity distinct from the ultimate being, but such being intrinsically involves its existence in its very nature. Its "nature" and "existence" are one single eternal fact. In all other things we are able to distinguish their particular natures from the fact of their existence, but in the original being there can be no such composition of distinct principles, for all "composition" implies some power still more ultimate which provides the explanation of the compounding. The question of causal origin cannot possibly arise when once the meaning of ultimate subsistence is understood. This supreme Being, eternally self-sufficient, whose nature is *to be*, we call God.¹

In contrast to this undifferentiated oneness essential to ultimate being, the universe and the minds of men are composite, for in them essence and existence are not one, but are two distinct (though inseparable) principles forming a composite unity as distinct from a simple unity. The distinction between "essence" and "existence" in the universe (whether considered in part or whole) is no invention of the human mind, but, like all other real distinctions, is objective in things themselves. Observation makes us aware that things not only have existence, but over and above existence they have each also a distinct fabric of a given kind which we call their nature or essence. Existence tells us *that* a thing is, while knowledge of its essence tells us *what* a thing is.

To know *that* a thing exists is very different from knowing *what* particular nature it consists in. Consequently we always think of things and persons as *possessing* existence rather than as constituting it. Their existence is in no sense included in the definition of their essences: it is therefore a principle or activity distinguishable from

¹ Cf. the declaration of Jehovah to Moses: "I am Who am. . . . Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: He who is hath sent me to you" (Ex. iii 14).

their qualitative nature as such. Conversely, the nature of things is not included in or postulated by the definition or meaning of existence.

So clear is the distinction between the essences of things and the fact that they exist, that, even if we wished, we could not avoid making it. Indeed we cannot combine the different meanings of "essence" and "existence" in a single idea, inasmuch as our concepts are derived from composite being. This shows that we cannot *positively* conceive "subsistent being." Our very ability positively to conceive the universe is a sign to us of its non-subsistent character. Thus all material and spiritual reality present in the universe of direct experience, being composite, is dependent for its composition of essence and existence upon a more ultimate being; it is a product whose existence is conferred upon it by a superior cause. Such natural objects are, of course, not to be considered as having been first constituted as essences and then subsequently receiving their act of existence: that is an obvious impossibility, for though distinct, essence and existence in things are inseparable. The creation of the natures and the giving of their existence is simultaneous.

*The contrast
between God
and creatures*

There is thus a great contrast between God and his creatures. He alone is self-subsistent. Deity is Being *par excellence*, and as such cannot be multiplied. Even the word "being" cannot be used in one and the same meaning of the ultimate being and dependent beings. Creatures do not constitute an addition to "being" in the sense that being is predicated of God. But just as mind and matter can co-exist because they are different orders of being, so matter and finite minds can on a lower plane co-exist with God.

The meaning of subsistent being, common to the three persons of the Blessed Trinity, is perfectly comprehended by the subsistent mind itself, but our finite minds, even when aided by the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, can form but inadequate conceptions of it. "No one knoweth who the Son is, but the Father: and who the Father is, but the Son and to whom the Son will reveal him." ¹ In this stage of our experience we do not see God directly, but in his works. The creation and the redemption indirectly represent to us the being, truth and goodness which is the life of Deity. In the incarnate Logos, the way, the truth and the life, is the meaning of God most clearly reflected: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." ²

*Our natural
knowledge
of God*

The universe, life, and thought likewise in their own order give us knowledge of their one primal Cause. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made. His eternal power also and divinity." ³ Jehovah is thus never an "unknown God." "It is he who giveth to all life, breath, and all things: and hath made of one, all mankind, to dwell upon the whole face of the earth, determining appointed

¹ Luke x 22.

² 2 Cor. iv 6.

³ Rom. i 20.

times and the limits of their habitation. That they should seek God, if haply they may feel after him or find him, although he be not far from every one of us. For in him we live, and we move, and we are."¹ Inasmuch as God has so ordained that during its probation mankind should know him indirectly, our reflecting minds find in every realm of nature clear indications of his supreme activity and presence. Yet the finitude of our minds cannot adequately represent Deity in any of its absolute perfections. Thus wrote St Paul: "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgements, and how unsearchable his ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and recompense shall be made him? For of him, and by him, and in him, are all things: to him be glory for ever."² The nature of Divinity is not corporal or attainable by the five senses. "God is a Spirit and they who adore him must adore him in spirit and in truth." He is more perfectly spiritual than the mind of men or of angels. "God, who made the world and all things that are in it, he being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands. Nor is he served by the hands of men, as though he needed anything."³

"We see now through a glass in an obscure manner."⁴

Analogy

The terms we use of God are verily full of meaning, but none of our concepts can be referred to Deity without an accompanying proviso that their limitations have no counterpart in God himself.⁵ Our ideas themselves are partial, and in analogically referring them to God we mentally negate these partialities and attribute to him only their perfect meaning. Our concepts are superlatively verified only in the infinite perfection of subsistent holiness which we call God. We think truly of all reality in terms of our own nature. When therefore we consider orders of being which are higher or lower than our own we properly employ the principle of analogy. Thus we can think of purely inorganic matter and the purely spiritual life of the angels only by analogy with our human nature which is neither pure matter nor pure spirit, but a compound of both matter and spirit.⁶ Such analogical application of our concepts is more remote according as the mode of being concerned is different from our own, and Deity is supremely different therefrom. Yet inasmuch

¹ Acts xvii 25-27.

² Rom. xi 33-36.

³ Acts xvii 24, 25.

⁴ 1 Cor. xiii 12.

⁵ The validity of the principles of human knowledge is affirmed by all minds, for those principles are based ultimately upon experience and self-evidence. That mankind possesses true natural knowledge cannot be logically denied. A denial implies that we have positive knowledge of the meaning and conditions of truth. But to affirm that there is such a quality as validity is incompatible with a contrary attitude of doubt.

⁶ It is likewise owing to the analogical character of our knowledge of the consciousness of animals that the facts of animal psychology are so difficult to ascertain.

as our minds, in common with the natural objects of our experience, are made according to the exemplar of the Divine Mind, the knowledge gained from God's material and spiritual creations brings us valid, though partial, understanding of their primary Cause.

Christianity teaches us that subsistent being is self-complete living spiritual activity, wherein the one being of God self-manifestly appertains to itself in three distinct relations. The qualitative superiority and triune independence of Deity in no way detracts from the reality of creatures, nor does it render them illusory. On the contrary, their chief value and dignity results from the very fact that the Absolute Being has determined that they should participate in being, and simultaneously achieve his purpose and their own. They are not, indeed, emanations from God's unique nature, but being made in his likeness they are what they are because God is what he is, and are freely willed in the pure subsistent act whereby God is God.

§ II: THE NECESSITY AND FREEDOM OF GOD

*Intrinsic
absolute
necessity*

In general usage the term necessity bears a relative sense. One thing is said to be necessary to another, or circumstances are regarded as necessitating a given result. God's necessity, however, is of an entirely different order and is unique. It is not relative or due to anything extrinsic to himself, but absolute. Deity in itself is necessary irrespective of everything else. It is indeed owing to the contingency of the universe that we first realise that God is necessary, but that does not imply that the Divine necessity itself arises from his creation or conservation of the worlds. Necessity is, on the contrary, an excellence intrinsic to ultimate being.

Deity cannot but exist; it must be, and must for ever be. Divine necessity concerns not merely the principle of existence, but the whole reality of subsistent being. The rational nature of Deity, being numerically one with its actual existence, has an identical necessity therewith.

There is thus one unique inevitability wherein God's superlative nature both necessarily is, and is Deity. Negatively stated, this means that the final ontological impossibility is that the Blessed Trinity should not be, or should not be what it is.

*The contin-
gency of the
finite*

The universe of matter and mind does not possess intrinsic necessity, and is therefore said to be contingent. Apart from the duality of essence and existence already referred to, the contingency of the whole universe upon the Divine will and power is revealed by the relative dependence of its parts. It is a system of interdependent components, inorganic, organic and rational. This organisation of multiple parts is obvious whether we consider the individual atom, or single elements, or the cosmos as a whole. Composition of all kinds, however, implies a prior agent as the reason and cause of the compounding. Constitutive elements do not involve each other in

their very essence and meaning, otherwise they would not be distinct but identical. They cannot therefore be themselves the ultimate cause of their union.¹ The composite union which they form shows that they are not ultimately reducible to each other, and thus their unification as a system is dependent upon some power superior to themselves. It is not guidance or rearrangement that is implied, but total production as a cosmos. They are mutually incomplete and dependent upon each other as secondary causes, and also dependent upon a primary cause which, in the act of giving being to the whole, produces the parts in intimate relation.²

The relative completeness of the system of nature does not obscure the fact that unless it had been originally constituted as a composite whole it could not have existed at all. Nor does the resultant unity of operation itself explain the original composition, and no addition of dependent elements can constitute necessary being. The fact that the universe changes from state to state also shows that it is not an absolutely necessary being. A thing that changes its states is never wholly all it can be. Were any state necessary that state would be unalterably permanent, and if no state is permanently necessary such being cannot be necessary at all.

The sufficient explanation of all being

Beings that are essentially subordinate, existing for a compound unity or system, cannot therefore be necessary in themselves, nor can they render more than a relative explanation of their existence. The very queries that arise in our minds as to origins and purpose are evidence of this contingency, for such ideas represent impressions received from the world's inadequacy.

By all paths of thought we are thus led inevitably from contingent minds and objects to Necessary Being as the explanation of all reality and existence. Therein the sufficient reason of being is perfectly embodied and comprehended. A necessary being has in and of itself the reason of its existence, whereas contingent beings have not. God, being one and self-manifest, is thus self-explanatory: the subsistent Reason, wherein ultimate being and ultimate meaning are identical. Deity and Deity alone has intrinsically the ability and right to exist, for the reason of its existence is identified with its very nature.

The necessity of God, unlike certain relative forms of necessity, has nothing in common with determinism. Absolute necessity in subsistent spiritual life means absolute freedom and independence. To identify determination with necessity would render freedom

Divine necessity is not determinism

¹ Pampsychnism and theories of *anima mundi* posit a duality of matter and mind and therefore are not ultimate explanations.

² The contingency of the universe relates to the dependence of its being and is distinct from the question whether the universe had a temporal beginning. Even if the universe had always existed its dependence upon a prior constituting cause would be no less obvious.

impossible. Things that are determined are extrinsically under compulsion to something other than themselves or to something within themselves which is distinct from their will. God's necessity is not compulsion, and thus it includes the perfection of freedom. He is remote from the influence of beings on a lower plane, and within his own being there is no distinction of nature and will. Therefore in God freedom, which is independent personal judgement, is so identified with the life of God that it partakes of his very necessity; he is necessarily free. God is not composed of necessity and freedom as distinct principles. Thus freedom is involved in the necessary love whereby God appreciates his own infinitely perfect being. Divine freedom is not restricted to creation or contingent upon his will to create. It is not a temporary expedient. He does not acquire it or confer it upon himself, or produce it by his essence or his will; it is eternally identified with both. He does not will himself by a mere resultant or static acquiescence in the inevitability of his own being. That would imply that God's volition was determined by his nature. On the contrary, his volition is free; it is as much involved in the very life of Deity as is subsistence. God's will is never determined. Its freedom, therefore, is not an isolated activity exclusively applied to creation and providence, but is intrinsic to, and indistinguishable from, the infinite life of God.

Necessity in a given nature is according to the type of that nature. Material natures are determined, while spiritual natures have freedom. Thus, inasmuch as the Blessed Trinity is super-spiritual, its necessity is not the necessity of compulsion but the necessity of spirituality—that is, of mind and purpose. God's necessity, then, is one with subsistent freedom. Eternal freedom is integral to the very meaning of Deity.

*Necessity and
freedom
unified*

God's necessity implies that he cannot will to be other than he is, or act otherwise than according to his nature. His nature and powers are one; there can be nothing contingent in necessary Being. He is both necessary and free. These two attributes are complementary as known to us analogically; in Deity they are one single Divine fact. First Cause cannot be regarded as a principle of blind fatalism or unconscious fortuity. It must be the creative Exemplar of personal liberty and merit in angels and men. The adage that "what is to be, will be," is true therefore only if it is recognised that destiny includes liberty in God, as well as in the constitution of human beings. The partial necessity and freedom which finite beings possess in regard to each other derives its meaning from the perfect necessity and freedom of the Divine nature. Things are what they are because the Blessed Trinity is inevitably what it is, for it communicates being according to its own meaning and value.

*The origin
of right
and sanction*

The merit of our Lord's sacrifice, the authority of the Church's doctrine and penitential system, as well as all lesser rights, duties and privileges, derive from the necessary presence of God. In that same

triune life natural laws of mechanics, physics, biology, thought, ethics and society have their ultimate origin and sanction.¹ Moral obligation, or the ethical "ought," may be taken as an example of God's necessary intelligence and will impressing itself within the very fabric of beings he has formed. The nature of man being self-conscious and rational is able, by experience of the self and the bearing of its actions, to become acquainted with the meaning and ineradicable laws of its own constitution. Man's rational life and ethical goodness are consequently due to his compliance with and fulfilment of these natural tendencies. Such human action is therefore nothing less than direct obedience to the First Cause as to a personal lawgiver, whose purpose for human life is revealed in that synthesis of mental and physical inclinations which is distinctive of the human compound.

§ III: DIVINE PERFECTION

PERFECTION is the completeness of goodness and truth. Truth and goodness are ontological and ethical. All things have ontological truth and goodness, in that they are knowable and useful. They achieve a certain end of their own and contribute to the needs of other things and minds. In rational and responsible beings there are also ethical truth and goodness, which place them still higher in the hierarchy of reality.

The universe regarded as a united whole, comprising matter, energy, life, thought and will, has a certain completeness in virtue of which it so admirably fulfils its purpose. The whole, however, is in no respect greater than the sum of its parts, but is merely coincident with them. It possesses no quality such as a "world soul" over and above the totality of the active and passive powers of its constitutive elements. Each quality is therein restricted to distinct material elements or to modes of life and consciousness. Moreover, these partial qualities set limits to each other by the very fact of their mutual interaction. And not only do elements, such as iron and gold, spatially exclude each other, but, in general, the possession of one quality renders its possessor incapable of qualities of another kind. Thus "the heavens show forth the glory of God" but are lacking in any consciousness of it, so that their own glory is incomplete, while man, though able to appreciate their grandeur, lacks in physical life the relative permanence of the suns.

Chemical affinity renders the elements incapable of freedom; the inertia of inorganic matter excludes life; instinct in man is modified by reason; and human intelligence is extrinsically conditioned by the five senses.

¹ Thus that $2 + 2 = 4$ has only a relative necessity. It results from the fact that God has put us in relation with a number of things from which our minds can derive the notions of unity, difference, plurality and addibility.

Ontological and ethical qualities and powers within the universe are thus obviously partial and conditioned. No quality exists therein in absolute perfection. Hence the durability of the rocks or the synthetic power of the human mind cannot be regarded as respectively the perfection of strength or of knowledge.

Qualities and powers are found restricted in the order of nature solely on account of the limitations of the things and persons in which they are present. Further it is clear that such perfections, qualities, or powers are not precisely identical with the things and persons which possess them, but are departmental activities thereof. Activities are not their *substance*, but, as we say, the attributes, faculties, properties or accidents of those things—*e.g.*, gold is not precisely its atomic weight, and an animal is distinct from its instinct to imitate its parents; similarly in regard to all other substances. Man likewise has many activities distinct from each other as well as from his substance, which manifests itself by means of each in turn—namely, by sense perception, reasoning, will, movement, and so forth. Throughout nature there is an irreducible duality of mass and kinetic energy, whether of the atom or of the solar systems.

This fact, that activities or qualities are not identical with the substances of things, means that substances and their properties are compounded into a unity which is traceable to that same supreme constituting Cause to which the composition of their essence and existence is referred.

*Unqualified
completeness*

But qualities and powers as such are not in their essential meaning limited to those partial and incomplete forms in which they are found in nature. On the contrary, there is only one mode that can be thought of as the *necessary* mode of any quality, attribute or power, and that is a superlative mode which completely realises *the whole meaning* of that quality or power. If power and quality and goodness are ultimate they must be identified with ultimate reality, and as such be perfectly complete in the degree of their realisation.

The ultimate being must therefore be superior to all composition. In subsistent being nature and activity are necessarily identical. Thus the ultimate subsistent reality possesses in one non-composite triune activity, immanent to its essence, all the qualities and powers, ontological and ethical, which in the universe are apportioned partially to many diverse types of being.

In that divine mode all attributes are realised in absolute completeness or perfection, for God cannot restrict his own nature to any lesser degree, and nothing else is capable of causing any restriction therein. God is therefore uniquely complete in one all-embracing perfection which we call "Deity."

Such absolute perfection surpasses our comprehension; we can only think of it analogically. It is true that our concepts and ideals surpass to a certain extent all "comparative" degrees of being, unity, truth and goodness embodied in nature. Nevertheless our

*Our ana-
logical con-
cepts of God*

ideas fall immeasurably short of that unique "superlativeness" which we know must characterise ultimate being.

Such analogical knowledge of Deity arises mainly from two facts—viz. : (1) that the universe is contingent, or in other words that it has a Cause more perfect than itself capable of producing the composite system ; and (2) that the Subsistent Cause is not composite but identical in essence and activity. From these two considerations it follows that God acts or works according to his very essence, and therefore his creations represent his nature far more definitely than the works of man can embody human qualities. All causes bear some resemblance to their effects, but whereas a creature's causality is but an extrinsic modification of things that exist independently of itself, God's productions, inasmuch as they derive their entire being immediately from the Divine essence, are more truly representative of their Cause.

Our knowledge of the immediate products of God's essence is therefore a knowledge of the essence itself, though indirect. According to the capacity of finite things the Creator endows them with qualities analogous to his own. The exemplar or pattern of all finite qualities is the one all-comprehensive Quality of Deity itself. By knowing things he causes them, and they in their turn evoke in our minds the meaning and value they are thus made to represent. God's omnipotent apprehension of contingent beings in himself is itself the act which originates them. Thus in knowing them we are sharing his self-manifestation.

There is no other adequate explanation of the ultimate origin of truth. To know the partial qualities and values represented by creatures is thus proportionately to know the attributes of their perfect Cause.

Our most direct and intimate knowledge of God's work is that revealed in our own personality, for of that we have both exterior perception and interior consciousness. Human personality therefore most fully embodies for us the meaning and character of the Blessed Trinity. The meaning and purpose of any product is manifested by the dominant tendencies and laws of action and reaction which characterise it. We have seen that the reason and law of God are impressed within man's nature. Rational and ethical right and duty, thus dominant, reveal the spiritual purpose of God in the conscious purpose of man.

Natural experience as well as Christian teaching clearly indicate that knowledge and goodness (and not merely the prosperity or enjoyment which may accompany them) are the objects for which the human race and the conditions of its life were instituted.

The whole creation is subordinated to the attainment by men of personal wisdom and devotion, with happiness accompanying. Thus revealed in the tendencies given to the universe, of which man is the centre, the Blessed Trinity is manifested as Goodness and Truth in unlimited perfection.

The best possible world

NOTE.—God has created the best possible world, but that world is not this present earth but the supernatural Kingdom of God. This present imperfect earthly state has its place, however, as a condition without which the most perfect world could not be realised. A “heaven” whose free inhabitants were retained irrespective of their own will would be inferior to earth and hell. There would be a still more excellent world conceivable. Personal merit is more perfect than passive sinlessness.

The best possible world, then, is that wherein the Blessed Trinity is supernaturally known by those who by grace and personal determination have merited that dignity, and whose confirmation in goodness is but a divine perfection coinciding with the creature’s own deliberate character. The best possible world thus involves this present preliminary world (itself adequate as a sphere of probation) in order that man may, by avoiding possible wrong, freely attain the right with that merit of faith, hope, and personal devotion which restricted and obscure conditions of life alone make practicable. Angelic probation and the intermediate state of purgation are likewise conditions preparatory to the most perfect world which is the participation by rational beings in the life of perfect God.

§ IV: DIVINE INFINITY

The finitude of the universe

ALL things and persons of which we have direct experience are finite ; they are, indeed, subject to many limitations. The universe is a system of composite interdependent factors modifying and restricting each other as a natural condition of their co-existence. Each person and thing is limited in being, meaning, value, and in its complement of active and passive powers. It is, in fact, largely by means of their limitations that ordinary things can affect our senses or otherwise become known to our consciousness. Moreover, matter is essentially finite ; the divisible quantity which characterises its extended surfaces is the chief source from which we derive the idea of limitation. The material universe is thus not infinite even in volume, and the measurability of its surfaces or limits is itself the basis of physical science.

The limits of the universe are as clearly revealed by those of its surfaces which are adjacent to us, as would be the case were we able to see the outline of the furthestmost stars. The surfaces accessible to us are typical of all material volume, and thus, however numerous and distant the stars may be, their fabric still has limited bounds.

Our realisation of the finitude of the material universe is not due to the fact that our minds are limited. On the contrary, it is solely because the universe is finite that our finite senses are able to observe it at all. Only an infinite mind can directly know the infinite and in so doing be conscious of its own infinity. That which is infinite has, by definition, no limits, and thus no parts, for parts are limits. An infinite reality, then, cannot be known by observation of parts ; it is directly knowable either in its entirety or not at all. The material universe has really distinct parts. Our five senses, as differentiated parts of the universe of matter, are characteristically restricted. Our minds also are limited, though their limits are of a non-material character. Ignorance, error, forgetfulness, the serial character of

our reasoning processes, as well as our dependence upon external evidence, make us conscious of our mental limitations. The human will is subject to a corresponding finitude.

Limitation is likewise shown in both matter and mind by the fact of their development. All changes from one state to another involve either the loss or the gain of some ingredient or factor: loss implies present limitation; gain reveals limitation in the past; moreover, what is once finite can never become infinite. No addition of finite increments can accumulate to form infinity.

Infinity cannot be acquired; if it is not possessed eternally it can never be possessed. That which is infinite in any respect is necessarily infinite in all respects, for infinite being cannot be limited to this or that quality, but by definition includes all in all. It follows that whatever is finite in any respect is by that fact alone known to be finite in every respect. *Mathematical
"infinity"*

In order to take infinity seriously it is necessary to distinguish the true and real infinite from the so-called "infinity" of logic and mathematics. Mathematical infinity (applicable to the infinitely small as well as to the infinitely great) is sometimes qualified as "the potential infinite," but it is more accurately termed "the indefinite" or "the indeterminate," for it does not exclude limitation as such, but merely implies that any given particular limit is not to be identified with the abstract ideal or imaginary continuum of space or of time. No one can ever positively imagine or conceive an infinite or eternal series of stages or subdivisions in the mathematical sense; the most we do is to commence an enumeration, and then represent the remainder by a symbol. Moreover, a developing infinity or an infinite series of parts is a contradiction in terms, for infinity has no parts or limits.

We can, indeed, mentally prescind from all imagery of place, time and division, and set our minds to contemplate exclusively the idea of quantity or extension as an abstraction, but any actual line or surface in the real world cannot be without definite limits. The "indefinite" is thus but a mental generalisation applicable at once to every possible degree of quantity and thus incapable of being realised in any one given real being.

In contrast to the "indefinite," the *real* infinite cannot be a mere abstraction in our minds, but must be an existing being having one unique and unalterable meaning. Real infinity is being without any possibility of limits. The term "in-finity" is not positive but negative, and the idea we have of such a being is correspondingly negative. But the character of the negation must not be overlooked. It is the negation of a negation, for limitation is the *negation* of further being, and the idea of "limitless being," though negative in form, thus represents positive super-eminent being. *The real
infinite*

Our finite minds cannot form a positive concept of the real infinite, though our negative idea has a luminous meaning. From our

awareness of the multifarious limitations of the universe of experience arises the abstract idea of "the finite," as a general concept applicable to every type of restriction and limitation. This idea of the finite cannot, however, be conceived in isolation, but only as accompanied by an idea of its opposite, the infinite. The meaning of either of these depends precisely upon their being thought of together in a relation of contrast. We can, of course, think about the nature and powers of things that are finite, without adverting at once to the fact of their finiteness, but when once we recognise that they are finite, then we do but set up a mental contrast between them and the non-finite or infinite. Such complementariness in meaning shows that as ideas they are not conceived successively, but simultaneously. Together they are a compound idea which occurs to us as an expression of our realisation that our rational ideals and capacities find no adequate and exhaustive object either in themselves or in the world around.

*Unique
spiritual
greatness*

The mind's capacity for meaning and value is realised to be exhausted or exhaustible by nothing that is limited, and therefore only by the unlimited. Thus by experience of the finite our minds inevitably become aware of the fact that visible or limited entities cannot be the total object of which human reason is consciously capable. No degree of the finite realises the fulness of meaning of which the human understanding is capable. Though indeed we have no positive idea of, or adequate desire for, the infinite, we are clearly aware of the insufficiency of everything *other than* the infinite.

The verdict of our whole nature is that the finite is not the All of meaning or being. The partial cannot be the whole. We do not directly see the intrinsic possibility of the infinite, but we do directly see the impossibility that limited beings should constitute the whole of existence or exhaust the meaning of reality. This brings us clear knowledge that the meaning of being implies the real existence of the Infinite. It is precisely because we realise that things and persons are limited that we are unable to suppose that being as such must be restricted solely to them. They cannot embody the whole possibility of being, or comprise a sufficient reason even of their own finite existence. The inadequacy of the finite thus indicates that complete or perfect reality and meaning exist in the Infinite alone, constituting the sufficient reason of the infinite itself as well as of the finite.

Infinite being is therefore superior to the limitations of material volume and of discursive reason. *Infinity is spiritual greatness* of a unique and superlative order. Our mental imagery and our relative concepts of spatial extension are therefore incapable of representing it.

*Divine omni-
presence*

God's Omnipresence or spiritual immensity is thus entirely different from the mode of "presence" whereby finite objects "occupy" a defined place and sustain a relative position in regard to each other. The Infinite is "present" according to its subsistent

mode of being. All that is related to the infinite is related to the whole of infinity, for no partial relation is possible in regard to that which is indivisible. To be restricted to any spatial position is itself a limitation. The human mind, though finite, is in some respects superior to material or spatial restrictions, and Infinite Spirit transcends them all. It is by uniting the idea of spiritual life with the negation of all limitations that we can attain the most adequate mental "analogue" of the positive infinity of supreme being. The phrase "infinite matter" would be self-contradictory, for matter is essentially finite. Subsistent Mind can alone be consistently thought of as Infinity, as the philosophies of East and West abundantly illustrate.

§ V: DIVINE UNITY

"The Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church believes and confesses that there is one true and living God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, almighty, eternal, immense, incomprehensible, infinite in intelligence, in will, and in all perfection, who, as being one, sole, absolutely simple and immutable spiritual substance, is to be declared as really and essentially distinct from the world, of supreme beatitude in and from himself, and ineffably exalted above all things beside himself which exist or are conceivable."

"This one, only, true God, of his own goodness and almighty power, not for the increase of his own beatitude, nor to acquire, but to manifest his perfection . . . created out of nothing . . . both the spiritual and corporal creature, namely the angelic and the mundane, and then the human creature as partaking, in a sense, of both, consisting of spirit and body."¹

Unity is differently realised in diverse orders of being. In the realm of inorganic matter there is a merely structural and functional unity within the elements. Higher than this is the unity involved in chemical compounds. Vegetation presents above this again a unity of life. The animal represents a still more complex unity of organic life, involving also sense-consciousness. Man is a synthesis of matter, life, sensibility, rational mind and will, while the human soul, considered in itself, is the highest type of unity of which we have immediate knowledge.

The unity of the soul and its operations is more complete than that attainable in any material compound or organism. Its ideas interfuse without spatial separateness, and its volition is intrinsically involved in the activity of the intelligence, so that ideas and motives coalesce. Unlike sense impressions, ideas are not localised, but modify the whole fabric of the mind, so that the mind is greater than the mere sum of its ideas. Unlike sense imagery, ideas, being immaterial, each contribute to a general unity of meaning which

¹ Vatican Constitution *De Fide*, 1.

reveals itself in principles of thought and reasoning applicable to all reality. Single states of consciousness do not, indeed, manifest this essential simplicity of the mind's spiritual life, but any series of states bears witness thereto. The soul, or mind, is not, however, a perfect unity. It is composite in that its existence and other powers, such as reasoning and volition, are constitutionally distinct, though inseparable, from its essence ; moreover, its states of consciousness are variable.

The unconditioned perfection of unity is thus not possible in anything which is composite, partial, or mutable. It is exclusively proper to the infinite. Perfect unity means simplicity. In contrast to changing composition, it is a single fact involving in one reality a spiritual fabric, existence, meaning, value, activity. Triune God who is One Spirit is the sole complete reality, having in himself supereminently all the perfections of being, whether known to us or not.

We learn aspects of the meaning of God from the vast universe involving us which are not at first so obviously recognisable in the otherwise more wondrous realms of the human personality. The Divine omnipotent energy, supremacy, immensity, eternity, grandeur, have a peculiarly impressive embodiment in external nature, while man's personal and social life supplies the analogues of the Divine unity, intelligence, meaning, freedom, right, and purpose. Moreover, our own composite nature, inasmuch as it embodies vegetal and animal life in conjunction with rational powers, helps us to think of the still higher unification of all perfections in the supreme unity of God.

*Simplicity of
all qualities
in one Being*

The nature of God is spiritual, for the unlimited source of reality cannot be subject to the specific limitations and passivity of composite matter. But it is equally clear that rationality in God is not subject to the limitations conditioning finite spirits. The incomparably complete spirituality of God is neutral both as to the characteristic restrictions of finite mind as well as of finite matter. God is a Spirit of such transcendence that his essence unifies all those qualities which finite matter and mind inadequately represent in all their respective modes of duration, energy, life, emotion, understanding, and will.

Attributes in Deity are not supplementary but are all present in a single transcendent subsistent act. Our minds, being finite, cannot combine our various negative and analogical ideas of God into one concept or state of consciousness. Consideration of those concepts, however, shows that each implicitly involves all the others in intimate relation. Subsistence and infinity are complementary, perfection and intelligence ally themselves to infinite unity, power, will, immutability, and eternity. Each is an aspect to our minds of spiritual greatness.

The import of Divine unity is thus distantly realised by the partial synthesis formed by different thoughts regarding him. In the

attempt distantly to understand what unity is in God we think first of the possibility of a perfect form of each quality separately, and then of the possibility of one sole transcendent perfection, still greater than each, which in its limitless fulness includes them all more wondrously, without differentiation or dependence. "Simplicity" in God, however, is not acquired by synthesis, but is a necessary oneness eternally original.

In virtue of this absolute perfection of his unity God is unique. *One only God* Deity is numerically singular in its subsistent infinity. It does not include a plurality of divinities. It is not a genus but a single being. The composite system of the universe, including human life, implies a unity of authorship which the providential alchemy rendering evil contributory to good serves to emphasise. All creation has a single cause and tendency. There is only one First Cause, for God is One. Deity excludes all composition of different elements or beings, yet it is the very nature of absolute unity to be triune.

Reason naturally tends to explain the complex in terms of the simple, and to resolve differences of the many in a higher unity. There is thus a general belief in the unity of truth and reality in ultimate being. With equal naturalness the mind concludes that the ultimate unity must be a transcendent spiritual nature capable of self-manifestation, a sufficient reason evident to itself, unifying all perfections of matter, life, and society. All possibilities of being must therein be perfectly subsistent, for we cannot assume that the ultimate is limited to those perfections which are discoverable by unaided reason. On the contrary, by reason we know that God is knowable to himself in a manner that surpasses our negative and analogical knowledge of him.

His revelation then helps us to understand that ultimate being is not a mere abstract oneness or mathematical unity without distinctive quality and meaning.

From that revelation we learn that the absolute perfection of unity *Trinity in unity* consists in the sublimity of triune self-realisation. The co-equal persons are three relations in which the one indivisible Divine Subsistence possesses, knows and values itself. Trinity in Unity involves no distinction which differentiates the Divine Nature from itself, but, on the contrary, alone involves all that is required in order that it should *be itself perfectly* in consummate appreciation. It is the "necessary" unity of being, unifying the absolute and the relative in unlimited meaning. The One and the Many are thus ultimate in virtue of the relative mutual coinherence of the adorable Trinity in that self-sufficient Unity which is the One Godhead.

§ VI: DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE

POWER is the intrinsic energy of being realised in activity. *The dynamic aspect of divine life* Blessed Trinity, infinite in the immanence of its life, is the perfect self-realisation of Power. In one omnipotent and eternal experience

all powers of being, both absolute and relative, are completely actualised without the possibility of increase or diminution. Omnipotence suffuses all the Divine attributes, and is identical with the Godhood of God. It represents for us the dynamic aspect of the triune life of the divine essence, wherein the fecundity of the one subsistent nature expresses, manifests, and comprehends its own meaning and value, and all things within that fulness.

The divine processions

Omnipotence involves every possible mode of origination and production, and is thus more than the power of causation whereby things other than itself are brought into existence. The eternal origination or procession of the Son and the Holy Ghost is omnipotent life; but it is not causal activity, inasmuch as the persons are identical with the one divine nature. They are not additions to its life, they are its life. The three persons are self-expressions and self-realizations of life, knowledge, love, and sanctity which constitute the very being of Deity. Thus subsistence is power, knowledge is power, will and eternity are power, all infinitely one. Omnipotence is distinctive of Deity, and creation is but a revelation of it in the order of finite being.

Hence our idea of supreme power is but a distant analogy of that almightiness which characterises the ultimate being. Power in creatures passes from a state of potential capability to the actual performance of an act. But Omnipotence is the subsistent energy of eternal being, and is not transient but immanent and permanent in its infinite actuality.

Creation

Creation is to us but an aspect of an eternal activity. The statement of Genesis that God "rested" on the seventh day is metaphorical of the eternal contentment of God in the knowledge of all things in himself. In regard to the universe his activity has neither beginning nor end, and involves no change. Creation is not a local transference of power from God to the creature, nor is the creature a terminus of his power. The motive of that power is not the creature itself but God's knowledge of his own being. Apart from God's power the creature has no existence, and therefore cannot be regarded as an object antecedent to his production of it. Nor can the creature ever become an "object" reacting upon God in the sense in which objects react upon us. Likewise the continuance of the creative act in the conservation of and concurrence with creatures involves no new or different activity in Omnipotence.

Creation and omnipotence

The contingency of the universe reveals the fact that it was created by Omnipotence. The dependence of finite beings upon God is not accidental or partial but total, involving their entire reality. Thus contingent mind and matter are essentially and qualitatively different from subsistent Being. They cannot therefore be regarded as natural emanations from the Divine Nature or as participating in its distinctive life. This complete distinctness of God and finite being implies that the universe was produced in no way

other than *creation* in the full meaning of that term. For it is clear that creation is the only mode of causation whereby a cause can produce other being entirely distinct from itself.

It is evident, too, that creation is within the competence of Omnipotence alone. The universe, which is the product of the Creator, is indeed finite, but no power less than infinite could have produced it. Finite being cannot create; its activities presuppose already existing material upon which to operate. Not being subsistent, finite being cannot even maintain itself in being, and does not control its own existence. It follows, therefore, that finite being cannot create other finite being, as that would be equivalent to causing being equal to itself. The origination of being therefore requires a productive energy which is positively infinite. Sub-sistent being alone can create the finite, and the gift of grace which perfects nature and forgives sins by creative regeneration is likewise possible to Deity alone.

Thus all modes of created being, whether natural or supernatural, normal or miraculous, are finite evidences of that power, wisdom, and mercy which is triune Omnipotence.

§ VII: DIVINE IMMUTABILITY

To be mutable is proper to composite beings within an interdependent *Mutability implies dependence* system. The elements and orders of being in the universe exist for each other, and the capacity to change is a condition of their interaction. No chemical element or living species has any reason or capacity for existence except as part of a reciprocal system culminating in rational being. Material things do not possess independent spontaneous activity, motion, or life. In order that they may be active it is necessary that they should be influenced by other things. As truly as colour depends upon light, so truly do all properties of matter involve interaction. Animal dependence upon the vegetable kingdom is still more obvious. Also our own mental as well as bodily dependence upon other things is with us an abiding consciousness.

Finite activity, life, and development thus demand interaction of diverse entities. Movement can only take place when one thing is influenced by another either directly or indirectly. Without interaction there can be no change. To receive impressions from other things is of the very meaning of change or development. Mutual influence and interaction, moreover, necessitate heterogeneity. Things must be of different kinds in order to produce that modifying influence upon one another which is requisite for development, life, movement, or change of any kind.¹ The energy of chemical elements

¹ Evolution from perfectly homogeneous matter is thus impossible, for undifferentiated matter could not act causally upon itself and change its homogeneity into heterogeneity.

is only potential if considered apart from that interaction with other elements which is necessary for complete activity.

There are three types of change, namely, qualitative change, as in intensification or waning of attention; quantitative change, as in the growth or withering of a tree; and local change, which concerns movement from place to place. To bring about any kind of change some type of mutual influence between diverse things is requisite. Given the necessary stimulus a thing changes, but never can it modify itself in the absence of such extrinsic influences. This indicates that change is not identical with the thing that undergoes it.

The motion of the universe is thus an endowment distinct from matter as such, though intimately allied therewith. Matter is indifferent to rest or motion, hence it can be in either of these states. Of itself matter does not possess motion; if it did it could not be indifferent to movement.

Nothing can of itself change or move in any respect. Whatever is in motion is moved thereto by something other than itself. And inasmuch as each element in the universe needs itself to be influenced in order that it may in turn exert influence, the beginning of motion cannot be traced to any element *within* the universe. The whole system, as a system, must therefore have been originally endowed with motion, otherwise those relative movements within it with which we are familiar could never have originated. There must have been a first arrangement or ordering of the system as a system which was neither the effect of material energy nor essential to matter as such. That is to say, the motion of the whole finite series or group of elements which constitute the universe must have been produced simultaneously with their fabric, otherwise the system could not have existed at all. As a system they depend upon motion. But the motion itself requires the actual presence of the system. The system cannot be antecedent to the motion on which it depends, and so cannot be the cause of the motion. System and motion must exist simultaneously or not at all. *The universe, therefore, was produced in a state of movement by a cause superior both to matter and to motion.*

To summarise the foregoing considerations, the conclusion is clear that the universe is the product of a cause capable of producing instantaneously: (a) the group of heterogeneous elements having each its own potentialities, (b) their mutual complementariness, and (c) their actual motion throughout the system. Only thus actually in motion can the universe have originated.

It follows, therefore, that the activity whereby the system of nature is produced is of a higher order than the activity of movement or change. The originating Cause of being cannot have the same limited type of activity as it gives to its products. Their changeful mode of activity depends upon influence from without, but there is

What is moved is moved by another

The first cause unchanging

nothing which can change or move the First Cause, for no being other than that Cause exists on the plane of subsistent being. Nor could that Cause move or change itself, for no being, whether finite or infinite, alone can cause limitation, change, or movement in itself. It follows that the activity of this Cause is not any form of change or movement. The causal activity superior to all change must therefore be ever present in, and identical with, the very nature of the First Cause. The causation of the universe must thus represent a permanent and changeless natural activity of God as distinct from a transient or departmental change of state. The first change in matter, as well as all subsequent changes, is therefore caused by a being which itself is changeless. Movement ultimately owes its origin to a Prime Mover, himself unmoved, whom we call God.

Mutability is not an absolute perfection. On the contrary, the possibility of loss or gain denotes the absence of perfection. Change is the transitory stage of beings while they are actualising or ceasing to actualise their capacities in conjunction with influences from their environment. Changeability spells incompleteness and dependence. Being as such does not necessarily involve change; indeed, change can only occur in composite being, which is limited and dependent.¹

By definition, therefore, change cannot be absolute and can have no place in ultimate being. Infinity admits of no variation. God the Primary Being is thus unique in his superiority to change. He has the perfection of which change implies the lack. In the activity of Deity "there is no change, nor shadow of vicissitude."² The triune life involves no subsequent realisation of capacities previously undeveloped or passive. It has always been fully actualised. Its internal manifestations share the changelessness of the essence in which they eternally originate. Deity is pure omnipotent Act excluding instability and deflection. Subsistent goodness is necessarily constant and independent, for it is the fulness of being.

The activity whereby God creates the worlds involves no alteration in God's life, which has always included it. Creative and miraculous power involves no new state or procedure within his timeless fulness. Whatever God is in any respect, he is changelessly.³ The meaning of Eternity, which is studied in the next section, shows that God as Subsistent Creator has never been other than he is.

The changelessness of pure act

¹ Modern scientific philosophy has discarded Darwinism in favour of a theory of a God evolving with the universe in which he works creatively. But to require development in God is sheer anthropomorphism.

² James i 17.

³ In our own finite experience freedom is normally associated with a change of state, but change is not of the essence even of our freedom. It is not the fact of change which renders an act free. The freedom of an act is due solely to the spiritual nature which posits the act. Thus God's freedom in creating represents the eternally changeless state of his will.

His free creative act is itself necessarily eternal, though its finite product is naturally subject to time and change.¹

Immutability in the life of God is thus the antithesis of inertness, and is in contrast to the relative incompetence of beings that are subject to successive variation. Changelessness implies intensity of value in the Infinite as, on the highest plane, unifying the qualities of the static and the dynamic. Human beings normally attain their social values gradually through changing experience. But qualities which are occasional in men are permanent in God. Triune Deity involves these perfections in one all-comprehensive experience which is always identical with its being. God does not need to change in order to act. God *is* Act. Divine knowledge is not an acquisition; God *is* truth. The implications of all being are in him self-known and eternally realised. In that sublimest Companionship the Blessed Trinity does not need to learn to love. Love is in no way subsequent to being; it is integral to the very life of Deity. God *is* love.

Hence all theories suggesting that "passibility" is needful to God in order that he may be sympathetic to human beings, fall far short of that loving kindness and emotional compassion which is intrinsic to God's own triune experience. Every quality which such theories desiderate has been in God always, without his needing *per impossible* to submit to the imperfection involved in change.² Is not the exquisite delicacy of "the lilies of the field" an exemplification of unutterable tenderness as well as of inscrutable greatness? Thus not only all that creatures can acquire by changing, but literally *all that being can be*, in value, understanding, emotion, and active sympathy, the God who answers prayer is unchangeably in very essence.

§ VIII: DIVINE ETERNITY

THE duration of a being is its continuance in existence. When duration consists in a series of different states succeeding each other it is called temporal, and can be measured by our standards of time. Duration which is not composed of a series of successive states, but is one invariable state ever-present without end or beginning, is called

¹ God's constant providence in our world and in the unseen is included in his one creative activity. To will a series of changes is not to change the will. Thus answers to prayer, miracles, the intermediate state of disembodied souls, the Limbo (or Borderland) of those who die innocent of actual sin but unbaptised, equally with the preparation of heaven itself, are not revisions or after-thoughts in the Divine plan of the ages, but form an integral part of one supreme interrelated purpose, the inner significance of which can never be adequately realised in our present state of probation.

² Self-limitation is impossible to God in regard to any of his attributes, for all attributes are identical with his subsistent essence and are thus necessarily eternal.

Compassion
without
passibility

Time

eternal, and the idea of time cannot apply to it. Time depends upon the comparability of one stage or state with another, and, therefore, where there is no change of state there cannot be comparative duration or time.

Our own consciousness of time is thus due to the recognition of successive changes in ourselves and in the world around, and by conventional means we measure the periods occupied by the different states. Each state is "limited" by the state which precedes it and the state which follows it, and the knowledge of these limits enables us to measure any given state, and record it in terms of minutes or other time-standards. Changing states are so numerous in ourselves and our environment that the idea of time becomes from early years an element in our habitual consciousness. Nevertheless time is applicable only to things that change. We have seen, however, that change itself is not essential to being as such, and, indeed, changing activity can take place only in beings that are incomplete and dependent. In order to exist, live, and act, they need the co-operation of other things. They are always becoming what they were not before, and are never wholly all that they can be. They thus possess their actuality only by successive degrees or increments. This is true of individual things and persons and of the universe as a whole. They are never completely the whole reality of their being. Change may involve loss or gain departmentally, but in any case change spells limitation, and the serial process of their duration involves everlasting incompleteness.

The more complete a being is, the less it changes. A perfectly *Timeless duration* complete being would not change or need to change at all. It would possess its whole being permanently, and not in a variable series of successive stages. It would be capable of embracing its whole reality in one permanent experience. It would be always wholly itself, and for ever identical with itself in every respect. It would realise all its possibilities and meaning at once. There would be no past or present or future in our relative sense, but all would be an abiding "now," or transcendent "present." It would not merely (as we can partially) include the "past" by representative memory, and the "future" by anticipation based on past and present knowledge. In perfect being "past and future" would be actually present and fully possessed without differentiation of periods. Perfect duration would involve an unrestricted consciousness of the fulness of being. Time would not apply to it: it would be eternal life.

But such must be the character of Deity. Subsistent, the blessed *Eternallif* Trinity is its own fulness. Necessary, it knows no dependence. Perfect, it is complete in itself and has need of nothing. Infinite, it has no limits intrinsic or extrinsic. Immutable, it is unvarying. One, it possesses itself in undifferentiated identity. There is nothing that God will be that he is not yet, or has not always been. In him nothing awaits future development, no state needs to be acquired.

The "now" or "present" of our finite consciousness may be regarded as an instant or a moment or a day or a longer period, but it is never a state complete in itself. Consciousness changes incessantly owing to our limitations. But the "now" of superlative consciousness is not restricted to a passing state. It comprehends all being in one act and vision, its "present" is not a moment but the whole of eternity. God has, so to speak, always been present in our future as he has been in our past. Time is but the gradual and partial experience by creatures of the eternity of God.

Perfect Knowledge does not need to look back in memory, nor does Perfect Will need to look forward in anticipation.¹ All is known and willed together in the power of one subsistence. Man's soul is naturally immortal, and by its vast range of thought and imagination can, in measure, embody all things and represent a synthesis of universal history. Man is a microcosm. But God is the Macrocosm in whom the universe of nature and of history has its original exemplar, its possibility and actuality. It is known in his eternal life as a temporal manifestation. We by direct knowledge know only finite things in their passing finitude, and thus inevitably our knowledge involves the idea of time. But finite things are not the whole of reality. The Infinite is, to itself, far more consciously real than anything can be to finite minds.

The Divine mind and will cannot regard Deity under the aspect of time. And it is in that timeless nature that the Infinite knows the finite. The finite is known and willed by God according to his own mode of consciousness, which, unlike ours, is transcendent and eternal. God, in knowing the imitability of his nature, knows his creatures. In willing his own perfection he purposes theirs, and has never lacked the full realisation of his creative power and purposive providence. In what we call the distant future his activity will be no greater and no less than it has ever been. Thus sang the Psalmist: "In the beginning, O Lord, thou foundedst the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest: and all of them shall grow old like a garment: and as a vesture thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art always the self-same, and thy years shall not fail."² "The mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity upon them that fear him."³

Eternally complete self-realisation is possible to God only, who is the infinite and omnipotent mind. Eternity is not cumulative or acquirable by countless ages of existence: it is a single infinite fact without process or temporal qualities. Hence the universe can never become eternal; it is characteristically changeful and therefore

¹ Terms such as "fore-knowledge," "pre-destination," "pro-vidence," "pre-vision," and "pur-pose," reflect the limitation of our minds in conceiving analogously their Divine equivalents.

² Ps. ci 26-28.

³ Ps. cii 17.

*Eternal
knowledge
and will*

*Complete
self-realisa-
tion*

temporal. Even could we suppose that it never had a beginning it would be in no sense eternal, since it can never include its future at any given stage. We learn from revelation that the world had, in fact, a first stage or beginning. Furthermore, eternity is nothing other than infinity under the aspect of duration. Thus only that which is infinite is eternal, and what is eternal must be infinite in every respect. Infinity is possessed in its entirety or not at all. The universe not being infinite, but finite, is thus known to be limited in duration. Thus temporal, it is incapable of eternity in the past and in the future. In no respect does it transcend the category of time, though the age of the suns has not yet been finally calculated by man.

The universe, at each moment, is, however, related by dependence to the whole of eternity. God's creative act being eternal has no stages corresponding to the events of time. The eternal is one and indivisible. Whatever, therefore, is ever related to eternity is related to the whole of eternity. But to coexist with the whole of eternity is not to coexist *always* with eternity. Hence, though in the eternal comprehension of God things neither begin nor end, their own changeful and temporal character remains.

*Relation of
the universe
to eternity*

§ IX: DIVINE INTELLIGENCE

THE highest type of being in the universe of our experience is the human personality. Man recognises his own supremacy in the natural order because he knows his own nature to be spiritual as well as material, whereas all things lower than himself are non-spiritual. Thus we speak of human beings as persons, while referring to other beings as things or individuals. Personality is attributed only to those higher individuals who are rational or spiritual. The human personality is not indeed purely spiritual; it is a unique compound of matter and mind. According to the Scholastic explanation the vital principle of the human body is not entirely immersed in matter, since it is spiritual. The normal condition of the soul is to be united to the body, and thus a disembodied soul is meanwhile an incomplete human personality.

*Human
personality*

The human spirit has thus a twofold operation. Its inferior function is the energising of the bodily organism, while its higher activity is man's reason. Animals are capable of an instinctive response to environment, and have a lower type of memory in the form of spatial imagery of past material scenes and actions. Man in addition to this is spiritually aware of meaning, value, and purpose in nature and existence. He is capable of a rational appreciation of the higher significance of all being in terms of his own. He classifies phenomena and events according to non-material and abstract principles of order, and conceives the universal aspects of reality and truth. Such abstract ideas cannot be seen with the eyes, or otherwise be the object of the senses. They are not material objects

*Spirituality
and meaning*

outside the mind but immaterial or spiritual states on a plane beyond the range of nervous impressions.

The human mind therefore possesses, within the foil of its own fabric, what is known as "meaning." In virtue of this meaning man understands his experiences along with the laws and relativity of natural objects.

Mind

From such non-material states of rational meaning and voluntary appreciation of values we thus gain our idea of spirituality. Meaning and value, as such, are not in material things, but are rational relations within our consciousness. Only as experienced in mind can meaning and value be present. Therefore, it is the mind itself which supplies the subject within which they can exist. The qualities of matter are knowable to us because we are able to form in our minds the ideas which material things embody on a lower plane. Meaning does not come ready made from without to the mind. It cannot exist outside the mind, and inheres only within it. That is to say, the mind is that type of reality the experienced modifications or activities of which take the form of meaning and appreciation. The terms "Spirit" and "Spirituality" thus designate meaning-fabric in contrast to material and sense-fabric, and it is this spiritual character of life which distinguishes human persons from sub-human types of individuality.

The highest form of activity

We see, then, that personal self-realisation in immanent spiritual life is the highest form of activity of which we have experience. It is superior because of that immanence whereby, though complex in its powers, its life is relatively independent and complete, and can contain within itself its own term and process.

In the ascending scale of being, each higher form embodies the activities of the lower forms with the synthetic addition of its own higher characteristics. Thus plants possess, over and above the atomic energy common to all types of matter, an immanent individual life, assimilate nutriment, grow and propagate their kind, and have a degree of sensitivity. Animals further possess, in a superior order, all these vegetative functions while adding thereto their distinctive qualities of high sensibility, imagination, memory, appetite, emotional language, and progressive movement. Man, in a still higher mode, embodies in his physical life vegetal and animal powers, but in such a manner as to subserve a higher than animal individuality and purpose, finding expression in a language which is rational and ideal. Revelation teaches us that the life of an angel is more intensely immanent even than that of the human mind.

The higher, therefore, the mode of life, the more activity it embraces, and thus is the more immanent and independent. The supreme life is that which is perfectly immanent, complete, and independent. Hence the ultimate subsistent life of triune Deity, which is necessarily self-sufficient and independent, includes immanently all activities of being in a super-spiritual mode.

God is necessarily spiritual because he is superior to dimensive parts, and yet embodies the fulness of meaning and value of all-being. He includes within himself, in the highest possible form, all the activities which angels, men, animals, plants, and inorganic elements possess in various lower grades of being. The spiritual substances of angels and men can partially embody all reality in their knowledge and volition, in virtue of modifications of their own meaning-fabric. But the ultimate being who is cause of all by the power of his life is not thus conditioned. God does not derive knowledge and purpose from objects as external to himself, but from within his own nature. Deity is subsistent meaning and value, omnipotent intelligence and will. In God the perfection of the real and of the ideal are one actuality. His self-knowledge is infinite, all-involving consciousness. He eternally possesses the completest knowledge of creatures in recognising that his own perfections are creatively representable in finite modes. The actual existence of finite being can provide no new object or knowledge for the Being who alone is in every respect their ultimate explanation.

Truth is eternal because it is identical with eternal Deity. Finite minds participate in truth in the same manner in which they participate in being. God is necessary truth, envisaging finite beings within an infinite unity of conscious meaning, in which alone lies their original possibility.¹

God's knowledge, therefore, is for ever complete and changeless. Being eternal he knows, in unalterable vision, as actually existent, all the beings of the universe according to their proper and individual natures, together with every series of changes in matter and living things, as well as all acts of freewill in angels and men. We ourselves cannot even predict our own free acts, because the whole meaning of our natures never appears in our finite consciousness at any one time. But the whole reality of all free spirits is completely obvious to God in his creative act. The acts of a man are not creative of new being, but utilise powers which are the immediate product of the divine life itself; they are thus fully comprehended in God their primary Cause. In this perfect and changeless meaning of God things are not observed as past or future, or viewed as from afar. All states of being, all events, conditions, intentions, rights, duties, merits, demerits, joys, sorrows, hopes and fears, are "present" in an eternal and comprehensive awareness.

The intelligence of the supreme Being is revealed: (a) in the composite and relative order within the universe, (b) in the gift of intelligence to men, (c) in the very meaning of truth.

(a) We have seen that compositeness cannot be ultimate. The universe implies a prior constituting cause to which it owes this

¹ We cannot regard our minds as one with the Divine Mind, since we are incapable of a direct and positive consciousness of the infinite. The finitude of our minds is further shown by our relative ignorance.

composition of finite elements. We have seen, too, that neither the universe nor its activities are necessary in themselves. Inasmuch, therefore, as the reason why things are compounded is not involved in the components themselves (for mind, and not matter, is the principle of order), the ordering and compounding involved in the constitution of the universe is due to a Cause which has some intelligent reason for producing such a system. And as such reason can be present only in an intelligent being, it is clear that the cosmic order of interdependent elements is due ultimately to a Cause which is intelligent.

The order of the universe is not a mere remodelling or redistribution of pre-existing material. It is the creative constitution of the whole system in a state of relative activity. Hence it does not consist in the giving of "guidance" to material otherwise chaotic. Even independently of the relative movements discoverable in the material universe itself, there is evidence of God's intelligent ordering in the very fact that external objects are knowable to man's mind. Absolute chaos is therefore inconceivable, for any knowledge of things, in whatever state they may be, is itself order, and not chaos. Indeed, the knowability of things external to the mind is the supreme example of order. Each aspect of cosmic order implies sovereign intelligence in the universal Architect.

*Human
intelligence*

(b) We have seen in the section on Perfection that qualities are unlimited in their source. Where, therefore, they are only partially possessed, they do not originate, but are the gift of a higher cause in which they exist completely in identification with being. This is true of the properties of both matter and of mind. Each is a manifestation in different grades of the attributes of their common cause. Thus just as material energy symbolises Divine power, so man's possession of finite intelligence is a sign of perfect intelligence in God its original Cause.¹

*The meaning
of truth*

(c) Truth is an aspect of being. It is that aspect under which being is knowable or intelligible to mind. Over and above the question of universal order or relativity, there is the question of the ultimate reason or intelligibility of being as such. To be intelligible at all, being must be related to a mind. Thus the meaning of truth implies a knowing mind as well as a knowable object. We are able analogically to see the purpose of God in the purpose of men, but that does not give us direct knowledge of the ultimate purpose or meaning of being in itself. Being is thus only partially intelligible to finite minds. Ultimate meaning is beyond our comprehension.

¹Theology declares that mind cannot have developed by any *natural* process from matter or from semi-material "neutral stuff." Self-conscious meaning, which is the essence of mind, is an entirely different type of reality from all modes of material energy or organic imagery. Therefore, to change matter into mind would only be possible by God's *supernatural* power, for it would be equivalent to transubstantiation.

Partial truth does not include the ultimate reason of being, whether finite or infinite, as it is subsequent to, and dependent upon, the previous actual existence of the universe. Yet the fact that being is known by us to be partially intelligible implies that being is perfectly intelligible to some mind which is greater than our own. Perfect intelligibility, or the ultimate explanation or reason of being, must be identical in act with the being in whose mind that explanation is present, for a mere explanation *in* a mind is not, as such, an explanation of that mind. Hence in subsistent Deity intelligibility and being are one reality. In other words, if relative truth is valid, its validity depends upon absolute truth, and what is absolute excludes all dependence, even the dependence of subject upon object.

The meaning of Truth and intelligibility thus reveal the presence of a being whose nature is to be perfectly intelligible in itself; that is to say, a being of which spirituality is the very essence. God, therefore, being subsistent, is self-existent Reason and Meaning. Perfect and infinite in every respect, he is not limited to the lesser qualities of being, but involves all in a transcendent life of spiritual meaning and eternal value.

§ X: DIVINE VOLITION

VOLITION is spiritual will whereby value is appreciated and loved. *Value and spiritual will*
It is devotion to being under the aspect of goodness, the counterpart of the same consciousness wherein the meaning of being is understood. Volition and intelligence are the complementary activities distinctive of personality and self-realisation.

Thus the principles of explanation already employed in the section on Intelligence are applicable generally to the immanence, completeness, and independence of spiritual volition. Likewise those facts of nature which reveal intelligence in the Divine Cause imply also the presence of his perfect will: (a) in the institution of the orderly system of nature whereby the components mutually contribute to the common purpose of all; (b) in the gift to finite man of a nature inherently tending to goodness; and (c) in the fact that partial values are real only as implications of absolute Value in the ultimate being upon which all depend, just as partial truth depends upon absolute truth for its final validity. *Perfect will in God*

From such considerations we know that supreme volition is enshrined within the very life of the three Persons who are one Spirit, so that Deity is its own purpose of subsistent value, its own personal appreciation in supreme mutual love.

In human volition there are two forms, namely, desire and delight. *Divine volition supreme delight*
Desire is the imperfect or unfulfilled state of will, wherein is sought that which is beneficial and advantageous. Delight is the superior state of will realised and fulfilled in the actual possession or attainment of its object. Divine Volition, however, involves no imperfection, and is therefore supreme delight, the significance of which

we can only contemplate by analogy. Lacking nothing and possessing all, the triune perfection knows no desire. Divine volition is perfect because will and object are one in the fullest realisation of subsistent life. The intrinsic might of triune sanctity embraces within itself an infinite appreciation of perfect being. God loves all being by being All, not by composition but by very excellence of reality, truth, and value.

Divine sanctity

In this identification of will with perfect being consists God's merit and goodness, both relative and absolute. God *is* sanctity in virtue of his immanent love of the most sacred perfection of his own nature as manifested in the triune life and in its benevolence to creatures. "He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is his name."¹ In itself the Divine will thus possesses its infinitely adequate object, for love and being are identified.

Divine self-love

The complaisance of power whereby God loves himself supremely is according to the very meaning of ultimate and subsistent being. There can be no error or disproportion in God's eternal activity. Therefore, in Deity, self-love is necessarily infinite. It is impossible that it should be otherwise. God's will is naturally identified with the perfection of his being. There is no selfishness in the Blessed Trinity, for selfishness is an inordinate self-aggrandisement which despises others and unjustly withholds from them their rights and esteem. Self-seeking in men or angels is doubly false in that it imputes undue importance to oneself whilst undervaluing God and one's neighbour. But proportionate self-love in all is both necessary and praiseworthy, and the absence of self-esteem would be incongruous and unnatural. God's gift of being to creatures is liberality, the opposite of selfishness, and shows that his self-love embraces all things. The reason of love is the goodness involved in rational beings, as well as, secondarily, their value to ourselves, and the Divine Exemplar of being is honoured in all respect shown to finite perfections. True love for the lesser good can therefore only exist as involved in devotion to the highest Good.

God's love of creatures

The partial revelation of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity helps us to appreciate the meaning of eternal love. God's love is necessary and changeless, yet voluntary and free. It is the exemplary originating source of all affection, fervour, enthusiasm, and worship in his creatures. In the mutual self-realisation of the three Persons is embraced the Divine love of creatures: as expressed in the words of the natural Son of God: "I in them, and thou (Father) in me: that they may be made perfect in one; and the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou also hast loved me."²

The problem of evil

In Deity there is the highest recognition of human and angelic worth. It may be that this will not be evident to the whole universe

¹ Our Lady's words in the *Magnificat* (Luke i 49).

² John xvii 23.

until the era of judgement, but meanwhile, with that faith which is appropriate to our state, there can be no real doubt of the Divine concern for creatural benefit. Suffering, calamity, bereavement in peace and war: these are the obscurities attending the overture of immortality. "The sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come."¹ Exemption from pain is not the ideal of happiness or the emblem of success. Pain and death are natural to sensitive human and animal nature, and the body can only be rendered immune from them by a preternatural gift which no man can claim as a right. Death and its attendant distresses are an appropriate tribute to the eternal sanctity in view of the sin of the race. In that mystery of sacrifice lies the means of redemption, and the more innocent the sufferer the greater benefaction he brings to mankind. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."² Thus can be paid the debt of temporal punishment for corporate transgression.

The "problem" of evil is the problem of angelic and human selfishness, and the "origin" of evil is nothing else than the origin of pride. God constitutes free creatures in being and co-operates with their actions. Guilt lies in just that deliberate relation of acts to motives in which the distinct activity of men and angels consists. Evil is a relation of disproportion within the creature's volition, for which he alone is responsible.³

Pain, death, and other physical calamities are called "evil" only by analogy. In themselves they are appropriate in the circumstances, and God is their primary author. God is said to cause physical evil in the sense that he creates things which are good in themselves, and yet incidentally capable of causing harm to others. "Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God. Wisdom and discipline, and knowledge of the law are with God. Love and the ways of good things are with him."⁴ Hereby the sacred writer precludes the error of those who suppose two primitive principles, good and evil.

The will of God is a will to holiness, not to the mere prosperity of man. That saving will is shown by the gift of sufficient grace to all, along with the gift of freedom. God's will is absolute, using no means, but directly willing all events in the one infinitude of power which is essential holiness.⁵ Nothing can resist that will. Man's being and destiny are willed as one in God's timeless volition,

¹ Rom. viii 18.

² Gal. vi 2.

³ Our difficulty in understanding God's co-operation with his creatures' activities is due to our inability to form a positive conception of action which is creative.

⁴ Eccles. xi 14-15.

⁵ Terms such as "overruling," "tolerating," "overlooking," and "anger," and equivalent phrases, are but metaphors, contrasting with opposing wickedness the divine activity of which we have only analogical knowledge.

and what we call predestination and reprobation are but aspects to our minds of that total productivity of creation in regard to responsible creatures. God created man's being as possessed of certain powers and the ability to act freely. God's concurrence with man's deliberate acts does not diminish their freedom but maintains it. Man's purpose is the fulfilment of the Divine purpose in the manifestation of Divine power and sanctity. "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth,"¹ and all human acts inevitably fulfil that purpose. Thus "in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth: and every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."²

*The reason
of creation*

Creation thus expresses God's delight in the sanctity of his own Deity, as including his imitability on creatural planes. God who is Being in the highest degree is himself the sole principle and reason of all lesser modes of being. Composite natures have not of themselves the reason of their being; their very possibility arises from the fact that they are known and purposed by God in imitation of his own perfection. Their type of being is such that they could not exist unless they were created. They are by nature dependent; that expresses both their frailty and their charm.

Being subsistent and infinitely perfect, God has no need of creatures, nor can they add to his beatitude or involve change in his activity. Whatever is related to his eternal life is related to the indivisible whole of that eternity. To be Creator is God's eternal state, though finite creatures are naturally of limited duration, and are thus conditioned by time. Eternally Creator, he knows and wills all always. The production of creatures is not a subsequent fulfilment of an antecedent "desire," but has place in the eternal-realisation of his omnipotent life.

By creating the universe God therefore acquired no additional glory, but manifested it to rational beings who, in Christ the universal King, are the central feature of that creation. To finite minds that manifestation is known in time, while to God himself it is known and possessed in his eternity. God is his own purpose. His own excellence, self-manifested and made known to creatures, is the complete object of his infinite volition. His glory is no other than his own intrinsic perfection, and this is the motive of his works.

God's ultimate reason in creating the finite is thus identical with his very being. He is the Alpha and the Omega. The purposive or "Final Cause" of creatures is therefore God himself.

In considering the ultimate reason why God created the world we must distinguish the two very different meanings of the word creation. The term "creation" is used to denote: (1) the Divine activity as creative, and (2) the finite universe as the product of creation. The

¹ 2 Cor. xiii 8.

² Phil. ii 10-11.

reason of the omnipotent act itself is one with God's essential delight in his perfection and power as possessing that exemplary excellence whereby all else must depend creatively upon himself. The sufficient reason of the creative act as such is thus totally immanent to the Divine Cause. But the finite universe, considered in itself as the product of omnipotence, contributes nothing to the Divine reason or motive in creating. Finite things cannot contain within themselves the ultimate reason of their nature or existence. They are not purposed for their own sakes, but because they represent the glorious nature of their triune Maker.

It follows that Deity is under no obligation to create finite entities, and is perfectly free in conceiving their possibility no less than in giving them actual existence. Even the human will cannot be compelled to act by a finite object, still less the Divine.

Creation, then, has its complete and eternal reason in the Divine Perfection which is the Glory of God, and the manifestation of God in the universe is evidence of the freedom of Divine love. During the present preparatory stage of our existence that glory of God is seen but indistinctly. The fuller manifestation of the glory of the Blessed Trinity and the meaning of creation is attainable only in that experience which makes heaven what it is, namely, the supernatural intuitive vision of the perfection of Deity.

§ XI: ADORATION

To give honour where honour is due is a dictate of our very nature. Where there is excellence of being or goodness or knowledge or power, there reverence is accorded inevitably.

Because of his ineffable value and our complete dependence upon him, God merits our deepest adoration. Humanity has ever borne testimony to the Supreme Ruler. Magic and sceptical anti-intellectualism may always be present as outgrowths upon human religion, but mankind *is* what it has been, and thus the race can never lose its sense of responsibility to its God. Religion is connatural to us. It is not only a mode of consciousness. It is a physical state of man's dependent being. It is, further, the response of man's complete personality to the ultimate facts as known to us. The knowledge of God is humanity's greatest boast, and a lowly worship, both private and public, is consequently man's pre-eminent vocation. This natural tendency to worship God is itself a proof that such is the will of him who conceived our being, and constituted it so that it should recognise him as its Alpha and Omega, its efficient, exemplary, and final Cause.

The propriety of interior and exterior worship is still further enforced by the revelation of Christ, which at once clarifies our natural knowledge and brings further insight as to the status of man in the Divine purpose. "God is a spirit, and they that adore him must

adore him in spirit and in truth." ¹ Our Lord, who spoke these words, himself embodies the supreme example of that spiritual worship. The filial spirit of harmony with the divine will, recognition of God in all creation, gratitude, prayer, praise, adoration, especially the adoration of sacrifice, pervaded our Lord's every intention in joy and sorrow. The subjective element of personal preference and advantage was entirely subject to the objective element in his devotion to the Blessed Trinity. The sublime transcendence of God, which added so much grandeur to the Divine condescension, was the central theme of his life and teaching. So it must ever be.

It is inappropriate to regard God primarily under the aspect of his beneficence to his creatures. Gratitude for existence and for every privilege there must indeed be, but that element must be subordinate to the still higher recognition of all that Deity is in itself. Things are what they are because God is what he is, and this order must ever be observed. Even self-regarding prayer has its proper motive in adoration of God as subsistent reason, value, and sanctity. Praise to the holiest contains no element of flattery, but its absence would be an unnatural affectation.

God must be recognised, we cannot avoid it. It is vain to strive after an artificial indifference in a matter that is so intimate to our whole being. Vain likewise, and idolatrous, would be any attempt to deflect our admiration from its true object by imputing to humanity or to nature and its tendencies the attributes which are proper to Deity alone. Human worship of God is no such Narcissism, or worship of ourselves as reflected in our own conceptions. We contemplate God as objectively as we do the material world of which our ideas are similarly analogical.

We are fully conscious that the reality of the Blessed Trinity is inexpressibly more wondrous than our ideas are capable of representing. Whereas we need to restrict the meaning of our concepts when applying them to finite persons and things, the whole range of our ideas finds exhaustive applicability in regard to Deity, the subsistent fulness of all that man admires and enjoys in finite nature.

A. L. REYS.

¹ John iv 24.

IV

THE BLESSED TRINITY

§ I: THE DOGMA OF THE TRINITY

By the Blessed Trinity we mean the mystery of one God in three *General notions* persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, each subsisting distinct in the same identical divine nature.

It will be well if, at the outset of our study of this fundamental dogma of the Christian religion, we acquire precise and clear-cut ideas as to the exact significance of such terms as nature and person, since they must needs occur frequently in any treatise on the Trinity.

They are words which we employ commonly enough in ordinary conversation, and in writing in a loose literary way, without adverting to their more precise philosophical and theological connotations. Both words are of ancient lineage and have played no mean part in the history of dogma. For centuries they were the watchwords, the touchstones of orthodoxy, during the great controversies which distracted the early Church as to the divinity and humanity of Christ. In the welter of theological argument, ambiguities were gradually removed, and in course of time the meaning of these two words gradually crystallised into definite technical form.

The word nature, derived from the Latin *natum*,¹ means literally *Nature* that which is born, or that which is produced. We use the term nature, in its widest sense, to indicate everything that has been produced, the totality of finite things, the whole created universe which in its various parts furnishes the objects of what are called the natural sciences. These objects, the earth, the sea, the animals, the stars, differ very considerably: each, we say, has its own nature. And so by an easy transition from its etymological significance, we arrive at the philosophical meaning of the term nature as that which makes a thing what it is; in other words, the essence, or quiddity of the thing.

"Nature, properly so called," says Aristotle, "is the essence of beings, which have in themselves and by themselves the principle of their movement." ■ The nature of any being, then, is simply its essence considered from the dynamic standpoint, that is, precisely as the principle of its peculiar activities. It is the nature of a fish to swim, of a bird to fly, of a reptile to crawl; and it is by observing their characteristic operations, their native activities, that we are able to classify things according to their natures.

¹ *Nasci*, to be born.

² *Met.*, lib. v, c. 4.

Person

The word person is derived from the Latin *persona*, which originally meant the mask worn by ancient Greek and Roman actors on the stage. These tragic and comic masks were so constructed as to magnify the voice which sounded through (*per sonare*) the spacious cavity in front of the actor's mouth. That through which the voice sounded, the mask, was naturally called *persona*.

The term was then transferred from the mask to the actor who wore it as he portrayed some god or other mighty potentate. Next, it came to be applied to any assumed character of distinction, and finally to any human being as a name of dignity. For, it will be noted, person is primarily a name of honour, indicating rank and importance; and consequently, in philosophical usage, it came to be applied exclusively to the highest grade of the things which exist in nature, namely, substances endowed with rationality. Accordingly, in the fifth century, Boethius defined *persona* as "*rationalis naturæ individua substantia*," i.e., "an individual substance of a rational nature." St Thomas Aquinas, Leibnitz, Kant, and others have made valuable contributions to the study of personality, but the classical definition of Boethius remains substantially unchanged and unchallenged.

Hence the requisite qualifications for personality are :

1. In the first place, *subsistence* or substantiality; a person is first and foremost a substance, that is, something which exists in itself, something which subsists, as for instance an apple, and not something which merely inheres in something else, like the colour of the apple.

2. In the second place, the substance must be *distinct*, that is, it must have complete individuality, so that it is not in any sense part of, or common to, something else. Consequently neither the human body nor the human soul, separately, is a person.

3. And, finally, this distinct substance must be of a *rational nature*. We cannot, therefore, predicate personality of dogs or horses, however clever they may be, and still less can we predicate it of lower forms of life, or of inanimate objects. By a person, then, we mean a distinct substance endowed with the faculty of reason.

A mystery

We speak of the *mystery* of the Blessed Trinity, because clearly we are stating a truth which is above or beyond reason, when we say that in the same divine nature there are three distinct persons. As far as our experience goes, wherever we have a plurality of persons, we have also a plurality of individual natures. Apart from revelation we should never even have conceived the possibility of such a thing as absolute identity of nature in three distinct persons.

The Council of the Vatican has declared that the deposit of revealed truth contains some mysteries which can neither be understood nor demonstrated by reason, and in the whole ambit of divine revelation there is nothing more profound than the doctrine of the Trinity. Here, then, if anywhere, we have a truth above reason. It is beyond the wit of mortal man to fathom it, to sound its depths and

shoals, for "no one knoweth the Son but the Father: neither doth anyone know the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him."¹ Nevertheless, with St Athanasius, St Augustine, and St Thomas Aquinas, we contend that the doctrine of the Trinity is not against reason, and, furthermore, that we can establish to the full the rationality of the obedience of the faith which accepts this great mystery.

To say that unaided human reason could never have excogitated the doctrine of the Trinity is not to say that the doctrine is incomprehensible or evidently repugnant to reason. The fact being made known to us by revelation that there are three persons in one God, reason, as we shall see, is well able to dispose of the objections which reason can bring. Truth is not at war with itself, and consequently reason and revelation play perfectly harmonious parts in the service of Eternal Truth.

From the very beginning the doctrine of the Trinity was in the forefront of Christian teaching. It is enshrined in the final commission of our Blessed Saviour to his Apostles: "going therefore teach all nations . . . baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost"²; and, as we shall see, it is taught explicitly in many passages of the New Testament. In fact the germ of the Apostles' Creed would seem to be the statement of the doctrine of the Trinity set forth by St Irenaeus in the second century in the following formula: "I believe in one God the Father Almighty, who made the heaven, the earth and the sea, and all things contained therein; and in Jesus Christ the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets preached the dispositions of God."³

The Catholic doctrine

Now the preaching of this new doctrine, affecting as it did the vital concept of God, not unnaturally led to considerable confusion of thought amongst some of the early converts to Christianity, who brought with them into the Church preconceived notions with regard to the Deity.

No less than three distinct influences are discernible, distorting *Errors* the doctrine of the Trinity, each in a different way. First of all, there was the Jewish influence, stressing monotheism as opposed to the polytheism of the pagans; then there were the Platonists with their ingrained tendency to multiply divinities; and, finally, rationalism was represented by the Gnostics whose general preoccupation was to harmonise the Christian religion with current philosophical speculation.

1. The Jewish influence made itself felt in the heresy of the Sabellians who, through over-emphasising the unity of the Godhead against the Platonists, ended by making the three divine persons mere

¹ Matt. xi 27.

² Matt. xxviii 19.

³ *Adversus haereses*, I, x, 1.

modes or manifestations of the divinity. They seem to have taken the word person in its original sense of mask or character, and to have conceived the Trinity as an outward manifestation of the threefold character of God as creator, as redeemer, and as sanctifier. Obviously, here, there is merely a trinity of concepts and not of persons.

2. Many of the Platonists went to the other extreme, and multiplied not only the divine persons, but also the divine nature itself, so as to afford a real basis for the charge of polytheism levelled at them by the Sabellians.

3. The Gnostic influence favoured Arianism and other forms of Subordinationism, which made the second and third persons of the Trinity subordinate, or inferior, to the Father, and consequently in reality made the Son and the Holy Ghost emanations, as it were, outside the divine nature altogether, and therefore in essence creatures.

All these different forms of error were condemned in the celebrated dogmatic letter which Pope Dionysius (A.D. 259-269) addressed to Denis, Bishop of Alexandria. In this epistle are formulated the principles which later governed the decisions of the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) in defining the divinity of the Son, and the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381) in defining the divinity of the Holy Ghost.

*The
Athanasian
Creed*

The whole doctrine of the Trinity is summarised in the Athanasian Creed. This creed, though not the work of St Athanasius, is admittedly not of later date than the first half of the fifth century, since it contains no echoes whatsoever either of the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) or of the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). It solemnly proclaims: "Now the Catholic Faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity." Then follows a detailed exposition of the precise meaning and theological implications of this fundamental formula, embodying the majestic declaration: "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God." The symbol ends in the uncompromising spirit of the great Athanasius whose name it bears: "This is the Catholic Faith, which, except a man believe faithfully and steadfastly, he cannot be saved."

§ II: THE TRINITY IN SCRIPTURE

I

*In the Old
Testament*

It was the peculiar glory of the Jews, as God's own chosen people, to have preserved upon the earth, amidst the welter of surrounding polytheism, the worship of the one true God. As a nation, the Jews never wavered in their belief that there was but one God, Jehovah; and consequently the idea of a trinity of divine persons would be alien to their natural mental outlook.

The mystery of the Blessed Trinity was not formally revealed in the Old Testament, but in accordance with what St Bonaventure

calls "the general law of preparation," this distinctively Christian doctrine is foreshadowed on many pages of the Old Testament. For it appears to be God's way not to allow the fulness of revealed truth to break upon the world suddenly. There is a long period of adaptation, as it were, during which the way is prepared gradually for the final revelation. Thus, the Fathers declare the Paschal Lamb to be the type, the symbol, the figure of the Divine Victim by whose blood we have been redeemed. They see in the initiation rite of circumcision an adumbration of the sacrament of baptism, and in the manna a foreshadowing of the true bread of life in the Holy Eucharist. In the same way there are assuredly indications in the Old Testament of the stupendous revelation which was to come in the New Testament as to the inner fecundity of the Divine Life itself.

Thus St Augustine detects the implication of a plurality of divine persons in such utterances on the part of God as "Let us make man to our image and likeness,"¹ "Behold Adam is become as one of us,"² "Let us go down, and there confound their tongue"³; wherein other commentators see only the plural of majesty. The triple *Sanctus* of Isaias, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts,"⁴ and the triple blessing recorded in Numbers,⁵ have also been pointed out as heralding the sublime mystery of the Trinity in Unity.

Again, the theophanies, or manifestations of God in the Old Testament, in which an angel of the Lord appeared to one or other of the patriarchs, were interpreted by all the Fathers prior to St Augustine as manifestations of the second person of the Trinity in the form of an angel. St Augustine takes exception to this view on the ground that God is incorporeal and therefore invisible to the human eye, but nevertheless he holds that the angel represents God. The most notable of these apparitions is that which was vouchsafed to Abraham in the valley of Mambre: "And when he had lifted up his eyes, there appeared to him three men standing near him: and as soon as he saw them he ran to meet them from the door of his tent, and adored down to the ground."⁶ St Augustine, St Ambrose, St Hilary, and the Fathers generally, interpret this incident as a veiled manifestation of the mystery of the Trinity; and this patristic exegesis receives corroboration from the Roman Breviary which, in the response to the second reading from the Scripture occurring for Quinquagesima Sunday, setting forth the above-cited passage of Genesis, says of Abraham: "he saw three and adored one."

From the time of Daniel onwards there are clearer references to the second and third persons of the Trinity in the not infrequent personifications of the Word, Wisdom, or the Spirit. Thus we read, "By the word of the Lord the heavens were established; and all the power of them by the spirit of his mouth."⁷ And again, "I have not spoken in secret from the beginning: from the time

¹ Gen. i 26.² Gen. iii 22.³ Gen. xi 7.⁴ vi 3.⁵ vi 24-26.⁶ Gen. xviii 2.⁷ Psalm xxxii 6.

before it was done, I was there, and now the Lord God hath sent me, and his spirit." ¹ In the sapiential books, Wisdom is constantly hypostatised and speaks as a Divine Person; as, for instance, in Ecclesiasticus: "I came out of the mouth of the Most High, the firstborn before all creatures." ²

Naturally the second person of the Trinity has a peculiar prominence in the Old Testament owing to the number of prophetic passages which predicate divine attributes of the coming Messias. Thus, "The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee" ³; "and I will make him my firstborn, high above the kings of the earth . . . and his throne as the days of heaven." ⁴ In fact many of these passages in the Old Testament are explicitly applied to Christ in the New Testament. ⁵

However, the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is certainly not revealed in the Old Testament, which at best, in accordance with the general plan of the divine economy, merely foreshadows "the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret from eternity, which now is made manifest by the Scriptures, according to the precept of the eternal God, for the obedience of faith, known among all nations." ⁶

2

In the New Testament

Whereas at best the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is only dimly foreshadowed in the Old Testament, in the New Testament it shines forth with unmistakable clearness, lighting up many difficult passages with regard to the Incarnation, the redemptive work of Christ, the mission of the Holy Spirit, the operations of grace, and the infinite perfection of God.

Lest we lose ourselves in the maze of material at our disposal, it will be well, perhaps, if we set forth, first of all, the chief texts which treat of all three persons of the Trinity taken together, and then consider briefly the more important texts concerning the different persons of the Trinity taken separately.

A. THE DIVINE PERSONS CONSIDERED COLLECTIVELY

(i) *In the Gospels*

We shall consider, first of all, passages from the Gospels, and then from the Epistles. In the gospels all three divine persons are mentioned in an emphatic way on four momentous occasions.

At the Annunciation "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most

¹ Isaias xlvi 16. ² xxiv 5. ³ Psalm ii 7. ⁴ Psalm lxxxviii 28-30.

⁵ Compare, for instance, Ps. ii 7 with Heb. i 5; Isaias vii 14, with Matt. i 23; Isaias xl 3-11 with Mark i 3; Zacharias xii 10 with John xix 37.

⁶ Rom. xvi 25, 26.

High shall overshadow thee, and therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." ¹ Here, clearly, we have an unmistakable distinction of subsisting individuals. That the "Most High" refers to God the Father is obvious from a comparison with verse 32, where we read of the Son, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High." Now the Father is necessarily distinct from his own Son, and from the Holy Ghost, who is carrying out the work of the Most High. So, too, the Son and the Holy Ghost are really distinct from each other, since, as will be shown, the latter proceeds from the former.

Furthermore, each of the three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, subsists in a rational nature, namely, the divine nature itself. That this divine nature is common to all three persons is seen from a cursory consideration of the text. The divinity of the Father, "the Most High," is beyond question: as to the second person of the Trinity, the term "Son of God" is here used in its strictly literal sense to express true, real, sonship in such a way that the Son is of the same divine nature as the Father: the divinity of the Holy Ghost is revealed both in the miraculous work which he performs, and in the fact that he is described as "the power of the Most High," in the same manner that Christ is said to be "the Son of the Most High."

In this text, then, we have set before us both the reality of the distinction between the three subsisting individuals, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and also their real community in the divine nature. In other words, we see that there are three divine persons.

Again we have a striking manifestation of the Trinity of divine persons at the baptism of Christ in the Jordan by John the Baptist, as recorded in St Matthew's Gospel, where it is written: "And Jesus being baptised, forthwith came out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened to him: and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him. And behold a voice from heaven, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." ² We have here an external manifestation of the three persons as distinct. The Father speaks from the heavens, the Son rises up out of the water, and the Holy Spirit appears in the form of a dove. Here at least, it would seem, that all possibility of "confounding the persons" is precluded.

In this solemn incident at the beginning of our Blessed Saviour's public ministry we have more than a mere hint or inkling as to the community of the divine nature in all three persons. We cannot reasonably doubt that the "Spirit of God" is consubstantial with the Father, "the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal." As to the divinity of the Son who, it has been objected, in this incident occupies a subordinate rôle, especially in that he has been baptised by John,

¹ Luke i 35.

² iii 16, 17.

it has been pointed out by many Scripture commentators that the full force of the words spoken from heaven is somewhat weakened in our English translations, which ignore the significance of the definite article before the word Son, in the Greek original. What the voice proclaimed was : " This is *the* Son *par excellence*, mine, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased " ; in other words, we have here a proclamation of the divinity of the Son, of his consubstantiality with the Father.

*After the
Last Supper*

When our Blessed Saviour was taking leave of his disciples after the Last Supper, he said to them : " I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive. . . . " ¹ In this passage the real distinction of persons is evident. No person asks himself for anything, nor does a person ever send himself on a mission. The language used by Christ on this august occasion is at once unintelligible and unjustifiable unless the three divine persons are really distinct. Our Blessed Saviour asks for *another* Paraclete. The word paraclete means literally " one who is called in beside " to assist in some way. It has been variously translated as counsellor, consoler, comforter, advocate, guide, friend ; but the word is so rich in meaning that it would need a sentence at least to plumb its depths. Christ himself gives us the key to its expansive meaning when he speaks of *another* Paraclete. He himself had been a Paraclete to the disciples. He is about to leave them. He asks the Father to send someone to take his place, to discharge his divine office, to be another Paraclete. If the divinity of Christ is once admitted, it is impossible to deny the divinity of the Spirit of Truth who was to be another Paraclete.

*In the divine
commission*

Both the distinction of persons and the unity of the divine nature are emphasised in the well-known passage of St Matthew's Gospel in which Christ's final commission to his Apostles is recorded : " Going, therefore, teach ye all nations ; baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. " ²

The three distinct names, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in accordance with common usage, indicate three distinct persons, that is, three subsisting beings of a rational nature each complete in its own individuality in such a way as to preclude the possibility of any identification or confusion of one with another. The distinction of persons is stressed in the Greek by the presence of the definite article before each name, *the* Father, *the* Son, *the* Holy Ghost ; it would be contrary to Greek usage thus to repeat the definite article before mere attributes of one and the same subject.

The divinity of each of the three persons is equally clear. For he in whose name baptism unto the remission of sins is administered must needs be God, and this baptism is to be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The

¹ John xiv 16.

² Matt. xxviii 19.

Vulgate reading *in nomine*, which we translate "in the name of," indicates the one by whose power or authority the sacrament is administered; whilst a literal rendering of the Greek words would be "unto the name of," indicating rather, as Franzelin has pointed out, the one to whose honour and worship the recipient of the sacrament is consecrated. In either case divinity is clearly implied, divinity undivided, and possessed equally by all three persons. This interpretation is confirmed by a comparison of the text before us with 1 Cor. i 13 where St Paul indignantly asks the Corinthians, "were you baptised in the name of Paul?" Here both the Latin and the Greek expressions for "in the name of" are the same as in St Matthew's text, and St Paul's meaning is abundantly clear, namely, "Is Paul the author of your baptism?" It is as though he said to them, "Why extol me, or Peter, or Apollo, or any mere mortal as the source of grace?" In other words, "Is Paul *God*?"

(ii) *In the Epistles*

As in the Gospels, so in the Epistles, there are four classical passages having reference to the persons of the Trinity considered collectively.

The most famous of these is the Johannine Comma¹: "And there are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. And these three are one." That this passage sets forth the true Catholic doctrine, and that it is in perfect harmony with the teaching of St John's Gospel, there can be no doubt.

Nevertheless this statement as to the "Heavenly Witnesses" has been the subject of considerable controversy. The text itself comprises two verses of the First Epistle of St John.² The undisputed text reads: "For there are three who give testimony." Then follow the disputed words: "in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that give testimony on earth." And then, again, we have the undisputed text: "the Spirit and the water and the blood: and these three are one." It will be observed that the undisputed words make sense in themselves if the disputed be omitted. Westcott and Hort, in their important edition of the New Testament text, state in the note on this passage that "there is no evidence for the inserted words in Greek, or in any language but Latin, before the fourteenth century"; and also that "the words first occur at earliest in the latter part of the fifth century," that is, in Latin. This summary may be said to express the general view of the evidence, though there are not wanting scholars who trace the passage into earlier times, even to Tertullian at the end of the second century A.D. In any case it is evident that the textual case against the "Comma" is a strong one; no Greek manuscript of any consequence, for example, contains it.

¹ 1 John v 7.

² 1 John v 7-8.

Something of a sensation was therefore caused when a decree of the Holy Office appeared under date of January 13th, 1897, replying in the negative to the question "whether it can safely be denied, or at least be called in question," that the disputed text is "authentic." An official explanation, however, was then given privately, and has lately been published officially in the *Enchiridion Biblicum* issued under the authority of the Biblical Commission¹ to the effect that this was not intended "to prevent Catholic writers from investigating the matter more fully, and after weighing the arguments on both sides . . . from inclining to the view unfavourable to the genuineness of the passage, provided they profess themselves ready to stand by the judgement of the Church. . . ." Thus we may conclude that the evidence is strong against the passage, but that the Holy See reserves to itself the ultimate decision in a matter which obviously falls within its competence.²

*The teaching
of St Paul*

St Paul's own teaching with regard to the Blessed Trinity is unequivocal, notwithstanding the rationalist contention that he makes of Christ only a celestial man, a being removed by many degrees from divinity. Writing to the Corinthians, St Paul says: "Wherefore I give you to understand that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, saith Anathema to Jesus. And no man can say the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but the same God, who worketh all in all."³ In the first sentence we have a clear statement of the equality of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Ghost, and then follows what has been described as at least an insinuation of the doctrine of the Trinity in Godhead, since diversities of graces are ascribed to the same Spirit (the Holy Ghost); diversities of ministries to the same Lord (Christ Jesus); and diversities of operations to the same God who worketh all in all (the Father). All these operations are divine, but by appropriation they are attributed to the different persons of the Trinity according to that peculiar fittingness which led the writers of Holy Writ, in treating of divine operations, to assign external works of power to the Father, external acts of love to the Son, and external works of sanctification to the Holy Spirit. In this particular text, it will be noticed, the three persons are mentioned in reverse order, and this, according to some commentators, with a view to emphasising their absolute equality.

*The
Trinitarian
invocation*

No one can fail to see the implications of St Paul's direct invocation of the three persons of the Trinity in the final verse of his Second Epistle to the Corinthians: "the grace of our Lord Jesus

¹ Rome, 1927: pp. 46-47.

² The Council of Trent declared the traditional Vulgate "authentic" (Session iv) in a context which shows the meaning of "authentic" to be primarily "official". It is not declared authentic in the purely *critical* sense.

³ 1 Cor. xii 3-6.

Christ, and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.”

In precisely the same manner does St Peter pen the first words of his First Epistle: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers dispersed . . . according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, unto the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. . . .” *The apostolic salutation*

In the Epistles, then, as in the Gospels, the Holy and Undivided Trinity is shown forth both in the bewildering multiplicity of operations outside the divine essence and in the ineffable intercommunion of the divine persons in that inner life which is from eternity unto eternity.

B. THE DIVINE PERSONS CONSIDERED SEPARATELY

We are now in a position to consider the divine persons separately, that is, in their individual and distinctive relationships towards each other. The fact of the distinct relationships and of the common nature of the three persons is abundantly clear from the manner in which each of the three is spoken of in Holy Writ. It would be tedious and superfluous to give an exhaustive list of all the texts in the New Testament which treat of the divine personality of one or other of the three persons. We shall therefore content ourselves with making mention only of the more celebrated texts with regard to each of the persons.

Whereas ancient heresies assailed the divine personality of the second and third persons of the Blessed Trinity, Modernists have in addition attempted to make of God the Father a kind of limited deity, still in process of evolution, ever blindly striving and groping to find himself in the universe as in the medium of his self-expression. Needless to say, such a view finds no warrant in Holy Scripture. In the Old Testament, Jehovah is portrayed as the omnipotent sole creator who rules and governs the world according to his will; whilst in the New Testament, he is the first person of the Trinity, the principle from which all else proceeds, even the Son and the Holy Spirit from all eternity. Thus he is set before us not merely as the Father of all creatures in the metaphorical sense, but as the Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, in the strictly literal sense: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”¹; “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for ever”²; “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings.”³ That the Father is also the principle of origin for the procession of the Holy Spirit is clearly stated by St John: “When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me.”⁴ How precisely the second and third persons proceed from the Father we shall consider presently.

¹ 2 Cor. i 3.

² 2 Cor. xi 31.

³ Eph. i 3.

⁴ John xv 26.

God the Son

The teaching of revelation with regard to the second person of the Blessed Trinity centres in the doctrine of his real and perfect sonship. If he is the real Son of God, then he must be consubstantial with the Father, that is, of the same divine nature as the Father, or, as the Creed has it, "true God of true God." There will be community, in fact identity, of nature. On the other hand, if the sonship is real, so too must be the distinction of personality. Now, that the sonship is real is stated in the New Testament in the most unequivocal manner: "God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son" ¹; "the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." ² This real sonship of Christ is even contrasted by St John with adoptive sonship, for Christ is "only-begotten," whereas "as many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God." ³

St Paul, too, stresses the fact that the filiation of Christ is of a different and higher order than that of the adoptive sonship even of the angels. He says that God "in these days hath spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world," and who is "the figure of his substance." St Paul then goes on to say that this Son, being made higher than the angels, hath inherited "a more excellent name than they, "for to which of the angels hath he said at any time, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith: And let all the angels of God adore him." ⁴

The scriptural language used of Christ is unintelligible unless he is the Son of God in the most literal sense of sonship. It is clear, then, that the second person of the Trinity proceeds from the Father by generation; by some real process of generation which is from all eternity.

God the Holy Ghost

That the Holy Spirit is not a mere attribute of God, or some form of impersonal divine energy emanating from the Father and the Son, is obvious from the fact that, as we have already seen, baptism is administered in the name of, that is, by the power of, the Holy Ghost, just as much as by the power of the Father and the Son. We have seen that the Holy Spirit is a distinct rational substance, in other words, a distinct person. He is a divine person, since the spiritual regeneration which he bestows in baptism is assuredly a divine gift. Moreover, the special functions attributed to the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures proclaim his Godhead: "The Holy Ghost said to them, Separate me Saul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have taken them" ⁵; "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them"; ⁶ "Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath placed

¹ John iii 16.⁴ Heb. i 1-6.² John i 18.⁵ Acts xiii 2.³ John i 12.⁶ John xx 22.

you bishops, to rule the Church of God.”¹ The Holy Spirit, then, is a divine person “who proceedeth from the Father”² and from the Son who sends him.

Now just as the name Son indicates a necessary likeness in nature to the Father, so, too, the term “Spirit of God” implies a necessary likeness to the essence of God. This point is stressed by St Paul in the classical text in which he argues from an analogy with the human cognitive process. He says: “For what man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him? So the things also that are of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God.”³ St Paul has just been speaking of certain hidden mysteries, and in answer to the unspoken query as to how he knows these things, he answers that he knows them by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. He then proceeds to explain that just as no one can know a man’s secret thoughts except his own spirit or self, so no one can fathom the deep things of God but the Spirit of God, that is, the Holy Ghost, co-essential with God, and possessing the same identical nature.

Now though the Holy Spirit proceeds similar, in fact identical, in nature with the Father, as does the Son, nevertheless the Holy Spirit must proceed by a process different from that by which the Son proceeds. The second person of the Blessed Trinity is called the *Only-begotten*. Clearly, then, the Holy Spirit proceeds by a process other than that of generation.

We are now in a position to enquire into the character of the divine processions, and into the fundamental constituents of the distinctive personality of the Father who proceeds from none, of the Son who proceeds from the Father, and of the Holy Spirit who proceeds from both. But we will do well to approach this sublime study in the spirit of the true humility of learning as voiced by the Psalmist: “Lord, my heart is not exalted, nor are my eyes lofty.”⁴

§ III: THE FECUNDITY OF THE DIVINE LIFE

ARISTOTLE reached the highest point of pagan theological speculation when he defined God as “Thought of Thought.” In Aristotle’s philosophy there is an ever-ascending scale of being ranging from pure passivity to pure activity. God must necessarily be the supreme activity in which there is no alloy of passivity of any kind whatsoever. Now the highest activity of which we are aware is intellectual activity, the spiritual activity of thought. God, then, in the Aristotelian theodicy, is pure, unadulterated thought which, on account of its very perfection, can think only of the infinitely perfect, namely, itself. To think of anything lower than itself, according to Aristotle, would be derogatory to the infinite perfection of the pure activity of thought. Hence God is defined as the “Thought of Thought,” the Infinite

*The
Aristotelian
conception
of God*

¹ Acts xx 28.

² John xv 26.

³ I Cor. ii 11.

⁴ Ps. cxxx 1.

Intelligence wrapt in eternal self-contemplation. But the God of this philosophy is at best but a pale abstraction subsisting in awe-inspiring isolation.

*The Jewish
conception*

On the contrary, when we come to consider the God of the Jews, there is warmth, there is light and shade, there is colour, for this is a personal God who governs the universe by his providence. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the God too of the mortal enemies of the Jews, the Philistines. He is the omnipotent God of heaven and earth who "made the little and the great, and hath equally care of all."¹ Above all, the God who is revealed in the Old Testament is a *living* God, a God endowed with the fulness of life, a God whose very essence it is to live, a God who describes himself in the stupendous words, "I am who am."² "He who is," is his distinctive title, for he is the unique being who exists necessarily, whose very existence is his essential characteristic; but not the remote impersonal colourless existence of the God of Greek philosophy. Far from it: he is personally nigh to each one of us. "Let all fear the God of Daniel," says Holy Writ, "for he is the living God."³ He is the source, the fount, the teeming principle of all life, sustaining and governing the whole of creation at every moment, the God to whom we must render an account of the life that he has given to us.

*Contrast with
Mohammed-
anism*

Islam's conception of God is well known, and represents a kind of *via media* between the Greek and the Jewish notions: "There is no God but God; and Mohammed is his prophet." So, too, Christ Jesus was his prophet, and indeed many another, since the *Qur'an* proclaims, "there is no nation but has had its warner." Nevertheless, the greatest of the prophets and apostles, such as Moses, Christ, and Mohammed, are mere mortals, and the same gates of spiritual advancement that were open to them are open to all mankind. They are "warners," admonishers, voices calling men always to the contemplation of the sublime unity of the Godhead. In no sense are these prophets intermediaries between God and his creatures: there are no intermediaries. However proficient in sanctity these "warners" may be, at best they are but guides. They do not even reflect the light of divinity, for just as the sun in the heavens is the sole source of light to this planet, so God in his isolation is the sole source of light to the spiritual world. . . . This is indeed a beautiful and arresting piece of imagery, but it must be confessed that the concept of deity which it sets forth is so dazzling that we are intellectually blinded by it. It is like looking at the sun with the naked eye: we are so dazed by its brilliance that we learn nothing about it.

The plain fact is that Mohammedanism, equally with paganism, though in a different way, failed to realise the true nature of God,

¹ Wisdom vi 8.

² Exod. iii '14.

³ Dan. vi 26.

failed to understand that he is the God of life and love, of that life which is supremely active, and of that love which is infinitely diffusive. He is not a god who dwells like a lone star apart, but the God whose pulsating life and illimitable love find expression in the gracious condescension of his self-revelation. It is to one's intimate friends that one reveals the secrets of one's inner life, and consequently it is in the New Testament, with the coming of the Eternal Son of God in the flesh for the love of man, that the veil is drawn aside from the majesty and mystery of the divine life, so that we may catch some glimpse of it as it is in itself, and not merely as it was known hitherto in its outward and visible manifestations.

From revelation it is obvious that the divine life in itself is not solitary either in the Aristotelian or the Mohammedan sense. As we have seen, we are given many inklings of this basic truth in the Old Testament, especially in those passages wherein Wisdom is personified and speaks in accents which are unmistakably divine, as, for instance, in the following: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before he made anything from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived. . . ." ¹

But it is from the New Testament that we learn definitely of the *The divine processions* origins or processions, as they are called, which are intrinsic to the divine nature, and which give rise to the distinction of persons in God. Thus our Blessed Saviour says of himself, "For from God I proceeded and came." ² According to the Fathers, the words "and came" refer to the outward manifestation of the eternal Son of God in the flesh at his coming in the Incarnation; whilst the expression "from God I proceeded" is taken to be a statement of his eternal origin from the Father. This interpretation is confirmed by St Paul's direct application to Christ of the words of the Psalmist, "Thou art my son, to-day have I begotten thee." The use of "to-day," indicating the immediate present, in conjunction with the past tense "begotten," must be regarded as a forcible way of expressing the eternal "now," the generation which always was, is, and ever shall be.

Furthermore, there is clear indication of another origin or procession, equally from all eternity and terminating, as does the first procession, within the divine essence itself. It is Christ himself who tells us of the Paraclete "whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father." ³ The Holy Spirit is sent by the Son, and therefore proceeds from the Son equally as from the Father.

There are, then, two distinct processions or origins in the divine essence which, as we see, is represented in Scripture as being

¹ Prov. viii 22.

² John viii 42.

³ John xv 26.

manifestly fruitful in itself. The key to the nature of the divine fertility is to be sought in the fundamental concept of God as the supreme spirit who alone exists of himself, and is infinite in all perfections. "God is a spirit,"¹ and therefore his intrinsic activities must be entirely spiritual, and the divine processions or origins must be of a purely spiritual character.

Now the essential activities of a spiritual agent are thought, by which he understands the true, and volition, by which he loves the good. Therefore of God, who is the supreme spirit, we must predicate thought and volition in their fullest perfection. This much was recognised by Aristotle, though without the guiding light of revelation he was unable to penetrate deeper into the mystery of the hidden things of God.

Since it has been made known to us by revelation that there are, intrinsic to the divine nature itself, two different processions or origins, it is clear that one of these processions will be according to the activity of the divine intelligence, and the other according to the activity of the divine will. This is implied in the names which the Scripture applies to the second and third persons of the Trinity. The second person is called the Logos, that is, the word or the concept, something begotten by an intellectual process; whereas the third person is called the Holy Spirit. Here the term "spirit," derived from the Latin *spirare*, to breathe, is used by analogy with the manner in which we draw a deep breath or sigh as expressive of the attraction of the will to some loved object.

§ IV: THE PROCESSION OF THE SON FROM THE FATHER

The Logos

IN the prologue to the Fourth Gospel St John says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The term "the Word," "the Logos," was in common use amongst the philosophers of St John's day. As far back as 500 B.C. it was employed by Heraclitus to express that which gives rationality or order to the universe. With Plato, the Logos became an intermediary between God and the material world; with Aristotle, the energy in touch with finite things. The Stoics seem to have endowed the Logos with intelligence and consciousness, whilst the Jew, Philo, who was a contemporary of St John, even personifies it in much the same way that the Hebrews personified Wisdom in the Old Testament.²

It would seem, then, that St John, of set purpose, made use of a word which was well known in the schools of his day. Ephesus was the hub of the learned world, and there scholars were wont to meet together to exchange ideas, to speculate and philosophise. We

¹ John iv 24.

² Wisdom xviii 15; x 1, 2.

can hardly doubt that a favourite theme of their discussions must have been the precise nature of the mysterious intermediary between God and man which every system of philosophy seemed to regard as a first postulate. St John says to them in effect: You argue mightily amongst yourselves, Platonists, Stoics, and disciples of the Jew Philo, as to the true character of the Logos. Behold the veil is drawn aside, and you are permitted to look into a region where pure reason cannot penetrate. It is revealed unto you that the Logos is indeed the eternal Son of God made man.

St John proclaims an entirely new *doctrine* of the Logos. For, *The new doctrine of the Logos* in the first place, the Logos of current speculation was at best a vague abstraction; even the Logos of Philo "floats indistinctly midway between personal and impersonal entity."¹ But for the author of the Fourth Gospel, the Logos was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, in the person of Christ Jesus. In the second place, the idea of the Logos becoming incarnate was utterly beyond the conception of any contemporary thinker, since they all regarded matter as essentially impure, and bound up with evil. That the Supreme Being should really assume a human nature and become man, man made of a woman, as St Paul has it, was beyond their most exalted vision. And finally, neither Greek, nor Roman, nor Jew regarded the Logos as of the same identical nature with the omnipotent God whose supreme will the Logos merely executed; whereas for St John, the Logos is consubstantial with the Father (x 30), so that by the Logos all things were made, and without him was made nothing that was made (i 3).

This will become clearer if we consider the teaching of St John himself.

Twice in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel, the Logos is called *The "only-begotten"* of the Father. Thus, in verse 14, we read: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we saw his glory, the glory, as it were, of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." St John is here testifying that he himself had witnessed Christ's divine attributes shining through his sacred humanity. For St John had seen "the glory, as it were [*ὡς*], of the only-begotten of the Father." The Greek particle *ὡς* does not mean "as if," but "such as belongs to." As St Chrysostom has pointed out, it does not express similitude, but identity, as is true of our own use of the particle "like" in such expressions as "he acted like a man." St Chrysostom therefore renders the passage: "We have seen his glory, such glory as it was *becoming and right* that the only-begotten and true Son of God should have."

Again, in verse 18, St John says: "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Instead of "the only-begotten Son," the

¹ Zeller: *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, Vol. III, p. 378, 3rd edn.

reading "God only-begotten" is found in many ancient manuscripts, so that this second reading is regarded as equally probable by the late Cardinal MacRory.¹ It is an explicit statement of Christ's divine sonship, and even if this reading be not adopted, it can hardly be ignored as a valuable commentary on the text.

In any case St John's meaning is clear. His point is that he could not have acquired the doctrine which he has set forth in the Prologue from any source other than the divine source itself. But Christ could declare it because he was "in the bosom of the Father," that is, in the secret counsel of the Father. St Thomas Aquinas, commenting on this passage, writes: "In that bosom, therefore, that is, in the most hidden recess of the paternal nature and essence which transcends all created power, is the only-begotten Son, who is therefore consubstantial with the Father."

Père Lagrange shows that the term "only-begotten," as used in the Prologue, is a much stronger expression than that used by St Paul in Romans viii 9, where Christ is called "the first-born amongst many brethren." The Prologue states that the Logos, as God, is the only-begotten of the Father, whilst St Paul states that the Logos, as man, is the natural Son of God, and first-born among all others, who are only his adopted sons. Everything considered, it is impossible to doubt that the term "only-begotten Son" implies real, as opposed to every form of metaphorical, sonship.

The expression "Son of God" has various meanings in sacred Scripture, but there are certain passages of the New Testament in which the term obviously refers to the real eternal generation of the second person of the Trinity. Before indicating these passages it will be helpful to glance at the use of the term in the Old Testament and by Christ's contemporaries.

In the Old Testament it is used (1) to indicate any kind of special relationship to God. Thus it is predicated of angels,² and even of magistrates.³ However, this vague use of the term is comparatively rare. (2) It is commonly applied (*a*) to the people of Israel, as for instance in such texts as "Be ye children of the Lord your God,"⁴ and "Israel is my son, my first-born"⁵; and (*b*) it is commonly applied especially to the king of Israel: thus we have, "I will be to him [David, the king] a father, and he shall be to me a son,"⁶ and "Thou art my son, this day [that is, the day of the coronation or anointing] have I begotten thee."⁷ (3) By an easy transition it came to be applied in a special manner to the Messiah, the anointed one *par excellence*. This obviously would be the sense in which the term would be used of Christ by his contemporaries apart from divine revelation.

With regard to the New Testament usage, it is pretty generally admitted, even by rationalist critics, that in the Epistles the term

¹ *The Gospel of St John*, p. 33.

² Gen: vi 2; Job i 6.

³ Ps. lxxxix 6.

⁴ Deut. xiv 1.

⁵ Exod. iv 22.

⁶ 2 Kings vii 14.

⁷ Ps. ii 7.

The "Son of God"

In the Old Testament

In the New Testament

“Son of God” applied to Christ is meant to express his divinity; that it is in fact a statement of his real generation from the Father. Again, there can be no doubt as to its precise meaning when the expression is used by Our Lord himself. He teaches men to call God “our Father,” but he himself always speaks of “my Father.”

The twofold nature of Christ and his divine origin are well brought out in Matthew xxii 41-45¹: “And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus asked them saying: What think you of Christ? whose son is he? They say to him: David’s. He saith to them: How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying: *The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool?* If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?” The problem is, how can David be the father of one whom he sees at the right hand of God? The answer is that David, though he is the father of Christ according to the flesh, cannot be his only father. He who sits at the right hand of God the Father, sharing divine authority, must indeed be the consubstantial Son of God.²

Even reason may throw some light on the mysterious generation of the Son by the Father. Already, the very name Logos, the word or concept, gives us an insight into it. For there is a remarkable analogy between the way in which the mental word or idea of some external object is conceived in our minds and the ordinary biological process of generation. For instance, I look at some object outside myself, say an oak tree. Thereupon there is formed in my imagination a visual image or phantasm of that oak tree. The active intellect now proceeds to strip that image of its pictorial or sensory elements until there is left only the nude impression of the oak tree, and this purified image then penetrates of its own accord into the womb of the passive understanding, where it is assimilated and brought forth as the concept or logos of the oak tree.

In this rough and ready account of the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of intellection, it will be noticed that the external object, the oak tree, plays the part of the father; the purified image, the part of the fruitful seed; and the passive understanding, the part of the matrix or womb. Moreover, the concept resembles both its parents, for the concept of the oak tree is indeed like the oak tree, but each individual concept of the oak tree is modified somewhat, and moulded, by the particular understanding in which it is formed.

When we speak of the generation of a concept in the human mind, obviously we are using the term generation in an analogous sense. The formation of an idea of an extra-mental object is not, literally and strictly speaking, generation at all. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the process may very well be likened to the process of

¹ Cf. Mark xii 35-37. ² See also Matt. xvi 16; Mark i 11; Luke i 35.

generation. But the procession of the Logos within the divine essence *is* generation in the strict sense.

Generation in the wide sense, says St Thomas Aquinas, is nothing but change from non-existence to existence. Thus, for instance, we speak of generating hope, or love, or fear in the human soul. It is to be noticed that whatever is produced in this fashion is produced, not out of nothing as in creation, but out of previously existing material. But generation in the strict sense belongs properly to living things, and is defined by St Thomas as *origo alicuius viventis a principio vivente coniuncto*; ¹ that is, "the origin of a living being from a conjoined living principle."

St Thomas, however, immediately adds, "not everything which proceeds from a conjoined living principle is called begotten; for, strictly speaking, only what proceeds in the specific likeness of the parent is really generated, as a man proceeds from a man, and a horse from a horse."²

There seem, then, to be three requisite conditions for real generation.

1. It must be a vital operation resulting in the communication of life.

2. The generating principle must be actually conjoined with that which is begotten, so that the offspring is of the very substance of the parent.

3. The offspring must be of the same species as the parent precisely in consequence of the manner of his origin. Hence, though Eve was formed from the living substance of Adam, in the same species as Adam, she was not Adam's daughter, because her specific identity with Adam was not due to her origination from Adam, but to the extraordinary process of God's moulding her to the pattern of human nature.

Now St Thomas contends that the procession of the Logos in the divine essence satisfies these three conditions.

1. In the first place the Logos proceeds "by way of intelligible action, which is a vital operation."³ The eternal Father contemplating the divine essence gives origin to the Logos. Now with us the logos, or the concept which is formed in the mind, is certainly not a living thing. It is an accident, a modification or quality which is distinct from the mind itself.

But the Logos which is begotten by the Father is not something accidental to the divine essence, since this is incapable of modification or qualification of any kind. Whatever proceeds within the divine essence must be identical with it, and consequently the Logos does not proceed as an accident, but as something substantial, as the divine essence itself in fact, under a special relationship by reason of its eternal origination. The Logos, then, is not merely living, but the inexhaustible source of all life.

¹ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. xxvii, art. 2

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

2. In the second place, whilst it is obvious that the Logos or concept which we mortals form is not of our own substance, is not, so to speak, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, but merely a sort of mental accessory, it is clear nevertheless from what has been said that the Logos which proceeds from the Father *is* of his very substance, *is* of the same divine essence in every respect, differing from the father only by his proper relationship of filiation as opposed to that of paternity.

3. Finally, it follows that the Logos proceeds not merely with the same specific nature, but with numerically the same nature as the Father, and this precisely because of his mode of origin. We have seen that every concept bears the likeness of the intellect that conceives it. The concept in the human mind, it is true, bears but an intentional resemblance to the object with which it corresponds; that is to say, the resemblance is entirely in the intentional order, in that sphere of thought wherein the human mind assimilates to itself the things to which it has in-tended or stretched forth. In this case the resemblance is not even specific.

But it is far otherwise with the divine Logos. That which proceeds in the divine intelligence, or essence, namely, the Logos, is similar to the principle from which it proceeds, not merely in an intentional way, nor even specifically as in natural generation, but in the most perfect possible way, namely, by substantial identity.

Hence in the procession of the Son from the Father we have real generation stripped of all its imperfections; for we have the origin of a living being from a conjoined living principle, in such a way that this living being proceeds with the selfsame nature as its progenitor. But this origination is eternal, without change, without causation, without dependence, without time, without succession, without multiplication of the divine nature, from everlasting unto everlasting.

§ V: THE PROCESSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FROM THE FATHER AND THE SON

It is evident from the New Testament that besides the procession of the Logos there is another procession within the divine essence, namely, the procession of the Holy Spirit. For the incarnate Logos says: "But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me."¹ Here we are told that he proceeds from the Father, that he is sent from the Father by the Son; in other words, that the Holy Spirit proceeds both from the Father and the Son. *The second procession*

¹ John xv 26.

*From the
Father and
the Son*

That he proceeds equally from the Son as from the Father is clear from a number of texts from which we may select the following words of Our Lord uttered at the Last Supper: "He [the Holy Spirit] shall glorify me; because he shall receive of mine, and shall show it to you. All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine."¹ Since the Holy Spirit is a divine person, he is infinite in perfection, and therefore cannot receive anything except in his eternal origin. To receive from the Son, then, is to proceed eternally from the Son. But our Blessed Saviour adds immediately, "all things whatsoever the Father hath, are mine," to show that the things that were essentially his were communicated to him with his essential existence in his eternal generation from the Father. In this passage Christ tells his disciples that in the future the Holy Spirit, who is to come, will reveal divine knowledge, which has been communicated to him in his procession from both the Father and the Son. For this divine knowledge, like all divine attributes, is possessed equally by all three divine persons, since, as the Athanasian Creed has it, "the whole three persons are co-eternal to one another, and co-equal."

With the second divine procession we need deal only briefly here, as it will be described fully in Essay V.

*Not
generation*

We have seen that the Son proceeds from the Father by a strict process of generation because the Logos proceeds according to the operation of the divine intellect. Is it conceivable that the second procession in the divine essence is also according to the operation of the divine intellect? A little reflection makes it obvious that it is not conceivable. For if the Holy Spirit also proceeded as the divine concept, as the Logos, he also would be the Son, and this would contradict the Scriptures which tell us that the second Person is the "*only-begotten* of the Father."

Now there are only two conceivable activities of a purely spiritual being, namely, the activities of the spiritual faculties of intellect and will. If, then, the Holy Spirit does not proceed according to the operation of the divine intellect, he must proceed according to the operation of the divine will. Such is the reasoning of St Thomas Aquinas, following St Augustine. Just as in the intellectual process there is begotten within us a concept which is the image of the object understood; so, too, in an act of love, there arises within us an inclination towards the loved one which may be rightly regarded as the spiritual force of the loved one motivating within us. Naturally poets have a good deal to say about this attraction, or inclination, or urge; they honour it with many fine names indicative of its nature from "the breath of life" to "the sigh suppressed, corroding in the cavern of the heart."²

¹ John xvi 14, 15.

² Byron.

Now the procession of the Holy Spirit is considered to be a pro- "*Spiration*"
cession of love, that is to say, the third person of the Blessed Trinity
proceeds from the Father and the Son according to the operation of
the divine will. To know the supreme good in such a way as to
comprehend it, is necessarily to love the supreme good. Conse-
quently the Father from all eternity contemplating the Son, and
the Son from all eternity contemplating the Father, necessitate an
eternal act of mutual love, a divine spiration, common to both the
Father and the Son. This spiration issues within the divine essence
itself in what we can describe only as the divine breath personified,
the Holy Spirit of God, subsisting in the divine essence, but distinct
from both the Father and the Son by reason of his eternal origin
from them.

Just as in the intellectual act, the logos or concept which we form
is an accident, whereas the divine Logos is the subsisting divine
essence itself; so, too, in the volitional act, though the spiritus or
breath with us be merely an accident, in God it is the divine essence
itself, with the special relation which is proper to that which proceeds
according to the immanent act of divine love. But, whilst the Logos
is consubstantial with the Father precisely because of the manner of
his eternal origin, namely, by generation; the Holy Spirit is con-
substantial with the Father and the Son, not by reason of the process
of his origin, but for the simple reason that whatever proceeds in
the divine essence itself must be in substance identical with that
undivided and indivisible essence.

We have seen, then, that the second person of the Trinity is
properly called the Son, since he proceeds from the Father by a
process of real generation. But the third person proceeds by a
totally different process, and moreover by a process which, from the
psychological standpoint, is little understood even in the analogical
form in which we experience it. It is so elusive that it seems to
defy introspective analysis, and consequently we have no proper
name for that attraction or urge, or impulse, which is, as it were,
the internal issue of the volitional process. That being so, it is not
surprising that we have no proper name for the third person of the
Trinity, as we have for the second; but in view of the fact that the
Holy Ghost proceeds according to the operation of the divine will
as distinguished from the divine intelligence, he is called in Scripture
by such names as "Spirit," "Gift," or "Pledge" of love. These
names clearly express the characteristic outpouring of love, which
manifests itself in gifts and pledges, but above all in the supreme
gift or pledge to the loved one of the lover's whole self.

We may sum up what we have said with regard to the eternal
origin of the third person of the Trinity in the words of the Athanasian
Creed: "The Holy Ghost is from the Father and the Son, not made,
nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding."

§ VI: THE DIVINE RELATIONS

THE study of the divine relations is a matter of supreme importance, for the Council of Florence, in the *Decretum pro Jacobitis*, after declaring that in the three persons there is one substance, one essence, one nature, one divinity, one immensity, and one eternity, formulates the general principle, that everything is one, except where relative opposition intervenes.¹ It follows therefore that the distinction between the persons is due to their relations to each other.

The whole doctrine of relation has been worked out elaborately by Scholastic theologians and used by them to elucidate, as far as may be, the sublime mystery of the Trinity. But here it must be admitted frankly that we are largely in the region of philosophical speculation. The Church has made no formal pronouncement in this matter, but it is instructive for us to see how her devoted theologians have attempted to harmonise the content of revelation with the findings of reason.

*Relations
real and
mental*

By relation we mean the habitude of one thing to another, or, as Annandale's Dictionary has it, "the condition of being such or such in respect to something else." For, says St Thomas, "the true idea of relation is not taken from its respect to that in which it is, but from its respect to something external."² Thus, as I sit at my desk, I have a definite positional relation to the paper on which I am writing; a totally different kind of relation to the words in which I express my thoughts; and a third kind of relation to the dog who lies at my feet. Meantime there are also my varying relations to my spiritual subjects, my fellow-citizens and my readers.

Now it is obvious that some relations are purely mental since they have no foundation except in the mind which links up the related objects. It is in this way that the lily is related to purity, and the red light to danger. Nevertheless there are real relations whereby certain objects are linked up, not merely mentally, but in point of actual fact in the order of extra-mental reality. Thus the perfection of a wall consists in the real positional relation of each brick to every other one; the perfection of a squad at drill lies precisely in the relative attitudes of the members of the squad.

Three conditions are seen to be required for real relationship: (a) the related objects must be real, and not merely figments of the mind; (b) they must be really distinct from each other; and (c) the relation of one to the other must be founded on a solid fact outside the mind which apprehends the relationship. Hence the relations of paternity and filiation existing between any human father and his son are real, because the father and son are real persons, really distinct from each other, and the relationship is founded on the physical act of generation.

¹ *Omniaque sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio.* Denzinger, 703.

² *S. Theol.*, I, Q. xxviii, art. 2 c.

Now we have seen that in God from all eternity there are two *Four real relations in God* real processions or origins, since both the Son and the Holy Spirit proceed as real persons. Each real origin gives rise to two real relations. Thus the first procession gives rise to paternity and filiation, and the second procession to spiration and procession. These relations satisfy the requirements of a real relation, for (a) the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are real; (b) the persons related are distinct from each other; and (c) the first pair of relations are founded on the eternal act of divine generation, whilst the second pair are founded on the eternal act of divine spiration, both real vital processes.

But, whilst there are four real relations, there are not four divine *But three persons* persons. We have already defined a person as an individual substance of a rational nature, and we have said that the requisite conditions for personality are substantiality, individuality, and rationality.¹ Now, all four divine relations are substantial, since they subsist by reason of their identity with the divine essence; all four again are rational, since the divine essence is the divine intelligence; but all four are not individual. We have shown that for personality the rational substance must be individual in such a way that it is not in any sense part of, or common to, anything else.

Clearly in the Blessed Trinity the relation of paternity is peculiar and proper to the Father; the relation of filiation is peculiar and proper to the Son; and the relation of procession from the Father and the Son is peculiar and proper to the Holy Ghost. Each of these three relations is individual in the strictest possible sense, for between them there is opposition. But not so the relation of active spiration. This relation is not individual, but common to both the Father and the Son, and consequently it cannot possibly constitute a distinct person. Hence, since there are three, and only three, distinct subsisting relations in the divine essence, there are three, and only three, divine persons.

In the Preface to holy Mass appointed for Trinity Sunday and the Sundays throughout the year, the Church solemnly prays *ut . . . Definition of a divine person* *in personis proprietate . . . adoretur*; "that in the persons that which is proper or individual should be adored." That which is proper or individual to each of the divine persons is his distinct relation to the others. It follows, therefore, that the distinct subsisting relations in the Trinity are to be adored. But adoration can be given only to the divine persons themselves, whence we arrive at the definition of a divine person as a distinct subsisting relation.

This is confirmed by analysing the generic definition of person and applying it to the Trinity. The distinctive characteristics of personality are rationality, substantiality, and individuality. What precisely is it in the Trinity which satisfies these requirements? It is clearly not the divine essence itself as such, for it is common to all

¹ See p. 112.

three persons, as witness the Church in her Trinity Preface when she prays aloud, *et in essentia unitas . . . adoretur* ; “ that in the essence unity may be adored.” Neither is it simply a subsisting relation, that is, a divine relation subsisting of itself, for, as we have seen, there are four such relations, one of which, active spiration, being common to both the Father and the Son, is lacking in the essential note of individuality. Only those relations which are mutually opposed to each other by reason of their origin are completely individual, or, as the Scholastic theologians have it, incommunicable. Thus paternity is by its very connotation opposed to filiation, and filiation to paternity ; and since the Holy Ghost proceeds by a common spiration from both the Father and the Son, this relation of procession by an act of the mutual love of the Father and Son is necessarily opposed equally to paternity and filiation. We see then that, in the Trinity, that which is at once rational, substantial, and individual, is an incommunicable subsisting relation ; incommunicable, because by reason of its very origin it is diametrically opposed to other individual subsisting relations.

*Subsisting
relations*

Apart from revelation we could hardly conceive such a sublime notion as that of a subsisting relation ; but reason alone is able to demonstrate that the concept does not involve any self-evident intrinsic repugnance. We have seen that the essential note of relation is its respect, regard, or habitude to something else. If the relation is a real one, it derives its reality from the substance in which it inheres ; thus, paternity is a real relation in a real man who has begotten a real child. The notion of reality, then, is quite distinct from that of relation. However, a real relation in the Trinity cannot be something inhering in the divine essence, something modifying or qualifying the divine essence, for in that case the divine essence would be subject to composition. A real divine relation must subsist of itself, must be in fact the divine essence itself in its eternal intrinsic origins. Reason can find no repugnance in that a real relation derives its reality, not from inherence in a subject, as it does with us, but in a higher way, from the divine subsistence in its immanent fecundity.

With regard to the mysteries of faith, it is the function of reason to show that these truths which are above reason are not against reason. Herein lies the “ reasonable service ” of speculative theology. To penetrate into the hidden recesses of the wisdom of God is beyond man’s capacity and reach, for, as the Book of Wisdom has it, “ hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon the earth : and with labour do we find the things that are before us. But the things that are in heaven, who shall search out ? ” ¹ And of all the things in heaven none is higher, more remote from, and inaccessible to, human reason than this august mystery of the Trinity, before which,

¹ Wisdom ix 16.

as the great Athanasius assures us, the very Seraphim veil their faces and fall prostrate in adoration.¹

Etymologically, the word appropriation means “to make some-^{Appropri-}thing one’s own,” and from that it came to mean “to make some-^{ation}thing personal which before was common,” and hence, in the theological treatise on the Trinity, it signifies “the ascription of the common names, attributes, and operations to particular divine persons.”

We have already seen that in the Trinity everything is common to the three divine persons with the exception of the properties which are radicated in the relative opposition between the persons. Thus, filiation is proper to the second person, and cannot be predicated of either the Father or the Holy Ghost. But there are many attributes which, because they refer to the unity of the divine substance, can be predicated indiscriminately of all three persons. For instance, we may say equally of the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit, that he is God, that he is eternal, omnipotent, infinitely holy, the searcher of hearts. However, it is the constant usage of Holy Writ to ascribe certain of these common attributes to particular divine persons, and it will be found on examination that neither in Scripture nor tradition is the ascription or appropriation merely arbitrary.

It is true that appropriation is a mental operation on our part by which we attribute in a special manner to one person what really belongs to all three, and it is obvious that the appropriation does not make whatever is appropriated belong more to the person to whom it is ascribed than to the other persons. Nevertheless appropriation must have some foundation other than, and independent of, our minds.

As a matter of fact there are many different grounds of appro-^{Grounds of}priation which may be classified under three headings, according as ^{appropri-}we consider (a) the divine essence or substance in itself, (b) the divine ^{ation}essence in its outward activities, or (c) the divine essence in relation to its external effects.

(a) As an example of the first kind of appropriation we have the well-known attribution of St Hilary²: *Infinitas in Aeterno, Species in Imagine, Usus in Munere*, which we may render, “the Infinitely Eternal, the Image and Likeness, the Supreme Enjoyment.” Infinity and eternity are ascribed to the Father so as to stress the fact that, though he is the principle from which all else proceeds, he himself proceeds from none. None is thought of as before him. The Son is called the image and the likeness because he proceeds by real generation from the Father in such a way that there is between

¹ *Ep. ad Serap.*, n. 17.

² L. 2 *De Trinitate*, n. 1.

him and the Father the likeness of numerical identity of nature. And, finally, the Holy Spirit is portrayed in a peculiar expression, which I have rendered Supreme Enjoyment, since St Hilary's meaning is that the Holy Spirit is in the active unitive possession of the supremely lovable, and this because the Holy Spirit proceeds as the uncreated Love of the infinitely good.

(b) In the second method of appropriation, the divine essence is regarded from the standpoint of its extrinsic activities, partly with a view to distinguishing the divine persons from one another, and partly with a view to distinguishing them from creatures who bear the same names. Thus, power and its products are attributed to the Father, wisdom and its offshoots to the Son, goodness and its fruits to the Holy Spirit. This attribution is partly based on the divine origins, and partly also, as St Thomas points out,¹ on the removal of the imperfections which are found in creatures. A human father on account of his age is apt to be infirm, so works of power are ascribed to God the Father; a human son on account of his youth is inexperienced, so wisdom and its manifestations are attributed to God the Son; the word *spiritus*, breath or wind, indicates something which through its impetuosity is apt to be destructive, and so by contrast goodness in all its beneficent activities is appropriated to the Spirit of God.

(c) The third kind of appropriation is made from the standpoint of the divine essence in relation to its external effects. The classical instance of it occurs in St Paul's Epistle to the Romans (xi, 36), where he writes, "Quoniam *ex ipso*, et *per ipsum*, et *in ipso* sunt omnia"; "For *of* him, and *by* him, and *in* him, are all things." Here the particle *ex*, *of*, indicates the efficient cause, and is therefore appropriate to the Father who is the principle from which all else proceeds; the particle *per*, *through* or *by*, indicates the plan, or the idea, or the concept, according to which the agent works, and this kind of causation is naturally ascribed to the Son; the particle *in*, which the Authorised Version translates as *to*, denotes the ultimate or final end, to or towards which all creation moves: the Supreme Good which draws all things and brings all things to itself, the end for which they are made. For, as we have seen, it is peculiarly fitting that goodness should be appropriated to the Holy Spirit.

It will be understood readily that, as Billot has remarked,² all the different methods of appropriation are ultimately reducible to one, and to one which is radicated in the divine origins themselves. For whatever is appropriated to the Father will be found to imply in some way that he is the fount, the source, the principle which proceeds from none, but from which all else derives; whatever is appropriated to the Son will have necessarily some reference to the intellectual operation according to which he proceeds from the

¹ In I, D. 34, q. 2.

² *De Trinitate*, thesis XXXIV.

Father ; and finally, whatever is appropriated to the Holy Spirit will be traceable to the action of the divine will according to which he proceeds from both the Father and the Son, consubstantial with them, but distinct in personality.

§ VII: THE TEMPORAL MISSION OF THE DIVINE PERSONS

By the term *mission*, in its primary significance, we understand the sending of an agent, delegate, or messenger, and the inspired writers do not hesitate to predicate such a mission of the second and third persons of the Blessed Trinity. Thus, Our Lord says, "He that sent me, is with me,"¹ and again, "If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you ; but if I go, I will send him to you."²

*The notion
of divine
mission*

Now it is clear that the external mission of the divine persons cannot involve the imperfections which are necessarily bound up with the mission of any human person. With us, the person who sends is of higher authority than the person sent. But, because of the perfect equality of the divine persons, there can be no question of the subordination of one person to the other. We have seen that all three persons have everything in common except what arises from the opposition of relationship of origin. Therefore the external missions of the divine persons must be radicated in their processions ; they must be, as it were, continuations of their eternal origins.

All theologians are agreed that for a divine mission in the technical sense it is required

1. that there shall be a going forth or a procession of the person who is sent from the person who sends ;
2. that the person sent shall acquire a new relationship to creatures ;
3. and acquire this new relationship precisely by reason of his procession from the sender.

There can obviously be no change in the divine persons themselves, and therefore whatever change results from a divine mission must be in the creature, in whom the divine person begins to be in a new, *i.e.* in a supernatural way.

It is equally clear that only those persons are sent who proceed, and that they are sent only by those from whom they proceed. Hence the Father is sent by none ; the Son is sent by the Father ; and the Holy Ghost is sent by the Father and the Son.

These missions may be of two kinds : visible or invisible, according as the divine messenger comes to creatures in a visible or invisible manner. Thus in the Incarnation of the Son of God we have a visible mission in its greatest possible perfection, whilst visible missions of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove and of parted tongues of fire are recorded in the New Testament. An

*Visible and
invisible
missions*

¹ John viii 29.

² John xvi 7.

invisible mission is one which takes place without any external signs, as whenever sanctifying grace is infused into the soul, according to the divine ordinance.

The visible missions

Of the invisible missions we shall not speak here, since these will be described fully in the following essay. Among visible missions the most important is the coming of the second person of the Trinity in the flesh in the mystery of the Incarnation. The second person of the Trinity became man to redeem us from our sins and to lead us to the beatific vision. The visible mission of God the Son was the preliminary to his invisible mission to our souls, as he tells us in the prayer to his Heavenly Father, in which he sets forth the object of his mission: "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."¹

In the Old Testament there were no visible missions, because, as St John points out, a visible mission is a manifestation of grace which is already conferred. For, says St John: "as yet the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not glorified." It must be borne in mind that though the just of the Old Testament were participators of grace within their souls, externally and legally they belonged to the order of servitude and not to that of adopted sonship.² In order that it might be manifest that it is through Christ, true God and true man, that all men shall acquire the power to become sons of God, it was fitting that no legal or formal dispensation of grace should precede his coming, but that the second person of the Trinity made man for us should himself inaugurate the external economy of grace. In the old dispensation God operated through the visible forms of angels, who were his messengers, the harbingers of his favours; in the new dispensation he manifests in outward form the actual gift of sanctification which he has already bestowed upon the soul.

Other visible missions of the Holy Spirit, to the early Christians, to the Apostles, and to Christ, are recorded in the New Testament. Of the visible mission of the Holy Spirit to our Blessed Saviour in the days when he walked the earth John the Baptist testifies: "I saw the Spirit coming down, as a dove from heaven, and he remained upon him."³ This mission had indeed been prophetically foretold by Isaias in the Old Testament, when he said: "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord."⁴

In the New Testament the Holy Spirit appeared under several emblems or sensible signs: at Our Lord's baptism, as we have just said, in the form of a dove, bringing the message of reconciliation, symbolising the advent of salvation to the human race, just as the

¹ John xvii 26.

² John i 32.

³ Gal. iii-iv; Heb. ix-x.

⁴ Isaias xi 2-3.

dove of old was used to indicate that the ancient world was saved from inundation ; again the Holy Spirit is manifested as a gentle breathing signifying the spirit of God ; and yet again under the forms of parted tongues of fire, showing forth the manifold operations of the Holy Spirit.

It is to be noted that a visible mission always implies an invisible one, though not vice versa. Moreover, in the visible missions, with the sole exception of the Incarnation, the part played by the external element is merely symbolical. Both kinds of missions, the visible and the invisible, are found in their highest perfection in the Incarnation of the eternal Son of God. Herein the Word assumed our human nature in such a way that it became his. His body was not merely a sign or symbol of the divine ; it was God's own body. For the human nature which the Son assumed was united hypostatically with the divine nature which he already possessed, in the one person, the historical Jesus ; and since he is in himself uncreated grace, in his visible mission all invisible missions find their bounteous source.

We have seen that the Trinity is a mystery in the strict sense of *Conclusion* the term, that is to say, a truth which unaided human reason could never have discovered for itself, and which human reason cannot fathom even after the existence of the Trinity has been revealed to us. We are told distinctly in Holy Writ : " no one knoweth the Son but the Father : neither doth anyone know the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him." ¹ The " no one " obviously means " no one outside the Trinity," for the Holy Ghost is no more excluded from the knowledge of the Father in this passage than the Son is excluded in the following text, in which St Paul explains how he came to a knowledge of the hidden things of God : " But to us God hath revealed them by his Spirit. For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him ? So the things also that are of God no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God." ² Clearly perfect knowledge of God as he is in himself is an essential attribute of the three divine persons and pertains to them alone.

But by the Redemption we have been made partakers of the divine nature, and raised to the dignity of adopted sons of God. Our adopted sonship is a derivative, a consequence, a corollary of the natural sonship of the second person of the Blessed Trinity. He is the first-born, we are his brethren. For the natural sonship of Christ is the ideal of our relationship to the Father, an ideal to which, through the grace of Christ, it is possible for us to make some distant approach in this life. This indeed we do, in the supernatural order, by way of that consuming charity which is a reflection, an after-glow,

¹ Matt. xi 27.

² I Cor. ii 10-11.

as it were, of that divine love of the Father for the Son, and of the Son for the Father, of which the Holy Spirit is the Pledge and the Seal. "The Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God." ¹

It is to us, then, as sons of God, to us who have been elevated by grace to the supernatural plane, to us who have been made co-heirs with Christ, to us, his intimate friends, that the sublime mystery of the inner life of God has been revealed. There is opened up to us a vision of the incalculable richness of the divine life in its eternal fecundity. We catch a glimpse of the true meaning of communion with God by contemplating the divine sociability by which each person of the Trinity penetrates and pervades each other and possesses the essence of each other person as his own.

Here is the ideal unity unattainable outside the beatific society of the undivided Trinity, but nevertheless the essential exemplar of our fellowship in the Church of Christ and of our ultimate union with God. At the beginning of his first Epistle St John tells us that as an Apostle he is proclaiming the sublime mystery of the coming in the flesh of the second person of the Trinity precisely "that you also may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship may be with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ." ²

We are called to fellowship with God himself. Truly no other people hath its God so nigh. In thankfulness for the revelation made known to us we are moved to say with reverential awe, "This is our God, and there shall be no other accounted of in comparison of him." ³

RICHARD DOWNEY.

¹ Rom. viii 16.

² 1 John i 1-3.

³ Baruch iii 36.

V

THE HOLY GHOST

§ I: INTRODUCTORY

“ AND (we believe) in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the Life-giver, who proceeds from the Father *and the Son* ; who with Father and Son is together adored and together glorified ; who spoke through the prophets.”

With the exception of the words in italics, which were added later, this is the form in which the doctrine concerning the Holy Ghost is set forth in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, a formulary commonly attributed to the First Council of Constantinople of 381.¹ The words were an answer to the heresies of the time ; they have been constantly reaffirmed by the Church as the official summary of her doctrine, in particular by the profession of faith of the Council of Trent.² It will be shown in the course of the present essay that all the Church's teaching on the Holy Spirit may conveniently be grouped under the various clauses of the Creed.

Under the clause affirming the equal adoration due to the three divine persons, we shall treat of the divinity and consubstantiality of the Holy Ghost. Under the clause regarding his procession from Father and Son, we shall deal with the sources of that doctrine. The words “ The Lord, the Life-giver ” will serve as a text for some account of the Holy Spirit's work in the Incarnation, in the Church, and in the individual soul. Finally, the phrase commemorating the prophetic office of the Spirit will give an occasion for a short treatment of the inspiration of Holy Scripture.

It has been regretted at times that no explicit mention was made by the great Creeds of the Holy Ghost's office as Paraclete and of his visible mission on the day of Pentecost. But it may be urged in reply that this office is summarised in the one phrase, “ The Lord the Life-giver,” and that, in Cardinal Manning's words, “ it is not by accident or by mere order of enumeration, that in the baptismal creed we say, ‘ I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church.’ These two articles are united, because the Holy Spirit is united with the Mystical Body.”³

¹ Denzinger's *Enchiridion*, n. 86. The Creed may well be earlier by some years than the Council of 381, and must be if it is that quoted by St Epiphanius in 374.

² Denzinger, n. 994.

³ *The Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost*, p. 35.

§ II: THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY GHOST

I

*The Old
Testament*

THE central dogma of the Christian faith, that of the Blessed Trinity, is one that was only foreshadowed under the old dispensation. It is not to be denied that, in the light of the New Testament revelation, many traces of the doctrine may be observed in the pages of the Old Testament. Furthermore, it is the opinion of some Catholic writers that certain of the Fathers who died before Christ's coming may have received a special enlightenment regarding the trinity of persons in the Godhead. But it is commonly maintained that the generality of mankind under the Old Law could find only scanty and indecisive warrant for such a belief in the pages of the sacred text.

This is especially true as regards the Holy Ghost. Though the term "Spirit (of God)" occurs no less than ninety-four times in the protocanonical books alone ¹ it is far from clear that the readers or writers of those books were aware of any distinction of persons in God. A few representative passages will give some clue to the nature of the evidence.

In the first place, it is the Spirit of God (in Hebrew, Rû^{ah} 'elôhîm) who is regarded as inspiring the holy prophets. Thus one reads of the seventy elders ² that "When the Spirit had rested upon them, they prophesied." Later, at the close of the period of the judges, Saul, the first Israelite king, is assured by Samuel that "the Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee and thou shalt prophesy with them." ³ For Osee ⁴ a prophet is above all "the man of the Spirit," while Micheas contrasts the reality of his mission with the ravings of the false prophets in the phrase, "As for me, I am filled with strength, thanks to the Spirit of God." ⁵

It is a further office of the Spirit to move the prophet to utter words of exhortation and warning and to set his seal upon a divine mission. It is said of Balaam ⁶ that "The Spirit of the Lord came upon him" and inspired him to prophesy good things regarding Israel. David declares in his last words ⁷ that "The Spirit of the Lord hath spoken by me and his word by my tongue." The Prophet Isaias is even more explicit: "And now the Lord God hath sent me and his Spirit" (*i.e.* he and his Spirit have sent me).⁸ And again, in the words cited by Our Divine Lord in the synagogue at Nazareth ⁹: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me . . ." ¹⁰

But the action of the Spirit is not restricted to prophecy. There

¹ See the Oxford *Hebrew Lexicon*, pp. 925b-926a.

² Numbers xi 25.

³ 1 Kings x 6-10.

⁴ Osee ix 7.

⁵ Micheas iii 8. The Douay Version differs slightly.

⁶ Numbers xxiv 2.

⁷ 2 Kings xxiii 2.

⁸ Isaias xlvi 16.

⁹ Luke iv 18-19.

¹⁰ Isaias lxi 1.

is frequent mention of his influence upon kings and rulers and judges in ancient Israel. He it is who moves them to deeds of warlike valour and virtuous judgement. Thus we read of the judge Othoniel ¹ that "the Spirit of the Lord was in him and he judged Israel," and of Jephthē ² that, on the eve of his departure for his campaign against the Ammonites, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon" him. Gedeon and Samson, Saul and David are likewise mentioned as receiving in abundant measure the Spirit of fortitude and wisdom.³ It is the Spirit who will rest in a special and most intimate manner upon the Messianic King, who is to receive a sevenfold influence of his might.⁴ And in another passage of Isaias ⁵ it is said of the suffering Servant of the Lord that "I have given my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles." This endowment with gifts is twice found in Exodus.⁶ In the former passage God says of Beseleel that he has "filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom and understanding and knowledge of all manner of work."

Again, the Spirit is regarded as the source of life and energy. At creation's dawn "the Spirit of God moved (better, hovered) over the waters."⁷ And Job says in reference to the beginning of his life, "the Spirit of God made me and the breath of the Almighty gave me life."⁸

Finally, an even more intimate doctrine of the Spirit is found in such passages as Isaias lxiii 10: "They provoked to wrath and afflicted the Spirit of his holiness,"⁹ and in Aggeus:¹⁰ "My Spirit shall be in the midst of you. Fear not." Perhaps the most explicit of all Old Testament references occurs in Wisdom,¹¹ "And who shall know thy thought, except thou give wisdom and send thy Holy Spirit from above," where the Spirit seems practically to be identified with divine wisdom.

Turning to the books outside the Old Testament Canon, one finds little definite teaching on the Holy Ghost. He is called "the Spirit of understanding and sanctification,"¹² and it is said of Isaias that "his lips spake with the Holy Ghost until he was sawn in twain."¹³ But, in general, the doctrine is not especially prominent.

From these and other passages in the pre-Christian literature, it might appear that the doctrine of the Spirit as a distinct person was revealed with some degree of clearness in Old Testament times. A careful examination, however, will go far to negative this impression and to confirm the dictum of a well-known theologian that, in spite

¹ Judges iii 10.

² Judges xi 29.

³ Judges vi 34; xiii 25; xiv 6, 19; xv 14; 1 Kings xi 6; xvi 13-14.

⁴ Isaias xi 2. ⁵ xliv 1. ⁶ xxxi 3; xxxv 31. ⁷ Gen. i 2.

⁸ Job xxxiii 4. See also Isaias xxxi 3; Ezechiel i 12; x 17.

⁹ Cp. Ephes. iv 30. ¹⁰ Cp. Ephes. ii 6.

¹¹ ix 17. See also i 4-7. ¹² Testament of Levi, xviii 7.

¹³ Martyrdom of Isaias, v 14. See also 1 Enoch lxvii 10; Psalms of Solomon xvii 42; Targum of Onkelos to Gen. xlv 27; Jerusalem Targum to Gen. xli 38.

of the frequent allusions to the "Spirit of God" and the "Holy Spirit," which would be readily understood by Christian readers of the third person of the Trinity, "no passage, so far as I know, is brought forward, which, considered in itself [that is, apart from the full revelation of Christ] could not suitably be explained as the personification of a divine attribute or a divine operation."¹ With this temperately expressed opinion the present writer is in hearty agreement.

2

The New Testament

To pass from the obscure teaching of the Old Testament on the Holy Ghost to the clear and abundant testimony of the Gospels and apostolic writings is to enter another world. Whole volumes have been written that are solely occupied with a discussion of the New Testament teaching and here one can only offer a selection of some of the more important texts and passages.

In approaching these texts it is to be noted that three scriptural uses of the word "Spirit" must be carefully distinguished. First, the term is used to signify the divine essence as wholly immaterial. It was in this sense that Our Lord said to the Samaritan woman, "God is a spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."² Secondly, there is the use of the word so common in the Old Testament, as noted above, in which the term might be understood of a divine attribute or operation.³ Thirdly, there is the frequent and unmistakable use of the term in the New Testament for a distinct person in the Godhead, who is called in a peculiar sense the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of Father and Son. It is our claim that the New Testament witnesses to a Person, who is divine and is distinct from the Father and the Son.

The fact that the Holy Ghost is a person appears, in the first place, from the titles given to him by Our Lord in his last discourse to the disciples.⁴ Our Lord calls him "the Spirit," and though the Greek word for "spirit" (*πνεῦμα*) is of the neuter gender, the pronoun used in referring to it is in the masculine gender.⁵ Again, he calls him by another name, the "Paraclete," which more probably means an advocate or pleader, a friend of an accused person called to testify to his character or to enlist sympathy in his favour. This term is used four times in regard of the Holy Spirit in St John's Gospel,⁶ but occurs in his first Epistle as a title of Our Lord, who is our "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just."⁷ The title, therefore, is evidently a personal one.

¹ Van Noort, *De Deo Trino*, p. 133.

² John iv 24.

³ Cp. Gen. i 2; Psalm l 13, etc.

⁴ John xiv 15-18, 26; xv 26; xvi 7-15.

⁵ *ἐκεῖνος*. See especially xvi 14.

⁶ John xiv 16, 26; xv 26; xvi 7.

⁷ I John ii 1.

The same fact may be seen from a comparison between the Holy Ghost and other persons. Besides the one just mentioned, we find in the gospels a comparison between blasphemy against the Son of Man and blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which brings out even more clearly the personality of the Spirit.¹ And again the formula of baptism contained in the risen Christ's commission to his Apostles² associates the Holy Ghost with the other two persons of the Trinity in a manner that shows clearly that he too is a person.³

Thirdly, it is made clear from the attributes of the Holy Ghost, which testify to his personal character. He speaks, teaches, and testifies. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all truth."⁴ He chooses and constitutes ministers in the Church. "Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock, wherein the Holy Ghost has placed you (as) bishops to rule the Church of God."⁵ The Holy Ghost said to them: "Separate me Saul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have taken them."⁶ He issues decrees to the Church through his Apostles. "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us."⁷

Moreover, the Holy Ghost is a person distinct from the Father and the Son. Apart from the evidence of the baptismal formula in St Matthew, we may gather from St John's Gospel that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father, is sent by the Father, is demanded by the Son from the Father. Further, he receives of the Son, is sent by the Son, gives testimony of him, and takes his place. "I will ask the Father and he shall give you another Paraclete."⁸ "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name."⁹ "But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me."¹⁰ "He shall glorify me, because he shall receive of mine."¹¹ "If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."¹²

That the Holy Ghost is a divine person may be seen from the frequency with which he is identified with God. So to lie to the Holy Ghost is to lie to God,¹³ and to offend him is to offend God. Again, to be the temple of the Spirit is the same as to be the temple of God. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"¹⁴

It may also be proved from the divine operations that are attributed to him. He fully knows the secrets of the divine counsels. "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. . . . So the things also that are of God no man knoweth but the Spirit of God."¹⁵ To him are appropriated the inspiration of the prophets¹⁶

¹ Matt. xii 32; Luke xii 10.

² Matt. xxviii 19.

³ See Essay iv, *The Blessed Trinity*, pp. 118-119.

⁴ John xvi 13.

⁵ Acts xx 28.

⁶ Acts xiii 2.

⁷ Acts xv 28.

⁸ John xiv 16.

⁹ John xiv 26.

¹⁰ John xv 26.

¹¹ John xvi 14.

¹² John xvi 7.

¹³ Acts v 3-4.

¹⁴ I Cor. iii 16.

¹⁵ I Cor. ii 10-11.

¹⁶ 2 Peter i 21.

and the foretelling of the future.¹ He is the giver of various gifts and graces, and, on this count, one finds a striking reference to all three persons of the Blessed Trinity in St Paul.²

“ Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit,
And there are varieties of ministrations but the same Lord.
And there are varieties of workings but the same God, who worketh
all things in all . . .

But all these things are the work of one and the same Spirit, who apportioneth severally to each as he will.”

To him is also attributed the conception of Christ in the womb of the Blessed Virgin. The verbal parallelism in St Luke’s narrative is to be noted.³ The angel says to Mary :

“ The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee,
And the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.”

Here “ the power of the Most High ” is clearly a synonym for the Holy Ghost.

Again, it is his function to sanctify and regenerate fallen men. “ Unless a man be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”⁴ “ The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us.”⁵ Finally, it is his office to be at once the earnest and the agent of the resurrection. “ He that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”⁶

One may summarise the teaching of this section in the last words of a martyr, St Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who suffered for his faith in the year 155. After he had been bound to the stake, he lifted his eyes to heaven and prayed, saying, “ Lord God Almighty, Father of thy only and blessed Son, Jesus Christ, I bless thee that thou hast counted me worthy of this day and hour, that I may have a part in the number of thy martyrs, in the Cup of thy Christ, unto resurrection to life eternal of both soul and body in the incorruptibility of the Holy Spirit. . . . I glorify thee through the eternal and heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ, thy only Son, through whom be glory to thee, together with him and the Holy Ghost now and for ever.”⁷

§ III: THE PROCESSION OF THE HOLY GHOST FROM THE FATHER AND THE SON

The Divine processions

So far it has been established that revelation makes known to us a divine Person, the Holy Ghost, who is distinct from the Father and the Son. It remains for us to show that the intrinsic reason of this

¹ Acts xx 23.

² I Cor. xii 4-6, 11. Here I follow the Westminster Version.

³ Luke i 35. ⁴ John iii 5. ⁵ Romans v 5. ⁶ Romans viii 11.

⁷ *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, xiv 1-3.

distinction is to be found in the doctrine of the divine origins or processions of the Son from the Father, and of the Holy Ghost from Father and Son.

It has been stated elsewhere ¹ that there are in the divine nature two processions or origins of one divine person from another or from others ; that they are from all eternity and terminate in the divine essence itself ; that they imply no imperfection or posteriority of time or nature in the two persons who proceed ; that they correspond to the two activities of a purely spiritual nature, since the one is according to the operation of the divine intellect and the other according to the operation of the divine will. Further, it has been stated that the Father alone does not proceed, but is the principle of all processions, and that the Son proceeds from the Father alone by a special mode of procession known as generation. This, then, is the first procession, that of the divine Word, who is the perfect "reflection of his (the Father's) glory and the expression of his substance." ²

With the second procession, that of the Holy Ghost, we must here deal more fully. It is of divine faith that there is in God *The second procession* a procession of the Spirit, which is distinct from that of the Word. The chief scriptural authority for this procession is to be found in Christ's discourse in the supper-room, to which reference has already been made.³ There is mention of the Father from whom the Son proceeds ; of the Son who asks the Father to send, and who himself sends, another Paraclete distinct from himself ; of a Paraclete Spirit, who is expressly said to proceed from the Father. It will be shown later that he proceeds also from the Son.

It is furthermore of faith that the second divine procession is not generation, and that he who proceeds is not the begotten or the Son, but the Spirit. In Holy Scripture the third person is called the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, but he is never called the Son. In fact, in various passages of Holy Scripture it is made clear that the Second Person is the *only* Son, the only-begotten of the Father.⁴ The Creeds also may be invoked as witnesses to this tradition ; of these the Athanasian is the most explicit in its wording : "The Holy Ghost is from Father and Son, not made nor created *nor begotten* but proceeding." ⁵

The patristic evidence bears valuable witness to the truth in that the Fathers, while confessing their ignorance as to the precise *reason* why the Holy Ghost does not proceed by generation, are most certain as regards the *fact*.⁶

¹ Essay iv, *The Blessed Trinity*, pp. 123-133.

² Hebrews i 3, according to the Greek.

³ John xiv-xvi.

⁴ John i 14, 18. The word, ἀγαπητός, in Matt. iii 17 ; xvii 5, etc., ordinarily translated "beloved," should more properly be rendered "only," for it means : "that wherewith one must be content . . . hence of only children." See the new *Liddell and Scott*, s.v.

⁵ Denzinger, n. 39.

⁶ St Gregory of Nazianzos, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 8.

Various insufficient explanations have been put forward by St Augustine and other Fathers and schoolmen. It has been said, for example, that the Holy Spirit does not proceed by way of generation because he proceeds from two divine persons and the Son only from one. But this, in fact, would only prove that the Holy Ghost is not the Son who proceeds from the Father alone, and would not exclude his being *another* Son proceeding from the first and second persons. Again Richard of St Victor, St Bonaventure and others have sought the distinction in this that the Son receives a nature communicable to another, whereas the Holy Ghost does not receive such a nature. But it might be answered that filiation does not call for the reception of a communicable nature, but for the reception of a nature similar to that of the principle from which the son proceeds. These and other explanations fail in that they assign no adequate reason for distinguishing between the manner of the processions of the Son and of the Spirit.

The best explanation may be found in St Thomas.¹ To understand it we must realise that the first procession is according to the divine intellect and the second is according to the divine will. For generation properly so called it is necessary that the begotten should be similar in nature to the principle from which he proceeds *precisely by reason of the mode of his procession*. Now this condition is verified in the procession by way of intellect, and not in the procession by way of will. The Word, by the very fact that he proceeds according to the operation of the divine intellect, is the express likeness of the principle from which he proceeds, since the intellect is essentially an assimilative faculty. But it is not due to the very nature of his procession that the Spirit is like to the principle from which he proceeds, for he proceeds by way of will. "The intellect," says St Thomas, "is actualised by the object understood residing according to its own likeness in the intellect . . . the will is actualised not by any likeness of the object willed within it, but by its having a certain inclination towards the thing willed."² In other words, the will is not an assimilative faculty, but tends by an impulse towards the thing loved. That this impulse or inclination in God is the divine essence itself is not due to the very character of Love, but to the fact that nothing can proceed in God which is distinct from the divine essence. Hence, says St Basil³: "We do not speak of the Holy Spirit as unbegotten, for we recognise one unbegotten and one principle of things, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ; nor (do we speak of the Holy Ghost) as begotten, for we have been taught by the tradition of the Faith that there is one only-begotten; but, having been taught that the Spirit of truth proceeds from the Father, we confess him to be from God in uncreated wise."

¹ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. xxvii, art. 2-4; *Contra Gentiles*, IV, cc. 11, 19.

² *S. Theol.*, I, Q. xxvii, art. 4.

³ *Ep.* cxxv.

The first and most common name of the Person who proceeds according to the divine will is the Spirit. "The name 'Spirit' in things corporeal seems to signify impulse and motion; for we call the breath and the wind by the term spirit. Now it is a property of love to move and impel the will of the lover towards the object loved. Further, holiness is attributed to whatever is ordered to God. Therefore, because the divine person proceeds by way of the love whereby God is loved, that person is most properly named the Holy Spirit."¹ It may be added that the term more commonly used in English, "the Holy Ghost," is simply a derived form of the Anglo-Saxon *gāst*, which means soul or spirit. There is no name that formally designates the mode of origin of the Holy Spirit. Theologians have contented themselves with calling it "procession," or, later, "spiration."

A second personal name of the Holy Ghost is that of Love. Love in respect of God can be taken in a twofold sense. It can be used essentially in so far as it implies an act of the divine will or a relation to the thing loved, and, in this sense, it is common to the three divine persons, as when St John says that "God is love (or charity)."² But it can also be used in a personal sense for the love that proceeds from Father and Son and is the resultant of their loving, and, so taken, it is a proper name of the Holy Ghost. In this sense, the "Veni Creator Spiritus" speaks of "the living fountain, fire and LOVE."

There is a third personal name of the Spirit, and it is that of Gift. The Holy Ghost proceeds as the mutual love of the Father and the Son, and it is of the nature of love to be a gift, to be, in fact, the first of all gifts from which all others flow. Hence, in the hymn just quoted, the Holy Ghost is called "Altissimi donum Dei"—"the gift of God most high."

It is, furthermore, of divine faith that the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity "proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son . . . as from one principle . . . and by one spiration."³ These are the words of the Second Council of Lyons, the fourteenth General Council, held in 1274. They have been constantly repeated and reinforced in later Councils of the Church and in professions of faith. This dogma is denied, as regards the Son, by the Orthodox Eastern Church, which claims that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father only, on the ground that this alone is explicitly stated in Holy Scripture.⁴ To the uninstructed this point might seem to be one of minor importance. In reality it is essential not only for a true profession of the Catholic Faith, but for the establishing of any consistent theology of the Blessed Trinity.

We will begin with the Scriptural data, premising the remark that

¹ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. xxxvi, art. 1.

² Denzinger, n. 460.

³ I John iv 16.

⁴ John xv 26.

we do not claim to find in Holy Scripture any perfectly explicit statement of the Holy Spirit's procession from the Son, but that the force of various equivalent statements is unmistakable. Holy Scripture declares that the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of the Father. "The Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you."¹ But it also speaks of him as the Spirit of the Son. "God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts."² "The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."³ The natural meaning of "the Spirit of the Son" is that which is spirated, or breathed by the Son. In other words, it is equivalent to that which proceeds by spiration from the Son. Furthermore, it is admitted by the Orthodox themselves that the Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of the Father for no other reason than because he proceeds from the Father. Hence, one may conclude that the Spirit of the Son is so called because he proceeds from the Son.

Again, in certain passages the Holy Spirit is said to hear the Son and to receive from him. This would have no real signification, unless he proceeded from the Son. Our Lord in his last discourse to the disciples⁴ says of the Holy Ghost: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all truth" (better, "He will guide you into all the truth"). "For he shall not speak of himself; but what things soever he shall hear, he shall speak. . . . He shall glorify me, because he shall receive of mine and shall show it to you." Here, then, there is question of the communication of divine knowledge by the Son to the Holy Spirit. Evidently, this cannot imply any ignorance on the part of the Holy Ghost, or any need of illumination from the Son. It can only mean that, as there is no real distinction between the divine knowledge and the divine nature,⁵ the Holy Ghost receives wisdom by receiving the divine nature from the Son. In other words, the Son communicates to the Holy Spirit the divine nature, which he has himself received from the Father. Passages of similar implication are to be found regarding the Son's reception of the divine nature from the Father. "The things I have heard of him, these same I speak in the world."⁶ "As the Father hath taught me, these things I speak."⁷ "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me."⁸ This interpretation of John xvi 13 ff. receives additional support from a text that immediately follows it. "All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine."⁹ In the light of these texts and of the general teaching on the divine relations,¹⁰ we may argue as follows: All things whatsoever the Father has, the Son has with the exception of paternity. But active spiration, or the act of breathing the Holy Ghost is not paternity. Therefore, as the Father has active spiration, the Son also has it.

¹ Matt. x 20.² Gal. iv 6.³ Phil. i 9.⁴ John xvi 13-14.⁵ See Essay iii, *The One God*, pp. 86, 92.⁶ John viii 26.⁷ John viii 28.⁸ John vii 16.⁹ John xvi 15.¹⁰ See Essay iv, *The Blessed Trinity*, pp. 134-136.

The same truth may be gathered from the texts relating to the mission of the Holy Spirit by the Son. Our Lord said: "And I will ask the Father and he shall give you another Paraclete that he may abide with you for ever."¹ And again, more explicitly: "When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father."² And again: "If I go, I will send him (*i.e.* the Paraclete) to you."³ It is clear from such passages that there is a mission of the Holy Ghost and that the principle of this mission is the Son. Now it will be seen later that a divine person can only be sent by the person from whom he proceeds. But, if the Holy Ghost is sent by the Son, it is clear that he proceeds from the Son. A divine mission necessarily presupposes an eternal procession. *Missio sequitur et manifestat processionem*. A mission follows upon a procession and makes it manifest.

We conclude, then, that the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit points clearly to his eternal procession from both Father and Son. St Augustine, commenting on John xx 22, writes: "Why do we not believe that the Holy Ghost proceeds also from the Son since he is the Spirit of the Son also? For if he did not proceed from him, he (Our Lord) when he manifested himself to his disciples after the resurrection would not have breathed upon them, saying: Receive the Holy Ghost. For what else did that breathing signify than that the Holy Spirit proceeds also from him?"⁴

A word may be said regarding an important text to which reference has already been made. It is Our Lord's phrase regarding "the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father."⁵ It will be noticed that this text in no way states that the procession is from the Father only. Furthermore, it follows immediately upon the words: "Whom I will send you from the Father," a mission, which, as we have seen, clearly postulates an eternal procession from the Son.

The teaching of the Fathers may here be summarised, though a careful individual study of their writings is essential for the formation of an independent judgement.⁶ We may leave on one side the testimony of the Latin Fathers, which on the Orthodox theologians' own admission is entirely favourable to the Catholic doctrine. We may also with good reason refrain from any attempt to find very clear testimonies to the doctrine in the Fathers of the three centuries before the Council of Nicaea in 325. Having established these limitations, we can go on to say that the Greek Fathers teach with moral unanimity the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son.

Sometimes the doctrine is taught equivalently and implicitly, as when Origen (185-254) says that: "The Son communicates to the

¹ John xiv 16.

² John xv 26.

³ John xvi 7.

⁴ In Joan. Evang., tract. 99, cap. 16.

⁵ John xv 26.

⁶ There is an admirably full account of the question in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, t. v, coll. 773-807.

person of the Holy Spirit not only being, but also wisdom, intelligence and justice.”¹ Or again, in the words of St Basil (ca. 330-379): “As the Son is in regard of the Father, so is the Spirit in respect of the Son. . . . No dissection or division can be in any way conceived whereby the Son should be understood without the Father, or the Spirit separated from the Son.”²

At times, however, the doctrine is taught distinctly and expressly. St Epiphanius (ca. 315-403) speaks of “the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son, intermediate between the Father and the Son and from the Father and the Son.”³ Or, as St Ephraem the Syrian (ca. 306-373) writes: “The Father is the Begetter; the Son the Begotten from his bosom; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son”⁴—Or, again, in the words of Didymus of Alexandria (ca. 313-398), “Our Lord teaches that the being of the Spirit is derived not from the Spirit himself, but from the Father and the Son; he goes forth from the Son, proceeding from the Truth; he has no substance but that which is given to him by the Son.”⁵

We must note particularly the phrase that often occurs in the Greek Fathers, and is not unknown in the Latin writers: “The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *through* the Son.” St Athanasius says that: “As the Word before the Incarnation dispensed the Spirit as his own, so now that he is made man he sanctifies all with the Spirit. . . . Through whom and from whom could the Spirit be given, but *through* the Son, whose Spirit he is?”⁶ St Basil states that “the native goodness and the natural hallowing and the royal dignity reach the Spirit *from* the Father *through* the Only-Begotten.”⁷ This formula is recognised by the Council of Florence as perfectly orthodox.⁸ It merely lays stress upon the fact that breathing or active spiration is in the Father as in its principle and in the Son as it is communicated to him by the Father.

*An argument
from reason*

In the light of Scripture and Tradition, theologians have found an argument from reason that may fairly be described as unassailable. It is stated by St Thomas as follows⁹: “It must be said that the Holy Ghost is from the Son. For if he were not from him, he could in no wise be personally distinguished from him.” In other words, the Holy Spirit is really distinct from the Son; but in the divine nature there can be no real distinction between the persons except by reason of the origin or procession of one from the other. “For it cannot be said that the divine persons are distinguished from each

¹ *In Joann.* ii 6.

² *Ancoratus*, 8.

³ *Hymnus de defunctis et Trinitate*; Ed. Lamy, 3, 242.

⁴ *De Spiritu Sancto*, 34-37.

⁵ *De Spiritu Sancto*, c. 18, n. 47.

⁶ Denzinger, n. 691.

⁷ *De Spiritu Sancto*, c. 17, n. 43.

⁸ *Or. c. Arianos*, I, 48, 40.

⁹ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. xxxvi, art. 2.

other by anything absolute ; for it would follow that there would not be one essence of the three persons." Therefore they are distinguished only by relations. Nor can the divine persons be distinguished by relations that are merely dissimilar, for in the Father there are two dissimilar relations, Paternity and active spiration, "but these are not opposite relations, and therefore they do not make two persons but belong only to the one person of the Father." In like manner, filiation and active spiration in the Son, since they are merely dissimilar relations, do not constitute two persons. Hence the reason for the distinction must be found in relations that are opposed to one another. "Now there cannot be in God any relations opposed to each other except relations of origin. And opposed relations of origin are those of a principle to that which proceeds therefrom. Therefore we must conclude that it is necessary to say either that the Son is from the Holy Ghost, which no one says ; or that the Holy Ghost is from the Son, as we confess."

The Orthodox position is based on the affirmation that the Father is the source of all things, and that to admit the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son would be to admit two sources in God. Catholic theologians have replied by allowing that the Father is the ultimate principle of the divine processions, who alone does not proceed, while disallowing expressions that might seem to imply any inferiority in the other two persons. They also insist that, although there is a relation of generation between Father and Son, there is no opposed relation between them in so far as they are the common source of the Holy Ghost's procession. At the Councils of Lyons II (1274) and Florence (1438-45), the Pope and the Latins were willing to make certain concessions in terminology—to admit that the Father is the "cause" (understood in the sense of principle) of the other two persons and to allow the complete orthodoxy of the formula "from the Father, through the Son." Unfortunately for any hope of permanent reconciliation, our opponents are not strong in either logic or metaphysic, they have tried to convert a point of abstruse theology into a popular war-cry, and the end of their opposition is not yet.¹

One of the principal Orthodox grievances is that the Latins have *The* tampered with the historic Creeds by inserting the clause known as *Filioque* the *Filioque*, that is, the words "and from the Son." It is true that the considerable additions made to the Nicene Creed by the Council of Constantinople in 381 did not include these words, and that the article originally read: "The Holy Ghost . . . who proceeds from the Father." Later, however, the words "and from the Son" were added, first in Spain, as the evidence of several Spanish councils of the 5th, 6th, and 7th centuries shows, and then in France and Germany. In 809 the Synod of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) petitioned

¹ See in particular Dr. Adrian Fortescue's *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, pp. 372-384.

Pope Leo III to introduce the formula at Rome. He refused to make any change in the official creeds, though the doctrine itself of the procession from both Father and Son was universally believed in the West. Finally, Pope Benedict VIII (1012-1024) allowed the introduction of the *Filioque* at Rome. It had long been in use throughout the Roman Patriarchate.

The legitimacy of such an addition in the first place, on the authority of a local council, may well be questioned. But there can be no doubt concerning its lawfulness since its approval by the supreme magisterium of the Church. Nor have the Orthodox any reason for saying that such an addition contravenes the decree of the Council of Ephesus forbidding anyone to "compose another faith than that one which was defined by the holy Fathers who were gathered together with the Holy Ghost at Nicaea."¹ The Council's intention was to anathematise any contradictory formula. It had nothing to say against legitimate additions to the Creeds or against clearer statements of the unchanging Faith.

A few lines will suffice for the remaining words of the Second Council of Lyons—that the Holy Ghost proceeds from Father and Son *as from one principle and by one spiration*. The clause has already been equivalently stated. All things are common to Father and Son with the exception of paternity and filiation, and the only distinction between them is one of origin. It follows, then, that active spiration is numerically the same in the Father and the Son. So, in the words of St Augustine²: "The Catholic Church holds and preaches that God the Holy Spirit is not the Spirit of the Father only, or of the Son only, but of the Father and the Son. . . . He is their common life (*communitas*). It was therefore their will to give us communion with one another and with themselves through that which is common to them both; to gather us together in one by this Gift which both have in common, namely, by the Holy Ghost, who is God and the Gift of God."

We must now pass from the inner life of the Blessed Trinity to consider the Holy Ghost in his temporal mission and in the gifts he gives to men.

§ IV: THE TEMPORAL MISSION OF THE HOLY GHOST

"By the Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost, Catholic theologians understand the sending, advent, and office of the Holy Ghost through the Incarnate Son and after the day of Pentecost. . . . The Eternal Procession of the Holy Ghost completes the mystery of the Trinity *ad intra*; the Temporal Mission . . . completes the revelation of the Trinity *ad extra*."³

¹ Denzinger, n. 125.

² Sermon 71, 12, 18.

³ Cardinal Manning, *The Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost*, p. 14 and pp. 22-23.

Our Lord himself tells us that "He that sent me, is with me,"¹ and that "If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you, but, if I go, I will send him to you."² These sendings, or missions, may be defined as the processions of one divine person from another as implying a new mode of existence in creatures. They involve no change in the divine persons themselves, nor, since the divine persons are everywhere present, can they be understood of any change of place or local motion. But they demand a new manner of existing in a rational creature, and this new operation must take place in the creature in whom the divine person is received after a new manner. It is to be noted that all divine operations in creatures are common to all three persons of the Trinity, but, as regards these operations, the Son and the Holy Ghost are sent, whereas the Father is not sent, but sends. The Son is sent by the Father, and the Holy Ghost by the Father and the Son.

These missions are either visible or invisible; in the former, the divine person manifests himself visibly; in the latter, his manifestation is invisible. The invisible mission is effected by the gifts of grace without any exterior manifestation, but the visible missions are brought about with some external effect perceptible to the senses, as, for example, in the Incarnation of the Word or in the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. The former is the only example of a substantial visible mission, for the Word by becoming hypostatically united to a human nature appeared visibly in that nature. Four visible missions of the Holy Ghost are commonly enumerated; and they were all not substantial but representative since, although the Holy Ghost was specially revealed in them, he was not united personally and hypostatically with creatures. The first visible mission took place at Our Lord's baptism and was under the appearance of a dove³; the second was at the Transfiguration and took the form of a luminous cloud⁴; the third took place after the Resurrection, when Christ conferred the Holy Spirit upon his Apostles under the form of breath⁵; lastly, the fourth occurred on Pentecost in the form of tongues of fire.⁶

We have now to consider the invisible mission of the Holy Ghost and the varied ways in which "He, who is the divine goodness and the mutual love of the Father and the Son, completes and perfects by his strong yet gentle power the secret work of man's eternal salvation."⁷ Following Pope Leo's Encyclical, we shall consider three of the principal manifestations of the Holy Spirit's temporal mission under the headings, the Holy Ghost and the Incarnation, the Holy Ghost and the Church, and the Holy Ghost in the souls of the just.

¹ John viii 29.² John xvi 7.³ Matt. iii 12.⁴ Matt. xvii 5.⁵ John xx 22.⁶ Acts ii 3.

⁷ Pope Leo XIII: Enc. *Divinum illud*, p. 426. The pages referred to are those in *The Great Encyclical Letters of Leo XIII*, an American edition published by Benziger.

The Holy Ghost and the written word of God will be the subject of our final section.

*The Holy
Ghost and the
Incarnation*

“Among the external operations of God, the highest of all is the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word. . . . Now this work, though it belongs to the whole Trinity, is appropriated especially to the Holy Ghost, so that the gospels thus speak of the Blessed Virgin: *She was found with child, of the Holy Ghost, and That which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost.*¹ And this is rightly ascribed to him, who is the Love of the Father and the Son, since this great *mystery of godliness*² proceeds from the infinite love of God towards man, as St John tells us: *God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son.*”³

It is of faith that one divine person can assume to himself a human nature without this union being shared by the other divine persons. In fact, only the Word assumed human nature. But the act of raising that nature to union with the Godhead is common to all three persons, since it is an operation of the Trinity in relation to creatures. As St Thomas has it: “The three persons effected the union of a human nature to the one Person of the Son.”⁴ But this act, for the reasons given by Pope Leo, is most fittingly attributed to the Holy Ghost.

Moreover, the dignity of personal union with the Word to which a human nature was elevated was bestowed by reason of no merits of ours. It is therefore essentially a grace and, as such, proper to the operation of the Holy Spirit. Other graces remain in the accidental order; even the gift of the Holy Ghost to the just, though in itself substantial, does not effect a substantial union, as we shall remark later, but the personal union of Christ’s human nature with the Word is a substantial union. Hence the grace of union is accounted the greatest of all graces; and this grace, by which in the judgement of most theologians the humanity of Christ was formally sanctified, is rightly attributed to him who is regarded as peculiarly the source of sanctification.

To the Holy Ghost we also attribute the fulness of sanctifying grace with which Christ’s soul was endowed, and which is called in Holy Scripture his *anointing*.⁵ In the synagogue at Nazareth Our Divine Lord applied to himself those words of Isaias the prophet: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, wherefore he hath anointed me,”⁶ and this anointing of the Spirit was bestowed not only in the grace of union, but in all the other graces and gifts that adorned the soul of Christ, so that in him resided the absolute fulness of divine grace in the most perfect manner possible. Isaias had foretold that these gifts of the Spirit would be bestowed upon the offspring of

¹ Matt. i 18, 20.

² 1 Tim. iii 16.

³ John iii 16; *Divinum illud*, p. 427.

⁴ *S. Theol.*, III, Q. iii, art. 4. See Essay xi, *Jesus Christ, God and Man*, p. 383.

⁵ Acts x 38.

⁶ Luke iv 18; Isaias lxi 1.

Jesse¹ and, at Christ's baptism, the descent of the Spirit and the Father's voice glorified the divine Son. "Therefore by the conspicuous apparition of the Holy Ghost and by his invisible power in his soul, the twofold mission of the Spirit is foreshadowed, namely, the mission which is evidently manifest in his Church and that which is effected by his secret descent into the souls of the just." ■

We must now consider the Holy Ghost's office in founding the Church and in her guidance and administration throughout the Christian centuries. Pope Leo says that "the Church which, already conceived, came forth from the very side of the Second Adam, when he was, as it were, sleeping upon the cross, first showed herself in a marvellous manner before the eyes of men on the great day of Pentecost."³ It was the fulfilment of Our Lord's promise to send "another Paraclete," who should be the "promise of the Father."⁴ It was the last of the visible missions of the Spirit. And Our Lord by this gift to his disciples intended "to complete and, as it were, to seal the deposit of doctrine committed to them under his inspiration."⁵

The conception of this deposit and the sources of revelation in which it is contained are more fully dealt with elsewhere.⁶ But, at the risk of some repetition, one must insist upon the fundamental truth that one of the effects of the Holy Ghost's mission to the Church is to ensure the safe custody of an unchanging revelation. The Church teaches us that after the death of the Apostles no new economy or new revelation was to be expected, and, further, that there never has been nor will be any objective increase in revealed truth. Holy Scripture assures us that the present economy is final; it is the "fulness of time"⁷; that Christianity stands, as it were, midway between the types and figures of the Old Testament and the final consummation of God's kingdom in heaven; that, in opposition to the levitical ministry that passed away and needed renewal, Jesus, "for that he continueth for ever, hath an everlasting priesthood."⁸ It was to be the office of the Apostles' successors to "keep that which is committed to their trust," to "hold the form of sound words" which they had heard, to avoid all that was "contrary to the doctrine" which they had learned, to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."⁹ And Tradition teaches the same lesson—that from the earliest times Catholics sought to follow in all things the apostolic teaching and regarded novelty in doctrine as an unmistakable sign of heresy.

This is not to deny that there could be, and indeed has been at times in the Church's history, a somewhat more explicit or more

¹ Isaias xi 1 ff.

² *Divinum illud*, p. 428.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ John xiv 16; Luke xxiv 49.

⁵ *Divinum illud*, l. c.

⁶ Essay i, *Faith and Revealed Truth*, pp. 28 ff.

⁷ Gal. iv 4; Eph. i 10.

⁸ Heb. vii 24.

⁹ 1 Tim. vi 20; 2 Tim. i 13-14; Rom. xvi 17; Jude 3, etc.

distinct or more technical presentation of certain dogmas.¹ It remains true that, in the words of the Vatican Council, "the doctrine of faith which God has revealed has not been proposed, like a philosophical invention, to be perfected by human intelligence, but has been delivered as a divine deposit to the Spouse of Christ to be faithfully kept and infallibly declared."²

The deposit must be "faithfully kept"; there have been occasions when it has had to be "infallibly declared." The Holy Ghost is twice called by Our Lord "the Spirit of truth,"³ and it is to him that the Church looks for that gift of infallibility, that divine assistance that safeguards her supreme authority in its doctrinal definitions and in its ordinary teaching of the faithful. This assistance should not, as is evident from what has been said, be regarded as a means of communicating new truths to the Church, nor is it a positive influence inspiring the Popes and members of General Councils to utter definitions and declarations of Catholic doctrine. It is rather in the nature of a negative influence that restrains the episcopate and its Head from teaching or proclaiming anything contrary to the revealed deposit. But, though it may be called negative in its essential character, it is not negative in its effect—the preservation of the ecclesiastical magisterium within the limits of the truth. Such assistance does not necessarily preserve the Church from error except in regard of revealed truth and truths intimately connected with revelation, nor does it dispense the authorities of the Church from exercising ordinary prudence and diligence in preparing matter for a definition. This, then, is the special divine assistance promised by means of the Holy Spirit's mission to the Church. "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth."⁴

But the Holy Spirit comes to the Church not only as the Spirit of Truth, but as the Spirit of Holiness. He is the principle of regeneration in baptism,⁵ and of the forgiveness of sins⁶ and of all supernatural life. St Paul exhorts us not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption,"⁷ and by whom we are united together in one body. "For in one Spirit were we all baptised into one body,"⁸ and that body is the Body of Christ, a visible and a mystical Body.

Finally, the Holy Ghost is the principle of unity in the Church, of her organisation, and of all the gifts conferred upon her members. "There are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit. . . . But all these things one and the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one

¹ See Essay i, *Faith and Revealed Truth*, pp. 33 ff.

² Sess. 3, cap. 4, Denzinger, n. 1800.

³ John xv 26; xvi 13.

⁴ Acts i 8.

⁵ John iii 5.

⁶ John xx 22.

⁷ Ephesians iv 30.

⁸ I Cor. xii 13.

according as he will.”¹ He is the source and the secret of that “unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one Spirit; as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all.”² And what is true of the body as a whole is true also of its organs. “Take heed to yourselves and to the whole flock,” said St Paul to the priests of Ephesus, “wherein the Holy Ghost hath placed you (as) bishops to rule the Church of God.”³ “Let it suffice to state that, as Christ is the Head of the Church, so is the Holy Ghost her soul,” says Pope Leo.⁴ And he quotes St Augustine’s words: “What the soul is in our body, that is the Holy Ghost in Christ’s body, the Church.”⁵

The Holy Ghost is also called the heart of the Church, for, as St Thomas says⁶: “The heart has a certain occult influence, and therefore the Holy Ghost is compared to a heart, which invisibly gives life to and unites the Church.”

It is to be noted that the Church as a society is not merely the sum of the individual members, and he who is the Church’s soul, in addition to his indwelling in the souls of the individual members, dwells in the Church as a society, an organism, a body, and acts principally through the gifts bestowed upon the society—priesthood, ecclesiastical magisterium, and sacred authority.

“This being so, no further and fuller ‘manifestation and revelation of the divine Spirit’ may be imagined or expected; for that which now takes place in the Church is the most perfect possible, and will last until that day when the Church herself, having passed through her militant stage, shall be taken up into the joy of the saints triumphant in heaven.”⁷

It is not possible within the compass of this short essay to say very much regarding the work of the Holy Spirit in the individual soul. A large part of the subject is treated in other essays, notably in Essays XVI and XVII on *Sanctifying Grace* and *Actual Grace*, and in those, ten in all, that deal with the Sacraments of the Church. But something more than a word must be said here concerning one of the principal effects of sanctifying grace in the soul, namely, the inhabitation of the divine Persons in the souls of the just. But, as this is a special divine presence, it is necessary first to have some conception of God’s ordinary presence in the things he has created out of nothing.

Holy Scripture accustoms us to the truth that God is everywhere really and substantially present. “Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord” by his prophet Jeremias,⁸ and the fact of that divine presence in all creation is one of the child’s first lessons in the things

¹ 1 Cor. xii 4, 11.

² Ephesians iv 3-6.

³ Acts xx 28.

⁴ *Divinum illud*, p. 430. ⁵ Serm. 267, 4.

⁶ *S. Theol.*, III, Q. viii, art. 1 ad 3.

⁷ *Divinum illud*, p. 430. ⁸ xxiii 24.

*The Holy
Ghost in the
souls of the
just*

of God. The mode of that indwelling is less generally explained. Theologians commonly say that the formal reason for this divine presence is not the divine substance itself, but the divine operation. God is a spirit, and a spiritual substance, unlike a bodily substance, is not in a place by its extension, but by its operation therein. Hence God is present in things by his operation. So the reason assigned by Holy Scripture for this presence is that "in him we live and move and are,"¹ or, in other words, that God is present in his creatures as a cause is present to its effect, namely, by the application of his power. An enlargement upon this conception is given in St Thomas's dictum that God is present and exists in all things, "by his power, inasmuch as all things are subject to his power; by his presence, inasmuch as all things are naked and open to his eyes; by his essence, inasmuch as he is present to all as the cause of their being."²

This is the ordinary presence of God in the order of nature, but there are other more intimate modes of his presence in the supernatural order. We have already spoken, in treating of the Incarnation, of the most special of all these modes—the substantial union between a divine person and a human nature that gave to the world Jesus, Our Lord, true God and true man. Now we come to the special manner of God's presence in the just, whereby the divine Persons reside by grace in the just soul as in a temple in a most intimate and special manner.

The fact of this inhabitation is a dogma of the Faith, which is most explicitly stated in Holy Scripture and Tradition. As regards the Holy Ghost, we have already considered the texts regarding his mission and gift to men. The words in St John were addressed in the first place to the Apostles, but many other passages prove that the divine gift was not restricted to them but was bestowed on all the adopted sons of God. "You have received the spirit of adoption of sons," writes St Paul to the Romans.³ ". . . For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God." And he writes to the Galatians:⁴ "Because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts. . . ." And it is not only a divine gift, but a permanent divine presence. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"⁵ "Your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God."⁶

This presence of the Holy Ghost is also the presence of the other divine persons. Our Lord himself says: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, *abideth in me*, and I *in him*."⁷ And again he says, "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and *we* will come to him and will make our abode with him."⁸ The chief condition is love of Jesus; as a reward he

¹ Acts xvii 28.

³ viii 15-16.

⁶ I Cor. vi 19.

² *S. Theol.*, I, Q. viii, art. 3.

⁴ Gal. iv 6-7.

⁷ John vi 57.

⁵ I Cor. iii 16.

⁸ John xiv 23.

and the Father will dwell supernaturally and permanently with the lover.

Hence it is clear that, as a result of sanctifying grace, the human soul becomes the temple of God, who inhabits it in a special manner not merely by His created gifts, but by the real presence of the divine Persons. This is especially evident from the Epistle to the Romans,¹ where the Holy Ghost and his gift of charity are sharply distinguished. "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us."

So fundamental a truth was commented upon even by the Apostolic Fathers. Thus St Ignatius of Antioch writes to the Ephesians²: "You are then all travelling companions, bearers of God, bearers of his temple, bearers of Christ, bearers of sacred things, having no other vesture than the precepts of Jesus Christ." And this divine indwelling is distinguished from God's created gifts as St Cyril of Alexandria tells us: "We are made *partakers of the divine nature*³ and are said to be born of God; we are therefore called gods, being raised not by grace alone to supernatural glory, but having already God dwelling in us and abiding in us."⁴

This permanent inhabitation of the divine Persons in the souls of the just necessarily calls for some change on the part of the creature, and for the setting up of a new real relation in him whereby he is intimately joined with God. But, as St Thomas says, "No other effect (*i.e.* no other change) can be the reason for the divine persons existing in a rational creature in a new manner *except sanctifying grace*."⁵ Evidently there can be no change on the part of God, who is immutable; hence some new divine effect is required that operates in the just and not in others. And Sacred Scripture, the Fathers and the theologians agree in finding no other effect of this kind except sanctifying grace. So it is that our union with God is effected by means of the supernatural, created accident of sanctifying grace. Hence by the reception of sanctifying grace the just truly become the temples of the divine Persons, who truly and really inhabit their souls. This is confirmed by the consideration that the divine Persons do not inhabit the souls of those who are not in a state of grace, for, in the words of St Athanasius, "He who has fallen is no longer in God, since the holy Paraclete Spirit, who is in God, has receded from him."⁶ It is, of course, true that God can *move* the sinner by his actual graces, but he does not thereby inhabit him, since actual graces are of their nature transient.

But we must further determine the manner of this divine inhabitation. By its very definition as a special presence and as an effect of sanctifying grace, it evidently cannot be reduced to God's

¹ v 5.² ix 2.³ 2 Peter i 4.⁴ *In Joannem comm.*, i 9.⁵ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. xliii, art. 3.⁶ *Or. contra. Arianos*, III, 24.

ordinary manner of existence in his creatures by his power, his presence, and his essence. Nor can we accept the view of certain theologians that the Holy Spirit is only present in the just in so far as he preserves in them the supernatural gifts of grace and the infused virtues. This would call, indeed, for some supernatural presence, but not for a divine inhabitation, since God preserves the habits of faith and hope in sinners, but does not thereby inhabit them. Inhabitation implies a permanent reception as a guest and a friend, a reception not merely of a friend's gifts, but of the friend himself. Any theory that minimises this fact may be ultimately reduced to what St Thomas calls "the error of those who say that the Holy Ghost is not given but only his gifts."¹

For the true explanation of this divine presence we turn to St Thomas. After mentioning God's common manner of existence in creatures, he continues: "There is one special mode, belonging to the rational nature, wherein God is said to be present *as the object known is in the knower and the beloved in the lover*. And since the rational creature by its own operation of knowledge and love attains to God himself, according to this special manner, God is said not only to exist in the rational creature, but also to dwell therein as in his own temple."² The keynote to this teaching is to be found in the words in italics. First, "God is said to be present *as the object known is in the knower*." This may be explained in the following way. Among the infused virtues and gifts that accompany sanctifying grace the gift of wisdom, since it arises out of charity, has a pre-eminent place. It is the gift of such knowledge as gives true delight and peace to the soul. But knowledge, if it is to be truly delightful, calls for a certain real presence of the thing known, by reason of which the knower really enjoys the object of his knowledge. Hence the gift of wisdom calls for such a real presence of God in the soul as is possible in this life. But, in the present life, a real union with the intelligence is not possible; we should then already enjoy the beatific vision. It is, however, possible to have this union with the essence of the soul and with the faculty of enjoyment, which is the will. Therefore the gift of wisdom requires the real presence of God in the essence of the soul and in the will. And this is effected by sanctifying grace according to St Thomas's dictum, "To have the power of enjoying a divine Person can only be according to sanctifying grace."³

Secondly, St Thomas says that God is present "*as the beloved in the lover*." Sanctifying grace, by the intermediacy of charity, constitutes perfect friendship between God and the soul. But

¹ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. xliii, art. 3, arg. 1.

² *Ibid.*, I, Q. xliii, art. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, l.c. For this argument and the following the writer is much indebted to his old master, the late Père Edouard Hugon, O.P., S.T.M. See his *Tractatus de Gratia*, pp. 175 ff.

friendship, as a condition, calls not only for unselfish and mutual love, but also for a certain communication of good things, establishing some measure of equality between friends. This communication of good things is effected by sanctifying grace, for, since grace is a participation of the divine nature, it is something common to God and ourselves, namely, that supernatural life which is given to us by God and is most truly ours. And so God gives us something of his, namely, a participation of his divine life, and we are permitted to give something of our own to God, in so far as we promote his extrinsic glory by good works done in a state of grace. Furthermore, friendship to be perfect calls not only for an affective union of the lover with his beloved, but also, so far as is possible, for a real and effective union, so that the beloved is not only extrinsically present to the lover, but exists within the lover as a most intimate object of his knowledge and love. And so this supreme intimacy and friendship between God and man calls for a special and intimate presence of God in the soul.

Hence the whole argument turns upon the nature of charity, which is intimate friendship with God. Our *knowledge*, indeed, is in this life imperfect and obscure and does not effect a real union of God, by way of object, with our intellect. But our charity, since it is specifically the same as the charity of our heavenly fatherland, demands and effects a real union of the divine persons with the will of one in a state of divine grace. Hence, by way of sanctifying grace, in which charity is rooted, the divine Persons are really and substantially present in our souls.

Is this divine presence common to the three divine Persons or does it pertain in any exclusive manner to the Holy Spirit? The question is already answered by the fundamental principle that all external operations of the Trinity are common to the three divine Persons, though, as we have seen in the case of the Incarnation, a formal substantial union could exist between the Word and a created nature without this union being shared by the other divine Persons. A special union with the Holy Ghost would involve a hypostatic union with every soul in a state of grace, and Catholic teaching recognises no hypostatic union other than that of the Incarnate Word. But it may freely be allowed that this divine indwelling, as a work of divine love and the effect of the divine friendship, manifests in a special manner the personal character of the Holy Ghost, who is subsistent Love, the infinite Love of the supreme Good. So this inhabitation is fittingly appropriated to the Holy Spirit, and it is in this sense that we must understand those texts of Scripture and Tradition which state that the Father and the Son dwell in us through the Holy Ghost.

The effects of this marvellous indwelling are not far to seek. Since we have a share in "that wonderful union, which is properly called 'indwelling,' differing only in degree or state from that with

which God beatifies the saints in heaven,"¹ we enjoy most intimate converse with the divine Persons. We have dwelling within us one who is our Advocate in the sorrows and misfortunes of the present life, and who makes known to our souls the deep things of God.² We have within us the source of all the virtues, gifts, and fruits bestowed by the Holy Ghost upon men, and even our mortal bodies, since they are the temples of the Blessed Trinity, are in a special manner made holy, and sacred, and worthy of the general resurrection.

What are our duties towards our divine guests? We must avoid anything that may occasion the withdrawal of this special inhabitation in our souls or that may hinder the fulness of the divine activity within us. We may also consider some words of Père Hugon reminding us that, "Since friends are accustomed to converse with each other and to pay each other visits, we ought very often to visit the Blessed Trinity, as we visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. A double visit should be paid by us frequently in the course of the day: a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, though this is not always possible, and a visit to the Most Holy Trinity, which is always and at all times possible and passing sweet indeed!"³

§ V: THE HOLY GHOST AND THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD

*The prophets
of the Old
Testament*

WE have already seen that it was one of the functions of the Spirit in Old Testament times to inspire "the holy prophets, who are from the beginning."⁴ The subject of Hebrew prophecy is an intricate one, not to be lightly attempted in less than a treatise. For our purpose it suffices to say that throughout the Old Testament literature we find frequent mention of prophets. A prophet by definition is "one who is moved to speak by God, one who delivers his messages or reveals his will."⁵ The word is also used in the sense of one who predicts future events, but, according to the authority just quoted, this is "an idea merely incidental, not essential." Granting that the foretelling of the future, sometimes of the far distant future, was frequently a part of the prophetic office, we may still hold that the principal office of these great figures that arose from time to time in Israel's history, particularly at times of national infidelity or disaster, was, like St John the Baptist's, to "turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people."⁶ From Samuel to Malachias, that is from the eleventh to the fifth century before Christ, we can trace an uninterrupted succession of these divinely sent and divinely inspired messengers, whose office it was "to assert Eternal Providence and justify the

¹ *Divinum illud*, p. 433.

² *Tractatus de Gratia*, p. 182.

³ See Liddell and Scott's *Greek Lexicon*, 8th ed.

⁴ 1 Cor. ii 10.

⁵ Luke i 70.

⁶ Luke i 17.

ways of God to men." As regards their call and mission we are frequently reminded that these were supernatural. They presupposed an enlightenment of the mind (though, as we shall see, not necessarily the communication of new ideas), a special mission and an impulse given to the will to communicate to others the message received.

Now, among these prophets, some of them were moved to set down in writing the truths they had emphasised in their preaching, and so we find among the Old Testament books some seventeen which contain the summarised teaching and preaching of the so-called writing prophets. Many of the other prophets never wrote at all, or, if they wrote, their writings have perished. With these non-writing prophets we are not here immediately concerned, though we believe that their supernatural illumination and mission should be attributed to the Holy Spirit of God. Our concern is with the prophets and other holy men of old in both Old and New Testament times, who were moved by God not only to preach but to set down in writing the divine library of the Scriptures "in apt words and with infallible truth."¹

The divine impulse given to the sacred writers is known to us as "inspiration," though it is to be noted that the great St Thomas, in his *Summa Theologica*, has no treatise on inspiration as such, but deals with the whole matter under the heading of Prophecy, to which it most rightly belongs.² We must now inquire how far the Scriptures affirm their own inspiration and how far this truth is grounded in Tradition, before we pass on to the nature of that divine gift.

The fact of the divine character of the holy Scriptures is laid down with the greatest clearness by the Vatican Council of 1870. "These books (*i.e.* those of the Tridentine Canon) of the Old and New Testament are to be received as sacred and canonical . . . because, having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God for their author, and have been delivered as such to the Church herself."³ And among the canons on Revelation there is one that anathematises anyone who should deny the sacred and canonical character of these books, or "that they have been divinely inspired."⁴ We shall have occasion to go deeper into the sense of this definition, but meanwhile we can note two points in passing: first, that the Church's approbation follows and does not constitute inspiration; that is, the Church receives them because they are divinely inspired; they are not inspired simply because she receives them; secondly, that, although we have not, as yet, given any complete definition or description of inspiration, it is clearly stated that there is a divine influx of some sort whereby God influences

¹ Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus*, p. 297.

² *S. Theol.*, IIa-IIae, QQ. 171-174.

³ Denzinger, n. 1787.

⁴ Denzinger, n. 1809.

the sacred writers and by reason of which the books are said to have God for their author.

Among those who deny or limit this divine influence are, first of all, the Rationalists. Since they question the existence of God and deny the fact of revelation, it is hardly surprising that they also deny inspiration, which supposes a God who inspires and a revelation having, as one of its sources, the sacred books of Scripture. Then there are the liberal Protestants, who frequently use the word, but in a quite uncatholic sense. For them inspiration is a kind of religious exaltation of the same order as poetic inspiration, or else it is nothing more than the natural genius of a great writer, calling for no special divine intervention. Thirdly, we have the Modernists, whose denial of inspiration in any Catholic sense is based upon the two chief dogmas of the Modernist programme—denial of the supernatural and denial of absolute truth. One of the leading Modernists has said,¹ “God is the author of the Bible, as he is the architect of St Peter’s, Rome, or of Notre-Dame de Paris,” that is, by his general concursus, and in no special and supernatural manner.

*The witness of
Scripture*

The Scriptures themselves bear witness to their own divine character. First, we find numerous passages in both Testaments in which certain books or parts of books are said to possess a divine authority. In the Pentateuch God moves Moses to write. “And the Lord said to Moses: Write this for a memorial in a book.”² “And the Lord said to Moses: Write thee these words by which I have made a covenant both with thee and with Israel.”³ In the New Testament, reference is made to David, who, according to Our Lord, “saith by the Holy Ghost: *The Lord said to my Lord*, etc.”⁴ And the words of God to Moses are taken by Our Lord as said to the Jews of A.D. 30, who could only have received them in writing. “Have you not read that which was spoken by God, saying to you: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?”⁵ Therefore these words were written under the divine influence, or, in other words, were divinely inspired.

In many other passages it is stated, either implicitly or explicitly, that the Scriptures *as a whole* are inspired. In the Old Testament there is no explicit statement, but a large part of the Scriptures is said equivalently to be inspired, in that it is attributed to the prophets, who themselves affirm the divine character of their mission and preaching. Our Lord himself frequently refers to the Old Testament Scriptures as a firm and infallible proof of his divine mission, and as having final authority. “Ye search the scriptures: for

¹ A. Loisy, *Simple réflexions sur le Décret du Saint Office “Lamentabili,”* pp. 42 ff.

² Exodus xvii 14.

⁴ Mark xii 36.

³ Exodus xxxiv 27.

⁵ Matt. xxii 31-32.

you think in them to have life everlasting. And the same are they that give testimony of me." ¹ "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?" ² "The Scripture cannot be broken." ³ In particular one has the formula that occurs some 150 times in the New Testament, "The Scripture saith" or "It is written," which attributes to the Scriptures an authority that belongs to God alone. The appeal is made to the Old Testament Scriptures as a whole, as is proved by Our Lord's reference ⁴ to "the Law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms" concerning him, a phrase which includes the three divisions of the Jewish books, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

The most explicit proof is furnished by St Paul's second Epistle to Timothy. ⁵ The Apostle exhorts Timothy, who was the son of a Gentile father and a Jewish mother, to remain firm in his faith, and puts forward two motives, the apostolic authority of his teacher ⁶ and the authority of the inspired Scriptures, which Timothy has known from his infancy, and which "can instruct thee to salvation, by the faith which is in Christ Jesus." He continues: "Every scripture is inspired of God and is also profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice." ⁷ It is clear from this verse that the word "scripture" is the equivalent of the "sacred scriptures" used in the preceding verse. It includes at least the books of the Old Testament and may well be extended to include such books of the New Testament as had already been written. "Every scripture" is better than the Douay Version's "All scripture," since it emphasises the inspiration of each single part of Scripture, in addition to being a better translation of the Greek. The most important word, "inspired" (*θεόπνευστος*), means literally, "breathed by God," and so, divinely inspired. It is not found elsewhere in the New Testament or in the Septuagint. Its sense may be illustrated by a verse in II Peter ⁸ though the immediate reference there seems to be to spoken prophecy. "Prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired (literally, moved) by the Holy Ghost." Hence we may conclude that all Scripture and every part of it is inspired by the Holy Ghost.

The value of these proofs from Scripture must be correctly understood. It is true that they have real force of proof; that they are in sufficiently clear terms; and that they enjoy indisputable authority, since many of them come directly from the lips of Our Lord and his Apostles. But the witness of the Scriptures remains imperfect and incomplete. If we look for a criterion or standard for determining the inspiration of any particular book of the Old or New Testament, we shall find that there are many insufficient ones and only one that is fully satisfactory.

¹ John v 39.

² Matt. xxvi 54.

³ John x 35.

⁴ Luke xxiv 44.

⁵ iii 14-16.

⁶ iii 14.

⁷ This version slightly differs from the Douay.

⁸ i 21.

The Catholic teaching is that this criterion is not to be found in any intrinsic excellence of the books themselves nor in the testimony of the authors of these books, nor in the interior illumination of the reader by the Holy Spirit. No human testimony, and not even the apostolic character of the writer will suffice, for the gift of the apostolate was conferred for the preaching of the Gospel, and here there is question of written works. The only testimony that abstracts from subjectivism and is truly infallible, universal (*i.e.* having application to all the inspired books) and at the disposal of all is that of God, which is made known to us through the teaching authority of the Catholic Church. Apart from the insufficiency of all other criteria, it should be clear that the fact of inspiration is a dogma of the Faith and that a dogma of the Faith is not to be believed upon merely human testimony. Therefore the fact of inspiration is to be believed upon the authority of God alone. The appeal of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church is made to Scripture not as an inanimate book at the mercy of everybody's private judgement, but to the Scriptures as interpreted by the voice of Tradition, which is that of the Church, "to whom (alone) it pertains to judge concerning the true sense and interpretation of Holy Scripture."¹

The witness of tradition

We cannot here go fully into the history of the doctrine of inspiration, but we may attempt some general summary, which can be divided into two periods—the first three centuries and the period from the fourth century onwards. As regards the first three centuries we have, as is well known, relatively few Christian documents, and of these fewer still make any reference to the authority, and the reason for the authority of Holy Scripture. However, we find allusions to the biblical writers as the organs, or the instruments, or the ministers of God, and especially of the Holy Spirit, who is represented by St Justin (martyred A.D. 163-7)² as playing on their minds as a musician plays on a lyre. The books themselves are the "oracles of the Holy Spirit," "the divine utterances." A striking phrase is that of St Clement of Rome (who wrote about A.D. 96),³ "Ye have searched the scriptures, which are true, which were given through the Holy Ghost." Careful distinction was made between the genuine books and those judged to be apocryphal, and it was the aim even of the earlier Fathers and writers to discover the exact sense of Scripture, because there, they were persuaded, was to be found truth pure and undefiled.

From the fourth century onwards there is abundant witness to the regard in which Scripture was held and the teaching of local councils, Popes, Doctors, Fathers, and theologians shows that the general inspiration of the biblical books was firmly held, taught,

¹ *Council of Trent*, Sess. iv ; Denzinger, n. 786.

² *Cohortatio ad Græcos*, c. 8.

³ First Epistle to the Corinthians, 45.

and believed. But the more exact theological inquiry into the nature of inspiration was yet to come, and this must be the next subject of investigation.

In the decree already quoted in part, the Vatican Council says: *The nature of* "These (books) the Church holds to be sacred and canonical, *not* ^{divine} because, having been carefully composed by mere human industry, ^{inspiration} *nor* merely because they contain revelation without any admixture of error, *but because, having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author*, and have been delivered as such to the Church herself." ¹

Before stating the true doctrine the Council deals with two of the errors concerning the nature of inspiration that flourished for a time even among some Catholic writers. The first error confused inspiration with the subsequent approbation of the Church, holding that a book written by human industry alone could be reckoned as inspired Scripture if the Holy Spirit subsequently testified by the judgement of the Church that it contained no error. It may be answered that, apart from the Church's condemnation, this theory, which was not proposed before the sixteenth century, does not explain the view of inspiration current for centuries, and that such approbation by the Church cannot change the manner in which the book was written. It could give it a certain extrinsic authority, but it could not make a purely human work the direct work of God. Again, the second error must be avoided. Inspiration is not to be identified with revelation, which is a divinely made manifestation of truths previously unknown or less clearly understood. Inspiration, on the other hand, is an influence of the Holy Spirit moving men to write down certain things, which may or may not be specially revealed for the purpose. Finally, the Council implicitly condemns the error of confusing inspiration with the assistance given to the authorities of the Church in their teaching office. The one is a positive motion to write, whereas the other is a negative preservation from error in doctrinal definitions or teaching.

The true doctrine of inspiration is set out at some length in Pope *The doctrine* Leo XIII's great encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*. After quoting *of Leo XIII* the words of the Vatican Council, the Pope goes on to say that "because the Holy Ghost employed men as his instruments," we cannot therefore allow that error exists in the sacred works, on the plea that it might be attributed to the human authors and not to God. "For, by supernatural power, he so moved and impelled them to write, he was so present to them, that the things which he ordered, and those only, they first rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth. Otherwise it could not be said that he was the

¹ Denzinger, n. 1787.

Author of the entire Scripture.”¹ The explanation of this passage will furnish us with a satisfactory concept of inspiration.

The notion of instrument

First, the Pope adopts the scholastic terminology and speaks of the human author as the instrument. The distinction between the principal efficient cause or agent and the instrumental efficient cause is well known. The principal cause is one that acts by its own virtue or power; the instrumental cause acts not by its own power, but in so far as it is moved by the principal cause. The simplest example, perhaps, is that of the woodman and his axe. In felling a tree the woodman is the principal efficient cause and the axe the instrumental cause. It is clear that the axe itself is incapable of attaining the effect and needs the guidance and directing skill of its owner for the achievement of the purpose for which it is used. One must, however, distinguish a double virtue in the instrument, one proper to itself and the other communicated to it by the principal agent. Thus the axe has one action that pertains to its very nature, namely, the power of cutting, and another action, communicated to it by the principal agent, that is, the power of giving grace or beauty or, at least, a regular shape to the thing cut. Now two things are required in regard of the instrument: first, that it should concur in the production of an effect which is more excellent than any it could attain by its own power alone; secondly, that it should receive from the principal cause a transitory virtue, or motion, or guidance to raise it above its connatural powers, and to apply it to the production of the effect. The exact nature of this transitory influence is disputed. Thomists generally demand a physical entity, essentially transitory in character, which begins and ceases with the act to which it contributes. In other words, the instrument is rendered active by physical premotion, whereby the instrument is physically elevated above its natural efficacy by the transitory influence that it receives. In St Thomas's words: “The influence of the mover precedes the motion of the thing moved by a priority of nature and causality.”² It is to be observed that this influence does not change the nature of the instrument, though it adds a new efficacy to its connatural operation. Moreover, this communicated power is only exercised through the power that is proper to the instrument, for “it is by cutting that an axe makes a bed.”³

The instrument, then, has its own proper action and also the influence communicated by the principal cause. If the former were lacking it would be not an instrument, but a mere occasion for the operation of some cause wholly extrinsic to it—in no sense a medium between the principal cause and the effect. If the latter

¹ *Providentissimus*, p. 297. (References are to the pages of the work mentioned p. 157, n. 7.)

² *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, 150.

³ *S. Theol.*, III, Q. lxii, art. 1 ad 2.

were wanting, that is, if there were no principal cause, there would be no question of instrumental causality.

Before applying this teaching to the inspiration of Scripture, we must realise that, though the full development of the scholastic explanation is not earlier than St Thomas's time, the doctrine of God as the author of Scripture and man as God's instrument is found in the sources of revelation.

St Thomas himself applies his general teaching on instrumental causality when he says: "The principal author of Holy Scripture is the Holy Spirit . . . man was the instrumental author."¹ Admitting the fact of inspiration, one must say that Holy Scripture has two authors, for it was written by men and, none the less, is the Word of God. In other words, God is the author of Holy Scripture by means of the human author, and this subordination of the sacred writer to the influence of the Holy Spirit is best explained by the doctrine of the principal and the instrumental efficient causes.

For greater clearness we may make the above-mentioned application by considering the nature of inspiration in God, in man, and in the resulting sacred work.

A. *In God.* ("For by supernatural power, he so moved and impelled them to write. . .") Inspiration is an extraordinary grace given to the recipient not for his own sanctification but for the benefit of the Church, and infallibly efficacious. First, it is a *grace*, for it is a supernatural motion from God, given to bring about a truly supernatural effect, and wholly distinct from God's ordinary concursus. It is an *extraordinary grace* given only to a few in the course of human history and given by way of a transitory movement, and not as a permanent habit. It is a grace given not for the benefit of the individual but for that of the Society. Finally, there is an *infallible connection* between this grace and the effect intended by God, so that the sacred writer infallibly though freely was moved to carry out all that was involved in the production of a book.

B. *In man.* ("The things which he ordered and those only they first rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth.") By these words the Pope makes reference to the intellect of the sacred writer, to his will and to the executive powers required for the carrying out of the work. Leaving on one side any preparatory labours, it may readily be seen that this sentence affirms the reality of the divine motion throughout the whole process from the first conception of the ideas to the actual production of the book.

We have said that it is of the nature of a principal cause to move the instrument to act. "The instrumental cause acts through the motion by which it is moved by the principal agent." ■ It

¹ *Quodlibet.*, VII, art. 14 ad 5.

² *S. Theol.*, III, Q. lxii, art. 1.

follows that any of the opinions mentioned above that make inspiration consist in subsequent approbation by the Church or in merely negative divine assistance, falls short of the true conception of the divine causality.

We have said, again, that it is the nature of the instrument to have a twofold virtue, the one proper to it, the other communicated ; and that the latter does not destroy the former but uses it. It is to be held, then, that the human instrument acting under divine inspiration acted in a human manner, that is, intelligently and freely. This excludes any direct suggestion or dictation of words, which would imply that the Holy Spirit was not only the principal author, but the sole author of an inspired book. On the contrary, it is certain that in choosing men for his instruments, he allowed them the free use of their natural powers and of their ability or relative lack of ability, as the case might be, and the resulting works show clearly that the authors preserved their own literary styles and modes of expression. Further, we are told by the author of the second book of Machabees that his abridgment of the five books of Jason of Cyrene was "no easy task, yea, rather a business full of watching and sweat,"¹ and by St Luke that he had "diligently attained to all things," that is, that he had made an accurate study of his materials, before he began to write.² This does not agree with any theory of mechanical dictation, and from this it follows that various sayings of the Fathers, which compare the sacred writers to the "pens" or the "secretaries" of the Holy Spirit must be rightly understood. They were pens and secretaries in so far as they wrote nothing of Scripture except under the divine influence, but they were also free and intelligent human beings, not mere mechanical agents.

Divine action on the intellect Now, as regards the divine action upon the intellect ("*They, first, rightly understood*"), we must distinguish between the reception of new ideas and the judgement passed on ideas already in the mind of the thinker or writer. The former is essential to the concept of revelation, which is the reception of new truths, but, in all true prophecy, there is another element, namely, a divinely assisted judgement passed upon the truths received, whether these were received by revelation or in some natural manner. In the book of Genesis we are told that God made known to the Pharaoh in dreams what he was about to do.³ But the divinely assisted judgement on the interpretation of the dream was given to Joseph, and he was a prophet, whereas the Pharaoh was not. So in biblical inspiration the essential notion is that of a supernatural judgement passed upon the truths that God wishes to have handed down in writing to his people. Many, or even all, of these truths may have been arrived at by ordinary human means. Inspiration, as regards the intellect,

¹ ii 27.² Luke i 3.³ Gen. xli.

is a divine light that elevates and assists the mind of the sacred writer to judge with absolute certainty and truth that certain things are to be set down in writing. This practical judgement regarding the things to be written is undoubtedly the principal action of the intellect under divine inspiration. But it would seem, though this is disputed, that the mental processes preceding this judgement, namely, the theoretical judgement regarding the truth of the propositions and even the conception of the ideas, were divinely influenced, though this divine influence was in the nature of an illumination and not necessarily of a revelation of new ideas.

A question arises: How far were the inspired authors conscious of their own inspiration? In default of more evidence it is difficult to be positive. St Thomas¹ distinguishes the "spirit of prophecy" from the "prophetic impulse" (*instinctus propheticus*) and calls the latter: "A certain most secret impulse, which human minds experience without their knowledge." But the majority of theologians are inclined to admit at least some general knowledge of the divine motion on the part of the sacred writer, though it seems clear that the writers did not always appreciate the full depth and full importance of what they were writing.

We come to the divine action upon the human will of the inspired author. ("Then willed faithfully to write down.") There is ^{Divine action on the will} question here of a divine motion, truly efficacious but not destructive of freedom, that moved the writer to set down in writing the things he had conceived under the divine impulse. This action on the will was not confined to a preliminary impulse, but "was present" to the author "in a special and uninterrupted manner"² up to the time of the completion of his work. It partly preceded the conception of the matters to be written and partly followed upon this conception, in so far as there was first the general proposal to write, then the thinking out of the concepts to be expressed, and finally the will to set them down "in apt words and with infallible truth." In these last words we see expressed the final stage of the work and the divine impulse given to the executive powers through the intermediacy of the will.

C. *In the Sacred Work.* Reverting once more to the teaching on instrumental causality we can now answer the question: Who is the author of a book of Holy Scripture? And the answer is: God and man. God is the author of the whole book, and man is also the author of the whole. There is no question of attributing part to one and part to the other. The whole is to be attributed to each, but to God as the principal cause and to man as the instrumental cause. ^{Inspiration considered in the sacred work}

We may sum up this teaching on the nature of inspiration in the light of Zanecchia's now classic definition. Inspiration is:

¹ *S. Theol.*, IIa-IIae, Q. 171, art. 5.

² Encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus* of Pope Benedict XV.

“A divine, physical, and supernatural influx, elevating and moving the faculties of men that the things which God willed might be committed to writing for the good and utility of the Church, and in the manner which he willed.”

In treating of inspiration as it is in God, we saw that it was a physical influx upon the faculties of the writer and that it was in the supernatural order. Its action, as the definition says, is to elevate and move the faculties—the intellect, the will and the executive powers that contribute to the complete effect. The end or purpose is to bestow a library of divinely-written books upon the Church of Christ. Finally the object of inspiration is *the things which God willed . . . in the manner which he willed*. As God is the principal author, Holy Scripture must contain all that God wished to hand down to man in this manner and nothing more.

So we have first, the truth that is of faith—that God is the author of Holy Scripture; secondly, the fact that is clear from Tradition—that the books of Scripture were visibly produced by human writers in subordination to God; finally, the explanation of this duality of authorship by means of St Thomas’s doctrine of instrumental causality. For, as he says, “It is clear that the same effect is ascribed to a natural cause and to God, not as though part were effected by God and part by the natural agent; but the whole effect proceeds from each, yet in different ways: just as the whole of the one same effect is ascribed to the instrument and again the whole is ascribed to the principal agent.”¹

*The extent of
divine in-
spiration*

It is clear from the decrees cited above that all the books of the Old and New Testaments are divinely inspired. But a further point has to be noted, namely, that, according to Catholic teaching, inspiration extends not only to all the sacred books, but to all the authentic contents of these books. This is sufficiently implied in St Paul’s words: “Every Scripture is inspired of God,” where no distinction is made between one part of Scripture and any other. All were written under divine inspiration. The Councils of Trent and of the Vatican declare that the sacred books in their entirety and with all their parts are to be received as sacred and canonical, since they were written under divine inspiration.² Pope Leo XIII is quite explicit on the point: “It is absolutely wrong and forbidden, *either* to narrow inspiration to certain parts only of Holy Scripture, *or* to admit that the sacred writer has erred.”³ This is the teaching of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, to whom any distinction between inspired and non-inspired Scripture was entirely unknown. Pope Benedict XV said of St Jerome what could be said of all the Fathers: “He affirms that which is common to all the sacred writers: that they in writing followed the Spirit of God, so that God

¹ *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, 70.

² Denzinger, nn. 784, 1787.

³ *Providentissimus Deus*, p. 296.

is to be considered the principal cause of the whole sense and of all the judgements of Scripture." ¹ In fact, one may say that this doctrine follows from the nature of inspiration, which postulates divine guidance for the entire composition of the whole work written by the inspired writer.

A further question, which, unlike the preceding, is freely discussed among Catholics, is whether inspiration extends to the very words used. And here one must distinguish. If by "verbal inspiration" is meant mechanical dictation, we have already rejected any such conception as being irreconcilable with the writer's freedom, with the varieties of style and expression found in the different books, and with the testimony of the writers themselves. But, if by verbal inspiration we mean that the divine action of elevating and moving the writer's faculties ought to extend to the effect, namely, to the composition of the book, then we may say that this view seems to be more reasonable and more consistent than any other. It is more in harmony with the Vatican Council's words that the books "having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, have God for their author," and with Pope Leo XIII's expression: "The Holy Ghost employed men as his instruments to write." It is also more in accordance with the doctrine of instrumental causality—that the whole of the effect is to be attributed both to the principal and to the instrumental causes. Again, ideas and the words in which they are expressed are so closely connected in the human mind that it is hard to see how God could have influenced the concepts without extending his divine action to the words. This, then, is the view, which, to distinguish it from any dictation theory, has been called that of "plenary" inspiration. As has been said, it remains a theory and has not been imposed upon the Church by her authorities.

From the fact of divine inspiration it follows, as a necessary consequence, that the sacred books are free from all error. We have already quoted Pope Leo's words that "It is absolutely wrong and forbidden . . . to admit that the sacred writer has erred." And a little later he writes: "It follows that those who maintain that an error is possible in any genuine passage of the sacred writings, either pervert the Catholic notion of inspiration or make God the author of such error." ² It is clear from these words that absolute inerrancy belongs only to the original manuscripts of the sacred books, and that errors due to copyists or translators may have crept into the texts and versions of Scripture in the course of centuries. We are reminded of this latter fact by Pope Leo, but he adds that its existence in a particular instance "is not to be too easily admitted, but only in those passages where the proof is clear." ³

¹ Enc. *Spiritus Paraclitus*.

² *Providentissimus Deus*, p. 297.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 296.

The Catholic teaching is that the principal effect of divine inspiration is the infallible truth of all things contained in Holy Scripture. For any full discussion of such a statement with applications to the various difficulties brought forward against it, the reader must be referred to manuals of Scriptural introduction and to commentaries on the separate books. But here one may well note that not all things contained in Holy Scripture have precisely the same degree of truth. The words that are recorded as spoken by God himself, or by angels, or by inspired men are inspired in themselves and intrinsically and in consequence are divine words. Again, the writer's own words are inspired and divine in so far as he spoke in God's name or made known truths that exceeded his natural powers and could only be known by divine revelation, such as prophecies, mysteries of faith, and so forth. But there is a third class consisting of those utterances recorded in Scripture that are only inspired by reason of their consignation, that is, by reason of their occurrence in a sacred book, but are not thereby made intrinsically divine and infallible. Such are the words uttered by non-inspired men, and these do not obtain a greater authority by being recorded in Holy Scripture, and can be true or false, unless they are approved by God or by the inspired author. So "the vain reasonings of the wicked," as our Douay Version calls them, in the book of Wisdom¹ receive no divine approval by being recorded in Holy Writ. It is often necessary to consider carefully the writer's method of presentation, and so, in the book of Job, one may see that many false statements are put forward during the dialogues for the sake of making the truth more apparent. Finally, if the sacred writer sets forth his own opinions or feelings or doubts, these are inspired by reason of consignation only and are not intrinsically divine and infallibly true.

One may end this brief statement of a most vital question with two quotations, one from the greatest of the Latin Fathers, the other from a papal document. Both are peculiarly applicable to the interpretation of Holy Scripture.

St Augustine, writing to St Jerome, distinguishes his attitude towards Holy Scripture from his attitude towards secular literature. As regards the first, he says: "I confess to your Charity that I have learned to yield this respect and honour only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error. And if in these writings I am perplexed by anything which appears to me opposed to truth, I do not hesitate to suppose *either* that the manuscript is faulty, *or* that the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, *or* that I myself have failed to understand it." (Letter 82, 3 to Jerome.)

¹ ii 1 ff.

Again, we find Pope Pius IX in his encyclical *Qui pluribus*,¹ emphasising the truth that: "Although faith is above reason, there can never be found any real dissension or real disagreement between them, since they both have their origin from the same source of unchanging and eternal truth, God." In other words, between the certain sense of Holy Scripture and the certain conclusions of natural reason or natural science, there can be no real opposition, for "all these things one and the same Spirit worketh."²

JOHN M. T. BARTON.

¹ November 9, 1846. Denzinger, n. 1635.

² 1 Cor. xii 11.

VI

GOD THE CREATOR

§ I: INTRODUCTORY

How man himself, the world in which he lives, and the greater world of the heavens came into being are questions that men have asked themselves from at least the earliest times of recorded human thought. And vast numbers of men have failed and still fail to find a satisfactory answer. The human reason, indeed, is capable, by its own natural powers, of finding the right solution to the riddle; but, in fact, the difficulties are so great, the obstacles put by men themselves in the way of straight thinking are so many, the influences leading their minds astray are so powerful, that it is very rare for civilised man, left to his own devices, to discover the true answer, and rarer still for him consistently to hold to it. Men in the more primitive state, with their simpler and more direct and natural outlook, and without the distractions and impediments arising from a complex civilisation, seem, on the whole, to have a truer view of the question, and to be less troubled by the doubts, uncertainties, and speculative fancies that afflict the mind of civilised man. In the course of our exposition we shall have occasion briefly to speak of some of the theories to which men have had recourse; at present it is enough to note the simple fact that many different opinions have been and are held.

It is easy to see and needs no proof that this question of the origin of the world and, more particularly, of man himself is of the highest importance, is, indeed, one of the few fundamental questions as to which the holding of right or of wrong views means having a true or a false outlook upon the whole of life. A right view is the necessary foundation of a true philosophy of life, of a true individual and social ethic, of a true religion; whereas by a false view philosophy, ethic, and religion are of necessity falsified, confused, and misdirected. The question, then, being so weighty, and its inherent and incidental difficulties so many and so grave, it has pleased God, in his mercy, not to leave men without divine help and direction in the matter. He has come to man's aid; by clear and repeated revelation he has made it easy for him to discover the certain truth, and by his grace he enables him, without much difficulty, to hold to it firmly and consistently. This truth is summed up in the opening words of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth." The revelation of this truth is, however, far older than Christianity. The Jews from the earliest times held the same belief. It is taught constantly and explicitly throughout

the Old Testament. This doctrine is, therefore, one of those which, as regards their main lines, have undergone no development since the first days of the Church's existence. At the same time, however, all its implications have not been fully and clearly perceived from the beginning, nor have all its particular applications been always rightly understood. In these respects there have been development and growth of clarity which it will be our business to note as we proceed. But first of all certain fundamental things must be made clear, and certain points elucidated as being necessary to a proper understanding of the whole dogma.

§ II: IDEA AND MEANING OF CREATION

THE verb "to create" does not necessarily mean to make something from nothing; this is true, also, of the equivalents of the English word in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. But the word in all these languages does contain the idea of a productive action that, in one way or another, is more than ordinarily powerful. Thus we speak rightly of the creations of a genius in music and sculpture, or we talk of the Sovereign creating new peers of the realm. Consequently the word is properly applied in a special and distinctive way to that action, requiring the exercise of infinite power, by which God—to use the ordinary but not wholly satisfactory phrase—makes something out of nothing, or—to speak more precisely—makes something to be where there was absolutely nothing. This is the strict theological meaning of the word; this is the sense in which we shall use it throughout this essay, unless we make it clear that it is to be taken less strictly.

We see at once that this act differs wholly from any of which we have experience. Nothing at all like it is known to us. All the productive actions within the range of our experience need a subject to work upon, and merely effect some change in a thing already existing. The sculptor who produces a statue does not make a new thing, he but changes the form or shape of an old thing, the stone or marble upon which he works; the musician playing on his instrument produces vibrations in the existing air; the chemist makes new substances by combining or dividing existing ones; even thoughts or ideas, which may at first seem to be really new creations, are not so. In the first place, they have no independent existence apart from the thinker, being nothing but passing modifications of his mind; and secondly, in order to produce them he must have pre-existing material, objects of thought, to work upon. Without these human thought is impossible. All these productive actions, and all others possible to men, are therefore reducible to some sort of change effected in some subject that was already in existence before the action began. But creation is not like any of these. Creation is not a transformation of one thing into another,

nor is it an emanation or outflow of something from the creator's own being, nor any kind of action about or upon some pre-existing subject or material. Creation means just this: that besides God, and apart from God, there was nothing, no being of any sort whatsoever; God willed, commanded, and behold, at his command and by the sole power of his will, things, substances, beings, sprang into existence. Where nothing had been, now there is something; something that is neither God, nor a part of God, nor an emanation from his substance; something having its own being and its own special nature, and yet dependent upon God for all it has and all it is.

Not self-contradictory

How this creative action proceeds we know not; its mode is beyond our understanding. We can have no experience of it. It is beyond the ken of physical science, which, dealing only with the phenomena of human experience, and with their flow and succession under the impact of finite forces, cannot reach to the very first beginning of things when infinite power acted. Yet in the idea itself there is nothing contradictory, nothing offensive to human reason. On the contrary, not only has God clearly revealed that such was the origin of all things, but human reason itself can prove and does prove that so it must have been, while no theory can satisfy, as does this truth, all the imperious exigencies of human thought.

I said just now that the common description of creation as "the making of something out of nothing" is not wholly satisfactory. This is so because, in common speech, the words "out of" in the expression "to make out of" refer to the subject or the material from which someone, by working upon it, produces something else, as when we say that a carpenter makes a table out of wood. But it is clearly impossible even for God to work upon nothing, or to use nothing as the material or stuff from which to produce something. The idea is self-contradictory. This may seem ■ small, even a trivial matter, but the point must be made and even pressed, because at least from the third century, right down to our own times, opponents of creation have used this definition as a peg on which to hang the charge that the concept of creation is self-contradictory, since, as they have triumphantly pointed out, it is quite impossible for anything to come out of nothing. Creation, then, would be more accurately defined as the production of something in its totality, or, again, as the action that, without working upon any already existing subject or material, produces something wholly new.

It will help to complete and to make clearer our notion of this fundamental concept if we glance at two or three more of those aspects of creation which put it into a class by itself. In the first place we need hardly say that no created being can itself create. Creatures are, of necessity, limited in nature and capacity, whereas to create needs the exercise of unlimited, that is, of infinite power,

A creature can act only if he has some other created being to act upon ; put him, even the highest and noblest of creatures, up against sheer nothingness, and, having nothing to take hold of, his utmost power is powerless. Creation is so far removed beyond the possibility of created power that we might almost say that God himself, in order to create, must bring into action the full force of his infinite might.

Secondly, we may remark that creation cannot be a gradual process ; there can be no measurement in time, no succession of movements or states in the creation of anything. Between simple not-being and being there can be no middle state of half-being, for this would already be something. Nothingness cannot grow and gradually change into something. And consequently, since it is growth, change, succession, movement that require time and there is none of these in the creative process, creation is, in the strictest sense, instantaneous, or even more exactly, timeless.

From this it follows directly that the fact of creation is one of those truths that are altogether beyond the reach of investigation, of proof or disproof by physical science. This can deal only with the measurement of time processes, with the succession of phenomena in time, with the relation of state to state of things subject to movement and so to time, with the mutual activities of things acting in time ; to go beyond this into the region of timeless production, of production without movement, growth or succession, belongs primarily to the philosopher and metaphysician, while the theologian, using the data of revelation, may be said to act as a court of higher appeal.

We make no attempt to disguise the fact that the notion of creation is hard to understand ; rather, we fully acknowledge that in its inward reality, as in its mode of realisation, it is beyond our power adequately to grasp ; it is truly a mystery. It is as much beyond our power to understand the idea, as it would be to perform the act of creation. But no apology is needed on that score, no valid objection can be based on the difficulty involved. Ease of comprehension is not necessarily a sign-post to truth, especially when we are dealing with the higher and the bigger things. In looking for a way to account for what we see and experience in the world, in searching for the first cause and the final reason of things, we are bound, sooner or later, to come up against mystery ; whether we believe or believe not in God, whether we accept creation as a fact, or, rejecting it, try to discover another way out, we are bound to find ourselves in an intellectual blind alley. And, to take only the lowest view of the matter, it is better and more sensible to put the mystery in its right place than in its wrong, better, that is, to put it on the side of God, who, from the nature of the case, is infinitely above our comprehension, dwelling in light inaccessible, than on the side of creatures, whom, since they are our kin, we can claim to have some right and capacity to understand. To put the

mystery on the side of God does, at least, make other things understandable, and does introduce orderliness into the world we know; to deny God and divine mystery is to bring nothing but confusion and obscurity into the world, and to put a full stop to straight thinking long before it reaches its natural limits.

§ III: CHURCH'S TEACHING ON CREATION IN GENERAL

*The Old
Testament*

HAVING thus defined and made as clear as we can what we mean by creation, we go on now to set forth what the Catholic Church teaches on this matter. And in the first instance we shall take the dogma of creation in the most general way, leaving its particular applications until later.

As has already been said, faith in God as the Creator of all things is not exclusive to the Christian religion. It had been held by the Jews from the earliest days of their existence as a separate people, and from them it passed on as the heritage of Christ's Church. But there is no need for us to undertake a searching examination into the teaching of the sacred Scriptures on this point. It is hardly too much to say that in every book of the Bible, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, the creation of all things by God is either explicitly or implicitly asserted. With regard to the Old Testament it is well to note that it is unwise to lay too much emphasis upon a particular phrase or a single text, as, for example, the first words of Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," since the word in the original Hebrew text may not necessarily have the full force of the word as we understand it to-day. But when the whole context is taken into account, when the witness of the Old Testament is read in the light of our knowledge of other ancient religions and of Eastern mythologies, it becomes quite evident that the Hebrews had a clear and definite faith in God the Creator of all things.

In the ancient Eastern religious systems, and especially in the Babylonian, between which and that of the early Hebrews there are several lines of connection, there is found an essential element or a basis of dualism. That is, two original and primeval principles are posited as the necessary beginning_s of things. These principles, under various names, represent good and evil, light and darkness, spirit and matter. There is conflict and war between the two, and it is only by victory, and a victory that is by no means absolute and complete, that the one principle is enabled to claim and to uphold his rights as the supreme God, to whom all are subject. In such a system of dualism, whatever may be its special characteristics and its accidental variations, there is no room for a First Cause who, in absolute independence, brings everything else into being, such as is required by the Christian teaching of God the Creator.

But in the Hebrews' sacred Scriptures there is no trace of any such dualism. Throughout them God is spoken of as supremely independent. He creates by his word without having to overcome the resistance of matter, he rules with sole authority with none to dispute his sway; there is no indication of any primeval strife between him and any ruler of darkness. The earth, the heavens, men, the gods of the Gentiles must render him unquestioning submission; there is no hint or sign of any power whatsoever that can for a moment claim the right of resisting or opposing him. The only possible foundation for such a consistent body of teaching is a firm belief in the dogma of creation by one only omnipotent God. A notable concrete example of this steadfast belief is afforded by the Book of Job. This book presents us with precisely that case which has always been the occasion of one of the strongest objections felt by many against the doctrine of an all-powerful and all-good Creator—the case, namely, of the just and God-fearing man who suffers all sorts of misery and evil, while God's enemies rejoice in prosperity and happiness. If God, being the Creator of all things, is the Lord of all, why does he allow such things to be? This is the baffling question that has always troubled men. It is the same question, at least in principle, as was so often asked during recent years, and generally, it is to be feared, in a spirit of defiance; if there be an almighty God, why did he allow the horrors of the War? The answer given by pagan thinkers not professing a pure monotheism always involved some form of dualism. The root and origin of evil, they said, was to be found in the existence of an evil principle, antagonistic to God and putting a limit to his power and goodness. Such, in substance, whatever the varieties in presentation and explanation, was the current religious philosophy of the time. But of any sort of dualism the inspired writer of Job gives not the slightest indication. Philosophically his solution of the problem may not be wholly satisfactory, but from our present point of view it is excellent, for throughout he insists upon God's supreme power and lordship, and upon the fact that he is at liberty to dispose of all things as he will because he is the almighty Creator of all.

In the time of Jesus Christ this belief was so firmly established as an article of the Jewish faith that there was no need for him explicitly to inculcate it. But it is to be found, even on a cursory reading of the gospels, as a necessary presupposition of much of his teaching. This is so little contested and so easily verified that we may well be excused any proof of it by actual quotation. When, however, the gospel began to be preached to the Gentiles who did not believe in one God the Creator of all things, it became necessary again to bring this truth to the front; hence, St Paul, speaking at Athens to materialists and pantheists, gives it an important place in his discourse.¹ Whereas also in his earlier epistles, although the

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¹ Acts xvii 18 ff.

doctrine is often mentioned, it is without any special emphasis,¹ in the later ones, the situation having changed, it behoved him to explain this truth more fully and carefully. Some false teachers, borrowing the fancies and speculations of the prevalent gnosticism, had begun to disturb the faithful by trying to explain the world by bringing in a multiplicity of semi-divine beings between God and creatures. Hence such passages as Col. i 15 ff., wherein the apostle lays stress upon the universality of God's creative act, from which nothing whatever is excluded, in the heavens or upon the earth, of things visible or invisible.

We may fittingly close this very brief summary of the teaching of the sacred Scriptures with the unequivocal and sublime witness of St John in the prologue to his gospel: ² "All things were made by him, and without him was made nothing that was made."

Tradition

Such being the clear teaching of sacred Scripture, and this doctrine being of so fundamental a character, it is not surprising that the Church should have made explicit profession of this faith in the earliest of her formularies of belief, the so-called Apostles' Creed. Scholars, however, are not agreed as to whether the words "Creator of heaven and earth" formed part of the creed from the beginning. The form given by the celebrated writer and translator of the works of the Greek Fathers, Rufinus, who died A.D. 421, omits them; on the other hand, Tertullian, the African apologist and controversialist, in his work *The Prescription of Heretics*, written probably shortly before the year 200, includes them in what is an evident allusion to the creed as used at Carthage, and in all probability at Rome, in the instruction of catechumens. "Let us see," he says (chapter xxxvi), "what she (*i.e.*, the Roman Church) has learnt, what she has taught. She knows one God, the Lord, Creator of the universe," etc. This would be decisive if we could be certain that Tertullian is quoting the actual words of the creed, but of that we cannot be sure. St Cyril of Jerusalem, in one of his famous *Catecheses* or instructions given to his catechumens, gives the text of the creed as used in his church, as follows, "We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth," and this instruction dates from about A.D. 325. These words, then, even if they had no place in the creed from the first, were certainly introduced into it at a very early date, and the occasion of their introduction would have been the necessity of definitely rejecting the errors of pagans, gnostics, and others who held materialist and pantheistic opinions.

Manicheism

The third century saw a wide extension of Manicheism. This was a dualistic system according to which the world was produced by two eternal and more or less equal principles, light and darkness, the light being responsible for the spiritual world, which is good, darkness for the material world, which is essentially evil. This,

¹ *E.g.*, Rom. i 20, 25, xi 36; 1 Cor. viii 6, etc.

² John i 3.

of course, cuts at the very root of the Catholic faith, and as the rapid spread of the system had become a danger to religion, the Fathers assembled in the First General Council at Nicaea (A.D. 325) judged it expedient, in drawing up the profession of faith, to proclaim explicitly that God is the "Creator of all things, visible and invisible"—that is, of the material as well as of the spiritual world. Strange and absurd as Manicheism seems to us, it has proved a persistent and an alluring form of error, cropping up in one shape or another many times through the centuries, and not yet, seemingly, being wholly extinct. During the Middle Ages the Church had to fight against various manifestations of this perversity. So, for example, in the Fourth Council of the Lateran, held A.D. 1215, setting forth the true faith against the Albigensians and others, she amplified the older creeds, and declared God to be the "one principle of all things, the Creator of all things visible and invisible, spiritual and corporeal, who from the beginning of time, by his almighty power, created from nothing both the spiritual and the corporeal, that is the angelical and the mundane world of creatures, and finally human creatures, as if common to both worlds, being composed of body and spirit."

Finally, it became necessary for the Church once more solemnly to proclaim and define her faith against the false teachings of nineteenth-century atheists, materialists, and sundry sorts of pantheists. To a great extent the decrees of the Vatican Council are a repetition of that of the Fourth Council of the Lateran. There are some changes in the arrangement of the text, two or three points are left out as having no longer any bearing on the actual circumstances of the time, while some others, of great importance, are inserted. For example, God *alone* is said to be the Creator of all things, emphasis thus being laid on his independence of all help or instrument; then the concept of creation is made more definite and clear by the assertion that God created all things from nothing, "according to their whole substance." Finally the decree brings in two fresh points of deep theological and spiritual import, in view of definite errors which had lately been propounded, and which, among theologians outside the Catholic Church, are now widespread. The first of these points is God's supreme liberty in creating, the second is the end he had in view in creating, which the Council defines to have been his own glory. These two points we must consider in some detail.

§ IV: GOD FREELY CREATED FOR HIS OWN GLORY

THE freedom of the will is one of the highest prerogatives of men and angels, a gift that distinguishes them fundamentally from the brute creation, and gives them a real likeness to God himself. This

*God not
constrained
to create*

freedom has various manifestations, or may be looked at from different points of view. Without going into details or discussing subtle matters that lie outside of our province, we may say that human free will consists in the absence of constraint, in that man is so master of himself that no one can force his will into action against his own inclination or resistance, and no one but himself can determine the direction in which he exercises his will. He has freedom of choice, firstly between action and inaction, or willing and not willing, and secondly between willing one particular object or another. There are, indeed, certain limits to this freedom, as there are to all created perfections, but to discuss these is beyond our scope. In so far, however, as it is a positive perfection, it is evident that it must be found in an eminent degree or mode, and without its human limitations, in God. The source of freedom must himself be supremely free. And since God is the First Cause of all things, which he created from nothing, it would only be labouring the obvious to spend time in proving that there was no constraint from without himself forcing him to create the world. What has no existence can exercise no pressure. Mere nothingness cannot constrain. This is common ground to all who believe in God the Creator.

But a further question arises which men have not found so easy to answer, and which, even when rightly answered, is by no means easy to explain. Granted that God be not constrained to create by any power external to himself, may it not be that his very nature, or to speak somewhat loosely, one of his attributes, such as his love, impels him to create? Or, if we shy at the word "impels," may we not at least say that by his nature there is within him such a strong essential tendency to manifest his power and goodness in creatures, that creation becomes a sort of moral necessity? Just as by divine necessity he exists, so by divine necessity he loves. Is there, then, anything in his divine nature which would make it incumbent upon his divine love to seek an object outside of itself, to look for an outlet for its overflowing infinity by bringing creatures into existence? Men of genius and piety have not been wanting who have answered affirmatively. Many non-Catholic Christians hold that there is some such necessity, while it is a common element in all pantheistic systems of philosophy. Hence the Vatican Council judged it expedient to define the truth in clear and explicit terms. It lays down that God created by a most free act of the will, and it anathematizes those who assert that his will in creating was not free from all necessity, and who say that it was as necessary for him to create as it is for him to love himself. Further, the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office in the year 1887 reprobated the opinion that God's love gives rise within him to any moral necessity for creating. Here, in passing, we may refer to the Essay *The One God* for further treatment of God's love of himself. It is

enough now to point out that it is something wholly different from what is commonly known as self-love in man.

Catholic teaching, then, on this matter of God's absolute freedom in creating is clear. But it is not easy to give a clear and, at the same time, a reasonable and positive explanation of it. There is no difficulty, however, in establishing a negative proof. The ultimate reason lies in what will be found written in Essay III of this work about God's nature and attributes. God is sheer, infinite perfection in himself, possessing in himself complete and independent beatitude. Nothing is wanting to the fulness of his happiness. His love, his wisdom, his intelligence, find from eternity absolute satisfaction in the contemplation of his own perfection as he lives and loves, Three in One. But where there are perfection and happiness, full, final, unchangeable, absolute, nothing else can be necessary to their possessor. This is self-evident. If, then, God wills that something else besides himself should exist, it can only be by the supremely free act of his perfect will, uninfluenced by any sort of necessity arising from within his own nature.

We may look at the matter in another way by comparing, as the Vatican Council does, God's love for himself and the act of creation. The former is absolutely necessary, so much so that it would be true to say that if God did not love himself he would not exist. If, then, creation were equally necessary, it would also be true to say that if God were not to create he would not exist; which would be to make the infinite depend upon the finite, the perfect upon the imperfect, and would so be self-contradictory.

Nor is there any moral necessity why God should create. Those who maintain that there is, often argue from the principle that love is of its nature self-communicative, ever seeking an object upon which it may bestow itself. But God is love, the argument proceeds, infinite love; hence there is in him a natural tendency to bestow himself upon objects other than himself, a tendency so strong, since he is perfect love, that if he were to withstand it and withhold himself from self-communication through creation, this would be some derogation from his perfection, and, in some way not easy to define, would constitute a blemish in his nature. The argument is specious and has deceived many. But it has two defects. It is founded on a false analogy drawn from rational creatures, and it neglects a fundamental Christian dogma. An examination of these two defects will show the insufficiency of the argument.

The false analogy lies in this: men are not only rational creatures, but also social beings. No man is sufficient unto himself, and every man is brother to his fellows. Hence men have towards one another mutual duties, to neglect which is sometimes a sin, at other times rather an imperfection. By virtue of these duties it is incumbent upon men to communicate to their fellow-men some, at least, of their own possessions, material, moral, and intellectual. Without

the fulfilment of such duties human society—that is, natural human life—would become impossible. Yet I use the restrictive phrase “some, at least, of their possessions” advisedly, for man is not bound to give all he has. A very learned man, for example, is under no sort of obligation to communicate all his learning to others. If he does so he fulfils a free counsel of perfection, but if he does not it cannot be imputed to him as a fault.

But there can be no such mutual social obligations between God and merely possible but non-existent creatures, for there is no society wherein they can arise. God cannot possibly be bound by any sort of duty to enrich nothingness with existence.

Again, with man every exercise of any of his faculties is an additional, if accidental, perfection. Life is not stagnation, but action; to stagnate is to lose what one has, and finally to die. A faculty that is not exercised becomes atrophied. Conversely, to act is to acquire, and every time a man acts, even if he acts only to give to another, he really enriches, not only that other, but also himself; by giving he acquires, he grows in perfection. And this is one reason why he is called upon to give, why he falls short of his duty if he does not give, because, namely, he is under an obligation, put upon him by God, to tend to his own perfection. But the same reason cannot apply to God, who, being all perfect, cannot grow in perfection, and, being all sufficient to himself and in himself, cannot be enriched by another.

The Trinity

Finally, as has been said, this argument takes no account of a fundamental Christian doctrine, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. If God were one person only, living in individual solitude and divine loneliness, it might be difficult to resist the contention that, being infinite love, he must seek an object to which to give himself. But as he is not one person but three equal persons the difficulty vanishes, since in the Trinity every tendency and every yearning of love is fully satisfied by the eternal, perfect self-communication of the Godhead from Father to Son and from Father and Son to Holy Ghost, and by the ever active mutual flow of infinite love between the Divine Persons.

God, therefore, cannot lie under any sort of necessity, arising either from within or from without his own nature, to create. If he elects to create it is purely by an act of free choice. So far we have spoken only of what is called the liberty of execution, or executive liberty, the freedom of choice between action and non-action. We have now to consider another aspect of free will as it is found in men, and to ask whether it also can be attributed to God. Thus a man may deliberate as to whether he shall go to Brighton for the week-end or stay at home. Having decided, by an act of executive liberty, to go, he now deliberates upon a choice of ways, thus exercising what is called the liberty of specification. He may go by rail, road, sea or air. And if he decides to go by

The best possible world

road he has still a wide choice of means before him and may hesitate between a motor-car, a horse, a bicycle, or his own feet. Finally he will choose that way of going which, in all the circumstances, seems to him to be the best, which most adequately meets his desires, his inclinations, his purse, his time, the end in view and so forth. Similarly with regard to God; having seen that, in creating, he enjoys full executive liberty, we have now to ask whether he likewise enjoys full liberty of specification. In other words, was God, having elected to create, in any way bound to create this actual world and this actual order of things, or could he have chosen another? Or, again, is this the best of all possible worlds, and was God therefore obliged to exert his creative energy on this, to the exclusion of any other? It might well seem that he was. For since it is the part of wisdom always to choose what is best and highest, or lapse from the rule of wisdom, and since God is perfect wisdom in whom no lapse is possible, it would seem to follow that he must of necessity create the best of all possible worlds.

Although this question is not of such theological and spiritual importance as the last, and although a full discussion of it would lead us into needless subtleties, it cannot be altogether neglected. We must first remark, then, that God is not only the efficient cause of the world, but also its exemplary cause—that is, he not only made it by his power, but he also made it according to the pattern existing in his divine mind, much as an artist produces a picture according to the pattern he has in his mind's eye. The world, then, is a reflection—faint, indeed, but faithful as far as it goes—of the divine mind, and so of God's nature and perfections. But these are infinite, and can therefore never be perfectly reflected or manifested. God's power likewise is infinite. Whence it follows that, however wonderful and great and apparently perfect a world may be created or even conceived, God's perfections are capable of a still greater and higher degree of imitation, and God's power is equal to the work of giving actual existence to such a still greater and more wonderful world. In this sense, therefore, the absolutely perfect world is a contradiction in terms. But if we look at the matter in another way our conclusions must be otherwise expressed. Taking a broad view of the universe and looking at it as a whole, and as a manifestation of God's goodness, power, and wisdom, it is impossible to conceive a world in which these could be more faithfully or fully expressed. In the first place, it comprises the only three possible classes of beings—the purely spiritual, the purely material, and man who is both material and spiritual. These three orders of beings exhaust the possibilities. Again, in each order we find a bewildering and marvellous range of degrees of perfection, from the lowest to the highest; in the material order from the simplest to the most complex, from the inanimate through all the grades of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, with uncountable

differences and degrees and combinations of perfections. In men, though all have the same nature, there is yet a similar variety of capacities and endowments; and from the little, comparatively speaking, that has been revealed about the angelic kingdom we can deduce, with an approach to certainty, the existence therein of a like immense variety of degrees of excellence. It is clear that such a universe, constituted of such a multiplicity of differences combined in one vast harmony, is a fit reflection of God's perfections, corresponding worthily to his wisdom, power, and goodness. It is true that we can conceive of other creatures that he might have created: he might possibly have made a race of flying sheep, or a kind of water that would freeze at sixty degrees, or have created a race of green men as well as white and black and yellow, or have endowed Shakespeare with the military genius of Napoleon and the scientific genius of Newton. But after all these would have been but accidental differences, and it does not appear that they would have expressed any more clearly than does the actual world the infinite perfections of his nature. In fact, it is quite likely that some of these or similar possibilities, if translated into reality, might rather take from than add to the world's perfection, by disturbing its present ordered harmony. All this St Thomas puts very briefly in answering the question whether God could have created things better than he did.

“When it is said that God can make a thing better than he makes it, if ‘better’ is taken substantively, this proposition is true. For he can always make something better than what actually exists. Moreover, he can make the same thing in one way better than it is, and in another way he cannot, as was explained in the body of this article [where the author distinguishes between essential and accidental perfections]. If, however, ‘better’ is taken as an adverb, implying the manner of the making, thus God cannot make anything better than he has made it, because he cannot make it from a greater wisdom and goodness. If, however, it implies the manner of the thing done, he can make something better, because he can give to things made by him a better manner of existence as regards accidentals, not, however, as regards essentials.”¹

And again: “The universe, the present creation being supposed, cannot be better, on account of the most beautiful order given to things by God, in which the good of the universe consists. For if any one thing were bettered, the proportion of order would be destroyed, as if one string of a harp were stretched more than it ought to be, the melody would be destroyed. But God could make other things, or add something to the present creation, and then there would be another and a better universe.”²

God, then, is supremely free, both as to creating or not creating, and, given the determination to create, as to the objects to be created.

¹ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. xxv, art. 6, ad 1.

² *Ibid.*, ad 3.

He is bound by no sort of necessity whatsoever. If we seek the sufficient reason for his choice of this universe rather than another, the only reasonable answer possible is that such was his good pleasure. In him his own will is the sole measure and standard of goodness in acting; whatever he does is good, just and simply because it conforms to that standard. But since that standard, being divine, is the highest possible, whatever he makes is made according to the best possible pattern, and hence is said to be formally the best thing possible. Such is the actual universe. Yet since the present universe does not exhaust God's mind and strength, another might conceivably be created which would surpass this in beauty, grandeur, and all that goes to the perfection of achievement, and which would, therefore, from the material point of view, be superior.

But this question disposed of, another and a cognate one at once arises: *Why did God create the world?* It was not from necessity; yet a good and sufficient reason there must have been. The human intellect is so fashioned that, despite the efforts at persuasion of sundry philosophers, it refuses to accept pure chance, mere fortuitousness, as accounting for anything. Almost as soon as its intelligence awakens to conscious life the child begins, in season and out of season, to ask why. The child's parents and teachers may often find its inquisitiveness embarrassing and inconvenient, but it is nothing but the recognition and the proclamation of the eternal principle that *Omne agens agit propter finem* (Everything that acts, acts on account of some end). The armchair philosopher, his intelligence perverted by years of misdirected speculation, may raise his voice in protest against the very idea of what he calls teleology, but it is the child with its insistent "why" and continual "what for" who is the mouthpiece of truest wisdom. And, indeed, no sooner do we look at things a little closely than we see that it is the recognition of this principle that lies at the root of all human progress in the sciences and arts of civilisation. It is because we realise that everything is ordained to some end or purpose that we want to discover what that is, and it is this desire that prompts all human investigation into the nature of the physical universe and all human ingenuity and inventiveness. Man only makes a tool or a new machine because he wants to do something with it, and he fashions it for that end.

As soon, then, as we begin to think upon the problem of creation, once we have decided that God made the world and made it impelled by no necessity, we are led to ask why he made it, what purpose he had in view. In answering this question we must carefully distinguish between two things that, though quite different, may be easily confused. The Catechism asks, *Why did God make you?* and answers, *God made me to know him, love him, and serve him in this world and to be happy with him for ever in the next.*

This answer might, in part, be extended so as to include not only man, but all creatures, for all creatures are made to serve God according to their own proper ways and fashions, though men and angels alone are made to know and love him, and to be happy with him for ever.

But this is not the end of the matter. We can go further and ask: Why did God make the world for this end, what purpose had he in view in providing this destiny for the world? This is a very different question and brings into view a very different end. Let us illustrate it by an example. An artist paints a picture which he hopes to sell. The purpose or end of the picture is to represent a certain scene, and in so far as the representation is a faithful one and conforms to the canons of art—whatever they may be—the picture is a good one and has achieved its end. But the artist's purpose in painting it is by no means achieved if it remains hanging in his studio or is returned unsold from the gallery where he had exhibited it. He painted it to sell, to provide food and clothing for himself and family, and it is only when it is sold and the money is in his pocket that this end is attained. And to make the distinction clearer, and more applicable still to our present subject, we may point out that it does not matter, from this point of view, whether the picture achieves its end or not—whether, that is, it is a good or a bad picture—even if it be thoroughly bad; so long as someone is so foolish or so undiscerning as to buy it at the artist's price, his end is gained.

The Catechism answer, then, as to the end of man (and by extension and adaptation of the world) tells us the end to which man is destined, and that is a matter with which we in this essay have no concern, but which is discussed in Essay IX. But it tells us nothing of God's ultimate purpose and motive in making the world with such a destiny, which is the question now at issue. On this point there is no chance of the instructed Catholic going wrong, for he has the Church's teaching defined in the Vatican Council to guide him. It is there laid down that God created the world "neither to increase nor to attain his own beatitude, but to manifest his perfection," and anathema is pronounced against anyone who shall deny that the world was created "unto God's glory." Given the firm Catholic teaching about God, who is "infinite in all perfection," which is the only teaching reasonable and satisfying, no other answer as to why he created the world is possible. God needs nothing, lacks nothing in himself to his perfect happiness. His infinite love and infinite intelligence are fully exercised and satisfied in the ineffable activities of his intimate life as a Trinity of divine persons. The happiness resulting from this exercise and satisfaction, even he, in his omnipotence, cannot possibly increase. He could not, then, create the world in order to attain or to increase his own happiness. The only end, therefore, he could have, was

that the creatures whom he made, and to whom he gives existence and all their various perfections, which are in different ways and degrees reflections of and a sharing in his own goodness and perfection, should, by seeking him, and serving him, and reaching out to him and returning unto him, each according to its own powers and fashions, attain their own ends and so doing show forth his perfection and glory.

And here we may pause a moment to consider the practical application and consequence of this so simple yet sublime teaching. Some philosophers and moralists preach what seems at first sight not only a stern but a pure and selfless morality. They maintain that men should practise virtue without any regard to ultimate reward from God; that this is the highest, indeed, the only true virtue worthy of man; that to be good for fear of hell or hope of heaven is but selfishness disguised, or even a degrading servility. The ancient Stoics taught the same doctrine. It is a doctrine which, by its subtle flattery of man's natural pride, is seductive. It has an appearance of nobility that appeals to the man of upright mind, and it goes well with the spirit of independence. But apart from the fact that it will not work, except on a very small scale, since human nature as a whole is too weak to stand the strain, it is a doctrine that contradicts these fundamental truths that we have been considering. God is man's Creator, and his end in creating him is his own external glory, which consists in the manifestation of his divine perfections. The higher the gifts he gives to creatures, the better and more highly are his perfections made manifest. More power and goodness and wisdom are shown in the creation of one human soul than in the whole solar system, because it is a creation of a higher order and one nearer to God's own nature. But, as is shown elsewhere,¹ and here taken for granted, he gives man not only natural but supernatural gifts, the higher nature of sanctifying grace, which is a still more wonderful reflection of himself. And giving him this he means him so to use it that after death it will expand and blossom into the still closer approach to God, the still more perfect assimilation to him, which we call the beatific vision or eternal happiness, which is the highest possible manifestation of divine perfection, apart from the hypostatic union in Jesus Christ, that even the wisdom and power of God can devise and produce. The blessed in heaven are God's greatest glory.

It follows, then, that when a man leads a good life, practises virtue, spends himself in the service of others in the hope of thereby gaining heaven, he is acting not from a selfish motive, not simply to promote his own end, but also and truly to fulfil God's end in the most perfect way. He is acting for God's glory. His happiness is God's will, and his end is God's glory. And even if this ultimate and higher end is not always openly in view and explicit in intention,

¹ Essay ix, pp. 311 ff.

it is always implicit and effectually operative, since God has commanded us to seek the kingdom of heaven, and it is his will that we should wish to attain our happiness by promoting his glory. So we see how truly this Catholic teaching of God's supreme liberty in creating and of the end he had in view is at the base of all Catholic morality, asceticism, and the practice of sanctity; since, as a man becomes more perfect by repressing concupiscence and overcoming his passions, as he grows nearer to God and more like him by practising in an ever higher degree every kind of virtue, by so much the more does he make manifest God's perfections and give his Creator the glory due to him.

§ V: THE WORLD HAD A BEGINNING

ONE other point of Catholic faith remains to be noticed before we pass from this consideration of creation as a whole and in general to the treatment of the various kinds of created things. This is the question whether God created the world from all eternity, as he exists from eternity, or whether it had a beginning in time. It might seem at first that this is a question of a purely metaphysical character or of scientific interest, without any theological, moral, or dogmatic bearing whatever. What can it possibly matter to me whether the world has existed, in some form or another, from eternity or not? What bearing can it have on my life, provided that I acknowledge God as its Creator? Why should the Church go out of her way to define, as she has done, in the Fourth Lateran Council, and again in the Vatican Council, that the world is not coeternal with God, but that he created it in the beginning of time? Surely this should be left to the scientists to discover if they can, or to the metaphysicians to argue about as they will. In reality, however, though this matter may have no direct bearing on one's spiritual life, it is closely connected with questions that have, and so it possesses a real theological importance. The doctrine of the non-eternity of the world is intimately bound up with that of God's liberty in creating. For if he had created from some necessity arising from his own nature, the world must have been coeternal with him, since owing to his immutability such necessity would be eternal and eternally necessitating. But if he creates freely, simply from his own free predilection, then as he alone determines to create, and what to create, so also in his free determination lie all the circumstances of creation, among them being the moment of its realisation.

Again the theory of a world existing from all eternity has been invariably in the history of thought bound up either with some sort of Manichean dualism, or else with some kind of materialistic evolutionism, or with some variety of pantheism. Hence the Church has had at different times to condemn the error and proclaim the truth.

But although this clearly is the revealed truth, proclaimed, for example, by Jesus Christ himself,¹ it is a truth bristling with difficulties, which, were it not for the gift of faith, might easily result in doubt. For according to Catholic teaching God is from all eternity changeless, and not changeless inaction, but changeless activity and life. If, then, he is now actually creating, he must have been so from all eternity or there would have been a change in him; and if the result of the changeless creative action is now the world, the same must have been the result from all eternity, or else you would have the same changeless action producing no result for a period and then at some determinate instant beginning to produce a result, which would be absurd and impossible. Nor does it seem to be any use to try to escape by saying that the world is created by God, not in so far as he is divine power or divine being, but in so far as he is divine will and freedom. For after all, these distinctions that we make between God's power and his will, as between his justice and his mercy or any other attributes, do not correspond with any real distinctions in him, in whom, apart from the three Divine Persons, everything is supremely one and undifferentiated unity.

The difficulty of the conception

The objection is undoubtedly serious, so much so, indeed, that to try to solve it, at least in such a way that the difficulty disappears, would be useless. The most we can do is to point out wherein the fallacy lies, and to show how the difficulty arises, in part from comparing things that are not comparable, and in part from the fact that it involves two ideas, of which one is beyond our understanding and the other beyond our experience. It may help us also if we first note how the argument used in the objection proves too much, and therefore proves nothing at all. For if it is applicable to the creation of the world in general, it must apply with equal force to the creation of any individual thing—for example, to the creation of each and every individual human soul, each one of which is thereby shown to be eternal, which no Catholic and few Christians of any sort would allow. Or if the example seems to be a begging of the question, consider instead the Hypostatic Union of God and man in Jesus Christ. This was an event which, though not a creation, yet requires the direct exercise of changeless divine power as much as creation itself. Yet it took place, not from eternity, but at a definite moment in time. This consideration, however, does not take us very far. It shows, indeed, that the objection is invalid, but not only does it not help us to its solution, which as I have said is beyond us, but it does not even help to show why it is beyond us. We can, however, see why this is so, and thus gain some relief, if not repose, for the mind, by a brief consideration of the ideas involved in the objection.

One of them is wholly beyond our experience—namely, the *Time and eternity*

¹ John xvii 5.

idea of the first beginning of all things. We see many beginnings of things, but all of them take place in already existent time. They are all accompanied by and surrounded by movements, by noting which we can place them in their order and date them ; thus when we say that one thing begins on Tuesday and another on Wednesday, what we really mean is that these two beginnings are dated or measured by different stages in the relative motions of sun and earth, stages that we mark off as years, months, days, and so forth. Even if we could actually experience the absolute first beginning of a thing as distinct from its development from something already in being, such as the creation of a human soul, we should still be able to place it exactly in its time position, to put it in its proper place in relation to some movement that preceded, accompanied, and followed it. We should still be able to say, supposing we had instruments accurate enough, that up to the end of the twenty-seven hundredth part of a second after six o'clock on such and such a date the soul did not exist, but before the twenty-eight hundredth had gone by it was in being, therefore it was created in this twenty-eight hundredth of a second after six o'clock. But we cannot do this when dealing with the absolute first beginning of all created things. We cannot date it by working backwards on any evidence. Geologists trying to date a geological period have to be content with approximations covering thousands of years. And if we try to work back in thought and imagination we soon find ourselves groping. All we can do is to say that if we go back so many thousands or millions of years we come to a time when the universe was only a day old, or what would have been a day, if there had been the sun, working as it is now, to measure it, of which we cannot be sure. We can now work backwards through this day to its first hour, its first minute, its first second, and then we drop off into a blank which leaves us baffled. We cannot say that we come to the beginning of time and find it dated by a certain fixed point in eternity. We cannot say that God had existed for so many ages of eternity and then created the world. We are brought up dead against this idea of eternity, which is the second idea involved in the objection, and which is beyond our comprehension. Time and eternity are not two similar and comparable sorts of duration differing only in having and not having a beginning and an end. There is no ratio, no proportion, no standard of comparison between the two. Time consists in motion, it is the measure of motion according to succession ; without things moving, and so moving as to be relative to each other in their movements, there can be no time. But eternity is without movement or succession, it cannot be split up into periods, it has no measure, it overrides and embraces all time, it has no past and no future, it is all and always present. In fact, there is no such *thing* as eternity in the same sense as there is such a thing as time ; there is an Eternal, who is God, and eternity is a name we

give to an abstraction when we wish to speak of God under the aspect of duration. And God is incomprehensible. We can see then why it is impossible fully to understand this matter of the creation of the world in time: it is because it is simply a special aspect of the whole question of the relation between God and the universe, the Creator and the creature, the Infinite and the finite, and that must remain a mystery, or God would be no God.

We have now reviewed the principal points of doctrine arising from an examination of the created universe taken as a whole. We must now turn to the creation of the various distinct kinds of things that go to make up the universe, and this will introduce us to sundry matters that are nowadays much discussed.

§ VI: THE DISTINCTION OF THINGS

ST THOMAS, whose arrangement we have been more or less closely following, prefaces his treatment of the creation of the various classes of beings by a brief enquiry, first into the authorship of the multiplicity and variety that distinguish the world, and then into the cause of the great primary distinction between good and evil. This latter question, because of its complexity, will more conveniently be treated in the following essay; the former will detain us but a very short while. In so far as we are expounding Catholic dogma and neither the free opinions cherished by private theologians nor, much less, the speculations of scientists or philosophers, all we need say on this point may be put under two or three heads. Firstly, that God is the immediate cause of the threefold division according to which the whole universe is classified under the material, the spiritual, and the composite. (As to the last class, namely men, a little more must be said later.) This is clear from the definitions of the Fourth Lateran and the Vatican Councils, and from other pronouncements of authority.

Secondly, that he is the author of all the different natural varieties to be found within each of these three classes. But here a distinction must be made. He is, of course, the immediate author of the different grades of angels,¹ since each angel must of necessity be a separate, distinct creation. But it is no part of Catholic faith that he is in the same way the immediate author of all the multiplicity of variations, from the simplest elements of the inorganic world to the highest animals, that comprise the visible universe. It is not Catholic dogma that all of these, or any of them (with certain reservations, to be noted later, as to man), are the products of distinct acts of creation by God. In other words, the Catholic Church allows scope for the theory and the working of evolution.

¹ Essay viii is devoted to the angels; to this readers are referred for a full treatment of this question.

But yet God is the author of all this multiplicity and variety, in the sense that, granting the truth, by no means proved, of such universal evolution, it still remains true that the development has been worked out along the lines intended and determined by God, in virtue and by means of the natural forces and tendencies implanted by him in the primeval matter which he created, under the direction of his all-pervading providence, and under the continuous impulse of his sustaining omnipotence, the withdrawal of which for an instant would mean the annihilation of all things.

Finally, it is also part of the Catholic faith that certain differences and inequalities now existing are not due to God's original plan and are contrary to what is called his primary intention. These are the differences that consist in some of the defects which are evil. Thus all the angels were created good, and the devils became bad solely by the free abuse of their liberty. So likewise it cannot be doubted that many of the purely natural evils that afflict the world are the result of human sin and of the sinful activities of men, and in this way, being evil, are not the direct outcome of God's creative action.

Provided, then, that he avoids such crudities of thought as are commonly denoted by such phrases as the struggle for existence, natural selection, etc., by which divine oversight and direction are generally meant to be excluded, the Catholic is free to think and to speculate as he likes on the question as to the immediate causes of the world's variety. If he is wise, he will confine himself to facts and evidence and go no farther in assertion than strict proof allows. But if he wishes to indulge his fancy, he may do so without sinning against the faith. This will become clearer from what is to be said in the next section. Meanwhile one more point arises for discussion here.

Other worlds? It has become quite common to take more or less for granted the truth of the hypothesis of either the existence of other worlds in the solar system, inhabited by men like ourselves, or else the existence of other systems beyond the limits of the solar system, in one or more of which the conditions of the earth are repeated in all that concerns animal and human life. And from this unproved hypothesis the conclusion is drawn that, since traditional Christianity is essentially geocentric and looks upon the earth as the sole theatre of the Incarnate Word's activity and, indeed, as the only scene of God's revelation and dealings with men, it must be changed, or, to use the favourite modern word, restated, in order to bring it into line with the advance of astronomical science. Hence there is some theological interest in the question whether the world be one, in the sense of being unique. But for Catholics it is not of great importance, and hitherto the Church has had no occasion to speak upon the matter. Scientifically the existence of other inhabited worlds is purely theoretical. Revelation, so far as it has been made

to us, concerns this world alone, neither including nor excluding any other but wholly abstracting from it. If it should turn out to be true that there is another world or twenty more, Christianity will not be affected in the least. If other worlds exist we know that they, like ours, must have been created by God and must be ruled by his providence; and whatever theory we may choose to apply to their human inhabitants, whether their spiritual history and experiences be similar to ours or not, we know that God will have provided for their needs, as he has for ours, in a manner befitting his infinite wisdom, justice, and love. More than this it is impossible to say. But, whatever be the facts, the Christian religion will need no "restatement," because it, as well as God's revelation in the Old Testament, concerns and affects this world alone. So no Catholic needs to be disturbed in his faith, whatever wonderful discoveries astronomy may yet make.

§ VII: THE STORY OF CREATION

WE come now to what many will probably look upon as the most important part of our task. We have to examine the story of the creation of the world, from the first chaos to the making of man, as it is told in the beginning of the Book of Genesis. How is this story to be understood? How can it be reconciled with what is now known and accepted by all, Catholics as well as others, of the physical history of the universe, and especially of the earth, of the living things, vegetable and animal, that dwell on it? How can we pretend that there can be any real reconciliation between the Catholic doctrines of the inspiration and the inerrancy of sacred Scripture and the biblical story of creation when this is subjected to the test of scientific knowledge? Many Catholics, perhaps most of them, are prepared to accept it as true that there must be a reconciliation, that the theologians, at least, must know how to solve these difficult questions, and to acquiesce in leaving the matter to them, and not worrying themselves about it any farther. Such an attitude, while most creditable to their faith and their trust in the Church, cannot be satisfactory intellectually, and may often be dangerous to themselves and others. It is therefore necessary for us to deal with it in so far as it has any bearing upon Catholic doctrine. Though it still has its difficulties and is still a question of some delicacy, yet, happily, it is not so formidable by far as it would have been some forty or fifty years ago. On the one hand, the advance both of scientific knowledge and of biblical studies has put out of court certain ideas and theories that were wont to cause heated discussion; and on the other, the enlightened wisdom of Pope Leo XIII and his successors, in laying down the true principles of interpretation and in definitely settling some points, has made

it easier for Catholics to defend the faith, removed sundry causes of domestic disagreement, and on certain matters enlarged the boundaries in which they may move freely without incurring suspicion of disloyalty to faith or Church.

The problem

The first thing to do is to state the problem as clearly and succinctly as possible. In the first chapter of Genesis the sacred writer tells the story of the creation of the world and all it contains. His narrative is divided according to the works done by God on each of six days. It may be thus analysed. First of all comes the primary work, the creation of heaven and earth in a state of chaos and darkness. Then comes the work of differentiation, in three divisions. The work of the first day is the creation of light, and its separation from darkness, day and night. The work of the second day is the creation of the firmament, which is called heaven, and the division of the waters beneath it from those above. The work of the third day is the gathering together of the waters and the appearance of the dry land, or the division of land and sea. To this the writer adds a kind of supplement in the production of plants, trees, and fruits.

After this comes the adornment and furnishing of the different parts of the world, with a similar threefold division. The work of the fourth day is the creation of the heavenly luminaries, the sun, moon, and stars, to rule the day and night and divide light from darkness. The fifth day sees the production of fish in the waters and birds under the heavens. On the sixth day are produced the various sorts of beasts and reptiles that people the earth, and finally man, male and female. The seventh day is consecrated to rest from labour.

No one can help admiring the sublime simplicity of this story. And the more we learn of the accounts preserved by other ancient people wherein are narrated the beginnings of the world, the greater by comparison appears the nobility of this Hebrew narrative as well as the purity of the religious teaching therein enshrined. Unfortunately, however, it does not seem to fit the facts as we know them or are slowly learning them. The most obvious discrepancy is, of course, the fact that the world, instead of being made and completely furnished in six days, must have existed for unknown ages before man appeared on the earth. Among other defects of the narrative viewed in the light of present knowledge we may note the creation of plants and trees on the third day; and that of the sun, which is necessary to plant life, on the fourth; the creation of light and its separation from darkness on the first day, four days before the creation of the sun and heavenly bodies, the source of light. Again, all forms of vegetable life are said to be created together on one day, the third, and similarly all animals on another day, the sixth, whereas science proves that the production of plant life extended through immense periods of time, and was to

a great extent coincident in time with that of animal life. There are other points of disaccord which need not be specified.

On the other hand, the inerrancy, the objective truth of the whole of Scripture and all its parts, is one of the fixed and traditional elements of Catholic teaching, reaffirmed more than once, and in strong terms, by the Popes during the past thirty years. Then, again, the Biblical Commission, specially constituted by the Pope to deal with difficult points of scriptural interpretation, and speaking with an authority which, though not infallible, no loyal Catholic will reject or contest, has laid it down that these early chapters of Genesis are truly historical in form and contents, and that we cannot hold that they narrate, instead of actual facts corresponding to objective reality and historic truth, either fables borrowed from old pagan mythologies and cosmogonies, or merely allegories and symbols propounded under historical form in order to teach religious or philosophic truth, or legends in part historical and in part fictitious, made up for the instruction and edification of souls.

This is more or less a translation of the second and longest of the series of eight decisions issued by the Biblical Commission in 1909. And when the Catholic has read so far, he will probably begin to feel that whatever chance there may have been of reconciling Genesis and modern knowledge, to say nothing of some theories which, though not certain, are at any rate highly probable, has wholly gone. He will perhaps begin to think that if he is to remain a faithful and obedient Catholic he will have to cut himself off from all sorts of modern scientific thought, to throw overboard the most widely accepted scientific explanations of things, and to live a life of intellectual stagnation in company with his few fellow-Catholics. But as he reads on he will see a little light breaking before him. He will find that he still has some liberty of interpretation in those places as to which there has never been agreement or definite teaching among the Fathers and Doctors, and that he is not bound to the literal sense where it is clear that this would not be reasonable. When at last he reads the seventh decree, the dawn will broaden into the full light of day and the way will lie clear before him. This decree runs as follows: "Since it was not the intention of the sacred writer to teach the inmost constitution of visible things, or the complete order of creation, in a scientific manner, but rather to give to his countrymen a popular notion, conformable to the ordinary language of those times, and adapted to their opinions and intelligence, we must not always and regularly look for scientific exactitude of language when interpreting this chapter." This is no new departure in Catholic methods of interpretation. It is merely an application of the principle laid down by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*, that the Holy Ghost, speaking through the inspired writers, did not wish to teach men the truths of physical science—the inmost constitution of visible things—since

they are of no profit to their eternal salvation. Nor was Pope Leo an innovator in thus speaking, for he was but repeating the ideas and language of St Augustine. The sacred Scriptures, then, according to authoritative and traditional Catholic teaching, are not meant to be taken as books for the instruction of men in the physical sciences.

When it happened that the inspired writer had, incidentally, to touch upon such matters, to enforce or illustrate his teaching, to set it in a framework that should make a deeper impression upon his readers, or for some similar reason, he adapted himself to the level of their intelligence, he conformed his phraseology to their common (that is, their uneducated and often false) opinions, he took over their current modes of expression. Humanly speaking he had to do this or he would not have been understood by those whom it was his business to instruct, but in so doing he gives thereby no guarantee whatever that the expressions he uses, relating to the physical constitution of material things, correspond to actual physical reality. Such expressions are merely the vehicle of religious truth, rather than the proclamation of scientific truth. A good example occurs in the use of the current notion of the firmament, as we shall shortly see.

An interpretation

Guided by these principles, armed with their authority, and safe in the assurance which that authority gives, the Catholic can now proceed to the interpretation of this story of creation in such a way as to safeguard all that the Church teaches about the inviolable truth of sacred Scripture, without at the same time violating or contradicting any proved truth of the physical sciences. Among the different interpretations proposed in recent years by competent and approved theologians, I shall speak in detail of but one, since my object is to expound the Catholic faith, not the free opinions of theologians; and the sole reason for introducing at all what is but an opinion of some theologians, is that so the reader may have at command, not only the principles he must hold, but also an example of their application in a matter that to some might prove disturbing.

According, then, to this interpretation, the sacred writer composed his narrative upon a plan chosen by himself. His main thesis is that the world and everything in it was created by God. This it is what he wished to impress upon the minds of his countrymen, so as to preserve them from the errors and fancies current among the surrounding Gentiles. To express this the more clearly and vividly he chose the ordinary popular division of the universe into three elements, the heavens, the waters, the earth. In each of these three parts he pictures the work of creation as proceeding by stages. The first stage is the creation of all three divisions in a state of chaos (vv. 1, 2). The second stage is the work of discrimination, which is realised in the heavens by the division of light and darkness; in the waters by the separation of the higher

waters from the lower, by means of the firmament, which was conceived as a solid canopy stretched across the heavens; in the earth by the segregation of the sea from the land; while this is completed by the production of trees and plants, which, as springing from the soil, were regarded more as an integral part of the dry land than as a mere adornment of it. He then takes the threefold division again and summarises the work of their adornment or furnishing: the heavens are filled with sun, moon and stars; the waters are occupied by fishes (and here he introduces the birds as the living ornaments of the air); while the land is peopled by all sorts of animals and finally by man.

So is completed the whole work, with its three main stages, each containing three secondary divisions, always in the same order—heavens, waters, earth. The second and third main stages comprise, therefore, six divisions, to each of which is assigned a day. Such an arrangement, with its evident striving after symmetry, though of course not impossible in reality, certainly appears highly artificial, and to be adopted by the writer with the practical aim of making a deeper and more lasting impression upon the minds of a people who, like children, could understand a picture-story much better than a scientific disquisition. As for the “days,” the “mornings” and “evenings,” they would be, on this interpretation, an element of the writer’s artificial plan, chosen to exhibit creation as the type or model of the week given to work, followed by the repose of the Sabbath. They represent, therefore, six moments or impulses of God’s creative activity rather than any definite periods of time. With this interpretation, all the objections brought against the Mosaic account of creation from the physical sciences collapse. As it is a religious document in popular language, with no scientific object, it contains no scientific teaching and cannot therefore contradict scientific truth. The creation of all things by God is not a truth of physical science, but of philosophy, as has already been noted. We can therefore, in accordance with the teachings of science, or, if we like, of mere scientific theories, rearrange the order of the development of the world and its forms of life. We can lengthen out the astronomical periods of the solar system and the geological periods of the earth’s history to as many millions of years as we choose, and we shall not be contradicting Genesis. If we think that the evolutionists have proved their case, or even that they have gathered evidence enough to make it prudently tenable, we may hold that from the lowest protoplasm to the highest animals there has been a continuous progress and evolution, either gradually or with occasional leaps, and by the instrumentality of any natural means that we may prefer, and, upon one condition, we shall not be rebellious to the Holy Ghost speaking through the mouth of Moses. This one condition is that we exempt nothing and no process from God’s creative and directive activity, and acknowledge

him, working through the powers of nature which he has made, as Lord and Creator of all.

§ VIII: CREATION OF MAN

*Special
importance of
the question*

So far as we have gone in our review of the work of creation we have taken no account of the origin of man. This question, of course, has a special importance of its own, and theological implications of no mean gravity. Also, its treatment needs particular care in view of the distinctions which must be made between man as a whole and his two component parts, body and soul, since the teaching of the Church is not equally definite about all the different points involved.

We proceed first to take the question of the origin of the first human couple, man and woman, leaving till later the little that needs to be said about subsequent generations. And as the aim of this essay is an exposition of Catholic faith, other aspects of the matter in hand will not be touched, except in so far as they are necessary to an understanding of the faith and its implications. In their own spheres philosophy and the physical sciences have much to say about man's origin, but our concern is not with them, except by way of occasional contact.

*Unity of
man's nature*

In view of the extreme looseness of language and thought among so many modern proponents of current theories, we must be careful to define our terms strictly. Speaking, then, of the origin of man, we understand man to be a unity, one substance, composed of two distinct and different elements, one material, the other immaterial or spiritual, commonly called body and soul. He is as much one substance as water or wood or a horse is one substance; but there is an immensely greater difference between his two component elements, body and soul, than between the various different elements making water, wood, or a horse. All of these are material, and as such can be measured and counted and weighed, and are subject to all the laws that scientific investigators have discovered as ruling the whole material universe. But while man's body is akin with these, and is itself made up of the same material elements as they are, his soul is in a wholly distinct category and world. It has nothing in common with material things, nor is it subject to any of the laws which they must obey. It cannot be seen, weighed, or measured; even its existence and its nature can be known by us only by the use of the power, seated in itself, of observing its operations in ourselves, and thence arguing to its being and character. All this we try to express by saying that it is non-material or spiritual. Yet these two disparate elements combine to form a real unity, man, as was laid down explicitly in formal philosophical terms by the Fifteenth General Council, that of Vienne, in A.D. 1312. I have insisted on this, only to make it clear that man does not and

cannot exist until the soul indwells and gives human life to the body. Whatever origin or process of formation we may, for the moment, and by way of hypothesis, assign to body and soul, it must be remembered that, until the two come together and coalesce in one living unity and substance and being, there is no man. It is important to keep this in mind, as it has a bearing on the understanding of ecclesiastical documents and definitions which are always drawn up with strict regard to accuracy of phraseology.

As far, then, as concerns man, understood in this sense as a whole *Creation of Adam's soul* and one substance, the Church has spoken with infallible authority in the Vatican Council, besides making her mind known in other and less solemn ways. The Vatican decree lays down that "God created from nothing both sorts of creatures, the material and the spiritual . . . and then (*deinde*) the human creature, as it were partaking of both, being composed of spirit and body." This decree teaches that the creation of man was distinct from and subsequent to (*deinde*) that of the angels and the purely material world. It implies necessarily that the first man's soul, by which he was essentially and formally constituted in human nature, was due to a distinct divine creative act, by which it was drawn into being from sheer nothingness. This, also, is the evident teaching of the Holy Ghost speaking through Moses in Gen. ii 7: "And the Lord God . . . breathed into his (*i.e.*, man's) face the breath of life, and man became a living soul." This first point, then, is clear and fixed: Adam's soul was created directly and immediately by God from nothing. This is as much a part of Catholic teaching as it is a truth of sane philosophy. To deny it would be to rebel against the Church's authority, as well as to reject the dictates of sound reason. For a Catholic there can be no question and no debate about the hypothesis or even the possibility of the development of Adam's spiritual soul from the non-spiritual animating principle or soul of any brute, however highly advanced in the scale of animal perfection. The theory of evolution taken universally, as embracing the development of the first man's soul from some non-human faculty of one of the higher animals, is out of court for the Catholic; and far from feeling this a restriction of his intellectual and human freedom, he is grateful to the Church, which, by her authoritative pronouncements, keeps him to the broad highroad of common sense and saves him from aimless wanderings down all the blind alleys of human folly.

When, however, we go on to consider the origin of Adam's *Origin of Adam's body* body we enter a region where the definite certainty that obtains concerning his soul is lacking. This arises in part from the nature of the case, and in part from the nature of the available evidence. Clearly, the origin of man's body can have, of itself, no such grave theological and spiritual implications as are necessarily involved in the origin of his soul. That his body came into existence in this

way or that is a matter of historical truth and of scientific interest, but whether it was this way or that has, in itself, no direct theological bearing. But the Church, though she can, as the sole authoritative interpreter of Scripture, determine the meaning of any passage dealing with historical fact or scientific truth, when it is necessary or expedient, in order, for example, to safeguard some religious truth involved in a statement of fact, yet has, by virtue of her divine commission, no direct interest in purely historical and scientific questions as such. When, therefore, such a matter arises the question to be decided comes to this: Does the Holy Ghost through the inspired writer teach clearly, and mean us to accept as revealed truth, that such an event actually took place, or that such an assertion is a scientific fact? If he does, there is no more to be said, since God cannot err. But if there be any doubt as to whether that be his intention, then unless and until the matter is decided by the Church's divine authority, the Catholic is free, within the limits and subject to the conditions laid down to be observed in such cases, to understand the passage in the way that seems best. And so long as the Church gives no decision, diversities of interpretation and fluctuations of opinion are bound to occur.

What, then, is to be said concerning the origin of Adam's body? In the first place, it is certain that by far the greater part of Catholic thought, both through the ages and at the present day, favours the opinion that Adam's body was produced immediately and directly by God's act. The reasons for this are obvious; such seems to be the plain literal meaning of Gen. ii 7, "And the Lord God made man from the slime of the earth," and such an origin seems most fitly to accord with man's natural dignity and his supernatural destiny both of soul and body. And there can be little doubt, if any, that in the present state of our knowledge it is prudent and wise for Catholics as a body to retain this general and traditional opinion. For unless there be a prudent reason for so doing, it is rash to depart from a view which has commended itself to the minds of so many Christian generations.

In this instance no cogent reason exists. Far from it. For against this traditional view there stands nothing but the theory of evolution, as to which it cannot be too often repeated that, despite the claims of many of its supporters, it is still a theory only, having, indeed, some indefinite degree of probability, but no sort of certainty: while if we take it as covering all forms of animal life and so embracing the origin of the human body, the positive evidence in favour of it is, at present, so slight and feeble as to be negligible.

We might leave the question at that, but it may be useful to carry it a step further. It has often been asked if there is anything in the Church's teaching to prevent a Catholic from holding man's body to be a development from one of the higher animals, if this should ever be proved to be a scientific fact. If the question is

put in this way the answer must, of course, be a simple No, for the teaching of the Church, being divinely preserved from error, can never run contrary to anything proved to be a fact, in any field whatsoever of human knowledge. The question, then, should be differently framed. Is there anything in the Church's teaching to prevent a Catholic from holding the said theory concerning the human body, and so to make it certain that this can never be proved to be a fact?

The Vatican decree already quoted is by no means definite on this point. It does not say that Adam's body was immediately or directly produced by God from nothing, nor does it say anything about the process by which God fashioned it, or about the state or condition to which it had been brought, whether by direct divine agency or other means, at the moment when God breathed into it a living, human soul. As a consequence of this, and because the evolutionary hypothesis appealed to them, some few Catholic theologians set forth views on the origin of man's body more or less in agreement with current evolutionary theories. And, although in one or two cases writers had their works condemned or were called upon to retract their opinions, in no instance did it clearly appear that a condemnation, issued officially by one of the Roman Congregations, fell precisely on the point now under discussion—namely, that Adam's body was the term of a process of development, rather than the result of a special and particular divine creative or formative act.

The only other authoritative pronouncement is the decree of the Biblical Commission (No. 3) which forbids a Catholic to call in doubt the literal and historical sense of those passages in the first three chapters of Genesis wherein are narrated facts which touch the foundations of the Christian religion, among others mentioned being "the special creation of man, the formation of the first woman from the first man, the unity of the human race." We must see whether this decree has made any real change in the situation, to the extent of making it impossible for a Catholic to hold that Adam's body was the term of a process of natural, though God-directed, development, and that God took one of the higher animals and, by infusing into it a human soul, made it a man.

A Catholic evolutionist, recalling what has been said about the oneness of man's substance and the impossibility of man's existence until the soul indwells and vivifies the body, and claiming, as he is entitled to do, that ecclesiastical decrees which restrict liberty are to be interpreted strictly and narrowly, might contend that since this decree speaks of the creation of "man," and says nothing about his body, he is still free to hold that this latter was the result of an evolutionary process. Also he might argue that the literal historical sense of Gen. ii 7 is not absolutely certain, since first, according to the Hebrew, it does not read "God made man from

the slime (or dust) of the earth," but "God made man slime (or dust) from the earth," which may be variously understood; and secondly, that, whereas it is certain that not all animals were made immediately from the earth by God, yet Gen. ii 19 asserts that they were. Hence, invoking the seventh decree of the Commission that it was not the inspired writer's intention to impart scientific knowledge of the whole of creation, he may conclude that this passage about man is one of those wherein we are not to look for the accuracy of scientific language.

Whether such a position be reasonable, especially in view of the absence of any real scientific evidence in favour of the evolutionary descent of man's body, and of the many difficulties against it, is one question which, however, it is not within our province to debate. Another and quite distinct question is whether such a position is to be condemned as offending against, I do not say the Catholic faith, but against the loyalty and obedience owing to ecclesiastical authority as vested by the Pope in the Biblical Commission. All things considered, it would seem that the answer must be in the negative, and that unless and until authority should speak more clearly and definitely, freedom of opinion and discussion on this point are still allowable.

In other words, the Church gives us in this matter evidence of that truly divine prudence which characterises all her actions. When the faith is assailed she speaks promptly, decisively, clearly. When the matter in debate does not appear to imperil the faith, even though some among her children may scent danger, she waits. In her regard for man's dignity, she will not curb his intellectual freedom; in her anxious care for the faith of the timorous or more sensitive souls she impresses upon all the necessity of single-minded loyalty to truth in research, of sobriety in language, and of the spirit of obedience to her authority.

*Origin of
Eve's body*

As for the production of the first woman's body, a few words will be enough. The decree of the Biblical Commission particularly mentions the "formation of the first woman from the first man" as one of the instances wherein the literal historical sense of sacred Scripture may not be called in question. The reasons are plain. Firstly, the literal interpretation of the passage is presupposed or confirmed in many other places in Scripture, as when St Paul, addressing the Athenians, says ¹ that God "hath made of one, all mankind," or, writing of the relations of man and woman, reminds the Corinthians ² that "the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man."

Secondly, this truth has considerable dogmatic importance; Catholic teaching about the sacrament of matrimony and about the intimate union of Christ and the Church is closely bound up with it, illumined and strengthened by it. Beyond this it needs

¹ Acts xvii 26.

² 1 Cor. xi 8.

only to be said that within the ambit of this literal meaning does not lie the "rib" from Adam's side, since the exact meaning of the Hebrew word used is doubtful.

Here, also, we may note that the Biblical Commission mentions *Unity of the human race* the unity of the human race as a point as to which the historical, literal sense of Genesis is not to be doubted. This is, if not actually a part of Catholic faith, at least an example of what theologians call dogmatic facts. That is, it is a fact so closely bound up with a defined dogma that to deny the one is to reject the other. Let it be allowed that from the time of Adam onwards there have been any men dwelling upon the earth who were not his descendants, and it becomes impossible to hold the Catholic dogma of original sin, or that of the Redemption embracing the whole of, and limited to, the race of Adam. But since the Church is the guardian of the faith, she clearly must have the right, which indeed she has often exercised, of authoritatively stating such matters of historical fact as are necessary for the holding or the defence of revealed dogmas of faith.

It may here usefully be added that the Church has defined *Antiquity of man* nothing with regard to the antiquity of man, or the number of years that have passed since Adam's creation. She does not guarantee or assert that the list of the early patriarchs, with their ages given in the Book of Genesis, is meant as a complete and mathematically accurate record, from which any certain conclusion as to the date of man's first appearance upon the earth can be drawn. In this matter an attitude of prudent reserve, which includes a willingness to accept proved facts but a determination to take a large dose of salt with all unproven theories, is that best fitted to the Catholic mind, temper, and tradition.

When we pass on to the origin and mode of production of the souls of all of Adam's descendants we come to a question the interest *Origin of each human soul* of which is now mainly historical.

Leaving aside such errors as that attributed to the great Origen, who held that all human souls, as well as all angels, were created simultaneously from the beginning; and that promulgated by certain early heretics, who taught that they were some kind of emanation from God's own substance; and that imputed to Tertullian, that the soul is, like the body, the result of generation, errors more than once condemned by the Church—we must say a few words about an opinion once somewhat widely held in the Church itself, and the subject of controversy between two such celebrated Doctors as St Jerome and St Augustine. The immediate occasion of the discussion was the denial of original sin by Pelagius and his followers. St Augustine, as the great champion of the faith, was forced into the investigation of the way in which original sin was handed on from father to son, and found himself faced with a difficulty. St Jerome, consulted by him, pronounced unequivocally in favour

of creationism—that is, the opinion that each human soul is created directly and immediately by God, at the very instant of its infusion into the body, or more accurately, perhaps, that it is created *in* the body. St Augustine, though willing to be persuaded and, indeed, inclined to the same opinion, was not convinced. Since original sin is in the soul, he argued, if this is directly created by God, how can he be acquitted of, at least, part complicity in the production of sin? Unable to solve the difficulty, he clung to the possibility of the theory that the soul of the child is produced by the parent's soul, not, however, by its own natural power, but by virtue of a special power given it by God. St Augustine's great authority gave to this opinion a longer life than its own worth deserved, but it was afterwards abandoned, and on two or three occasions when it has been revived, even in a modified form, the writers responsible have been required to retract. Consequently there is no doubt that, though not explicitly defined by the Church, the direct creation by God of each soul at the moment when the body is ready to receive it, appertains to the substance of the Catholic faith. But as to when this moment is, and at what stage of pre-natal development the body becomes vivified by the creation of its rational soul, is a question still open to free debate.

§ IX: CONSERVATION OF THE UNIVERSE

EVERYTHING, then, that is in the heavens or the earth, or in what may be other worlds or other systems beyond the stretch of human eye or human power to discover or investigate, was at some moment lost in a past beyond human calculation called by God's command into being out of sheer and absolute nothingness. In that instant the world began, and with it time and motion. From that instant this vast created world, under the impulse of the forces and activities with which God had gifted it, began to go forward and to change and develop until it became the world such as we see it and partly know it to-day.

But there is one conception of this world which, common enough even among Christians, we must most carefully avoid. We must not think of the universe as something analogous to a piece of machinery made by man. A clock-maker may make a clock, and having wound it up, leave it to go "by itself" for a week or a month. The world is not like that, differing from the clock only in size and complexity. It was not just "wound up" by God in the beginning and then left to go "by itself" for so many thousands or millions of years until it runs down and comes to a stop or has to be wound up again. God could not make a world like that. As it needed his creative omnipotence to call it out of nothing, so it needs, at every moment, his sustaining omnipotence to keep it from sinking back into nothing. God's power and activity are necessarily

involved and exerted in every movement of every planet, in every vibration of the ether, in every breath that man draws and every thought he thinks, in every tick of that very clock that we speak of as going "by itself." The forces that move the world are his creation, the laws that govern them are of his making. This is the fundamental fact, let it be noted by the way, that makes miracles both possible and reasonable, since they are simply particular and striking examples of the Creator's power over and loving interest in his own work. This continuous and immanent activity of God in every phase and detail of the world's existence and life is as important and as necessary to bear in mind as creation itself. It is the complement and the correlative of creation. It enables us to realise that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (Ps. xxiii) as truly now and as completely as when "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. i 1), and also it enables us to follow without fear all the speculations, and to accept without anxiety all the proved or to be proved conclusions, of science as to the course taken by the process of world development and the means used to attain the end.

There is, however, one all-important field in which the work of creation, in the strictest sense, did not end on any hypothesis as to world processes, when the material universe was called into being and started upon its voyage across the sea of ages. Every human soul, from Adam's down to the baby's of to-day, is, as it comes into being, the direct, immediate result of God's creative act, who at that instant calls it out of eternal nothingness. The human soul, when it begins to be, has no past, no previous existence in a state of potentiality, such as next year's plant has in this year's seed; there is no process of evolution behind it; it is something absolutely new. So that in this way the sum total of created being is still growing, and will go on growing until the number of the elect is filled and all generations of men are called to judgement. The human parents of a child are not the generators of his soul. This, which alone makes man to be man, is the work of God alone. Here is the profound truth underlying the whole of Christian morality, the truth that gives solid reality to the prayer Christ taught us, "Our Father, who art in heaven," the truth that alone makes to be true and gives sweetness and reason to that word of Jesus that otherwise would be harsh and unnatural: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."¹ Only God could make such a claim, and God may make it only because he is our Creator, our Father, the only real author and immediate cause of our immortal soul.

B. V. MILLER.

¹ Matt. x 37.

VII

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

§ I: THE CONCEPT OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

*General
notion and
definition*

HOLY SIMEON of old proclaimed the child Jesus to be a light to the revelation of the Gentiles who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. How great was that darkness we know from the pages of contemporary secular writers. The Græco-Roman world at large was a temple of idols, in which men sought by degrading rites to placate a venal rabble of gods and goddesses. These deities, for the most part, were regarded by the masses as dread tyrants oppressing humanity from the security of the heavens, and by the leaders of religious thought as, at best, shadowy beings "content to sit aloft and watch the world go round." Many of the philosophers had abandoned themselves to crude materialism, or pronounced the world a cruel jest of Fate.

But it was not so within the narrow confines of Judea. There, and there only, the worship of the one true God obtained. For it was the peculiar glory of the Jews, throughout their chequered history, to have preserved upon the earth, amidst the surrounding corruptions of polytheism, the primitive concept of the one true God; the all-loving Father "who provideth food for the raven, when her young ones cry to God, wandering about because they have no meat";¹ the personal God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt; the great ruler of all nations, who brought the Philistines, the mortal enemies of the Jews, out of Caphtor, and the despised Syrians out of Kir.² It is, above all, his universal providence which distinguishes the God of Revelation from the heartless deities of the cultured heathen and the tribal gods of the untutored savage.

The word "providence" is derived from the Latin word *providere*, which means "to look before," "to make provision," "to take heed for the future." In its widest sense, then, providence pertains to the moral virtue of prudence, of which it is generally held to be the principal part, since the other two parts, remembrance of the past and understanding of the future, are merely its helpmeets in furnishing the grounds of decision. It is the aim of the prudent man to act circumspectly, in harmony with the dictates of right reason, so as to avoid extremes and attain to the golden mean. The first thing that a prudent man does is to co-ordinate his past experience and appraise the present situation

¹ Job xxxviii 41.

² Amos ix 7.

in the light of that judgement. His next step is to look forward and make provision for what is coming, according to his resources ; in other words, he orders things to an end in view. This ordering of things to an end is the precise function of providence.

Clearly, it involves the forming of a plan on the part of the intellect, and the carrying out of that plan on the part of the will. Since it entails the employment of both these faculties, it has been variously defined, sometimes from the standpoint of the intellect, and sometimes from the standpoint of the will. Thus, St Thomas Aquinas stresses the part played by the intellect when he says : " Providence is the divine reason itself, seated in the supreme ruler, which disposeth all things " ;¹ whilst St John Damascene emphasises rather the function of the will, when he defines divine providence as " the will of God by which all things are ruled according to right reason." ²

There is no discrepancy here, but merely a difference of point of view. The first definition is from the more logical standpoint of the divine plan to be put into operation, the second from the more practical aspect of the actual carrying out of the plan. Briefly, however, we may define providence as the divine governance of the universe, in accordance with the solemn pronouncement of the Vatican Council: " God watcheth over and governeth by his providence all things that he hath made, reaching from end to end mightily and ordering all things sweetly." ³

The Catholic Church teaches that the world in which we live, and of which we are part, is no mere plaything of some celestial order of beings, nor a work of such inferior worth that it has been abandoned by its architect, nor the mechanical product of impersonal evolutionary forces, nor yet the outcome of some aimless chance, but the ordered achievement of the Creator, who owes it to his own infinite wisdom so to direct and govern it that it may attain to the fulfilment of his divine purpose.

Providence, then, is simply the divine ordination of all created things to an end. But to what end? Reason and revelation unite in assuring us that the final goal, the ultimate end, to which all created things tend, cannot be anything in the things themselves. The objects of our daily experience are neither self-contained, self-sufficient, nor self-supporting. No created being is of such a kind that its non-existence is unthinkable, for the simple reason that no created being has a necessary grip upon existence. We may survey the whole universe without finding an entity which is in itself a sufficient reason for its own existence. Everything in Nature is at once the cause and the effect of other things. The greatest of created things at the highest provides only a partial explanation of anything.

¹ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. xxii, a. 1.

² *De Fid. Orth.*, i 3.

³ Sess. iii, c. 1.

To suppose, then, that any one of these things, or the sum-total of them all, is its own end, the harbour, so to speak, of its own ceaseless quest, is about as sensible as, to borrow Aristotle's illustration, the supposition that the art of shipbuilding is in the timber of which the ships are made. Even unaided reason leaves us in little doubt that the final end of the great conspiracy of Nature must be the glorification of the Creator. Hence the Vatican Council has declared: "If anyone shall deny that the world was founded for the glory of God, let him be anathema."¹

On this point the inspired writers of Holy Writ speak with no uncertain voice. "The Lord hath made all things for himself," says the author of the Book of Proverbs; whilst in the Apocalypse of St John we read, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God." St Paul declares that "of him, and by him, and in him, are all things."² The supreme purpose of all created things is set forth by the Psalmist in the verse, "The heavens show forth the glory of God."³ The final consummation of the designs of divine providence is thus depicted by St Paul: "Afterwards the end, when the Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father . . . when all things shall be subdued unto him, then the Son also himself shall be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."⁴

*The glory
of God*

It is, then, the function of inanimate Nature to manifest the glory of its maker; much more, obviously, is this the function of animate Nature with its greater capabilities, ever-widening till we reach rational Nature itself, creatures endowed with intellect and will, mortals made in God's own image. It is the daily lesson of our lives that nothing created can ever fill the heart of man. Each and every one of us has at some time or other set his heart on the attainment of some one thing; we have felt that if we could only attain to *that*, whatever it was, we should be perfectly happy. And, perhaps, we have had the good fortune to gain our heart's desire. If so, we have not been perfectly happy; disillusionment has followed swift and sure; we have discovered that, after all, it was not *that* that we wanted, but something else, and the ceaseless search begins all over again.

"We were made for Thee, O Lord," says St Augustine, "and our hearts are restless till they find peace in Thee"—restless as the river on its way to the ocean. From the infinite we came and to the infinite we tend. It is perfect happiness that man desires, a happiness which this world cannot give, the secure enjoyment of an unending bliss which cannot slip from his grasp, the everlasting possession of God.

However, it is not as though man's happiness were the all-important matter, and the enjoyment of God merely a means to

¹ Sess. iii, c. 1, can. 5.

² Ps. xviii 1.

³ Rom. xi 36.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv 24-28.

that end. Far from it. Man's enjoyment of God in the Beatific Vision lies precisely in the knowledge that his union with God contributes to God's greater extrinsic glory. Hence says Holy Writ: "The Lord hath chosen thee this day to be his peculiar people . . . to make thee higher than all nations which he hath created, to his own praise, and name, and glory."¹ So, too, in the New Testament, St Paul writes to the Ephesians of God the Father, "who hath predestined us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the purpose of his will, unto the praise of the glory of his grace."² Again, the Apostle prays for the Philippians, that they may abound in charity and be filled with the fruit of justice "unto the glory and praise of God."³ Finally the end and object of creation is admirably expressed in the salutation of the four-and-twenty ancients prostrate before the great white throne of the Almighty: "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power, because thou hast created all things, and for thy will they were and have been created."⁴

In the Book of Job we read how, when the foundations of the earth were laid, the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy.⁵ This was the opening chorus of Nature's triumphant hymn of praise, which has been chanted unceasingly ever since throughout succeeding ages, to the accompaniment of the harmony of the spheres. In this mighty orchestra every created being plays its proper part, each in subordination to the whole, for there is no instrument too humble to contribute something of its sweetness to the melody of the divine symphony.

Service is the essence of order, and service is the badge of the creature. Man, it is true, is the lord of creation, to whom all else in this world subserves. He can harness the forces of Nature to do his will and contribute to his well-being, but, in accordance with the same law of service, he himself can find happiness only in doing the will of God and manifesting God's glory. This law of service is impressed upon man just as much as upon everything in Nature, "from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows on the wall." The gradation of purpose in the ever-ascending scale of creation, from the lowest to the highest, was set forth in arresting fashion many hundreds of years ago by Lactantius, whose graceful style won for him the title of the Christian Cicero. Rhetorically he declaims: "The world was made that we might be born. We were born that we might know God. We know him that we may worship him. We worship him that we may earn immortality. We are rewarded with immortality that, being made like unto the angels, we may serve our Father and Lord for ever and be the eternal kingdom of God."⁶

¹ Deut. xxvi 18, 19.² i 5, 6.³ i 11.⁴ Apoc. iv 21.⁵ xxxviii 7.⁶ *Institutiones divinae*, vii 6.

All created things in some way show forth the glory of their maker. Because of his own intrinsic, infinite perfection, God must necessarily do his own will. It is impossible to conceive God as necessitated by anything outside himself, for were he so necessitated, clearly he would be limited from without, and therefore not infinite. Consequently God must, through the immanent necessity of his own unbounded perfection, seek always his own glory—a fundamental truth which has been solemnly defined by the Vatican Council in the proclamation: “If anyone shall deny that the world was founded for the glory of God, let him be anathema.”

Not that it is in any way possible to add to the intrinsic glory of that which is infinitely perfect. That glory was complete in the long silent years of God’s eternity, so to speak, before the dawn of creation. But in the time-series which begins with the external fulfilment of the creative act there is an outward manifestation of that glory on the part of the myriad creatures which, in manifold ways, reflect the divine perfections. That extrinsic glory may be increased, may be made more manifest; and it is precisely the greater revelation of that ever-varying glory which is the ultimate end of the universe. The work of his hands must necessarily fulfil the purpose which he has foreordained, for the counsels of the Eternal Father, which are coeval with himself, “reach from end to end mightily.”¹

§ II: THE ATTRIBUTES OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

WE may perhaps best present the teaching of Catholic theologians with regard to divine providence if we consider separately the various qualities or attributes which they ascribe to it, and these we may classify under four general headings.

1. *Its Universality*

To Christian ears there is nothing novel about the view that God’s providence reaches as far as his causality, that nothing is too vast, nothing too small, to escape his care. But there have been philosophers who have said of God what Herbert Spencer said of Nature, namely, that it cares nothing about the individual, but everything about the species.

This curious restriction of the workings of divine providence to the conservation of species bears a distinct family resemblance to the muddled metaphysic of the eighteenth-century Deists in this country. It will be remembered that they so stressed the transcendence of God as to banish him altogether from the detailed working of the universe which he had brought into being. He had, they insisted, made the universe, and then left it to run its own

¹ Wisd. viii 1.

course in accordance with the universal laws which he had imposed upon it at its creation, very much as a watch-maker leaves the watch to its own intrinsic resources.

In these contractile views of providence, both ancient and modern, there is always the underlying assumption that it is derogatory to God to act otherwise than according to heroic scale. The propounders of these theories appear to be of Cicero's opinion that "the gods are careful about great things and neglect the small." Not so the teaching of Christ, who said that not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without the Father.¹

The highest grade of knowledge about anything is to know it, not merely in its appearances or in its effects, but in its causes. The man who can make a wireless set knows far more about wireless than the man who only listens in. The latter's knowledge is at best superficial, and cannot be compared with the causal knowledge of the man who is able to construct his own instrument. To know a thing in its causes is to know it in its constituent principles, to understand it in the very foundations of its being. Now, since God is the ultimate efficient and exemplary cause of all creation, it follows that he must have the most intimate and penetrating knowledge conceivable of each individual thing, in its very separateness, in the height of its dignity, or in the depth of its lowliness. For God made not only the rolling orbs of heaven, but also the tiniest flower that blows, so that to much of his handiwork we may apply the saying of Virgil, "It is labour bestowed on a trifling matter, but not trifling is the glory" (*in tenui labor at tenuis non gloria*). Indeed, Aristotle has remarked that the nature of anything is best seen in its smallest proportions, and truly the surpassing wisdom of the Creator shines forth with dazzling splendour from the meanest micro-organism.

Huxley uttered a profound truth, more profound than he realised, when he declared that chance is only another name for ^{Apparent} failures. Nothing really happens by chance. Everything in the universe is directed by the all-comprehending divine intelligence to the ultimate end of glorifying God. The so-called irrationality of the universe, of which rationalists speak so glibly, turns out on examination to be more apparent than real. Indeed, it requires a peculiar type of mind to rule out providence on the sentimental ground that a beneficent God would not permit sparrows to be eaten by cats.

Do the devoured sparrows fail to attain their end? It is necessary to distinguish carefully between the proximate or particular end of created things and their final or general end. The particular end may, and oftentimes does, fail to be fulfilled, but not so the general or ultimate end. The particular end of the vine is to bear grapes on every branch, but the gardener may prune away many branches

¹ Matt. x 29.

in order to get better fruit. The failure of the particular end here subserves a general good—namely, the provision of more nutritious food for man. And many a hard-hearted farmer has remained unmoved at the tragedy of the sparrows, declaring them to be pests which ruin his crops.

Nature itself checks its own prodigality for the good of the whole, by ruthlessly frustrating the particular ends of many of its most fertile products. Thus says Professor J. Arthur Thomson: "A cod has several millions of eggs; if these all developed into codlings and these into cod-fish, there would soon be no more fishing, and that would be the end of the world. There is a star-fish called *Luidia*—and not a very common one—which has 200 million eggs. Huxley calculated that if the descendants of a single greenfly all survived and multiplied, they would, at the end of summer, weigh down the population of China. An oyster may have 60 million eggs, and the average American yield is 16 million. If all the progeny of one oyster survived and multiplied, its great-great-grandchildren would number 66 with 33 noughts after it, and the heap of shells would be eight times the size of our earth. 'Which is absurd,' as Euclid used to say when (according to Samuel Butler) he was tired of arguing."¹ It is obvious, then, that in many respects Nature is cruel only to be kind. The particular end must in many cases give way to the general, and there results a hierarchy of divine purpose, according to which everything in creation is directed to the ultimate end for which the universe was brought into being, the extrinsic glory of God.

It is to be noticed, however, that in the adjustment of particular ends to general purposes, in the subordination of the good of the part to the good of the whole, man is not simply on a level with the rest of creation. He ranks above and beyond every other living organism in this cosmos, and immeasurably above the whole inorganic world. All other mundane things are fleeting as "the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven." To man alone, of things of earthly mould, is vouchsafed a life beyond the grave, a conscious existence after the dissolution of the physical compound, a personal immortality. Throughout the eternity which lies beyond the portals of death, the immortal soul of man must glorify God; either in his infinite goodness by union with him in the Beatific Vision, or eternally separated from him in hell, in vindication of his infinite justice.

Essential immortality belongs to God alone, but the soul of man is naturally immortal; that is to say, the created nature of the human soul is such that it has not within it any principle of corruption, and we know from revelation that it is God's design to conserve the soul for ever according to its nature. The soul of man, then, has an absolute value, and not merely a value relatively to the

¹ *The Control of Life*, pp. 193, 194.

other finite things whose mutual limitation makes up the order of Nature.

It is impossible, then, that the good of man should be subordinated to the welfare of anything else in Nature. On the contrary, the universe and all that it contains are subordinate in purpose to the eternal destiny of man. Christianity assigns him his true place: midway between the extremes of Celsus and Protagoras. The former placed him on a level with the ant, contending that he never rises above the instinctive ingenuity of that insect, whilst the latter boldly declared that man is the measure of all things. The truth is that God made man a little lower than the angels, that he stands at the head of the hierarchy of the universe, as embodying its various perfections, a veritable microcosm. As the poet Herbert has it:

“ Man is one world, and hath
Another to attend him.”

St Thomas Aquinas points out that the providence by which God rules the world is like the providence by which a father governs his family, or a ruler directs a city or state.¹ The father administers everything for the benefit of his wife and children, whilst the ruler's supreme solicitude is for the welfare of his subjects. In both cases the providential care devoted to land, buildings, and business generally is subordinate to, and regulated by, the primary end in view. So, too, is it with God's providential care of the world; everything else is administered for the sake of man, on the principle that the closer the kinship of any created substance to the nature of God, the higher its position in the order of God's providence.

Now God is a pure spirit, and consequently spiritual substances approach most nearly to their maker. Such a spiritual substance is the soul of man. It is not, of course, an immaterial substance altogether independent of matter, as is an angel, since its especial function is to animate the material human body. In fact, it has an essential, a basic, relation to the body, which is not destroyed by the death and decomposition of that body. St Thomas Aquinas emphasises this point, insisting that to be strictly accurate in our invocation of St Peter we ought to say, not “ St Peter, pray for us,” but “ O soul of St Peter, pray for us,” since St Peter was, and will be again, soul and body in one unity. Nevertheless, the human soul in its essence is immaterial, and, in so far, a reflection of the divine nature and a seal of resemblance. Therefore is it at the head of all created things under heaven, an immortal being made in God's own image, to which all else ministers in the hierarchical scale of the universal providence of God.

¹ *De Veritate*, q. v, art. 2.

2. *Its Immediacy*

Furthermore, God's providence is not only universal, it is immediate. The Platonists of old distinguished a threefold providence, only one of which pertained in any way to the supreme deity. In this view, the guardianship over material things is relegated to the lesser divinities who circulate in the lower heavens; the affairs of men are left to the slender mercies of demons, powerful beings of doubtful character betwixt the gods and mortals; whilst only purely spiritual beings, in whom there is no admixture of matter, are deemed worthy of notice by the great God himself.

*Matter
and spirit*

It is surely a significant fact that matter has been the despair, and sometimes the undoing, of every religion except Catholicism. Either it has been glorified and worshipped by the worldly-minded, or it has been degraded and despised by idealists. In pagan systems of philosophy and theology generally, matter was regarded as a flaw in the handiwork of the gods, the source and the origin of all evil; and consequently from the outset Christianity was open to the charge of materialism.

Because the early Christians cherished the charred remains of the martyrs, they were scornfully described as "cinder worshippers." This, too, by the Epicureans, who thought it more spiritual to maintain that the soul of man is born with the body, grows with the body, and dies with the body. The Gnostics laughed the Christians to scorn for their belief in the resurrection of the body. Was it not the function of the spirit to purge itself of matter which is its shame? And why, they asked, venerate the mangled bodies of the martyrs, since those bodies, in life and in death, were an ignominy, a hindrance, and a reproach to spirituality? Similarly gibed the Manicheans. Just as they held that God is not great enough to overcome the devil, so, too, they held that spirit is not great enough to overcome matter, which is, and must be, for ever in all its forms and phases, ignoble. The Neo-Platonists, likewise, taunted the Christians with the unspirituality of their teaching, with the gross glorification of matter. The same charge is made against the Catholic Church to-day. It is objected that she is sacramentalist; that she elevates material things—water, oil, bread, and wine—to be actual channels of grace to the souls of men; that she venerates the relics of the saints, and indulges in spectacular rites and ceremonies.

But the fact is that she, and she alone throughout all the ages, has understood the great synthesis of spirit and matter. She sees that matter is not a flaw in God's handiwork, but a triumph of his power; that spirit can and does glorify matter; and she points triumphantly to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body as the crowning instance of spiritualised matter. And, therefore, in the Christian economy, it is not necessary to relegate matter and

material things to the care of some demi-god. It comes within the scope of the immediate providence of the infinitely perfect Creator.

Nevertheless, there are certain intermediaries in the workings of divine providence, not because of any defect in God's power, but because of the abundance of his goodness. St Paul describes the angels as "ministering spirits," and the Fathers depict them as assisting in the divine governance of the universe, as having charge of countries, provinces, cities, families, and individuals. But this guardianship of the angels is exercised in the carrying out of the all-embracing plan of divine providence, subject, as it were, to God's immediate supervision. The angels, like earthly kings and princes and rulers, are all part of the eternal design of God's providence, all powers and principalities sustained within the hollow of his hand.

The angels in Providence

However, it would seem as though God, through intermediaries, governs the world from afar, after the manner of the lord of the vineyard mentioned in the Gospel, who let out the vineyard which he had planted to husbandmen and himself went into a far country.¹ In interpreting this parable, the Fathers see in the absence of the master a reference to the fact that God no longer spoke to the children of Israel face to face; for though with them he was no longer visibly present. So, too, though God may seem to us to have withdrawn himself from the actual governance of the universe, in reality this is not so. St Paul calls upon us to realise that God is "not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and are."² He is present, though unseen, and present in such a vital way that our very continuance in being at every moment is dependent on him.

Constant dependence of creatures

We are inclined to think of creation as a past benefit, very much as we think of a plaything of our childhood as something which was a boon to us then, but which has long since passed out of our busy lives. And yet, assuredly, creation is not static; it is essentially dynamic and kinetic. It is a ceaseless act, for the work of conserving things in being is a prolongation of the act by which they were brought out of nothingness into being. "My Father worketh until now, and I work,"³ says our Blessed Saviour; whilst in the Old Testament we read. "How can anything endure, if thou wouldst not? or be preserved if not called by thee?"⁴ In the Psalms, the work of creation is depicted as going on uninterruptedly: "Thou shalt send forth thy spirit, and they shall be created: and thou shalt renew the face of the earth."⁵

Creation, then, in Holy Writ, is represented as a continuous act involving a direct divine influence on the very being of the creature, in such a way that, without this divine influence, the creature would simply cease to be at all. We are literally sustained in being at

¹ Matt. xxi 33.

² Acts xvii 27.

³ John v 17.

⁴ Wisd. xi 26.

⁵ ciii 30.

every instant by the divine power and providence, without which we should lapse into sheer nothingness. We are as dependent on the act of God as the spinning celluloid ball in a shooting-gallery is dependent on the jet of water which keeps it revolving in position. If the jet cease for the fraction of a second, the ball drops ; if God's sustaining hand were withdrawn, we should collapse, literally, out of existence.

However, this sustaining influence is not a new act, or rather a multiplicity of new acts, on the part of God. He conserves things in being by a continuation of the same act by which he imparts being. The divine conservation is likened by St Thomas to the preservation of light in the atmosphere by a persistent influx from the sun. In the continuous execution of the plans of divine providence there is no change, no succession in the creative act itself, since it is eternal and immutable, though the verification of the creative act, which takes place in time, involves both change and succession in the created object. As the sun is the only source of light to this planet, so God is the only source of conservation to the universe. It is his immediate providence which sustains and governs all.

§ III: THE ATTRIBUTES OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE (continued)

3. *Its Certainty*

WE have seen that there are two essential parts of providence, the one pertaining to the intellect and the other to the will, namely, the plan and its execution. Obviously, providence is the more perfect according as its plan is the more far-reaching, and the more faithfully it is carried out. Now the plan of divine providence, since it is the eternal wisdom itself, must necessarily be the most perfect for the end which God has in view.

"The best-laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a-gley," because of the failure of the mouse or the man to foresee what is going to happen, or because, though he foresees correctly, he cannot control the actions of other mortals or of other forces. But God's knowledge extends as far as the knowable. No thing that is, or ever was, or will be, or could be, is hidden from his ken. "Neither is there any creature invisible in his sight ; but all things are naked and open to his eyes,"¹ and consequently his plan must be flawless, all-embracing, and perfect in its minutest detail.

Again, since God is the omnipotent first cause of all, it is impossible that any secondary cause should thwart the execution of his plan. Every action of every free agent in the universe has been

¹ Heb. iv 13.

foreseen, in all its consequences, by the "searcher of hearts and reins,"¹ and duly taken into account in his eternal counsels. His providence, therefore, is certain, absolutely infallible, in its workings. This, however, does not imply that everything which happens under divine providence must happen of necessity.

Long ago Aristotle, on biological as well as on philosophical grounds, laid it down that the nature of any being is the infallible indication of its end or purpose, and this principle has received the endorsement of many modern psychologists. Thus, William James's celebrated argument for the immortality of the human soul comes to this, that immortality is grounded in the structure of man; in other words, that the nature of the human soul, being such that it has not within it any principle of corruption, is an indication that it is meant to survive the death of the body. In fact, it is difficult to see how anyone who believes in an all-wise God can think otherwise. God owes it to his own wisdom not to act against the grain of the nature he has established, but in accordance with it.

*Providence
and freewill*

Consequently, if it be the nature of any created being to act necessarily and uniformly, as, for instance, water seeking its own level, God will order it according to that nature; whereas, if it be the nature of a being to act freely, and therefore in erratic fashion, God will likewise order it accordingly. Failure to grasp this point has been responsible for many frivolous objections similar to that put forward by Cicero, who argues that if God foresees all things, then he ordains all things, and therefore are all things determined by inexorable fate. Consequently, there is no room in the world for free will; everything happens of necessity.

To this difficulty St Thomas Aquinas replies tersely that it is not only effects that are foreseen by God, but also causes, and that God foresees free causes acting freely, and necessary causes acting necessarily;² and to the objection that self-determination on the part of the creature is incompatible with infallible knowledge on the part of God, he answers that God's knowledge of the future is not really *foreknowledge* at all, since to the eternal Mind all things are present. So long as a free act is considered as future, i.e. as contained in its free cause, it is indeterminate and incapable of being known with certainty. But God knows free acts not as future but as present, that is, as though they were actually happening before his eyes. "They are displayed before the divine gaze," he says, "according as they are when they are being actually performed."³

Again, it has been urged that the certainty of divine providence in its workings is a bar to the utility of prayer, at all events, to the prayer of petition. The objection takes the common form that if God has fore-ordained what is going to befall me in eternity, it

Prayer

¹ Ps. vii 10.

² *Contra Gentiles*, III, 94.

³ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. xiv, art. 13.

cannot make any difference whether I pray or not. Now, clearly, this objection regards prayer as a sort of irruption into the order already established by divine providence, a sort of attempt to upset God's eternal plan. Nothing could well be further from the truth. Prayer is a part, and a vital part, of the order established from the beginning by God's providence. Prayer is just as much a part of the order as are the winds and the waves and the weather. As St Thomas remarks, one might just as well exclude the effects of these everyday causes from the scheme of providence as exclude the effects of prayer.

If God from all eternity foresees that a certain man who does not pray will be damned, and so ordains it, we may rest assured that one reason for that fore-ordination is that God, equally from all eternity, foresaw that the man, in his perversity, would not pray. The oft-quoted line of Virgil, "Cease to hope that the gods' decrees are to be changed by prayer" (*Desine fata deum flecti sperare precando*), has no point when addressed to a well-instructed Catholic, for he at least hopes for no such impossibility. He prays in the sure knowledge that his prayers have been foreseen by God "before anything was, from the beginning," and that they have been taken into account, as it were, in the divine economy of his marvellous mercies and infinite love.

4. *Its Uniformity*

Finally, divine providence may be described as uniform in that it is in harmony with the laws of Nature. We have seen that God governs everything according to its nature, and so he is said to order all things sweetly.¹ Hence, says Henry Ward Beecher: "Providence is but another name for natural law. Natural law itself would go out in a minute, if it were not for the divine thought that is behind it."

It is sometimes contended that the providence of a God who works miracles runs counter to the basic scientific principle of the uniformity of Nature. For practical purposes we may state the principle of uniformity thus: the same non-free agents acting in the same circumstances produce the same effects. In this statement the sameness is sameness of kind and not, of course, of identity. The same specific causes acting in like circumstances produce the same specific effects. The principle applies only to non-free agents, that is, to physical or natural causes, in contradistinction to the self-determining activity of human beings.

Is not this order of nature violated by God when he works a miracle? Has not Hume declared that "a miracle may be accurately defined as a violation of a law of Nature by a particular volition of the deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent"?

¹ *Wisd.* viii 1.

Miracles

The laws of nature

We may at once dismiss the invisible agent as a *bêtise* on Hume's part, since it does not require the erudition of Macaulay's schoolboy to know that a miracle can be worked by God alone. But the essential accuracy of this definition has been persistently questioned outside the narrow circle of professed rationalists and, of late years, even within it. Most theologians are at pains to explain that a miracle is not a violation of a law of Nature, but a sensible effect wrought by God beyond the ordinary course of Nature.

Now the effect of a divine action may well be beyond the scope of the ordinary powers of Nature, and yet not be a violation of the laws of Nature. For instance, accurate, detailed prophecy of remote future events is certainly beyond the ordinary mental powers of man, but by no means contrary to them. When Isaias foretold certain incidents in the Passion of our Lord, he was vouchsafed a vision of future events which were part of the eternal present to the divine intelligence. Surely in such case there is no violation of any law of Nature, psychological or physical. What happens is that, for the time being, the first cause uncaused supersedes a secondary cause, and produces a result beyond the power of the latter.

Mill, in his *Logic*, expresses the view that the laws of Nature ought to be stated as *tendencies* to uniform action. Thus, the law of gravitation in its most general form reads: "All bodies tend to move towards each other." Many causes other than miraculous intervention may prevent bodies actually exerting mutual attraction on each other; but nevertheless the *tendency* remains. Or, again, take the thermodynamical law: "If one part of a body be at a higher temperature than another, heat tends to travel from the part at the higher temperature to that at the lower." It is sometimes a matter of vital importance, a matter of life and death, to prevent this law actually operating, but it is impossible to eradicate the tendency to operation. Clearly, the law which admits of no exceptions, which cannot be violated, deals with *tendencies*, with the natural properties of things, and not with their extrinsic effects. And the natural tendencies of all created agents remain unchanged, even when there is miraculous intervention. That intervention does not change the nature of any mundane agent, though it may suspend, alter, or increase, its normal external effect. The supreme cause operates in place of the subordinate cause.

Thus when God preserved the three youths from harm in the fiery furnace,¹ the flames still retained their tendency to burn matter; in fact, they did burn the Chaldean ministers who stood close by. In the case of the youths, the tendency did not pass into action, because the operation of the secondary cause, fire, was in that case superseded by the action of the first cause uncaused, which is the cause of all else. It cannot be said that here there is a violation of the law of the uniformity of Nature. This becomes clear if we only

¹ Dan. iii 93, 94.

attend carefully to the wording of the law, which states that the same non-free agents acting in the same circumstances produce the same effects. Now, obviously, the fire of the furnace was not acting in the same circumstances when it attacked the Hebrew youths, who were protected by God, and the king's ministers, who were not. In the same circumstances, when there is no causal intervention, flames of fire will always consume human flesh; but where the first cause of all intervenes, the circumstances are certainly not the same, and consequently the law does not apply. It is a case outside the law altogether. There is no violation either of the general law of the uniformity of Nature, which applies only in its proper sphere, or of any particular law governing the tendencies of any particular body, since those tendencies remain unaffected by miraculous intervention. And hence Huxley, in his *Essay on Hume*,¹ says: "The definition of a miracle as a violation of the law of Nature is in reality an employment of language which cannot be justified."

§ IV: PROVIDENCE AND THE EVILS OF LIFE

1. *The Nature of Evil*

The difficulty THE chief objection against the providence of God has always been drawn from the existence of evil in the world. It has taken many forms, from the classical dilemma of Epicurus, that Omnipotence could, and Benevolence would, have prevented evil, to the naïve question put by Friday to Robinson Crusoe, "Why does not God kill the devil?"

During the Great War one frequently heard it said, and occasionally found it stated in print, that, when the war was over, there would be either no religion at all, or a completely revised and up-to-date religion, from which all idea of a benign providence would have vanished. It was felt by many noble-minded men that, at the crucial moment, Christianity had failed, and failed ignominiously. Why, we were asked, if God is infinitely good, did he permit that devastating war, bringing unutterable anguish to countless thousands, who had always striven to serve that God well and faithfully? Christianity seemed to have no satisfactory answer to offer. In the blood-welter the forces of evil appeared to have triumphed.

And yet the war, with all its attendant horrors, was only the newest form of the problem of evil. War or no war, it is always with us. Even in the piping times of peace it stares us in the face daily from the columns of the newspapers: earthquakes, shipwrecks, train disasters, air tragedies, famines, pestilences—why does God

¹ P. 129.

permit these things, bringing so much sorrow and suffering in their wake? Or, to come much nearer home, how is it that each one of us is called upon to endure so much misery from the cradle to the grave? It has been well said that man enters this world with a cry of pain upon his lips and leaves it with a groan. Or, again, think of the thousands of hapless infants who are born into this world every day diseased, deformed, or mentally deficient, and thus sadly handicapped at the outset for the stern struggle of life. The evils are real enough; they loom as a cloud of witnesses against the providence of God, darkening the heavens from view.

Every system of philosophy, every religion, that has ever existed from the dawn of creation down to the present day, has had to face the problem of evil, and try to triumph over it in its manifold guises. If we are really to grasp the problem, and perchance find a theistic solution wherein evil is reconciled with the providence of God, our approach to the problem must of necessity be through its philosophical and historical implications.

Talleyrand is reputed to have said that the purport of language is to conceal thought. This witticism seems to be particularly applicable to the language of philosophy. The difficulty is always to get at the thought at the back of the language, and certainly it is not lessened by the fact that each philosophical school considers it necessary to have a language of its own.

However, if due allowance be made for the peculiarities of expression of different philosophical schools, there is a striking unanimity amongst them with regard, at all events, to the *nature* of evil. It is thus possible for those who are poles asunder in their general outlook on "Nature, red in tooth and claw" to approach the problem of evil from a common standpoint.

It is, I think, universally admitted—in fact, it seems to be *Evil a privation* evident—that evil is not a thing in itself, but rather a condition of a thing. It is impossible to have a bad chest, for instance, without first having a chest; a moment's reflection makes it obvious that the badness is merely a condition of the chest. Furthermore, this condition implies the absence, rather than the presence, of something; in this case, the absence of a sound state of lungs. For evil is essentially a negation, and not a positive entity. Even Schopenhauer, who made of evil not only an active, but a dominant, principle, when he came to a metaphysical analysis of it, defined it as a negation, or rather a privation, in the will which fails to attain its object.

In the last analysis, then, evil will always be found to consist in the privation of good, in much the same way that a shadow on the ground consists in the privation of light. The shadow cast by a great tree appears to be real enough; it seems to occupy space, and to move from one place to another. Yet, obviously, it has no real existence of its own; it merely marks the spots from which

the rays of the sun are excluded by the tree. The shadow is, in fact, simply the absence of light.

Pain

So, too, evil, no matter how positive it may appear at first sight, is in essence the privation of good. Confusion arises from the fact that, in many minds, evil is identified with pain, which is most assuredly not a mere negation, but something very positive indeed. Yet, paradoxical as it may sound, pain is not in itself evil; it is merely the evidence of the existence of evil. It is Nature's warning signal that something is amiss.

Consider, for instance, the pain of a troublesome tooth. The pain arrests attention, and goads one to seek relief from the malady of which it is only the symptom. To that extent, pain is positively good, and, furthermore, many writers, ancient and modern, have pointed out the compensating values attaching to pain. Often-times it has been the discipline of great souls, and the school of character and personality. By the general psychological law of contrasts, it enhances the pleasure of physical and mental well-being. Its alleviation affords opportunities for the practice of heroic virtues; in fact, pain has much to its credit.

But my present point is that pain, so far as it is positive, ought not to be confused with evil. Clearly, in toothache, the evil, of which the pain is the evidence, is not something positive at all, but the absence of something that ought to be present, namely, the ordinary healthy functioning of the tooth. Cancer, too, with its accompanying agonies, is rightly regarded not merely as a positive malady, but as something very aggressive, greedily eating away the human flesh on which it fastens. Yet the evil of cancer consists ultimately in the absence of the proper structure of the flesh affected. Or take the case, oft-quoted during the war, of a bleeding wound full of shrapnel. The evil in the wound is not the excruciating pain, nor the shrapnel, nor the lacerated flesh, nor the life-blood gushing forth, but simply the absence in the flesh of the normal relationship of tissue to tissue which Nature ordains.

Evil, then, (1) is never a thing in itself, but a condition of a thing; and (2) it is never positive being as such, but a privation of being. Hence it has been defined by St Thomas Aquinas as "the deficiency of some good which ought to be present."¹

2. Classification of Evil

Shakespeare makes that wiseacre Polonius, who is all for nice distinctions, remind us that the drama is divided into "tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene undividable or poem unlimited." What Polonius has done for the drama, others, with a mania for meticulous classification, have

¹ *S. Theol.*, I-II, xlix, a. 1.

done for evil. To follow them is to lose oneself in a maze of words, so I will confine myself to the broad distinction of evil into physical, moral, and retributive.

Since evil is essentially negation, it follows that every deficiency, every privation, every limitation is in ■ way evil. It is in this sense that the Scripture says: "None is good but God alone."¹ Only the infinite, which knows no limits, knows no evil. Every finite being, precisely because it is finite, is to that extent evil. This is known as metaphysical evil. But were there no evil other than metaphysical evil, there would be no problem of evil to harass us. "Metaphysical evil," says Harper, "is only called such analogically; and, in this manner, is predicated of the limitation of finite Being. But, as this limitation is not a privation, but a simple negation, and is only called evil by an analogy of proportion, it is wisely disregarded."² The problem is concerned chiefly with those privations which result in consequences disagreeable to man. Man rarely suffers in silence, and so we hear a great deal of the problem of evil, but very little of the corresponding problem of good.

This fact was not overlooked by Hobbes, who remarked in satirical vein: "Every man calleth that which pleaseth, and is delightful to himself, good; and that *evil* which *displeaseth* him."³

The problem of evil, thus considered, arises from the fact that, when the forces of nature impinge upon man, consequences unpleasant to himself frequently follow. King Canute, seated on his throne at the water's edge, commanding the flowing tide to ebb, succeeded only in getting his feet wet. The boy who stood on the burning deck did not live to tell the tale; whilst we all know the very sad fate that befell the young lady of Niger who went for a ride on a tiger. Moreover, when the established moral order is disturbed we have what Aquinas describes as "the evil of wrongdoing." Then the suffering which the disturbance entails has the nature of a penalty, and is therefore described as "the evil of punishment." One of the earliest lessons we learn is that if we violate the order of Nature, some one, usually oneself, must suffer.

Just as there is a physical order governing the mutual interaction of the forces of Nature, so, too, there is a moral order, a normative system of conduct resulting from the harmonious balancing of such impinging regulative ideas as justice and mercy, truth and humility, or, in the Aristotelian ethic, of such extremes as cowardice and rashness, prodigality and meanness.

It is universally admitted that there is a moral order, though there are wide differences as to its nature, ranging from the independent morality of Kant to the utilitarianism of Mill. However,

¹ Luke xviii 19.

² *The Metaphysics of the School*, by Thomas Harper, S.J., vol. i, p. 541.

³ *Human Nature*, chap. vii.

in any system of ethics, an infringement of the accepted order is regarded as moral evil, the evil of wrong-doing, and it carries with it, in some way, the evil of punishment.

Now the Church has condemned the distinction between philosophical and theological sin, between an offence against one's rational nature and against God, as erroneous, rash, scandalous, and offensive to pious ears.¹ The teaching of Catholic theologians is that a morally bad act which violates the order of natural reason necessarily violates also the divine law. For, says Billot, "the dictate of conscience, essentially and from the very nature of the case, involves knowledge of the divine law as the source of moral obligation, and consequently it is metaphysically repugnant that a man who does not know God, or who does not advert to his law, at least in a general way, should have any consciousness of a morally bad act."² Actually and in practice there is no such thing as a purely philosophical sin which is not also theologically a sin. Where there is consciousness of a morally bad act there is consciousness of the transgression of the law of God. "The strength of sin is the law," says St Paul.³

The point is of great importance in considering the workings of divine providence, for it means that moral evil is always something which runs counter to the will of God. Consequently, that God should permit moral evil at all seems incongruous, and constitutes a special difficulty which we shall consider presently. Again, if moral evil is always an offence against God, and not merely against oneself, we begin to see the reasonableness of retributive, and not merely corrective, punishment for sin. By moral evil, then, we mean sin, which is defined by Billot, following St Thomas, as "a human act deprived of its due rectitude,"⁴ its due rectitude comprising conformity with right reason and with the law of God.

We may classify evil, then, as physical, moral, and retributive. So far, in considering the nature of evil and its classification, we encounter no great difficulty; but as soon as we enquire into the *origin* of evil, and seek to find the cause, or it may be the culprit, responsible for it, we are wellnigh deafened by the din of contending parties.

3. *The Origin of Evil*

1. Dualism is the earliest method of accounting for the existence of evil. In this system all things are classified as good or evil, and then traced along distinct lines to separate ultimate sources. Thus in Zoroastrianism, which flourished in the sixth century B.C., all good proceeds from Ormuzd, the infinite light and supreme wisdom, whilst all evil comes from Ahriman, the principle of darkness. We find the same dualistic conception in Manicheism,

¹ Denzinger, 1290.

² 1 Cor. xv 56.

³ *De Peccato*, p. 27.

⁴ *De Peccato*, p. 19.

in which the Father of Grandeur was held to preside over the realm of light, and the Father of Darkness over the realm of gloom. Each was supreme in his own domain.

In this way the problem of evil was dramatised, but not really faced. However, dualism escaped the necessity of attributing evil in any way to the god of light and goodness, and its convenient shelving of the problem of evil is held to have been one of the causes of the rapid spread of Manicheism in the third century of the Christian era. The advance of exact philosophical thought dealt a deathblow to all such fantastic theories of the origin of the world. Cultivated reason recognised the absurdity of the crude conception of two infinities. From the mere fact that each must have something that the other has not got, in order to differentiate them, it was recognised that one must be limited, and therefore itself to be accounted for. Hence the dualistic theory as to the origin of the universe, since it did not account for the origin, was abandoned.

2. But the abandonment of dualism does not necessarily imply *Pre-existence of souls* the acceptance of a monistic origin of the universe. Between the two there is a pluralism which postulates a number of distinct and independent sources of being, variously described as souls, selves, or monads. No one of these is infinite. Each is struggling for fuller realisation and greater perfection throughout many successive existences. Consequently, pluralism is enabled to fall back on the theory of the pre-existence of souls when confronted with the problem of evil. The champions of pluralism never tire of telling us that they are free from the necessity of attributing evil, in any way whatsoever, to God. It is not he who originates evil propensities in the human soul, they say; these propensities are merely the result of misdemeanours in previous existences. The soul that suffers from physical or moral evil in this life is being purged of the delinquencies committed in an unremembered, but lurid, previous life.

So far, so good. But, for one difficulty which the theory of pre-existence removes, it creates a dozen others. Are we to suppose that, at the end of each terrestrial existence, the human soul is detained in a sort of vacuum till it can be born into a suitable body, as a member of just the right family, in all the appropriate circumstances for its future development, and for its adequate punishment on account of previous misdemeanours? And what is the use or meaning of it all, when the soul, in each successive existence, is blissfully unconscious of its pre-natal good or bad deeds? The best that can be said for metempsychosis, or the transmigration of the soul from one body to another, is that, like many another fantasy, it is incapable of philosophical disproof; surely no great merit in the entire absence of any positive evidence for such an elaborate attempt to render an all-ruling providence unnecessary.

On philosophical grounds alone most consistent thinkers have

been driven into some form of monism, in the sense of a system which seeks for the origin of the universe and all that it contains, in a single principle. And at once the difficulty presents itself, that to that single principle, in some way, all evil must be traceable. This embarrassment is deftly evaded by those monists who regard the ultimate principle as impersonal being; but it will be found on examination that the non-theistic solutions to the problem of evil offered by materialists, idealists, and agnostics alike, are in reality merely restatements of the problem in esoteric terms. It is the old device of solving one difficulty by making another. Impersonal being, which is absolute, or unrelated, or unconditioned, or unknown, explains nothing, for the simple reason that it, above all else, stands in urgent need of explanation itself. To assign impersonal being as the cause of personal being is about as satisfactory as expecting water to rise above its own level.

4. *Attempts to Dispense with Providence*

(a) *Pessimism*

As typical of modern methods of handling the problem of evil whilst dispensing with God and his providence, and at the same time as affording an excellent approach to our own theistic standpoint, we may consider briefly the rival practical solutions of modern pessimism and optimism.

Pessimism in its origin is neither Western nor modern. It was cradled in the East, long even before the days of Buddha, who first raised it to the dignity of a doctrine. "The thirst for being," says Buddha, "is the origin of suffering," and, moreover, there is no way of escape, but by ceasing to exist otherwise than in the impersonal state of Nirvana. Some three hundred years before Christ, the Greek philosopher Hegesias enunciated a proposition which has since become the fulcrum of elaborated systems of pessimism, the proposition that the sum-total of the pains of life outweighs its pleasures. Nor did he shrink from the practical consequences of his philosophy; he openly advocated suicide as the only gateway of escape from the evils of life, till Ptolemy ordered his school to be closed in the interest of public morals.

What subtle connection there may be between poets and pessimism we leave to others to determine, but we have it on the authority of a poet that "our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought"; and, certainly, Heine, Leopardi, Byron, to say nothing of lesser bards, gave a message of persistent pessimism to modern Europe.

Schopenhauer But pessimism, as a metaphysical system, is the product of the modern German mind. It owes its origin to Schopenhauer¹ and its development to von Hartmann and Mailaender. During the

¹ A.D. 1770-1838.

first half of the nineteenth century Schopenhauer worked up and systematised the material which he had collected from Hindu religions and contemporary poets, and presented the world with the first attempt at a rational philosophy of pessimism.

Man he regarded as the outcome of a cruel cosmic process. Man alone is capable of fully appreciating the evils and miseries of life. More than that, man himself necessarily adds to them. The will-to-live, the primal instinct of life, is the eternal driving force at the back of all human activity. Because man wills to live under better conditions than his fellows, he becomes sober, chaste, honest; he finds it his best policy to be so. Hence all the natural virtues are directly traceable to this primal will-to-live.

But this same will-to-live is responsible also for the evils of life. It is precisely man's will-to-live, to live under the most advantageous conditions possible, that produces deceitfulness, dishonesty, hypocrisy, murder; in fact, the whole category of the vices. Good and evil alike are traceable to this will-to-live. But in Schopenhauer's contention the evil of life far outweighs the good, its pains outweigh its pleasures. The balance is all on the side of pain, of evil. It is the worst of all possible worlds.

Happiness is impossible until the cause of the evil, the will-to-live, is willed out of existence. The logical deduction from Schopenhauer's premises would be to abolish the will-to-live by the voluntary surrender of individual existence. Such, however, is not the conclusion of Schopenhauer. He rejects suicide, not as being in any way criminal, but merely as not solving the problem. "He who commits suicide," said Schopenhauer, "destroys the individual only, and not the species." The species is kept in existence by generation. It is generation that must cease. Men and women must cease to propagate their kind. Let the whole human race die out: therein lies the solution of pessimism, in the gospel of blind renunciation and abject despair. There will be an end of evil only when, as Swinburne has it, "this old earth will be a slag and a cinder, revolving round the sun without its crew of fools."

(b) *Optimism*

In opposition to pessimism we have optimism. I do not mean the fallacious metaphysical optimism of Leibniz, who pronounced this to be the best of all possible worlds, on the abstract principle that there is a sufficient reason for saying so, in that the work of an infinitely perfect Creator must be perfect, not merely for its purposes, but, apparently, in its possibilities. Still less am I alluding to the roseate optimism of Hammerling and Pangloss, who seem to have enjoyed habitually the kind of generous outlook on life which most people experience only after a good dinner. Such views made Schopenhauer forget his manners and say: "I cannot here

avoid the statement that to me *optimism*, when it is not merely the thoughtless talk of such as harbour nothing but words under their low foreheads, appears not merely as an absurd, but also as a really wicked way of thinking, as a bitter mockery of the unspeakable suffering of humanity.”¹

Nietzsche

I am speaking now of that philosophical system which, in direct opposition to the pessimism of Schopenhauer, hopes ultimately to stamp out altogether the evil which afflicts man: the optimism of Friedrich Nietzsche.² He tells us that from his earliest years the problem of evil haunted him, until one day he came across a copy of Schopenhauer's work, *The World as Will and Idea*. It enthralled him. Here at last was someone actually giving expression to the doubts and difficulties which had long surged in his own youthful mind. Here was someone who had an answer to offer. Nietzsche caught the infection of Schopenhauer's enthusiasm only to realise in calmer moments that he was not satisfied with the latter's anæmic answer, and he himself determined “to blaze a new path.”

It is not so much life, as power, that man craves, contended Nietzsche. Life without the power to dominate others in some way would be a feeble thing, and therefore the real primal instinct of man is the will-to-power.

He agreed with Schopenhauer that life at best is but a melancholy adventure, but he would have none of Schopenhauer's renunciation. He set out to become the prophet of defiance.

He impeaches Christianity with being a “slave morality,” with preaching an ethic fit only for slaves, an ethic which extols mean qualities, such as obedience, humility, and chastity. Away with it all, says Nietzsche; let us have a “master morality,” a morality fit for the lords of creation, who will do exactly as they please, guided only by the prudent caution of selfishness. “The weak must go to the wall,” says Nietzsche, “and we must help them to go.” Only the strong shall survive. In the course of this process, continued through centuries, there will evolve the “superman” who will ruthlessly trample out of existence any evil that may threaten his own happiness.

Such is the solution to the problem of evil offered by optimism. It is, if possible, a worse solution than that of pessimism. For where it touches the problem at all, it is only to widen it, by giving us more evils to account for, as witness the results of the Great War, which was assuredly brought about by the principles of “master morality.”

¹ *The World as Will and Idea*, vol. i, p. 420.

² A.D. 1844-1900.

§ V: THEISM AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

I. *The Fall and its Consequences*

BETWEEN these pagan extremes of pessimism and optimism which are reflected in the practical lives of so many men of the world to-day, there is the time-honoured answer of theism, at its best and fullest as expounded in Catholic theology; an answer which at least has made life liveable for countless thousands.

Both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were of the earth earthy; *Evil seen from God's standpoint* they never raised their eyes above the earth, never could. "Cease to look beyond the stars for your hopes and rewards," says Nietzsche. With their eyes fixed upon the earth, they sought to solve an eternal problem. Hence the dismal failure of both pessimist and optimist. The solution is not on the earth. It is precisely "beyond the stars" that man must look if he is even to understand the problem. From this earth we have not the point of view necessary to see evil as it really is in itself. We see it in so far as it affects us at the present moment. From a different point of view we would see it in a totally different light.

A beetle standing on a mole-hill regards every tiny speck of earth as a mountain, a huge obstacle to be surmounted. But a man standing alongside, with an enlarged vision of the whole country, sees the speck of earth in its true perspective. The beetle is too close to that speck of earth, too much harassed by it, to see it as it really is in itself. So, too, is it with us. We are like beetles on a mole-hill, too much taken up with the obstacle in our path to see it otherwise than as an obstacle.

A child regards many things as evil which in later life he recognises as having been good. From the point of view of the child it is evil that he must go to school, must obey his parents; but from the point of view of the grown man it is good that he was made to go to school, made to obey. He is so convinced of it that he insists on his own children going through the same discipline.

From our point of view, evils, very real evils, surround us on every side. But there is another point of view: there is the point of view of the Creator who called all things into being and who watches over them. How the evils appear from that point of view we know not at present. And yet that is the only point of view that really matters; the only point of view from which evil can be seen in its true character and in all its bearings. "For who among men is he that can know the counsel of God? or who can think what the will of God is?"¹

But even with our present limited vision we can discern the wisdom of the workings of divine providence, and see at all events that man is largely the architect of his own misfortunes. A slight

¹ Wisd. ix 13.

taste of philosophy, says Bacon, may dispose the mind to be indifferent to the things of religion, but deeper draughts must bring it back to God; and, we may add, to the realisation that "he hath made all things good in their time, and hath delivered the world to their (men's) consideration, so that man cannot find out the work which God hath made from the beginning to the end."¹

God does not directly cause evil

In the first place, from the metaphysical standpoint, it is obvious that God cannot be the direct cause of evil. We have seen that evil is not a thing in itself, that it is not positive being, but something privative. It cannot, therefore, be the object, or the term, of a positive creative act. The result of such an act must necessarily be positive being as such. Just as the sun in the heavens gives light, whilst the shadow on the ground, the absence of light, is caused by the intervention of some obstacle, such as a tree, blocking out the rays of light; so the infinitely good God is the direct cause of things which are good, though these are able incidentally to do harm to others. And hence the contention of the second-century heretics, the Florinians, and the kindred view of some of the Novatians, that God created things in themselves evil and was the author of sin, came to be abandoned on purely philosophical grounds.

Again, it is clear that God does not directly intend evil as such. In fact, no rational being can desire evil if it be apprehended merely as evil. Whatever evil a man may desire, he does not desire it except under some aspect of good. The drunkard is seeking to drown his sorrows, to while away time, or to produce a feeling of exhilaration; the libertine is seeking pleasure; the murderer is seeking in some way to make smooth his own path in life. All men are seeking happiness, though oftentimes they are much mistaken as to what is happiness. Now God, the infinite intelligence, cannot mistakenly apprehend evil as good; he must needs apprehend it as it is, as evil; and therefore he cannot positively or directly will it or intend it; that is, will it or intend it under its formal aspect of evil.

Nevertheless he can intend and cause physical evil as part of the order of his providence, not precisely as evil, but as implied in the more general good, or the good of the whole order, or the good of man. Death, we are told, entered into the world by sin, and the death of man is intended by God, not as an affliction, but as a punishment for sin. "For God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living," says the author of the Book of Wisdom.² Again, in the book of Ecclesiasticus, we read: "Fire, hail, famine, and death, all these were created for vengeance";³ that is to say, they are intended by God as punishments for sin, and only under that aspect does he desire them.

God made not death. For, says St Paul, "by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon

¹ Eccles. iii 11.

² i 13.

³ xxxix 35.

Man's original perfection

all men, in whom all have sinned.”¹ The Christian revelation teaches that Adam was created, not in a state of pure nature, but in what is called the state of original justice; that is to say, from the beginning his soul was endowed gratuitously by God with habitual or sanctifying grace, which raised him to a plane altogether beyond the human. Man by nature tends to God as his last end, as the creature tends to the Creator; but sanctifying grace made him a partaker of the divine nature, and gave to him a supernatural end, namely, to see God as he is, face to face, and ultimately to be united to him as to an all-loving Father. Furthermore, man was enriched with certain preternatural gifts, that is, with gifts which did not altogether transcend his nature, but nevertheless were not essential to it. Thus, he was free from the dread of suffering and death, captain of his own soul, with his intellect unclouded and his will untrammelled by the motions of concupiscence.

Adam fell from that high estate, and fell as head of the race. *The Fall* Human nature in its entirety was represented in him, and in his fall we all fell. In consequence human souls, at their coming into being, are deprived of the sanctifying grace which they would have had if Adam had not sinned. With this deprivation of grace, technically known as original sin, went concurrently the loss of the soul's supernatural qualities, capacities, and rights. By his fall Adam and his descendants forfeited also the preternatural gifts of impassibility, felicity, and immortality of body, whereby he had been exempt from physical suffering, mental worry, and the dissolution of soul and body. Hence, says St Paul, “by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death.”

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has redeemed us from the *Redemption* bondage of sin, and restored us to the supernatural order, but there remain with us certain effects and evidences of the fall. The preternatural gifts of Adam have not been restored to us, and man is, as it were, wounded both in the clarity of his intellect and the strength of his will. Consequently, much of the physical suffering endured by man is traceable to the representative sin of Adam, and some of it to the actual sins of ourselves and others. Sin is the root of human suffering.

But though Christ has not merited for us a restoration of the preternatural gifts of Adam, he has made it possible for us to make ignorance, concupiscence, and the physical pains and penalties of sin the occasions of supernatural satisfaction and merit. On this point St Ephraem says: “Man inflicts chastisement in order that he himself may derive some utility therefrom. He inflicts punishment on his servants in order that he may be master of them; but the good God chastises his servants in order that they may be masters of themselves.”² Furthermore, the disabilities of human

¹ Rom. v 12.

² *Carmina Nisib.*, Ed. Bickell, 1866, p. 70.

nature which issue in death are at least salutary reminders that "we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come."¹

Clearly, then, the ills that human flesh is heir to may become instruments of divine providence in making us "conformable to the image of his Son,"² so that, having suffered with him, we may be also glorified with him.³

2. Providence and Sin

With regard to moral evil, in its theological aspect sin, the Council of Trent has solemnly pronounced: "If anyone says . . . that God works evil as he works good, not merely permissively, but properly and for its own sake, so that the betrayal of Judas is the proper work of God just as much as the calling of Paul, let him be anathema."⁴ There is abundant scriptural testimony on this point. Thus says the Psalmist, "Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity";⁵ and the prophet Habacuc declares, "Thy eyes are too pure to behold evil, and thou canst not look on iniquity";⁶ whilst in the New Testament we read, "Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God. For God is not a tempter of evils, and he tempteth no man."⁷ In fact, as we have seen, a special difficulty arises with regard to the divine permission of moral evil, in that it can be perpetrated only by a rational being rising in revolt against the will of God; so that moral evil would appear to be, in its very essence, a thwarting of the divine will which is said to govern the universe.

He permits it

Yet that God permits sin follows from the fact of his all-ruling providence. Nothing can happen apart from the will of God, that is, apart from either his positive sanction in the case of morally good actions, or his permissive tolerance in the case of morally bad ones. God permits moral evil in the sense that he does not impede it, though he prohibits it by his law. We can see several reasons for this negative permission.

In the first place, God is self-sufficient and altogether independent of the work of his hands. But, so far from being independent of creatures, he would be limited in his operations by the malice of human beings if he were constrained to prevent moral iniquity; or, as some modern philosophers have not hesitated to say, he would be more or less perfect in proportion as he did prevent it. He would be a kind of limited progressive deity instead of the "Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come."⁸

In the second place, it is the function of providence to preserve, and not to destroy, the nature of the thing that is governed. In the present actual order, whatever may be said of possible orders,

¹ Heb. xiii 14.

⁴ Sess. vi, c. 6.

⁷ Jas. i 13.

² Rom. viii 29.

⁵ Ps. v 7.

⁸ Apoc. iv 8.

³ Rom. viii 17.

⁶ i 13.

liberty of choice, even between good and evil, is of the nature of the freedom of the rational creature, and because of this very freedom it must needs be that scandals come.

Thirdly, from the beneficent comparison of good with evil, the morally good is rendered more desirable, just as the brightness of the stars is the more appreciated on account of the darkness of the night. In much the same way, the iniquity of man forms a background for the better manifestation of some of the divine attributes. Who does not see in the divine tolerance of sin the evidence of the boundless mercy and forbearance of God, "patient because he is eternal" ?

Finally, it does not pertain to divine providence to bring about the total exclusion of evil from the universe, but to order to some good end whatever evils may betide. In fact, St Augustine lays it down as a principle that God would not permit evil were it not for the consequent good. He says: "For the almighty God, who, as even the heathen acknowledge, has supreme power over all things, being himself supremely good, would never permit the existence of anything evil among his works, if he were not so omnipotent and good that he can bring good even out of evil."¹ The good which may appear to us to be only incidental to the permission of moral evil is in reality a constituent, and a very necessary constituent, of the order of divine providence. God permits moral evil in one case, in order that greater moral good may obtain in another. Thus, St Thomas points out, the wickedness of Nero led to the gaining of many martyrs' crowns.

Now it is obvious that he who perpetrates moral iniquity places himself on the level of the lower order of things which subserve to man's higher good. The sinner by the irrationality of his actions degrades himself to the plane of irrational beings, so that his evil actions become merely the means of bringing about greater good to other men. In this respect the sinner insists, as it were, on ranging himself, not with men, but with the brutes. But assuredly in some way goodness is begotten of his wickedness. It is precisely in the fact that out of moral evil comes greater good that we are to look for the basic reason of the divine tolerance of sin.

§ VI: SPECIAL DIFFICULTIES AGAINST DIVINE PROVIDENCE

1. *The Prosperity of the wicked*

THAT God should allow the wicked to prosper and the just to be afflicted with calamities is considered by many men to be a special grievance against divine providence. And yet this difficulty was faced and answered in pagan times. Seneca begins his treatise

¹ *Enchiridion*, c. xi.

De Providentia with the old perplexing question: Why, if there be a providence, are good men buffeted by misfortune, whilst the baser sort go free? And the Stoic philosopher answers in a vein which has won for him the title of the Bossuet of Imperial Rome. After pointing out the difference between maternal indulgence and paternal discipline towards children, he goes on to say that God in his great love for good men exercises towards them a measure of paternal discipline in permitting them to be assailed by adversity. In the school of adversity they are trained to spiritual hardihood. Do you marvel, he asks, that God, who so loves these men, and wishes them to attain to the best and the highest, should permit them to be so severely tried by ill-fortune? For my part, I do not marvel, says this pagan writer, for the spectacle of noble men successfully combating evil is one worthy of the regard of the deity.¹

It is too hastily assumed that the just receive more than their fair share of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. That pessimistic contention is by no means supported by facts. Famine, pestilence, and war are no respecters of persons, and are as likely to mow down the impious as the just. The available evidence tends to show that both good and evil fortune are distributed indiscriminately to the godly and the ungodly. As the Scripture has it, your Father who is in heaven "maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust."² What happens is that our attention is more easily arrested by the sufferings of the just, since instinctively we feel that the unjust are meeting only with their deserts. But, as Seneca insists, all suffering is not in the nature of punishment; it has its disciplinary and formative value.

Again, our calculus of pleasure and pain is a very defective one. It estimates only the things that appeal to the senses, and registers nothing of the just man's peace of soul amidst all his afflictions. This point, too, was grasped by the ancients. In answer to the question, Why do many adversities befall good men? Seneca answers: No real evil can take up its abode with a good man, for contraries do not mix. Just as no raging torrents, nor storms of hail, nor the rush of many waters into the sea, can take away or appreciably lessen its salt savour, so the flood-tide of adversity cannot perturb the soul of the just man. Immovable he stands, making all things subservient to himself, stronger within than all else without.³

If this could be said of the honest pagan, what shall we say of the Christian who has in his soul the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? His is the peace that passeth all understanding. He may be called upon to spend his life in poverty and, worse still, to see his loved ones bereft of the good things of this world; but, after all, it was not the great God of eternal truth who, pointing to all the glories and splendours of the world, said, "All these will

¹ *De Providentia*, c. 2.

² Matt. v 45.

³ *Op. cit.*

I give thee, if thou dost fall down and adore"; that was said by the devil, the father of lies. Or, it may be that we mourn the loss of one cut off in the flower of his age, by what is called an untimely death; listen to the inspired words of the wisest of men: "The just man, if he be prevented with death, shall be in rest. . . . He pleased God and was beloved, and living among sinners he was translated. He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul. For the bewitching of vanity obscureth good things, and the wandering of concupiscence overturneth the innocent mind. Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time: for his soul pleased God. Therefore he hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities: but the people see this, and understand not, nor lay up such things in their hearts: that the grace of God and his mercy is with his saints, and that he hath respect to his chosen." ¹

It was Rousseau who said that if he had no other argument for personal immortality than the prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the just in this life, it would be more than sufficient to convince him. Instinctively we feel that there is a life beyond the grave where the balance is adjusted. David confesses that he was sorely puzzled by the prosperity of the wicked till the Lord revealed to him their end. "I studied that I might know this thing, it is a labour in my sight," says the Psalmist, "until I go into the sanctuary of God, and understand concerning their last ends. But indeed for deceits thou hast put it to them: when they were lifted up thou hast cast them down. How are they brought to desolation? They have suddenly ceased to be: they have perished by reason of their iniquity." ² Truly their prosperity is purchased at a great price. At best it is short-lived, for the day of reckoning fast approaches. We may take leave of this perplexing problem with the profound reflection set forth in the book of Ecclesiastes: "I saw under the sun in the place of judgement wickedness, and in the place of justice iniquity. And I said in my heart: God shall judge both the just and the wicked, and then shall be the time of everything." ³

2. *God's Tolerance of Evil*

But, it is contended, God does more than merely permit the evil to exist; being omniscient, he must necessarily foresee the evil, and to foresee an evil which you can prevent and yet remain passive is in reality the same as positively to will it. We answer that the result may be the same, but that there is a world of difference between positively intending to do evil and merely allowing a natural chain of causes to produce its proper effect, even though that effect may be evil, not merely in the physical, but in the moral sense.

¹ Wisd. iv 7-15.

² Ps. lxxii 16-19.

³ iii 16, 17.

Suppose, for instance, that an employer decides to give a bonus of ten shillings to each of his employees; and suppose further that he knows, not indeed with infallible certainty, but with a very high degree of probability, that one of his employees, X, will misspend the money in drink. Nevertheless, he gives the bonus to X, because X is one of his employees. X, having inherited a severe thirst and developed it by practice, does spend the money in drink, and through failure to report for work next morning is summarily dismissed. Whose fault is it that X is dismissed? Is it the employer's because he gave X a good gift which might have been put to an excellent purpose? Surely the culpability rests entirely with X, who abused the gift.

Similarly, God gives to each of us a good gift, the priceless gift of freedom. He knows, even with infallible certainty, whether I will choose good or evil. That infallible foreknowledge no more interferes with my real freedom than the conjectural knowledge of the employer interfered with the free action of the employee. If I am really free, as my consciousness testifies, I must in honesty place the culpability for an evil choice where it really lies: with myself. Having established a definite order in the universe, it is God's intention that that order shall take its course. It would be utterly unreasonable to expect special interventions of divine providence to avert natural consequences in the physical or moral order because they are unpleasant to man.

Predestination

At this point difficulties arise on the score that God positively predestines some men to glory, and permissively reprobates others. We have already formulated the general principles underlying the permissive action of God in allowing such evil as the damnation of the wicked. The reconciliation of the efficaciousness of divine grace, on the one hand, and the freedom of man, on the other, is a question which does not immediately concern us here.

St Thomas Aquinas keeps the question of predestination distinct from that of providence, pointing out that these questions differ in two important respects. In the first place, providence is concerned with the universal ordering of all things, whether rational or irrational, good or evil, to an end; whereas predestination is concerned only with that end which is the principal one of the rational creature, namely, the attainment of eternal glory. The term predestination, then, applies only to men's salvation. In the second place, since not everything that is ordered to an end attains that end, there is a manifest distinction between the ordering and the attainment. Providence is concerned only with the ordering, and consequently by divine providence all men are as a matter of fact ordained to happiness; but predestination is concerned with the outcome, or the issue, of the ordering, and therefore is restricted to those who actually do attain to heaven. Predestination fulfils the same function with regard to the attainment of the end that

providence does with regard to the imposition of that end, for the fact that some men do attain to the Beatific Vision is not principally through their own powers, but by the aid of grace divinely bestowed.¹

In the view of St Thomas, then, the problems of predestination pertain to a different order from that of divine providence. Such problems must be considered apart in the light of the workings of divine grace, and consequently lie outside the scope of this short essay. For a concise exposition of Catholic teaching on the subject of predestination we refer the reader to Essay XVII of this same work.²

Apart altogether from all questions as to the operation of divine grace, the further objection is raised that if God foresaw, even though he did not positively forewill, the damnation of the wicked, nevertheless, as an infinitely good God, he ought to have abstained from creating such souls. A little reflection, however, makes it clear that if God could be influenced in that way by a condition outside himself, the condition would be greater than he; he would be limited, constrained from without, and therefore not infinite, and not God. It would be as though the damned soul, whilst still only a mere possibility, could defy the Omnipotent to create it.

As we have seen, God must of necessity do his own will. This necessity is part of his very perfection, just as it is part of his perfection that he cannot sin. He might, of course, have created a world of intelligent beings in which there would have been no sorrow, sin, or suffering. Why he selected this world rather than innumerable other worlds without, at least, moral evil, we do not know, nor can we know till we attain to the Beatific Vision. And yet we have some inkling of God's providential purpose in his choice of this world. A world without sin would be a world without our present freedom, and a world without this freedom would be a world without love or, at all events, without the freely given love of the creature. When a doctor of the law asked, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment."³ For the free rational creature is capable of giving to God a homage which transcends that of every other conceivable work of his hands. And it is precisely this freedom, this perilous gift, which may be so easily abused, which imparts to man's actions their supreme glory or their supreme shame. It is the noblest natural gift of God to man, so prized that Dryden has said of it:

"And life itself th' inferior gift of heaven."

It is the love of the free creature, engaging every faculty of the rational soul, that the God of love desires. Love seeks to be

¹ See *De Veritate*, q. vi, a. 1 in corp.

² *Actual Grace*, pp. 610-612, 619-620.

³ *Matt. xxii 37.*

required, and it is written, "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son. . . ."

3. *Eternal Punishment*

But, it is urged, the infinite love of an all-provident God is not compatible with the doctrine of eternal punishment. As this difficulty is dealt with fully elsewhere in this work,¹ it will be sufficient here to indicate the main points in our reply.

1. The sin that consigns to hell is the deliberate uprising of the creature against the Creator, an act of malice perpetrated with full deliberation and free consent. God could no more pardon an unrepentant sinner than an earthly king could pardon an unrepentant traitor.

2. The eternity of hell is, as it were, a corollary to the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul. The soul of man, of its own nature, is immortal: that is to say, it does not in its essence involve any principle of corruption; it cannot lose its individuality, as material things do, by the dissolution of its own parts, or of the parts of any composite substance on which it depends for existence. Thus, a wall ceases to be a wall when its bricks are scattered, and the colours of a soap bubble vanish when the bubble bursts. Not so the human soul. Of its own nature it tends to continue in being, in full conscious individuality, and we know from revelation that it is not God's intention ever to annihilate it.

If, then, a human soul leaves the body in a state of separation from God, it continues eternally in that state, because of its own natural immortality. It is not as though God specially endowed the soul with immortality in order to punish it for ever; that conceivably might be regarded as the action of a fiend. But such is far from being the case. Man here and now is abundantly conscious of his personal immortality, and of the eternal destiny of happiness or misery that lies before him at his choice.

Conclusion

Life and death are full of mysteries. "All things are hard: man cannot explain them," says Ecclesiastes.² But the fact that man cannot explain them does not mean that there is no explanation. It is an axiom of scientific method that unexplained facts are not to be taken as running counter to established principles. It would be execrably unscientific to suggest that, because certain unexplained facts seem to militate against an established principle, the principle should be called in question, or perhaps even abandoned. Obviously, an explanation must be sought which is in harmony with the known law. So, too, however perplexed we may be at the complicated evils of life, neither our perplexity, nor the evils themselves,

¹ See pp. 1200 ff.

² i 8.

constitute an argument against the already established providence of God.

Suppose, for instance, that a prisoner is on trial for his life. Day after day you read the evidence against him; day after day it gets blacker, till you can have no reasonable doubt but that he is guilty of the crime. However, we will suppose further that, on the last day of the trial, he successfully proves an alibi. He was not there when the murder was committed, and so he cannot possibly be guilty of the crime. Nevertheless, all the circumstantial evidence is dead against him, and not the ablest lawyer in all the land can unravel its tangled skein. Fortunately for the prisoner it is not necessary to do so, since his innocence is established beyond rebuttal.

So it is with the evils which seem to cry out against the providence of God. We know, can prove, that there is an infinitely good God, who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth while he keepeth Israel.¹ The fact that we cannot smooth out all the evils of life to fit in to our satisfaction, and harmonise perfectly with the providence of God, is no argument against that providence, any more than our inability to explain away the evidence against the prisoner proves him guilty of the crime. It is a convincing proof that man's intelligence is very limited, and beyond that it proves nothing. "Only this I have found," says Solomon, "that God made man right, and he hath entangled himself with an infinity of questions. Who is as the wise man? and who hath known the resolution of the word?"²

Though the problem of evil remain, to man on this earth, for ever inscrutable, the providence of God shines forth like the gleam of the gold or the flash of the diamond, even from out the wastage and the wreckage wrought by man. Notwithstanding the evils which do abound on every side, and which do afflict us, every healthy-minded man and woman is forced to see that the mighty universe simply teems with the evidences of the infinitely good God who has called it into being, not for our satisfaction, but for his own greater honour and glory.

RICHARD DOWNEY.

¹ Ps. cxx 4.

² Eccles. vii 30.

VIII

THE ANGELS

§ I: TRADITIONAL ANGELIC NATURE

THERE is in every treatment of Catholic thought, unless it be a rigidly technical treatise, that happy mixture of the certain, the extremely probable, and the moderately probable which constitutes a real philosophy, where conservatism and liberalism are congenially blended. Thus in the pages which follow all the things written down are not matters of faith, nor would it be possible in a short essay of this kind to affix a proper theological note to every proposition, distinguishing what is strictly of faith from the conclusions and happy inspirations of minds fond of the things of God; but much edification and instruction can be derived from the sayings of theologians and preachers which are not *de fide*, but rather the legitimate speculations of minds habitually attuned to revealed truth.

*Angelology
in Scripture*

Our first authority on the history of the angels, their lives and their natures, is found in Holy Scripture. There is a great oneness in the presentment of angelic character in the various books of the Bible, from Genesis to Apocalypse; the angelic type never alters, we may even venture to say that it never develops as the divine revelation in other matters goes on and gains momentum from century to century; what the angels do at Bethel they do also in the days of Christ, they "ascend and descend upon the Son of man."¹ Cherubim with "a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life"² are visions as formidable as any angelophany in Ezechiel or the Apocalypse. There is not, therefore, in our angelology that progressive revelation of a mystery which is the characteristic of our Christology; the mystery of the God-man is revealed gradually to the minds of men; not so that of the angels; they are made completely manifest from the very beginning, and though, in the course of the centuries of the faith, angels show forth now one kind of activity now another, their essential behaviour is always the same. The fact is that our Scriptures never teach us anything about the spirits of the invisible world *ex professo*, they never narrate anything about them as a revelation of their mysterious existence; the inspired writers take them for granted and mention them only in connection with human history, the history of the people of God, and the history of Christ. Nothing is more casual and unexpected than the mention of angels in every portion of the Scriptures; you never know when to expect an angel; there is no set of events of which you could predict with certainty that they

¹ John i 51.

² Gen. iii 24.

would bring an angel from heaven to earth. The same thing which at one moment is done through angelic ministry, at another time is left in its natural setting. Our Scriptures, then, may be said to accept the angelic world as a complete, self-sufficient, unaccountable power, which cannot itself be altered by the course of human events, but which may influence them whenever it pleases. Nor do the Scriptures distinguish clearly at all times between angelic intervention and divine intervention; the heavenly visitant who is called "angel" passes at once into a rôle which is obviously divine. This is very remarkable in the oldest angelophany in the Bible—the angel whom we might call the angel of the family of Abraham; the heavenly messenger who spoke to Agar, the slave-wife of Abraham, is at the same time angel and Lord of life:

"And the angel of the Lord having found her (Agar), by a fountain of water in the wilderness, which is in the way to Sur in the desert, he said to her: Agar, handmaid of Sarai, whence comest thou? And whither goest thou? And she answered: I flee from the face of Sarai, my mistress. And the angel of the Lord said to her: Return to thy mistress, and humble thyself under her hand. And again he said: I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, and it shall not be numbered for multitude."¹

The clearest instance in Genesis of angelic, as distinct from divine, manifestation is perhaps the vision of Jacob:

"And he saw in his sleep a ladder standing upon the earth, and the top thereof touching heaven: the angels also of God ascending and descending by it; and the Lord, leaning upon the ladder, saying to him: I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. The land, wherein thou sleepest, I will give to thee and to thy seed."²

There is no mention of angels in the great period before the flood, nor are they described as ministering to Noe in his peril; the angelic ministry, as a ministry, begins with the history of the Jewish people. In the narrative of creation there is not the remotest mention of them, and that the evil spirit should be spoken of long before any other power of the unseen world shows clearly that the inspired writers never gave themselves any other task than the history of man and his vicissitudes. Spirits are not the theme of the Bible.

One might not unaptly compare the attitude of our Scriptures towards the spirits with their attitude towards those portions of the human race which are neither the Jewish nation itself nor the Christian Church. The peoples who are not the chosen race come frequently into contact with it, and are even meant to help the people of God in many ways; the scriptural allusions to them are therefore very valuable from the historical point of view, and we learn a good deal about the non-Jewish peoples from the Bible, though that book is in no sense a history of mankind at large. In a similar way the inspired historians and writers, whilst dealing

¹ Gen. xvi 7-10.

² Gen. xxviii 12, 13.

with man's supernatural career on earth, have revealed to us much of the unseen world, but only incidentally, and in so far as it concerns man's eternal welfare. We must bear in mind this relative position of our angelology in the Scriptures, and not expect more than fragments of angelic history; yet those fragments are precious and instructive in the extreme.

It would not serve the purpose of this essay to quote and explain all the various scriptural allusions to the spirits; every reader can perform this task for himself. Broadly speaking, we may divide the references of Holy Writ to the angels into four classes—the *historical*, the *liturgical*, the *theological*, and the *prophetic*.

By *historical* angelophany I mean all those assertions found in the Bible that spirits did a work, bore a message, or lent their help to humanity from the time of Agar to that of Peter in his prison. These activities are narrated as ordinary historical events, and they are never concerned with angels in their multitudes, but only with them as individual spirits.

Then there are the *liturgical* allusions to angelic presence in divine worship; the psalms abound in them, and the "sweet singer of Israel" professes to utter God's praises in the presence of the angels. The "multitude of the heavenly army praising God" at Christ's nativity may be considered under this heading.

As *theological* references those passages of the Scriptures may be quoted where the heavenly spirits are mentioned, not in connection with worship or missions, but as a portion of the supernatural world; as when Christ is said by St Paul to be raised up on God's right hand in heavenly places above all principality and power and virtue and dominion,¹ when the same Apostle says that the Christian man has "come to Mount Sion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels,"² or when Christ himself says that he will confess the name of his faithful witness before the angels of God,³ or that there is "joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance."⁴ The office of the guardian angels may also be considered as belonging to the theological aspect of angelology; the Scriptures reveal to us a side of the spiritual world which is more than a transient mission, in our Lord's words: "I say to you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven."⁵

The *prophetic* allusions are numerous in the Apocalypse where angels are described as doing great things in the mysterious future; but we have also some such prophetic references in the Gospels themselves, as, for instance, where Christ says that he will "send his angels and gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven."⁶

¹ Eph. i 21.

⁴ Luke xv 10.

² Heb. xii 22.

⁵ Matt. xviii 10.

³ Apoc. iii 5.

⁶ Mark xiii 27.

If we take the trouble to make for ourselves a complete collection of all the angelophanies of our Scriptures we shall easily gain an impression which might be called the traditional Christian sense concerning the angels. Their character, as I have already said, is clearly marked from the beginning and does not change; their readiness to do God's bidding is as great as their power to perform it; nothing can resist their will, and they never fail; they are always spoken of as being God's own, and at no time is there any fear as to their future. They carry out the commands of God with unflinching firmness when they are sent forth as the ministers of God's justice, and nothing diverts them from the course of apparent severity. They are standing in the fierceness of God's countenance, and yet the lowliest things of this earth are the objects of their attention, as when Raphael goes to the city of the Medes and finds Gabelus, giving him the note of hand and receiving from him all the money which was owed to Tobias.¹ The angels are never described as struggling with evil; it is always overcome by the sheer might of their presence. From the scriptural account of them we learn that they know neither temptation nor suffering. As we study them we are transplanted into a world entirely different from our own—a world where spiritual wealth is the rule, and where moral or mental destitution is unknown. It could not be said that through all the angelophanies of the Bible we learn anything personal about any one of the angels. There is certainly a variety of those spiritual personages in our Scriptures—some are more important than others, some fulfil missions which are not entrusted to others; but it could not be said that we learn much about these heavenly actors in the drama of the world, as we learn to love, to admire, to compassionate the human actors, like Moses or Elias or Paul, or, above all, like Christ himself. The angel who comes nearest to human sentiment is the angel who comforted Christ in his agony in the Garden: "And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed the longer."² But even in this instance how divinely anonymous the heavenly comforter has remained. All this confirms the truth of a remark already made, that the angels are not the principal theme of our Scriptures, but only an incidental one.

There is another most authentic source of information concerning angelic life, angelic power, and angelic character—the Church's worship, both in its sacramental and in its liturgical aspect. But there also we shall find the same features for which the Scriptures have prepared us, of spiritual aloofness on the one hand, and spiritual helpfulness on the other. The Church considers the spirits as her fellow-workers in the sanctification of the world, and her fellow-worshippers in the adoration of Christ. The Church's faith in the guardian angels is to be ranked differently; this is not

General characteristics of angels in Scripture

Angels in the Christian liturgy

¹ Tob. ix.

² Luke xxii 43.

so much an act of the Church as a dispensation of the Creator himself. What I mean here is this, that besides that universal guardianship of man by the angels—of which we shall speak later on—the Church makes use of the angels most freely in her sacramental and liturgical life. In her power of sanctifying visible things the Church seems to know no limit; she calls upon God to send the heavenly spirits and cause them to dwell in the place which she has blessed, to bid them guard the object she has sanctified, to make good the promise she herself has given of protection from the evil one. The *Rituale Romanum* is most instructive from this point of view. The great blessings of the Church, which are, after all, merely an extension of her sacramental power, are extremely bold in their use of angelic intervention. If the Church blesses a bridge over a river, she confidently expects that an angel will be deputed to the keeping of that bridge. The Church prays God to join his angel to the chariot on which her blessing has been bestowed. The angels are called down into the house of the sick, into the home of the newly wed, into the rooms where Christ's little ones are being taught their faith and their letters. There seems to be no end to those angelic possibilities in the sense of the Catholic Church. Everywhere the evil spirits are driven away, and the good spirits are made to take their place.

In the Liturgy, properly so called, the angels play a great rôle. They are present at the Eucharistic Sacrifice; one of the most mysterious and sacred prayers of the Canon of the Mass introduces an angel who has remained without a name throughout all the centuries during which the prayer has been recited:

“We most humbly beseech thee, Almighty God, to command that these things be borne by the hands of thy holy angel to thine altar on high, in the sight of thy divine Majesty, that so many of us as at this altar shall partake of and receive the most holy body and blood of thy Son may be filled with every heavenly blessing and grace.”

At the beginning of Mass, Michael is among those holy ones to whom we confess our sins. When incense is burned over the offerings on the altar the intercession of Michael, “who standeth on the right side of the altar of incense,” gives an additional aroma of sweetness to the burning perfumes. Then we have the glorious communion with the angels at every one of the Prefaces of the liturgical year:

“Through whom the angels praise thy Majesty, the dominions worship it, the powers are in awe. The heavens and the heavenly hosts, and the blessed seraphim join together in celebrating their joy. With these we pray thee join our own voices also, while we say with lowly praise: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts.”

Many other such evidences of the Church's faith in the presence of heavenly spirits round the Christian altar might be quoted from the Liturgies of the East and West. They are for us a very sure

guidance as to the nature of our participation in the comity of the invisible nations of spirits. We are as sure of their co-operation, of their love for us, of their knowledge of us, as we are ignorant of the details of that mysterious intercourse. It may certainly be said that the kind of spirituality which the Scriptures and the Church have made their own is a most healthy and most serene contribution to man's spiritual inheritance.

§ II: HISTORY OF ANGELIC CULT

If the spiritual character of the angels is well defined and clearly *In Scripture* marked in our Scriptures, the same thing could not be said of the way in which these mysterious beings are described for man's apprehension. There is no uniform way in the Bible of representing the angels. The most elaborate descriptions, such as the vision of the Seraphs by Isaias and the vision of the angel by Daniel, are completely baffling to the art of the painter. It is extremely difficult for us to visualise the scenes described so carefully by the prophets, as we are entirely without experience in such matters. The angels of the Resurrection and the Ascension are the most human presentments of the heavenly messengers: "And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man clothed with a white robe." ¹ "And while they were beholding him going up to heaven, behold two men stood by them in white garments." ²

The first point of interest, then, in the cult with which Christians have honoured the angels is precisely this attempt to make visible the unseen by giving a bodily form to the heavenly spirits. The earliest Christian representations of angels are concerned with the historic appearances, with those spirits who have fulfilled missions in the New Testament under definite names. Up to the fifth century no other angels are found represented in Christian art; and these are given the ordinary human form, with their names in such proximity that there can be no mistake about their identity, just as in the case of the apostles and martyrs. About the fifth century we begin to find mosaics, paintings, engravings of angels generally, without a clear historic reference, and the distinctive symbolic sign becomes prevalent, the wings attached to the bodily frame. There is quite a chapter of religious development implied in this progressive adoption of wings for the heavenly spirits by the Christian artists of the earlier centuries of our era. We have in Isaias the first mention of wings in connection with spirits:

"In the year that King Ozias died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated: and his train filled the temple. Upon it stood the seraphims: the one had six wings, and the other had six wings: with two they covered his face, and with two they covered his feet, and with two they flew." ³

¹ Mark xvi 5.

² Acts i 10.

³ Isa. vi 1, 2.

There is no clear evidence that the universal custom which has prevailed from Byzantine times of representing the angels with wings owes its origin to the vision of Isaias. The Seraphim as described by the great seer are one of the most difficult subjects to be materialised in art. The two-winged angels are a spontaneous creation of the Christian imagination which in this matter has followed the artistic tradition and intuition of the Western civilisations of earlier times. Nothing is more common in Greek and Roman art of the best periods than to give a pair of wings to a superhuman being. The divinity called Victory is invariably endowed with a glorious pair of wings, and so are innumerable genii. That Christian artists, of all shades of talent, should have pictured superhuman beings in the same way as that in which the pagans depicted them is no more astonishing than the circumstance of a hymn to Zeus being sung in melodies which are adapted to a Christian hymn, or of metres of pagan poetry being adopted by Catholic hymnologists. There are two instances of the classical art which have passed into the service of the angel worship which are especially striking. Genii or demi-gods are seen on ancient friezes and sarcophagi carrying the privileged ones of the human race to the ethereal spheres, and also weighing the souls of men in the scales of justice. In Christian art these two conceptions are commonplaces. Angels carry the elect to heaven, and angels weigh the souls of men in the final balances. The period of history when paganism was giving way finally to Christianity under the first Christian emperors is particularly interesting from this point of view. The Victory statues are often adorned with Christian symbols such as the Labarum, and genuine heathen medallions of Mercury have an entirely different signification when the word "Michael" is engraved upon them. Perhaps the owner of the art-treasure was loth to part with his gem, and had a Hermes Christianised into an archangel! ¹

From the sixth century onwards the angelic type is fixed. With the exception of the Seraphim of Isaias, who have always been the despair of draughtsmen, angels are given asexual lineaments of body and their garments flow in dignified folds. The alternative forms of winged heads are expressions of beauty which is neither masculine nor feminine.

It was reserved to the latest renaissances, the baroque and the rococo, to lower the majestic type of the best periods of Christian art. Can the name of "angel" still be given to that host of nude figures in plaster or marble which people the continental churches from one end of Europe to the other? It would be difficult to find any principle or justification underlying such handiwork on the part of Catholic craftsmen. The one reassuring thing about those periods of artistic extravagances is this, that at the very time when the artistic representation of the spiritual being was at its lowest,

¹ See *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne*, "Ange."

the theological schools of the Church produced some of the profoundest speculations on the nature and the might of the angels.

From the very nature of the case, acquaintance with the angelic world has not progressed as angelic art has progressed. We know of no more angels to-day than were known in the first century. Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael are the only authentic angelic names. In the first centuries there is often mentioned another angel, Uriel, even by the orthodox. He is invoked in some of the ancient litanies; he is supposed to be the spirit who stood at the gate of the lost Eden, with the fiery sword. But the trilogy of Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael stands nowadays without any competitors.

Superstition there has been in the cult of the angels. In the old Egyptian fashion an angel was supposed to be the Keeper of the Tomb, and to make it inviolable. The Gnostics had their own angelic mysteries. To know the true names of the "Seven who stand before God" was a talisman. St Paul alludes to the perversion of a great truth which had already begun: "Let no man seduce you, willing in humility and religion of angels,¹ walking in the things which he hath not seen, in vain puffed up by the sense of his flesh."²

The intellectual development of the angelic cult in the Church has far exceeded the liturgical and the artistic developments. If art has been once or twice on the point of making the angels vulgar, of turning them into pixies, theology, mystical and speculative, has more than compensated for such a lapse. Angels have become for the Christian thinker a sort of minor infinitude, with endless powers of mind and will.

The great classic of angelology is a work whose probable date is the second half of the fifth century, called the *Heavenly Hierarchy*. It is a portion of the work of an unknown writer who goes by the name of Dionysius the Areopagite. In this book the writer takes for granted that classification of the spirits into nine choirs, and again into three triads within those nine choirs, of which much will be said in the following pages. Quite an original contribution of the author seems to be the doctrine of hierarchic illumination, of which there is no clear trace in the Scriptures. It is, however, a most happy and genial application to a special case of the well-established theological principle of the interdependence of creatures, and the oneness of the created universe.

The angelic manifestations narrated in the Scriptures are part of the traditional Christian Faith and belong to the most authentic history of the people of God. The question now arises whether such angelic manifestations belong to the normal life of the Christian Church in her mighty course through the centuries. It is evident that whatever angelophanies there may have been since the last

¹ *I.e.*, by affecting humility and religion towards angels.

² Col. ii 18, 19.

book of the Scriptures was written, such manifestations are to be considered merely as historical facts, not as things integral in any way to the *depositum fidei*. It is, of course, a matter of faith that the heavenly spirits are associated in one way or another with the life of Christians here on earth, as will be explained by and by in this essay. The question now asked is about miraculous angelophanies, such as Peter was granted when he was delivered from his prison; are there on record clear and undoubted interventions of heavenly spirits, under easily observable circumstances in the history of the Church?

There is certainly an *a priori* assumption in favour of such manifestations; it may even be said that they belong to the ordinary *charismata* of the Church. Spiritual phenomena that occurred in the primitive Church are characteristic of the normal life of the Church, as the primitive Church is the ideal Church.

It has been found as feasible, therefore, to write the history of angelic intervention as to write the history of martyrdoms and missionary expeditions. This task has been carried out with great care and perfect soberness of method by those princes of Christian hagiography, the Bollandists. In their *Acta Sanctorum*, under the date of September 29, the feast of St Michael the Archangel, they give an exhaustive survey of all the known angelophanies in Church history. The learned historians deal with age after age from the second century onwards, under titles such as this: "*Beneficia Angelorum saeculo quarto*" ("the benefactions of the angels in the fourth century"). Thus nothing is easier than to gain from the complete and critical studies of the Bollandists a general impression of the miraculous interventions with which the Christian people have been favoured in their long history.

The interventions of St Michael are considered apart in the *Acta Sanctorum*, and they differ slightly in character from the usual angelophanies of the Catholic Church. More than once, though not as often as might be imagined, Michael, the leader of the celestial hosts, helps the Christian warriors on the battlefield to gain a victory over adverse powers. Moreover, St Michael has two great shrines in Western Europe towards which kings and peoples have pilgrimed as they pilgrimed to the tombs of the Apostles. Mount Gargano, in Southern Italy, and Mount St Michel, in Northern France, have been true angelic shrines from the early middle ages; there the heavenly prince has been believed to distribute favours and receive the pilgrim with all the graciousness of a mighty lord.

If we examine now the other angelophanies, century by century, we are struck by their sobriety and their manifest humanness. Rarely, if ever, do we come across anything in history that is of a terrifying nature in angelic manifestations, nor do we find the angels taking part ostensibly in the great struggles of the Christian people. Even the Crusades, which would have been such a perfect setting for

the scintillating intervention of heavenly hosts, are remarkably devoid of such glorious legends. Now and then a straggling battalion of Crusaders, athirst and discouraged, is led out from a hopeless wilderness by a mysterious stranger who disappears when the danger is past, but on the whole the angelic ministries, as narrated in Church history, are of a much more private, nay, intimate character.

Angels come and console the martyrs in their prisons, and even heal their wounds, like so many good Samaritans; angels are seen taking care of the bodies of the Christian athletes, which the persecutor had thrown out to ignominious neglect; angels feed the hermits, and manifest to the early monastic lawgivers what is wise and what is excessive in Christian asceticism; they help the solitary to overcome his terrors at the sight of solitudes filled with evil presences; they give warnings of the approaching death of some lonely servant of God, and they are seen carrying to heaven the soul of many a saint.

Quite early in ecclesiastical history we find the angels intimately associated with the Eucharistic mystery. They visibly assist at the sacrifice of Mass, they carry the sacramental Body of Christ to the solitary Christian who would otherwise have been deprived of that heavenly Food; and—what is more striking still—in the very heart of Catholicism, in a well-peopled nunnery for instance, an angel is seen taking Holy Communion to a privileged soul as a mark of special favour. St Isidore, the ploughman, is helped in his humble work by angelic fellow-labourers; and an angel girds the loins of St Thomas Aquinas with the mysterious *cingulum* of perfect chastity—a very remarkable attention in the life of the great doctor and thinker, for we do not read of heavenly intelligences whispering to him the secrets of Catholic theology. In the case of Thomas, the angelic ministry is of a much more intimate and personal nature. St Francesca is favoured with an almost constant vision of an angel, whose attention to his protégée is most minute in matters both spiritual and temporal. St Teresa sees angels carrying, as in triumph, the virginal body of one of her dead nuns; and St Stanislaus Kostka, detained in the house of a heretic in Vienna, receives the sacred Viaticum at the hand of an angel. An angel brings a lump of sugar to the infirmarian of St Philip Neri, thus making it possible for the saint to be given the medicine of which he was so sorely in need. Angels are heard alternating with monks in divine psalmody in many a medieval abbey, when the brethren were in need of encouragement during the painful vigil of a cold winter night.

Such are the characteristic angelophanies we find in Church history. There is a sweet sameness about them in all times. May we not say that angels break through the veil of mystery and manifest themselves, not in order to frighten Christians and overawe them, but to smile at them with the smile of love and compassion?

§ III: ANGELIC LIFE

OUR Scriptures are remarkably reticent as to the nature, the life, and the activities of those wonderful beings whom we call the angels. They show themselves to perform definite missions, to deliver messages, and they disappear as suddenly as they have come. The only trait which the Scriptures seem to distinguish clearly is precisely this agility of motion, this freedom from the trammels of space, and this also, no doubt, is the characteristic in angelic nature which is most attractive to the human imagination. Yet it would be an uncatholic thing to say that we are quite ignorant concerning the nature of the angels. Catholic theology has its own resources, and with regard to angelic existences it has arrived at certain conclusions, which in their outlines may be taken as expressing truth.

Christian thought is not satisfied with the merely ministerial rôle of the heavenly spirits; the angels are more than ministers and messengers, they are, above all, a portion of the universe, they are its noblest portion; and very early in the history of Christian thought we find the angels occupying a most important cosmic position. There is stability of power and life in the spirit world, and the angels are become great beings on whom the cosmos reposes as on solid foundations. This view is certainly adumbrated in the writings of St Paul when he speaks of Christ as being raised "above all principality, and power, and virtue, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." ¹

Pure spirits

Our theology starts with the principle that angels are pure spirits, and whatever may be deduced from such a principle we may hold as being true. Perhaps we cannot go very far, yet when we find the best theologians writing voluminously on the subject of the angels we ought to admit that much can be said without extravagance of speculation. Some extravagance there may have been at times, as it may intrude into philosophy of every kind, but such excess nowise detracts from the merit of the labours of a sober genius like St Thomas Aquinas, to quote only one of the great and humble theorists about the angels.

There is a conflict between Catholic art and Catholic theology in this matter. Catholic art gives bodily substance to the angels; it gives them physical colour, visible beauty; whilst it is the effort of Catholic theology to discard every element of materiality and visibility. We need only be reasonable in order to find peace in a contest that cannot be avoided. As we are now, in our mortal state, we cannot think in purely spiritual elements, we must have the aid of our phantasy, and the richest imagination will be the one to conjure up the most gratifying visions of heavenly messengers.

¹ Eph. i 21.

But we ought to know that the reality is very different, incomparably different indeed, and immensely more beautiful; we ought not to feel sad if we are told that our visions of angels, if we have such, do not represent the heavenly visitant in his native existence, but that he appears to us in the borrowed garb of imaginative impressions.

What, then, are the certain conclusions to be drawn from the principle that angels are spirits? The following statements may be taken as being widely accepted theorems concerning angelic existence:

1. Angels have a beginning, but they cannot perish; they remain everlastingly the same.
2. Angels are not subject to the laws of time, but have a duration measure of their own.
3. Angels are completely superior to space, so that they could never be subject to its laws.
4. Angelic power on the material world is exerted directly through the will.
5. Angelic life has two faculties only, intellect and will.
6. In the sphere of nature an angel cannot err, either in intellect or will.
7. An angel never goes back on a decision once taken.
8. The angelic mind starts with fulness of knowledge, and it is not, like the human mind, subject to gradual development.
9. An angel may directly influence another created intellect, but he cannot act directly on another created will.
10. Angels have free will; they are capable of love and hatred.
11. Angels know material things and individual things.
12. Angels do not know the future; they do not know the secret thoughts of other rational creatures; they do not know the mysteries of grace, unless such things be revealed freely, either by God or by the other rational creatures.

These theorems have reference to the natural state of the angel. But the angel has been elevated to the supernatural state, the state of grace, and concerning that state some other principles have currency amongst theologians; we must defer them to the subsequent section on Angelic Sanctity.

I think the enunciation of the aforesaid theorems is quite clear. Every one of my readers will understand what is meant by the phrases, though he may find it difficult to adjust such ideas to his ordinary way of thinking. The theorems here stated practically cover the whole field of theology; anything beyond this becomes subtlety.

From our Scriptures we know that amongst the angels there is a hierarchy—there are the greater, perhaps the immensely greater angels, and the lesser angels; but it would be temerarious, not to say foolish, to attempt an explanation of those differentiations in

spiritual substances. Why is one spirit greater than another? To this we can give no answer. We may say, of course, that a spirit is greater because his intellect is more powerful, because he grasps things in a more simple and limpid fashion, because he sees with one act of mind what other spirits of a lower order can only perceive by many acts; but it is evident that this would not give the root of his greatness. The reason why he can thus comprehend and visualise is because his is a greater mind. Why is his mind greater? Because his is a greater nature. But how is his a greater nature? To this query there is no reply among the children of men. So our theology of the angels concerns itself with the general angelic features, not with their special attributes, and we know no more about the highest angel than about the lowest; we give them the generic attributes which belong to all finite spiritual substances, the human soul alone excepted.

We may now say a few words in explanation of each one of the above theorems.

1. *Angels have a beginning, but they cannot perish; they remain everlastingly the same.*

Spirits, like matter, were created by God's omnipotence out of nothingness; they are no more a portion of the divine Substance than is a stone or a tree, but they resemble the divine Substance in a fashion that is immensely closer, so that by comparison they might be called divine, as God's likeness is in them in a manner in which it is not in other portions of his creation. We cannot say whether all the spirits that now exist were created at one and the same moment, or whether there were different creations. But no finite spirit could create another, and it is more in keeping with Catholic thought to say that God created all the angels together. The distance that separates the present moment from the creation of the spirit world is, of course, not calculable by time standards. Spiritual substance once produced by God cannot decay, it may do wrong in mind and will, but it always remains a perfect substance; it does not change in its essentials, it does not deteriorate in its nature. We could hardly say that it is immortal, because the word immortality would not do justice to such permanence; a spirit is simply unalterable, his changes are merely changes of thought and will.

2. *Angels are not subject to the laws of time, but have a duration measure of their own.*

This has been most beautifully expressed by Cardinal Newman in his *Dream of Gerontius*, and though the passage is often quoted it would be a neglect on my part to omit it here:

“ For spirits and men by different standards mete
The less and greater in the flow of time.
By sun and moon, primeval ordinances—
By stars which rise and set harmoniously—

By the recurring seasons, and the swing,
 This way and that, of the suspended rod
 Precise and punctual, men divide the hours,
 Equal, continuous, for their common use.
 Not so with us in th' immaterial world ;
 But intervals in their succession
 Are measured by the living thought alone,
 And grow or wane with its intensity.
 And time is not a common property ;
 But what is long is short, and swift is slow,
 And near is distant, as received and grasped
 By this mind and by that, and every one
 Is standard of his own chronology.
 And memory lacks its natural resting-points
 Of years, and centuries, and periods."

Newman put into matchless language the technicalities of scholastic theology. Though angels remain for ever, we do not say that they are eternal. Eternity is the measure of God's existence ; it implies negation, not only of an end but also of a beginning ; it implies, moreover, immutability of every kind, even immutability in intellect and will : such immutability or eternity is possessed by God alone.

3. *Angels are completely superior to space, so that they could never be subject to its laws.*

Our reason assents to this theorem more readily than does our imagination. Reason tells us that a spirit, through the very definition of his nature, has nothing spatial in his composition. Movement, in the bodily, the mechanical, sense of the word cannot be predicated of spirits. They act, they exert power on material things, now at one point of the universe, now at another ; these acts or influences are successive, not simultaneous, but it could not be said that a spirit has moved or flown from one spot to another, he has merely exerted two different acts of power over objects that are mutually remote.

4. *Angelic power on the material world is exerted directly through the will.*

Angelic will-power is not only immanent, it is executive ; it can alter the things of the material universe by a direct contact or influence. Spirits can work signs and prodigies by making use of the powers of nature, though it could not be said that they can work miracles, in the proper sense of the word, such as the raising of the dead ; this would require divine power. Angelophanies, or apparitions of angels or spirits generally, may be explained through the power these lofty beings possess of acting on our sense-perceptions, and of giving us those mighty impressions of which we find instances in the Scriptures : " His body was like the chrysolite, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as a burning lamp : and his arms and all downward even to the feet, like in appearance to glittering brass : and the voice of his word like the voice of a multitude." ¹

¹ Dan x 6

5. *Angelic life has two faculties only, intellect and will.*

With this theorem we banish from spirit-life every vestige of sense-life. Angels cannot be said to have imagination, passion, sentiment, all of which manifestations of life are essentially the modifications of organic life and sense-powers. This is what we mean by the very common expression "angelic purity." Angels are pure from all sensuality, not through virtue, but through nature. If there is sin in them it could never be, even in the faintest degree, sensual sin. Of such life we human beings have absolutely no experience, yet it is one of the very first conclusions we must admit when we state that angels are spirits. Attractive as the notion of angels has become to Christian imagination, there is no softness, no sentimentality, in true Catholic angelology.

6. *In the sphere of nature an angel cannot err, either in intellect or will.*

This may sound astonishing to our ears, for we hear much of the instability of all created things ; yet it follows directly upon the simplicity of spirit-nature. There cannot be in an angel any source of sin or error within his own sphere of existence, but he may sin and err in the mysteries of grace, as those mysteries are above him. Here again I must refer the reader to the sections on Angelic Sanctity and Spirit Sin.

7. *An angel never goes back on a decision once taken.*

There ought to be little difficulty in our admitting such a trait in the mentality of a spirit, for we admire such a characteristic even in man. There is this difference between obstinacy and strength of resolve in man—that obstinacy comes from narrowness of view, while strength of resolve comes truly from a wide grasp of a fact, of its circumstances, and its implications. The perspicacious man need not alter his views and decisions, because he has seen so clearly the true issues of a thing from the very beginning. Vacillation of purpose in man comes from a predominance of the sentimental element over the intellectual element. With spirits, as may easily be perceived, there could be no such source of weakness, no such hesitancy of purpose. At a glance they perceive a truth, either theoretical or practical ; they see all its aspects, all its consequences, and there are no lower powers in them that could act under impressions of a more mobile kind, and deflect their clear reason and their entirely spiritual will from its first course.

8. *The angelic mind starts with fulness of knowledge, and it is not, like the human mind, subject to gradual development.*

In this we have the profoundest difference between spirit intellect and human intellect. A spirit starts his existence fully endowed with all knowledge ; he is never a learner in the true sense of the word, as man is a learner. It may be said of an angel that he applies his knowledge to new objects, but he does not acquire ideas that were not infused into him by the Creator in the very making of him.

9. *An angel may directly influence another created intellect, but he cannot act directly on another created will.*

The former part of this theorem seems, at first sight, to contradict the last theorem, which said that angels never learn in the real sense of the word. Yet much of Catholic theology is taken up with the mutual illuminations of the angels—that one angelic mind illumines another angelic mind. The contradiction is merely apparent. Such influence as the theological term of illumination implies is not the teaching of the ignorant, but a communication of messages from higher spheres of divine commands for which the angelic mind is prepared, and to which it is attuned. Speaking colloquially, we may say that no angelic mind is ever taken by surprise by any communication that reaches it from the council chamber of God. Spirits, then, may act on each other's minds, but it is a sacrosanct principle with Catholic theology that God alone has power to act directly upon a created will. A creature may entice, may persuade, may tempt the will, but it can never touch it directly.

10. *Angels have free will ; they are capable of love and hatred.*

Freedom of will is the very essence of ethical perfection, and angels have always been supposed to be ethically good. Love and hatred must be taken in their case, not in the sense of a passion, of a sentiment, but as representing either affinities or oppositions of a will which knows of no sensual attachments.

11. *Angels know material things and individual things.*

12. *Angels do not know the future ; they do not know the secret thoughts of other rational creatures ; they do not know the mysteries of grace, unless such things be revealed freely, either by God or by the other rational creatures.*

Our eleventh and twelfth theorems are clear by their very enunciation. Angelic knowledge is not only of abstract things, but of concrete things. The future free acts of created rational beings are not knowable to a created intellect. God alone contemplates them with infallible security of vision in the light of his eternity. For the same reasons which make it impossible for a spirit to act directly on the will of any rational creature we may say that the secret thoughts of the heart of man or the mind of a spirit are hidden, unless freely revealed by the one who thinks the thought. In every thought there is an act of will, because I think when I will and I think what I will, but the hiddenness of the will covers my very thoughts. The mysteries of grace are the decision, not of a created will, but of the will of God. *A fortiori* it will ever be far beyond a created spirit's ken to find out what God is thinking, unless God be pleased to reveal his thoughts.

§ IV: ANGELIC MULTITUDE AND HIERARCHY

THE idea of multitude has always been associated with heavenly spirits. Though in our Scriptures they are never shown in multitudes in the execution of work, they are always many when they are shown as praising God or as forming his Court: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest: and on earth peace to men of good will."¹ One angel is seen delivering the message of Christ's Nativity to the shepherds, but a multitude of spirits is heard to sing the praises of God. In the Book of Daniel isolated spirits are sent forth with great power, but when the Ancient of Days is seen by the prophet sitting on his Throne there is again multitude in the spirit world: "Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him."² Thus, too, in the Apocalypse, four angels are seen "standing on the four corners of the earth and holding the four winds of the earth, that they should not blow upon the earth nor upon the sea nor on any tree";³ but there is "heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the ancients (and the number of them was thousands of thousands)."⁴ Again in the Apocalypse we see judgement being executed on the earth by seven angels, of whom each one holds a vial full of the anger of God, and successively, not simultaneously, they each pour out their vial upon the earth; but when Christ comes forth in triumph he is surrounded by the armies that are in heaven: "And he was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood, and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies that are in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."⁵

From this we may gather that in scriptural thought spirit multitude has a special significance—we might call it the notion of society; that the heavenly spirits are God's society, and that multitude refers not so much to the variety of external missions as to the variety of contemplation of God in himself. In other words, the concept of multitude in spirits is something very different from the concept of multitude in material things. Number is indeed a marvel of material nature; even the human race has that astonishing factor of number: God has multiplied the children of men. St Thomas remarks wisely that with material things, man not excluded, number supplements the weakness of the species; a species is saved from death, from disappearance, through its numbers, and the weaker the species the greater its numbers. It is evident that when we come into the spirit world the notion of number must take a different form, and when we say that angels are innumerable we mean something quite other than the

*Meaning of
angelic
multitude*

¹ Luke ii 13-14.

² Dan. vii 10.

³ Apoc. vii 1.

⁴ Apoc. v 11.

⁵ Apoc. xix 13-14.

idea suggested if we say, for instance, that the pebbles on the shore are innumerable. In material things number is rather a necessity than a perfection, in spiritual things multitude means perfection, and cannot mean anything else.

This point of theology is approached most satisfactorily if we bear in mind what I have insinuated already—that in our Scriptures spirit-multitude is always associated with the society of God, with the praise and contemplation of his perfection. Spirits are multiplied for this very end, that the perfections of God may be reflected more and more completely. If we take this as the starting-point we shall readily see the beauty of traditional Catholic doctrine which holds that spirits exceed in number anything that we know. The whole idea of multitude is changed; one angel reflects God's glory in one way, another angel in another way, and multitude is something very perfect for this precise reason that it is the image of a perfection which is absolutely inexhaustible. Such ideas are not connected with the numberless in the material world. We do not find any special beauty in the "innumerable" of the physical world, but the "innumerable" of the spirit world are expressions of beauty ever more and more complete. So we find startling theories held by our theologians—theories which sometimes do not approve themselves to thinkers whose intellect is more the servant of imagination than they would themselves admit. St Thomas makes it one of the corner-stones of his angelology that there are no two angels of the same species; that there are no two angels equal in nature; that the angelic world constitutes an ever-ascending progression of spiritual substances, each one higher than the other. With this he maintains the traditional view that spirits are innumerable, holding a principle which makes such a view quite acceptable; that it is the proper mission of the spirits to reflect, in a created fashion, divine perfection; that every spirit does so in his own way; and that an infinite ascending hierarchy of spirits cannot exhaust the wealth of God's reflected beauty. Number has become something very different in such philosophy from what it is in the calculations of the physicist and the naturalist. It is a thing of dignity, not a mere juxtaposition of beings side by side. There are, I admit, a good many theologians to whom this view seems too bold; they would more willingly talk of brother angels, of many spirits of the same rank, glorified and spiritualised human beings, in fact, which constitute a heavenly nation. But I think a very little consideration will show that imagination plays a large part in the opposition to the great Thomistic angelology; the angelic crowds of a Fra Angelico are certainly crowds of brother angels, not hierarchies of spirits.

I ought to say that St Thomas had deduced his theory of essential variation between angel and angel from the profounder principle of spirit nature. As angels are not united with bodily

frames, the great metaphysician finds it impossible to distinguish between spirit and spirit, except on the grounds that they all differ as one species differs from another species. Put quite simply, the idea comes to this : that there are no two angels alike, nor any two angels of equal rank. This view is certainly very commendable from the metaphysical point of view, and, though it may in a way bewilder the imagination, it contributes towards a clearer understanding of what is meant by angelic multitude. It is not an endless repetition within the same plane of being, as is the case even with man ; it is, on the contrary, an ever fresh addition to the permanent and essential beauties of the universe.

*Hierarchy of
angels*

These considerations lead us on naturally to the treatment of hierarchy among angels. It is one of the best-established doctrines of Christian angelology that there is a diversity of hierarchic gradation among the heavenly spirits. Our Scriptures tell us the names of nine different angelic orders, usually classified in the following succession, beginning with the lowest hierarchy : Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Dominations, Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim. These nine choirs are again distinguished into three orders, the impression having prevailed in Christian tradition that there is a certain community of nature, genius, and mission in these triple sets of spiritual categories. That kinship is usually expressed in three different affinities : Seraphim, Cherubim, and Thrones are associated together ; then Dominations, Virtues and Powers ; finally Principalities, Archangels, and Angels.

The first question one asks is this : is this ninefold hierarchy exhaustive, so that it may be said to describe the whole angelic world ? We cannot speak with certainty, yet it would seem that with the Cherubim and Seraphim we have reached the limits of the spirit world, for these sublime beings are constantly spoken of as the nearest unto God of the whole mighty creation. But no doubt this query is answered more completely if we can give a satisfactory explanation of angelic hierarchy itself. Certainly no theologian need admit that an angelic choir, say the choir of angels, is constituted of spirit beings of the same rank. A moment ago I said that some of the best theology holds that equality of rank is not possible amongst spirits, as each one is a hierarchy in the ever-ascending scale of beings ; we must, then, give to angelic hierarchies and orders a very wide meaning, nay, an indefinite meaning, and it would be again indulging our imagination if we made of those nine choirs nine different classes of spirits. The secrets which are revealed to us in those traditional names are just the few hints given to us of the glorious variety in God's spiritual world. To make of those names categories and exclusive partitions would be contrary to the intentions of the Spirit who whispered the great secrets. We are expected to multiply, not to divide, in our thoughts of the heavenly citizens. We should not divide them into classes, but we should be ready for endless varieties of spiritual splendours.

Hierarchy in the angelic world is not primarily a matter of grace, but a matter of nature. If angels differ in grace it is because they differ in nature, grace being granted to them according to the capacity of their nature ; such seems to be the more probable theological view. St Thomas is quite liberal in his treatment of the meaning of hierarchy and of the angelic orders within that hierarchy. He says that within the nine choirs we make three divisions on account of our imperfect knowledge, *propter confusam notitiam*, because we do not know more than the vaguest outline of their functions ; but did we know more clearly, then we should really see that every angel is in himself an order, because he fulfils a mission in himself, complete and not interchangeable. "If we knew perfectly the offices of the angels and their differences, then we should know that every angel has his proper office and his proper order in the universe, and this much more than any star, though it be hidden from us." ¹

We have only the vaguest hints as to the specific functions covered by those great names of Seraph, Cherub, Thrones, etc. In so free a matter doctors are allowed to differ. As a sample of the speculations to which those holy names have given rise we may quote St Thomas who, in his turn, cites the words of the pseudo-Dionysius : "Let us then first examine the reason for the ordering of Dionysius, in which we see that . . . the highest hierarchy contemplates the ideas of things in God himself ; the second in the universal causes ; and the third in their application to particular effects. And because God is the end not only of the angelic ministrations, but also of the whole creation, it belongs to the first hierarchy to consider the end ; to the middle one belongs the universal disposition of what is to be done ; and to the last belongs the application of this disposition to the effect, which is the carrying out of the work ; for it is clear that these three things exist in every kind of operation. So Dionysius, considering the properties of the orders as derived from their names, places in the first hierarchy those orders the names of which are taken from their relation to God, the *Seraphim*, *Cherubim*, and *Thrones* ; and he places in the middle hierarchy those orders whose names denote a certain kind of common government or disposition, the *Dominations*, *Virtues*, and *Powers* ; and he places in the third hierarchy the orders whose names denote the execution of the work, the *Principalities*, *Angels*, and *Archangels*." ²

*Functions of
the various
angelic orders*

Though it be commonly admitted, as we shall see in another section, that the lower order of spirits, called, with a more constant appropriation of language, the angels, are those spirits who watch over man, in fact, the guardian angels, we need not therefore hold that they are spirits of the same rank ; they differ essentially amongst themselves and there is only one spirit who may be truly called the lowest spirit. The guardianship of man by the angels is not so

¹ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. cviii, art. 3.

² *Ibid.*, art. 6.

much a matter of the personal dignity of the spirit as a matter of the influence he is pleased to exert on man. To an objector who would like all spirits, at least those within the same hierarchy, to be equal, on the ground that all men have an angel guardian, and that it would not be suitable that the guardians of beings so similar as men should themselves differ essentially, St Thomas answers that it is not truly a question of angelic essence so much as of angelic power. The results of that power are similar whatever the greatness of the spirit that exerts it.

It might be said that in many of the angelophanies narrated in our Scriptures the multitude of angels need not have been more than an impression on mortal minds of multitude when there was in reality no multitude. There is, however, an insistence on the number of spirits in the Bible narrative which it would be temerarious to represent invariably as merely a subjective impression on the minds of those men who saw the angels. There are, moreover, passages in the Scriptures which cannot be read otherwise than as meaning truly objective numerousness in the spirit world. Thus in the Epistle to the Hebrews the company of many thousands of angels is stated to be one of the elements of the Christian election: "You are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels." ¹

§ V: THE GUARDIAN ANGELS

IT is a favourite theme with St Thomas Aquinas to represent the whole physical world as being entrusted by God to the keeping of the angels. The stars in their courses are watched by the mighty spirits; nations are committed to the care of a heavenly prince, and there is no part of the universe which does not feel the breath of those whose mind beholds the countenance of God.

An all-pervading principle governs the theology of the spirit ministry—namely, an inferior thing in creation is invariably under the tutelage of a higher thing. To this great law there is no exception. The universe is held together with the golden threads of spirit power as well as with the coarser sinews of natural energy. As a principle in its vast and indeterminate form this doctrine is very beautiful, and we should not go beyond this generic outline of a great truth; we cannot fill it up with specific facts and details, for the very reason that spirit power, however and wherever exerted, could not be observable in the physical order, precisely because it transcends the physical order.

One objection against this comprehensive theory of theology ought not to be made, that under such an hypothesis physical laws would become superfluous, as spirit activity and will would be the ruling elements of the universe. The theological theory of the

¹ Heb. xii 22.

universe leaves the physical theory completely untouched. It supposes merely that the wise Creator, who governs the material universe in accordance with the uniform laws of nature that he has made, makes use, in the application of those laws, of angels as intermediaries and executors of his plan. Nor ought we to consider those created activities of the spirits superfluous on account of God's omnipresent vigilance over his universe. God multiplies created power, not because he could not effect the result himself, but because it is a more beautiful universe which has a hierarchy of potentialities.

The last form, the ultimate application of that great principle is embodied in the sweet and popular doctrine of the guardian angels. Every human being is under the tutelage of a heavenly spirit, and this in virtue of a natural law. It is not at baptism, it is at birth that every child of Adam is handed over to the keeping of an angel. Great as is the Christian faith in the privileged state of those that are baptised in Christ, it never made the guardianship of the angel an exclusive privilege of the regenerate, but the unbaptised infant shares this divine provision with the baptised. Spirit guardianship of the human race belongs to nature itself. It is true that in the Gospels the angels of the children spoken of are the angels of children who have faith in Christ: "Their angels behold the face of my Father who is in heaven,"¹ but Christian tradition has always been emphatic in admitting the universal guardianship of all men, because all men are, at least potentially, the children of God.

The question will be asked at once whether each human being has a separate angel, individually distinct from every other angel. To such a query it would be quite impossible to give an answer, unless we had some authoritative teaching. The work itself of guarding man could not be such as to necessitate the presence of a separate spirit for every separate human being. One angel has power enough to watch over millions with undivided carefulness; but the burden of opinion is in favour of individual angelic guardianship, not of collective protection. But for this we could give no other reason than that the will of God so ordered it. The protection of spirits must be conceived on entirely spiritual lines. No good purpose is served by false sentiment in a matter so holy. We could not say, with any vestige of truth, that the angel leaves his beautiful heaven for this dreary earth, to take charge of weaklings such as we are; for there is no real departure from the glories of angelic life when a spirit assumes the tutelage of a lower being; more truly the lower being enters into the sphere of activity of one special spirit, just as a planet is kept within the orbit of one special sun. As I have said already, the angelic guardianship of man by angels is only the last instance of the mighty tutelage of the spirit world

¹ Matt. xviii 10.

over the material world, with this difference, however, that free will comes into play where man is concerned. Here again we must not ask for precise facts, but must be satisfied with the general principle. We must start with the assumption that the human race has fared as it has fared up to now precisely because it has been under the tutelage of spirits—a tutelage which is constant, all-pervading, the most permanent element in the preservation of the human race. We might say, to make this point quite clear, that if the human race had not possessed the spirit tutelage its history would have been very different from what it has been; it would have been infinitely more dismal, though we cannot indicate the facts and events directly attributable to the spirits that watch over man. And what is said of the race is true of every individual human being; we must simply say that this life is what it is because he has been given at his birth into the keeping of an angel. Very few occasions in a man's mortal career can be traced to the immediate activity of his watching spirit; in fact, unless we are given a special revelation on the subject, not one event in life can be said with certainty to be the direct arrangement of the guardian angel. But we have much more: we have the assurance from our faith that we are being guarded; we have never known any other kind of existence; we might almost say we do not know what it is to be without an angel, just as we do not know what it is to be without the laws of gravity. There is this *a priori* certainty that if individual men are thus entrusted by the Creator to a mighty spirit their whole life is profoundly modified, whether they know it or not.

It would be a mistake to think that the guardianship of the heavenly spirits is given to man only as the result of prayer; it is given absolutely, as a final, unalterable dispensation of God's providence. This spiritual tutelage is meant above all things to keep the human race and human individuals in perfection of nature, and we may say without any exaggeration that the human race would have succumbed long ago to enemies, to deleterious influences, but for the ever-protecting, divinely directed activity of those benign powers. Prayer to the angels is, of course, an act of piety much to be commended and most fruitful, for it is in our power to make use of that great tutelage to an extent which varies greatly according to each man's good will; just as prayer to God, in another sphere, makes the divine Majesty more and more propitious, though it could not be said that God would have no thought of man unless man prayed. There is a providence on the part of God which is absolute and independent of man's good will. In the same sense there is a spiritual tutelage of the human race and of every individual being which transcends the vacillation of man's ethical state; the race is kept from destruction and internal dissolution for God's own purposes, we might almost say, in spite of itself. The sins of men are no signs that men are not guarded by good spirits, for, as

St Thomas says so well,¹ we can act against the good instigations of the spirit that is outside us as we can act against the good instincts that are within us. The good instincts remain as a great reality in spite of our prevarication; so likewise the angelic inspiration remains in spite of our voluntary deafness to it. Nor could it be said that the spirits work in vain, even with those who are lost. Not only are we to suppose, again with St Thomas,² that the most perverted of men are kept from greater evils by their heavenly guardians, but the evil committed by one man is kept in check by those spirits of sanctity, lest it work havoc in other men.

This angelic guardianship is something natural, something normal, as normal as the great powers of the physical cosmos. The spirits have not received a mission to interfere with man's free action; they have received a mission to save man from the results of his own evil deeds as far as is compatible with the higher dictates of God's justice. When an angel shows his protecting power manifestly, as when he delivered Peter from the prison, you have a miraculous intervention which ought not to be taken as the criterion of the ordinary working of spirit tutelage. There can be miracles of angelic intervention, as there can be miracles of divine intervention; but they are exceptions; God and his angels work unceasingly for man's welfare.

Illumination of man's mind is the most direct and most constant effect of the angelic tutelage; according to St Thomas,³ it is not too much to say that the human race is kept in mental equilibrium through the unceasing watchfulness of the good spirits. There is, in spite of individual aberrations, a sanity of thought in mankind which makes all men to agree on some universal principles. Would it not be a beautiful thing to consider such unanimity as the result of the supervision of the spirits? Certainly Catholic theology would not be loth to encourage such a view.

Then there is that extremely important office of the protecting angels to ward off the darkening influence of evil spirits. So far we have been assuming that spirits are good, but Christian revelation does not allow such optimism to be complete; there are bad spirits just as there are good spirits, as we shall see in one of the following sections. An immense amount of angelic work for man's benefit must be of the defensive kind; man could never know, unless it were revealed to him, from what evils he has been saved. The spirits fight for us to a great extent without our knowledge, their mission is essentially one of guardianship of a lower being, and it is carried out quite independently of that lower being's participation or recognition. It is truly a trust, and the spirit is responsible for the full discharge of that trust to the heavenly Father by whom it was committed to him.

¹ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. cxiii, art. 1, ad 3.

² *Ibid.*, art. 4, ad 3.

³ *Ibid.*, art. 5, ad 2.

So far we have considered angelic guardianship in the life of nature, as one only of the great forces that keep the universe together ; but it is evident that we cannot separate man's higher and supernatural destiny from his natural life ; we are called to the kingdom of heaven, the angels see in us their fellow-participants in the graces of the Holy Ghost, and they have the additional mission of leading us to heaven.

In connection with this supernatural purpose of the spirit tutelage St Thomas makes a few wise remarks which, in a way, justify the common Catholic opinion that each man is under the protection of a separate spirit, that there is no disproportion between the ward and the guardian. Man's destiny being eternal happiness, it is not too much that it should be watched over by one whose nature is unchangeably great. Again, the secrets of grace are the greatest secrets, they are God's personal province, they are the dealings of the adorable Trinity, not *en masse*, but with individual rational creatures ; only God knows the graces that make up the predestination of the elect. It is not astonishing, therefore, St Thomas would say, that individual angels are chosen to watch over human souls which are treated with such preference by God himself. God has messages to communicate to an angel about a definite human being, which are truly the secrets of the divine counsel : "Are they not all ministering spirits sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation ?" ¹ St Thomas has a good commentary on these words : "If we think of the last result of the spirit tutelage, which is the receiving of the inheritance, the angelic ministry is effective only in the case of those who receive the inheritance. Nevertheless, it is to be maintained that the ministry of the angels is not denied to other men, although in their case the ministry falls short of its final result, the leading on to salvation. Yet in their case also the ministry of the angels is not without its efficacy as they are kept from many evils."

§ VI: ANGELIC SANCTITY

NOT once in the Scriptures, so full of angelic incidents, do we discover a vestige of moral imperfection in an angel, nor do we ever find that one is rebuked for anything that he does. The angels are perfect in all their ways. Angelic sanctity is, for us Christians, a self-evident fact. Our theology greatly helps our spiritual intuition, and starting from certain clearly proven principles it has uttered beautiful things on the purity of the angels and the eminence of their holiness. What we know concerning the nature of a spirit and what we know about grace stands us in good stead when we come to look at the lives of our heavenly brothers. As spirits they can never do anything by halves, they cannot be

¹ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. cxiii, art. 5, ad 1.

imperfect, they cannot act remissly, the whole energy of their intellect and will is given to every one of their movements in the ethical order—if one may speak of ethics in connection with spirits. Venial sin is quite unthinkable in angelic morality; it is easier for us to understand a total collapse of the angelic will than a partial deflection; a spirit may choose a wrong end, but he could not choose it with less than the whole impetuosity of his nature.

Bearing in mind the excellency of a spirit nature, our best theologians have said that, in its natural sphere, on its own plane, so to speak, a purely spiritual being cannot fail either in mind or in will, but it could fail with regard to things that are above it; in other words, with regard to the supernatural. This point we shall elaborate more completely when we come to speak of angelic sin; for the present let us feel happy in the thought that the angels have not in themselves any weakness, any temptation, any of that division between higher and lower motives which is found in us. They have not the conflicts of any kind of concupiscence, they have no doubts, they are not in danger of forming precipitate judgements; and all this in virtue of the very principles of their nature.

But it is a matter of Catholic faith that the spirits have been raised *Elevation to supernatural order* to the supernatural order, that they received grace, and that they possess sanctifying grace and the gifts of the Holy Ghost just like the Christian man here on earth. There is not in them the division between flesh and spirit, between a higher and a lower nature, but there is in them the division between the natural and the supernatural. They have been raised above themselves for a destiny greater than the spirit destiny; they are meant to behold God face to face in Beatific Vision—an end so lofty that no spirit, however excellent, is capable of it without a gratuitous infusion of those higher qualities called grace. Grace with the angels, then, could not be a medicine to heal the wounds of a fall, as it is with man to so large an extent, nor could it be a help to powers weak and anæmic in themselves—spirits have no wounds, spirits are never weak—but grace with angels is essentially the lifting up of a perfect being to a still higher plane, the initiation of a created mind into the secrets of the Uncreated Mind; and without grace even the supreme spirit would be incapable of that communion with God which constitutes the life of charity with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. So we have to assume at once that, with regard to the final and supernatural union with God, the spirits are in the same position as man. It may be said that spirits, both discarnate and incarnate, are equidistant from the final goal of Beatific Vision, and that the angels, equally with us, are in need of the grace of God to reach communion with him. There is, therefore, at once brought about, through the supernatural, a true community of condition between man and the spirits. Abysmal as may be the differences of minds and wills between man and spirit, and between the spirits themselves,

the differences disappear, are as nothing, in presence of that true infinitude—the Vision of God. Just as in astronomy there are no real differences when distances are said to be infinite; the surface of our earth may appear extremely uneven to us who dwell upon it, there are the high mountains and the deep ravines, but looked at from the fixed stars such unevenness is as if non-existent.

*Trial of the
angels*

Though there is a radical difference between the natural and the supernatural even in the spirits, it is the more common opinion that all spirits were created with the gift of grace in them already; this would only mean that between the production of nature and the infusion of grace there was no time-interval, but there is always the profound and essential differentiation between the two elements, nature and grace. The spirits were not created in the clear Vision of God; this was to be the goal towards which they had to aim, the reward of their fidelity; they were created in grace outside the Vision of God, with the invitation to rise up to that supreme Vision; they were created, says St Thomas, not in the heaven of the Trinity, but in the empyrean heaven; from the one they were expected to ascend to the other. The *caelum sanctae Trinitatis*¹ is the heaven of the clear Vision of God face to face. The angels did not find themselves in that heaven to begin with; they found themselves in that other heaven which may be called the supremest place of the natural cosmos, whilst the heaven of the Vision is that glorious kingdom which has been prepared specifically for the elect from the beginning of the world: "Then shall the king say to them on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."² We say that the angels merited eternal life as truly as man merits eternal life, through correspondence with that supernatural grace that was in them, for the spirits as well as man had their day of trial, they were wayfarers between their earth and their heaven, between the *caelum empyreum* and the *caelum sanctae Trinitatis*. These principles are certain. How long did their trial last? Here we must leave imagination alone. Let us take it for granted that whatever element of duration there was in the angelic wayfaring it amounted in worth and spirit intensity to the value of the longest human life. Theologians would say that the first act of the angels was self-consciousness, the second act a full co-operation with the grace that was in them, and the third act the clear Vision or, shall we say, the flight from the *caelum empyreum* to the *caelum sanctae Trinitatis*. Only let us remember that centuries of human activity would pale before the energy of that single act of the spirits between creation and glorification.

*Grace
proportioned
to nature*

We have already spoken of the profound inequalities of the angelic natures; we said that they were an ever-ascending hierarchy of

¹ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. lxi, art. 4, ad 3.

² Matt. xxv 34.

spiritual substances. The question arises, then, whether grace and the supernatural endowment were meted out to them according to the capacity of their natures, so that an angel of a higher grade in nature is also of a higher grade in grace and of a higher grade in glory. This we may readily grant: a Cherub is greater than an inferior spirit in all his endowments, both natural and supernatural. Human beings are all of the same nature, but they receive grace in a variety of measures; some are given one talent, some five. We may say that with man nature is not the measure of grace; let us ever bear in mind that one human being, Mary, the Mother of God, has received grace more abundantly than any other creature. With the spirits, however, there seems to be a fitness that grace should exactly follow the perfection of nature. Men, though of one nature, work with various intensities; spirits, on the contrary, work at all times to the full extent of their energies, there can be no intermittencies, no relaxations, there can be no progress—in the human sense of the word—so it seems the wiser thing in theology to concede to the vaster mind and the vaster will an ampler manifestation of the counsels of God's supernatural order.

After these exact theorisings on angelic sanctity we could give our imagination free scope and let it enjoy the spectacle of that inexpressibly great holiness, but whatever we could imagine would fall short of the reality.

The vision of Isaias is the greatest imaginative presentment of angelic sanctity:

“ In the year that King Ozias died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated: and his train filled the temple. Upon it stood the seraphims: the one had six wings, and the other had six wings: with two they covered his face, and with two they covered his feet, and with two they flew. And they cried one to another, and said: Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God of Hosts, all the earth is full of his glory. And the lintels of the doors were moved at the voice of him that cried: and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: Woe is me, because I have held my peace; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people that hath unclean lips, and I have seen with my eyes the King the Lord of hosts. And one of the seraphims flew to me: and in his hand was a live coal, which he had taken with the tongs off the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: Behold this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquities shall be taken away, and thy sin shall be cleansed. And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us? And I said: Lo, here am I. Send me.”¹

There is, however, one aspect of angelic sanctity which we might almost call its moral side: it is expressed generally as the obedience of the angels—more truly it might be called their “order”; that the spirits keep the order in which they are created, carry out the missions which are entrusted to them, that all their mighty activities are an unceasing dependence on God's will; above all, that they accept the kingship of a nature lower than their own. They have

¹ Isa. vi 1-8.

not rebelled against the exaltation of the human nature in Christ Jesus, and the Catholic Church never ceases to speak of the Mother of God as Queen of the angels. This observance of the order established by God is the true angelic virtue, the one thing in which they might fail; it might even be called their temptation, and if the temptation be overcome, it is their victory. That there was some such victory is evident from more than one passage in the Scriptures; angels are considered as having come out of some great spiritual war triumphant in the moral order:

“And there was a great battle in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought, and his angels. And they prevailed not: neither was their place found any more in heaven. And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world. And he was cast unto the earth: and his angels were thrown down with him.”¹

Fidelity to God over a great, a mightily debated issue seems to be an essential portion of angelic sanctity.

§ VII: SPIRIT SIN

*Satan not
created evil*

WHEN Christ speaks of the reward of the elect he represents it in the form of an invitation to take possession of the kingdom that had been prepared from the foundation of the world.² The chastisement of the wicked he speaks of as everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.³ This terrible penal arrangement is not said to be, like the gracious provision for merit, *a constitutione mundi*, from the foundation of the world. Satan and his followers were not created evil; there was no thought in God's first providence of an *ignis aeternus*. No Christian doubts the existence of evil powers in the spirit world, but no Christian considers those evil powers to be anything but a miscarriage, through the creature's act, of the Creator's first plan. There is no evil principle having, so to speak, an estate by itself; all evil is an apostasy of a being that was primarily good; all evil is a bad use of the good things of God.

It is an extremely difficult point of theology to explain sin in connection with spirits. If our Scriptures were not so full of the activities of evil spirits the temptation might arise to regard all wickedness as a human phenomenon. The sinfulness of man is a thing of daily experience; we can explain it through man's composite nature, through man's passions and difficulties; man is morally a sinner, as socially he is a savage; both sin and barbarity are patient of explanation. But how shall we arrive at any satisfactory explanation of spirit lapses? If we regarded spirits only as more agile forms of human beings, then we might give them passions and instincts whose workings, sooner or later, would entangle them in difficult positions. But spirits are perfect, at any rate those spirits

¹ Apoc. xii 7-9.

² Matt. xxv 34.

³ Matt. xxv 41.

in which Catholic theology believes ; it is their very essence to be perfect in nature ; we cannot think of any sort of allurements which might deflect them from their path.

We might, as a first attempt at explanation, give this reason for a possible lapse in the spirit world : that spirits, since they are created beings, are finite beings, and that no finite being can claim absolute immunity from every possible error of mind or will. In this universality the principle may be considered as the remote cause of sin in all but God himself ; yet this does not work in Catholic theology as a cause of the fall of the angels, except as a most vague explanation. A spirit has no ignorances, has no weakness of mind ; his nature is so perfect that there is nothing for which he can wish or to which he can aspire ; though he is finite, he is complete in his sphere.

With great wisdom St Thomas has discarded every sort of motive for the angelic lapse that is not entirely spiritual, that savours more of imagination than of intelligence. He teaches with steady persistence that no spirit in his natural sphere can transgress or err in any way. But if the spirit be taken, so to speak, out of his natural order and placed in another, a higher order—the supernatural order—then there is the possibility of a refusal ; the spirit may refuse to accept or to hold something that is above his order ; he may, in fact, rebel against the order of God. This is the only tenable theological explanation of the fall of the angels, and I must develop it more amply.

Through the supernatural a spirit is taken out of his sphere into a higher one ; but this higher sphere means essentially a community of life with all other spirits thus favoured ; it means community with lower spirits ; it means community with man himself. The higher grace is indeed the more excellent gift, but it is also the more universal gift. The natural greatness of the angel is a glory which has no equal ; it is a singular perfection which is without a rival. A spirit may thus choose to enter into communion with the supernatural or to remain entirely in his own sphere, preferring his own natural excellency to the communion of the universal family of God. St Thomas says that some spirits chose the second alternative ; they preferred their natural glory in its isolation to the community of the supernatural charity ; and this is the fall of the angels. It is pride—because they elected excellency without reference to the more excellent good ; it is rebellion—because the Will of God was that they should accept the supernatural ; it is envy—not in the sense of the dark human passion, but in the sense of an opposition to a holy thing, the grace of God. All other sins must be taken more or less metaphorically in the case of the fallen angels. When it is said that Satan desired to be like unto God we could not take it as a reasonable view that he aspired to be as great as the divine Creator ; no spirit could be capable of such folly ;

*No spirit
can err in the
natural sphere*

*Rejection
of the
supernatural
order*

but as St Thomas puts it : “ In this wise did Satan wish unlawfully to be like unto God, because he desired as the final goal of happiness that which was within the power of his own nature, turning away his desires from the supernatural happiness which is obtained through the grace of God. Or it might be said also that if he desired as his last end that resemblance with God which comes from grace, he wanted to possess it through the power of his nature, not through the divine help according to God’s order.”¹ All this is very clear in a way ; it is opposition to the supernatural order which constitutes the *malitia angelica*, it is spirit rebellion. It is said sometimes that the mystery of the Incarnation was revealed to the spirits, and that their unwillingness to adore the God-man was their fall. This would only be another expression of the same doctrine that angels fell through a deliberate opposition to the supernatural, as the Incarnation is the highest phase of the supernatural.

Effects of
spirit sin

So we may leave this matter in that wise moderation in which it was left by St Thomas : “ In this way did the angel sin, because he turned his free will to his own good without reference to the (higher) rule of the divine Will.”² The great theologian thinks that such a sin is compatible with complete knowledge of means and end, principles and results, and that such a sin can be found in a being devoid at his creation of all perverse inclination and of all passion. It is essentially a free election of a definite state, and it is an irrevocable election. All other perversities which are attributed to Satan come from this free election, for it is not a passive state of personal excellency which Satan has chosen, it is of necessity an active opposition to the higher order. Thus every other sin is truthfully predicated of the evil spirits, because with every means in their power do they wage war against the supernatural order ; they are the great disturbers of the divine order. Satan always sins, Satan is mendacious, Satan is a murderer ; and he incites man to the foulest sins, not because of any pleasure he himself could have in the works of the flesh, but because the works of the flesh render man unfit for the grace of God and exclude him from the supernatural order. It is quite in keeping with all we have said when we hear the Scriptures stating that it is Satan’s chief occupation to deceive man, deceiving him in the most subtle manner and transforming himself into an angel of light. The difference between natural excellency and supernatural grace may be called a subtle difference, and man’s great deception lies in this : that through the splendour of natural gifts he is led to despise the grace of God.

It is a simple consequence of all that has been said to maintain that the evil angels keep all their natural gifts without any diminution ; they even keep their order ; they remain in the state which they elected, yet they are banished completely from the supernatural order ; and as the supernatural order is the one which

¹ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. lxxiii, art. 3.

² *S. Theol.*, I, Q. xliiii, art. 1, ad 4.

must ultimately triumph, Satan and his followers are truly cast out into eternal darkness, into the fire which will be their prison for ever. They are darkened in their intellects with regard to the mysteries of grace, with regard to the counsels of God's free will, but not with regard to things which constitute the glories of the natural universe; the knowledge of the natural universe is part of their very being, and they could not lose it without losing their identity.

In the foregoing considerations we have spoken as if the supernatural were offered to the spirits, when some accepted it and some refused. In the preceding section we said that the more probable opinion is that all spirits were created in the supernatural, so they were given no option as to its acceptance or its refusal. This, of course, does not alter the worth of the theological opinion. Though the spirits were created in the supernatural, they were free to remain in it or to forsake it, because it was something essentially added unto their spirit-estate, not something inherent in their very being. The demons are called apostate spirits, because they fell away from the vocation and the grace to which they had been called by the Creator; they did not persevere in their supernatural election as did the good angels. It is obviously a thing self-evident in theology that when once a created spirit has been admitted to the clear Vision of God all falling away becomes impossible. The spirits that lapsed had never attained to that Beatific Vision.

§ VIII: EVIL SPIRITS AND MAN

It could not be said that the spirit tutelage, of which through a wise dispensation of Providence man is the object, has a direct counterpart in the sad influences of the fallen spirits on the destinies of the human race. We are not in reality standing, as it were, between two spirits, a good one on our right and a bad one on our left; this would be an exaggerated notion of the activities of the reprobate spirits among the children of men. The angelic tutelage is a divine ordinance, directly willed by God; the temptations of the demons are not, of course, a divine ordinance, they belong to what is called the permissive providence of God; he allows them, but he does not order them. With this reservation made, we may go very far in our belief in the reality of demoniac power in the world.

To begin with, we must bear in mind that whatever may be the explanation of the presence of the evil spirits on our planet, such a presence was not originally brought about by the sin of man. The devil tempted man when he was yet in a state of innocence; the evil spirit was on this earth before human sin had ever been committed. Man's sins have strengthened Satan's position in this world, but it could not be said that they have created it. The presence of the Evil One on this earth in the days of man's innocence is an insoluble mystery.

*Demons
tempt by
divine
permission*

*Evil spirits
and material
things*

Nothing is expressed more often and more explicitly by the Roman Church in her various exorcisms and blessings than the idea that evil spirits abide in material things, from which they are driven out by the Church's triumphant power of sanctifying and consecrating the visible elements which are the basis of human life. The human body itself may be the dwelling of an evil spirit: this might be called the silent occupation of this earth by Satan, a thing full of mystery and independent in its origin of man's consent to Satan's evil suggestions. But there is also the more manifest presence of these dark beings. It would be temerarious to belittle what the early Fathers said of the power of the demons in the pagan temples, in the idols, in the groves and caverns where heathen rites were performed. The demons were loud in their utterances through the mouth of the idols, and many are the incidents in early Church history which prove that the pagan nations were accustomed to exhibitions of unseen powers which could never be considered as powers of light. Then we have, through all the centuries of the Christian spiritual warfare, most authentic records of manifest activities of the demons. The servants of God are persecuted by fierce powers, visibly, physically, in open daylight, as it were. The best-known case in modern hagiography is the persecution which the holy Curé d'Ars suffered in his body from his spiritual adversaries.

*Temptation
to sin*

The more recondite temptations of Satan which concern man's religious life hold a middle place between that silent occupation of this earth by Satan, and the tumultuous showing forth of his power in cases of possession or obsession. Satan tempts man to sin, not manifestly but secretly, in such a wise that it is not possible for man to discover whether an evil prompting comes from his own nature or from the suggestion of an alien spirit with a perverted will. Such discernment demands great spiritual gifts, one might even say it requires a special charisma which is given only to few. Indeed, it is not necessary for us to know whether an evil propensity is caused by an outside spirit, or is the result of our own evil inheritances; the avoidance of sin is the one thing that matters, and that is always within our power, through God's grace and the assistance of the holy spirits. On the whole, it is more in conformity with Catholic tradition to consider the Christian, with his glorious spiritual armour, as being himself formidable to the devils rather than as living in fear and terror of those beings of darkness. "Give not place to the devil"¹ is an apostolic precept which reveals the true psychology of diabolical temptations in our spiritual life. Place is given to the devil through any voluntary deflection from the moral order; the evil spirit enters into our life through those weaknesses of which we are guilty through our own carelessness. It is as if infidelity to divine grace could not remain a merely human

¹ Eph. iv 27.

affair, it has prolongations which man does not intend, but which are unavoidable consequences. We are, in the strong words of one of the Collects,¹ exposed to the diabolical contagion (*diabolica contagia*). The devil's influence on the human masses is no doubt much more powerful than the seduction of individual men, masses are more liable to suggestion, and all we know of mass-psychology makes us fear that, outside the Christian people, Satan's influence on mankind is a very real fact. The devils are, in St Paul's words, "the rulers of the world of this darkness."² I do not mention here that kind of bondage to Satan in which mankind found itself through sin, and from which it has been released through the Cross of Christ, for this aspect of demoniac power belongs rightly to the mystery of Redemption.

Man's intercourse with the demons is a thing which has no counterpart in his relationship with the good spirits. With a good spirit we never hold any intercourse which is not perfectly in the divine order, through the very definition of angelic sanctity. As demons are rebellious spirits, the question may pertinently be put whether it is in the power of man to get into touch with those wicked, but mighty ones, for some selfish end; one would naturally ask: has the devil ever answered man when man has tried to approach him, and to hold intercourse with him? Dark magic has always had a fascination for a certain class of minds, but no doubt most of its claims, if not all of them, belong to the realm of fables. Consulting the devil has always been held to be one of the darkest sins which man can commit.

Spiritism of the modern type is a more serious, a more alarming matter. It does not belong directly to either angelology or demonology, as the modern spiritist claims to hold intercourse with disembodied human spirits; however, there is a strong presumption that spiritistic phenomena, when they are not impostures, are things of evil origin; viewed from that angle, spiritism is only a province of demonology. I am aware, of course, that all modern spiritists repudiate dealings with the dark powers of the unseen world. They claim a purity of intention in their efforts to get into touch with the invisible world, which, no doubt, is sincere in many cases. They say that they want to learn from the spirits the things of the spirits; that they want to come into contact only with the holy ones on the other side. A spiritism thus refined is a most seductive thing, and to refute it, to show its illegality or its immorality, is not possible, to my thinking, apart from revelation, and unless we profess our faith in the guiding authority of the Church. All other arguments against spiritism are based on certain accidental, evil by-products of the practice, or they take for granted the very thing that has to be proved—that spiritism is an intercourse with fallen angels. We have here a first-rate instance of the

¹ XVII Sunday after Pentecost.

² Eph. vi 12.

beneficent meaning of the guidance of a living Church ; it enables us to see clearly, where so many are deceived and led in captivity by the spirit of error who transforms himself into an angel of light. Nothing is sadder than to see the numbers of well-meaning men and women who are held in thralldom by the fascination of contemporary spiritism, for we, as Catholics, know that they have become the playthings of the spirits who have been liars from the beginning. The circumstance that they are ignorant of the ethical perverseness of the practice does not in the least diminish its evil ; they have become the victims of a terrible conspiracy of wickedness in high places, from which we escape unscathed through our loyalty to the guidance of the living Church. As for the Catholic who will not listen to that guidance in these most dangerous matters, I do not see that a merely speculative exposition of the evil of spiritism could possibly have any influence to save him from the worst excesses of unhealthy curiosity.

It may be said that the Catholic Church has her own spiritism, a thing full of health and life ; it is her belief that every soul in the state of grace is in spiritual communion with every other soul thus privileged, and that this communion goes beyond mortal life. The Christian here on earth has a most intimate affinity with all elect spirits, angelic and human, in the world to come. The Church holds very definite and very practical views as to the mode in which spirits may approach each other. This profound doctrine is merely a part of the larger truth of the mystical Body of Christ ; and we may add that deeper knowledge of the disembodied state into which the spirit of man enters at death will facilitate the intelligence of the Catholic standpoint. Readers may be referred to other portions of Catholic theology for these absorbing matters.¹

§ IX: THE SOCIETY OF THE HEAVENLY CITIZENS

*Angels and
man's eternal
happiness*

It is evident by all the laws of spiritual life that angelic beings must be, in one way or another, a great element in the constitution of man's eternal happiness. The bliss of the elect will be essentially this—to possess all truth, to be in contact with all reality, to see all beauty. To see the angels, to behold them, must of necessity constitute a source of happiness greater than anything which the visible world could afford ; in fact, it is the supreme created source of happiness ; God himself, clearly seen in the Beatific Vision, being the uncreated source of happiness. To be with the angels, to see them in their glory, is a most legitimate desire in the heart of man, and the saints of God have often given utterance to such a longing. We must always keep alive within us that essentially Catholic principle of life, that the possession of the supreme Goodness, God himself, never destroys the appetite for created goodness,

¹ Cf. Essay xxxi, pp. 1118-1122.

but, on the contrary, enhances it ; to see God face to face produces in the minds of the elect a new capacity to see him in his creatures, and where is he seen to greater advantage than in the world of angels, which mirrors back, with an almost infinite power of radiation, the glory of the invisible God? Moreover, through the communion of supernatural grace man is allied to the angels by the bond of charity, he is not a foreigner but he is a fellow-citizen. There will be this truest exchange of love between man and the heavenly spirits : man, besides beholding the angels in their glory, will hold intercourse with them as citizens of the same kingdom, as the children of the same Father. This intercourse with the heavenly spirits will be the last thing in created love ; greater love than that there could not be except man's communion with God himself.

There is, however, something deeper than this association with the angels in vision and love. This association would be possible if the whole human race—I mean the elect human race—remained in its own sphere, on its plane, lower than the angelic world. The human race could be considered as the boundary-line of the whole world of the elect and as its lowest portion. Yet such is not the traditional view of Catholic theology. There is quite a volume of opinion which considers man's association with the angels to be of a more intimate kind, and of a much profounder dispensation. The elect of the human race are believed to be assumed into the very hierarchy of the angels, into the ranks of the Cherubim and Seraphim and all the other orders ; the elect of the human race will not be only the outside fringe of the spirit world, they will, on the contrary, be shining stars in every one of the spirit planes. It is Catholic tradition that the elect of the human race are destined to take the place of the fallen spirits, to fill up the gap made by the apostasies of the rebellious angels. This tradition profoundly modifies man's relationship to the angels ; it puts him on a footing of equality with those mighty beings which is the most astonishing of all spiritual exaltations. We could not say with any degree of certainty whether all the elect of the human race are meant to take the place of fallen spirits, but it would seem that no doubt is permissible with regard to God's intention of filling the vacant places in the spirit hierarchies with human beings. God will multiply his graces, and prepare his saints with such power of predestination that not one of the high thrones of spirit life will be found vacant on the day of the consummation of his mighty plan.

That there will be more than mere association of men and angels in the glory of eternity is clear from our Lord's words in speaking of the elect at the resurrection : " Neither can they die any more : for they are equal to the angels and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." ¹ This equality

¹ Luke xx 36.

means more than a mere similarity, it means a community of privilege which makes of the human elect and the spirit elect one society. This equality is entirely based on grace. Human nature will always remain what it is, vastly inferior to the angelic nature; but such is the power of grace that the inequality of nature is bridged over, and that an elect from the human race may truly become, in all literalness of language, the equal of the highest angel, and that consequently he will be vastly superior to other angels of lower rank.

In this matter, as in most of our philosophising on spirit-issues, we must be satisfied with the general principle; detail, from the very nature of the case, is not possible to us. Thus we do not know in what proportion the spirits fell or in what proportion they passed into the unchanging glory of the Blessed Vision; we do not know, either, with any degree of certainty, what direction that great cleavage in the heavenly world took when there was that sliding away from God of so many spirits. Did angels of every order fall away? Was there a preponderance of rebellion in any given hierarchy? Did many more fall in the lower than in the higher orders? Such questions cannot be answered with any degree of certainty. St Thomas is inclined to think that only a minority of the spirits fell away; because, he remarks wisely, to fall away is, in a spirit, against his nature, and things that are contrary to nature happen usually more by way of exception than by way of generality. It would seem, however, that the supremest spirit fell, and that this mighty prince of light was the cause of the apostasy of many. It is generally considered that Lucifer was that highest spirit who became the Prince of Darkness. We are not concerned here directly with demonology; our scope is a more consoling one. Whatever height a fallen spirit may have occupied in the scale of being, it is possible for the grace of God to raise man to that height, so that even the throne vacated by Lucifer himself may become the congenital inheritance of some holy human soul.

We need not maintain, of course, as already insinuated, that all human beings who are saved through the grace of Christ are meant to be raised to the angelic hierarchies. Cajetan,¹ the stern theologian of Reformation times, thinks that the children who die and are saved in virtue of baptismal grace, without any personal merit, will remain below the angelic order of election; they will be the true human race in its own setting; they will resemble the angels without being equal to them. Then again there are those human beings who will be absolutely superior, by the very laws of their predestination, to every angelic order; the blessed Mother of God is certainly one such creature.

The all-pervading principle is this: that grace is greater than nature, greater even than the highest spirit nature, and its scope is vaster than the vastest world.

¹ In *S. Theol.*, I, Q. cviii, art. 8.

As a confirmation of the doctrine of human substitution for the lost spirits we may quote St Paul's text, 1 Cor. vi 3: "Know you not that we shall judge angels? how much more things of this world?" The Apostle evidently alludes to the great judgement at the end of time; judgement will be given to the saints, and they will execute it, not only on this world, but even on the angels—the fallen angels, no doubt. This power of judgement would naturally presuppose, not only equality, but superiority of rank.

In the Western Church virginity is considered to be more particularly the angelic life amongst men, whilst in the Eastern Church the angelic life is more commonly identified with the renouncing of temporal possessions. The striving after higher perfection, after the angelic life in all its aspects, is, in Christian spirituality, a preparation for the higher ranks amongst the angels in the world to come; the martyrs, also, are those who will be found worthy to have their names confessed by the Son of God before the holy angels. Whatever heroism there is amongst Christians in the days of their earthly pilgrimage it gives them a right to a reward which again is fitly expressed by the word "throne." "To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me in my throne: as I also have overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne."¹

ANSCAR VONIER, O.S.B.

¹ Apoc. iii 21.

IX

MAN AND HIS DESTINY

§ I: INTRODUCTORY

THIS volume already contains essays that speak of God and of the Angels. Man and his Destiny come third.

This order was demanded by respect: for it would be unfitting in a work like this one to speak of God in any but the first place; and even the Angels, being of a nature so superior to man's, have a just claim to be approached before Man is.

Yet though this order be that of Nature, and indeed of time—for while God is in any case eternal, we hold that the Angels were created before man was—yet it is not the order in which we actually know things. We are conscious of ourselves and of other limited objects before we know anything of God: time, experience and most probably some intellectual guidance are needed before we become aware that God exists, and that he must be thought of in such and such a way. Still less are we directly conscious of the Angels; and though we might feel it very probable that such beings existed, and though we might shrink from the extreme arrogance of asserting that human nature exhausted all the possibilities of existence in itself, and though the fancy of every age of the world's history has proved how natural it is to surmise that the universe is peopled with invisible inhabitants, yet the Catholic knows that there are Angels because he is told so by the Authority he recognises as legitimate. On the other hand, he knows, without the possibility of doubting, that he exists himself; and he observes that there are other beings like himself round about him; and while he is sure he is not numerically the same as they are, he cannot but class them along with himself under one heading—Man.

Indeed, at the root of all human philosophy is the double perception, that I exist, and that I am not the same as what surrounds me. It is largely because I observe that I am not the same, and that I *clash* to some extent with my surroundings, resist them and am resisted by them, that I develop an adequate consciousness of my own existence: but this self-consciousness was involved in every act by which I became properly aware of other things, and the proposition, "I exist," is one of those few propositions which I cannot so much as deny without asserting it.

Now it is not long before a man begins to ask himself two questions—(1) *What* am I? (and generalising, What is Man?); and (2) *What* am I *for*? (and generalising, What is the Purpose of Man's Existence, if any?).

I am inclined to think that in the concrete it is the second of these two questions that most haunts mankind. Illogical as it may be to ask what I exist "for," till I have become clear as to what "I" am, men are quite apt to take themselves for granted, but by no means to take their destiny for granted. If you want to see a thoroughly haunted man, you will find him in the one who cannot see what he is "for," and is tormented by the surmise that he may not be "for" anything; that life is quite pointless; that there is no purpose anywhere; that he is what he is owing to a mixture of fluke and fate, and that after a meaningless spell of irksome years he will relapse into the general stock of existence and be thrown up thence again, who knows why, who knows when, like a bubble in a scum. Few men have chilled me more than the one who said to me: "I work, because I suppose I've got to live. But what am I living for? To work again to-morrow." That in itself is one of those sentences which, once heard, can never be forgotten. "I work, in order to live: I live, in order to work again to-morrow." It is horrible to an intelligent man to observe that everything in, say, the factory or workshop where he works has a *purpose*—windows; ventilators—save himself. Do not say that he *has* a "purpose," that is, to do his particular bit of the total job. He knows that a hundred men could do it as well as he: it is not *he* as he that matters; he could be dismissed to-morrow, and very often is, and forthwith replaced: he is a name, a number, a "hand." Hence he cannot see why *he* exists, and he resents it.

Now in an earlier essay it has been shown that God created man and all things else. It follows that man *was* created with a purpose, for God cannot act without one. God, it has been shown, is the perfect and ever active intelligence, and cannot therefore create unintelligently, nor in a moment of distraction. But to act without purpose is the very sign of unintelligence—the man who acts always without knowing why, is off his head: the one who does so intermittently may be charitably supposed to be "in the moon" unless he does it too often, and then you begin to have your doubts even about *him*. Moreover, God cannot create man for a purpose which man cannot sufficiently *know* (for you cannot do what you have no sufficient knowledge of), nor for one which, however well he may know it, he cannot possibly carry out. For it would be un-wisdom of the worst, to make a man for a purpose, and forthwith render the carrying out of that purpose impossible. God cannot thus contradict himself. And finally, this purpose cannot be a mean or petty one, let alone a bad one, for the Infinite Goodness cannot purpose anything evil, nor even mean. Therefore, even before we begin this essay, we have the right to assert that there lies before Man, and before each man, a Destiny that he should aim at fulfilling, that he can fulfil, and that will prove to be a high and noble one.

I need but add here that what God purposes should be accomplished, he wishes to be accomplished: and when his wish concerns an intelligent creature such as man is, God makes his wish known to him, and this amounts to "calling" him. Therefore you may at once declare that man, and each man, has a "vocation" and must have. But since man depends wholly upon God, he is under a total obligation to God, and therefore not only will it be good for him to obey God's call, but he *ought* so to obey it, and would do wrong were he consciously to neglect or to defy it. But since upon the fulfilment of his vocation depends the whole of his well-being and his happiness, his non-fulfilment of it implies his ill-being and his misery. And finally, since God does not and cannot create a "world" chaotically, but creates within it an order (and indeed it is "order" that makes it into a "world"), and calls men to play their part in perfecting that order, it follows that if man does not fulfil his vocation, he introduces disorder into the world in general, and into human society in particular. Therefore it is of extreme importance both for each man and for society at large that God's purpose should be fulfilled. Social misery and dislocation, as well as personal woe, attend upon its non-fulfilment.

All this you might deduce merely from reading the foregoing essays: I wish now to get closer to the subject by studying man himself and in himself.

§ II: DUAL UNITY IN MAN

THIS is not an essay of general philosophy, nor even of psychology, but one that is meant to explain in what way the Catholic Church looks at man's destiny. Still, a minimum of explanation must be offered as to what she holds that man is; and enough ought to be stated to show that this is not out of keeping with what man, without any appeal to outside authority, is conscious that he is.

Whatever else a man may think about himself, he is conscious of himself as *urged* interiorly to certain things. He experiences the urge to preserve himself—to extend himself—to reproduce himself. For my part, I consider all these "urges" to be aspects of one and the same vital impetus or force: but it is convenient to think of them as three. Quite without argument, the living creature feels the necessity to eat—to drink—to defend itself by throwing up its arm and so forth when attacked. But it does not want just to remain as it is: it tries to be *more*—it tends to "get," to possess. And when it has got a thing, it so identifies the thing with itself, that its possession becomes somehow part of itself—one says one has "extended one's personality" over this or that. If someone takes away what is mine, I feel that *I* am what is attacked and injured. I need a certain amount of outside apparatus to be, even, my proper self. Finally, there is the urge towards self-reproduction:

*The evidence
of conscious-
ness*

a man feels deep within him that alone he is incomplete: it is not "good" for man to be alone: he requires a mate, and the natural result of this association of two lives is a child, and a home. When I am alive, living with wife and child in a home, then the fulness of my human nature has been acquired. In any case, then, you observe that man is imperfect at first: he strains *towards* something: he has a destiny.

I next observe that all these urges or instincts admit of a "too much" and "too little." As a rule it is the "too much" that is noticeable. A man may allow his instinct for self-preservation so to master him that he cannot stop himself eating, though he knows that the food he likes is bad for him in large quantities—and if "gluttony" in this sense is on the whole observed in older men, so that the goutier an old man is, the more he is sure to want to eat rich foods and to drink port, the instinct for drink does not wait for old age before it starts to be a nuisance in very many lives. Quite young men may let themselves become unable to resist so much as the smell of drink, when the door of a public-house they are passing swings open, but in they go. Others cannot resist the craving to get, to take. The glittering trinket fascinates them, and they pocket it. If you are poor, this is called stealing. If you are rich and important, they call it kleptomania; if you are a politician, it is called "extending your sphere of influence." But it comes back to the fact that you cannot now keep your hands off things, be they yours or not. And everybody knows how the sexual urge can so increase within a man as to make him, as they say, a sexual maniac. All this means that instincts can get out of hand, and may master you instead of serving you: you may become their victims and their slaves.

But now—what is this "you" who should master and who may succumb to instincts? Are not your instincts "you"? Part, at any rate, of you? It is *I* who want to eat, to get, to mate. Am I then two "*I*'s"? No. I say: "*I* must not let *myself* eat sugar when *I* have diabetes; drink the fifth, tenth, fifteenth glass that *I* should like to: fall in love with Mrs. So-and-So." "*I* must not let *myself* . . ."

I see then very clearly that I am somehow double—there is in me something which is "*I*" which yet has not to allow something else, which is "*I*," to act always according to the instinct of the moment, but must say to the "instinctive self"—"No. Not just now: later. Not so-and-so—someone else. Not so much: not so little: not like that: not at all!" This at least suggests that the element in me which gives these orders is the more important, the more dignified and to-be-attended-to, of the partners.

Now—still speaking roughly and without entering into details or subtleties—I can observe that this "instinctive self" resides in, or quite simply *is* my body. Nothing will ever induce men to

think that they haven't got bodies. I shall always say: "My head aches: my back hurts: I have sprained my ankle." And so far as instincts go, this is where they reside. It is my body that requires food and drink: clothes and material comfort: the sexual life. And it is *not* a bodily thing that tells my body to do what it doesn't want to and not to do what it does want to—*e.g.*, to get up and dress when "I" want to stay in bed: not to drink another glass when "I" want to drink another. Say I am honestly very thirsty, and it is hot, and beer is accessible. Left to itself, my instinctive "I" would fling itself on that drink and swallow it and be unable to act otherwise. But a *thought*, as we say, occurs to me—"I know beer makes me sleepy: my business rival is just coming to discuss a plan—I shall need all my wits about me. I daren't risk drinking." I still am thirsty: the flagon still is handy: I none the less don't touch it, for a thought has intervened. And if there is still something "material" about a business rival, a sleepy brain, and a financial transaction, you can think of something still more "abstract"—for example, that the beer isn't mine and that it would be stealing to take it and that stealing is wrong. The notion, then, of wrong, attended to, judged more important than bodily pleasure, used as a motive, comes in to check my bodily instinct and its natural sequel—action. I already begin to see pretty clearly that these two elements that make me up—these two coefficients—are, one of them bodily, one of them not. Examine them now a little more closely.

Here is my body with its senses and instincts. It sees, tastes, touches particular objects—round, square, red, blue things: hard or soft things: sweet or sour things. It hears a shout, a whisper, first one sound and then another. Also it is my palate and my tongue and my throat that are soothed or disgusted with food: and it is my system of internal organs that have to deal with the food when I have eaten it. It is my body too that exhibits the cravings I have mentioned, especially that of appetite for what suits it, and shrinking from what harms it. When a fly flicks up to my eye, I blink without waiting to argue about it: a baby makes by instinct for its mother's milk and cries if it cannot get even that which it does not know it wants.

Now how different is my "mind." *Thought* can do all sorts of things that are just the opposite to those which the body does. I can think, for example, of "circle," which is an entirely abstract notion, and one which you never find realised in the concrete. You can have a small white round biscuit: a middling-sized black round gramophone record: a large green round bowling-green: but "circle" is neither white nor green nor black, nor two inches nor two miles across: it has nothing to do with size, colour, weight—you could destroy all round objects in the world, and your notion of "circle" would remain for ever as true as it for ever has been

true. You realise at once that you cannot cut off a yard of thought : nor weigh out an ounce of thought : not even have a coloured thought, whatever people may say about red rages and feeling blue. In other words, there is something in me which by nature deals with individual concrete things, and something else which by nature deals with universal abstract things—ideas.

Further, this latter element is what sees *order* among things and even puts it there. For example, so far as the actual paint goes, which catches my eye, a portrait is merely a number of daubs alongside of one another. My mind holds them together into a "unity," an order, a whole. And it is the mind of the artist that has seen to it that the daubs be put down not haphazard (as if he had thrown several pots of paint at a canvas), but in an order. And when an artist looks at a view, he invariably, for such is his peculiar sort of mind, pulls it about in his thought till it makes a "picture," falls into proportions. If he paints it, he will alter the masses of shadow, or intensify lights, and even change the disposition of the buildings somewhat, till a kind of rhythm is established. Critics then cry out : "But that is not *like* Piccadilly," or the Pyramids, or whatever the scene may be. "No," answers he, "but it's better. It's less lop-sided : it makes a better *picture* so." He has added *order*. Similarly, what you hear with your ear is simply a number of sounds that beat upon it : it is your mind that puts them together into a shape, a tune. A tune is for the ear what a pattern is for the eye. Words, so to say, meaning nothing when taken separately, have been put together so as to form a meaningful sentence for the mind, and by means of the mind. Not that everybody's mind is equally good at doing this—most people who listen to music have to leave out almost everything in order to retain the "tune" : often that is all they so much as listen for : the musician perceives and enjoys the harmony as well as the melody : he sees deep, as well as "along" : he not only follows the music as it flows, but delights in the sheer flow, the curving rhythmic changes.

So far we have thought of "instincts" as proper to the body, and so in a strict sense they are. But people often call any "appetite," or urge, or natural tendency, an "instinct." This breeds confusion, for not all "appetites" are instinctive in the physical sense. First and foremost, our *power* of knowing has the *appetite* for knowing. From sheer inquisitiveness up to an ardent and most pure desire for truth, I experience in myself the desire to *know*. In a moment I shall qualify this, for you can hear phrases spoken like : "Don't tell me : I don't want to know !" But then you will observe that you fear a piece of knowledge that would practically interfere with something you want to do. On the whole, people don't like being ignorant.

When I say "I know," I mean that I have appropriated by my mind a thing that *is*. I cannot even say, with any real meaning,

that I know a thing that *isn't*: I can be mistaken, and think that a thing is so and so when it is not: but I cannot desire to make a mistake—I always mean to get at what a thing really is, unless, of course, it interferes with me, as I said, and then I bluff myself. Hence I want to strike an agreement between my mind and a thing. When I do know a thing, I have, first, reached a *fact*: I know the fact. And second, I have enriched my mind to that extent—it stood neutral to the fact before I knew it; there was no active harmony established between my mind and the fact. When I know it, there is. So I can say that my mind has an appetite for “truth,” and by truth I shall mean, that a fact exists, that I have turned my mind to it, and have adapted my mind so as to lay hold of it in accordance with what it *is*. So I can say, for example, That is a rose—a real rose—a *true* rose. And I have a real and *true* idea of what a rose is. My mind does not misrepresent the rose.

However, living as we do, body-souls, we can normally only *get at* the rose, or any other object, by way of our senses: we have to “see” it with our eyes, and very likely augment our method of reaching it by smelling it and even touching it. I have a much “truer,” more adequate idea of a rose when I have not only seen its shape and colour but savoured its fragrance and felt its velvety softness. Even if someone describes a thing to me that I have never seen, such as a Feather-Snouted Yak, they have to help me out by saying that a yak is (or isn't) like a goat, and I presumably remember what feathers and snouts are like, and add this knowledge in with what my informant has administered to my pictorial imagination. So while I can truly know a rose, and even a yak, I know them as my senses supply them to me. I am grateful to my senses for doing so, though they cannot do it always very successfully, as when, for example, I catch my first sight of a yak in a densish mist. But at times the senses actually interfere with our ideas, as when we try to “think” a “circle,” and cannot help “imagining” it (as we saw) like a round thing, which it isn't and never was or will be. But even so, the senses assist us a little by providing the vague floating image which helps us to rivet our attention. But when you come on to conceptions like that of the fourth dimension, the invasion of sense-imagery is a sheer disaster: what more fatuous than the *drawings* of “fourth-dimensional” objects that you sometimes see inserted into articles on that subject? Similarly, and most of all, the senses are no suitable instrument in any way for knowing God himself, whom even the purest idea cannot adequately represent.

Hence we must say that the normal way of knowing, at least in this sort of life which we are living and about which we are talking, is to “pick up” some object by means of our senses, and forthwith, by the sheer natural power of the mind, to get a “true idea” of it, which “true idea” is nothing less than the mind itself adapted to

the thing known. Thus we are right to say that by means of our idea of the thing, we know the thing. The upshot of all this is, that the mind wants to "know," and is healthy and happy when it is knowing, and when it is knowing properly, that is, adapting itself successfully to what the object of its knowledge really is. The well-being, then, of our mind is its Knowledge of Truth.¹

But you observe that that which knows also wills. The will *Will* too is a sort of appetite. But not just any appetite—not one, for example, that in no way involves and presupposes knowledge. You cannot strictly speaking *will* what you do not know. In fact, it exhibits its action best of all in *choice*—when it acts, as we say, freely. I *select* one of two or several objects of which my mind takes stock. Short of that, I may even know no more than this—that I lack something: that I am in need of something. Then my vague appetite goes forth in quest of it knows not what exactly, save that whatever it is, I need it. Moreover, it is chiefly for the sake of clearness that I thus mark off the "will" from "knowledge": for my will can quite well stimulate my mind to enquire further—"I want something so much, that I am sure that it exists: look for it!" or again, it can check my knowledge—it can make me yield assent to something that I desire, even though I half know that it will not be good for me; and it can prevent my attending to what I fear may turn out to be true, and objectionably so. But in all these ways of behaving there is always a certain amount of knowledge that comes first. I may not know a fact, but I may suspect that it is there, and be pretty sure that I could find out if I hunted. But the introduction of that word "good" gave us a hint. It suggested that though in a sense I am bound to like pleasant things, I am not bound to *will* them. I choose very many things in which the pleasure is but incidental. I may like taking exercise, but I would take it even if I did not like it, because I have decided that it is good for me. I am resolved to do, and in fact do, things I simply loathe, because I hold that they are right, and that I ought to do them. (And that word *ought* gives us another hint that we shall take in a moment.) On the other hand, my feeling that a thing is pleasant, or hateful, may quite dominate my will, so that I yield to the pleasant action or shirk the painful one, hating myself for succumbing all the while. Nay, so far are such actions from being connected with knowing, that they may involve forgetting. I am insulted: I "see red": I forget everything else—nay, I "forget myself"—and I kill the man.

¹ For the sake of clearness, I want henceforward to call that thing which is associated with our body so as to form a "person" (an "I"), the *soul*: in so far as it is engaged in thinking and knowing in its normal way, I want to call it "the mind": that which it is in itself, is *spirit*. This, I repeat, for the sake of clearness, and not meaning to discuss the *relation* of "thought" and "will," as "faculties," to the "soul." By "faculties" I mean "*powers*."

The process of choosing seems really to be this—I become aware of two or more facts: if neither attracts me—interests me—I pass them by. If only one of them attracts me, I cannot but attend to it until I see a reason for attending to the other, and then I may direct my attention to *that* one. But if they both attract me equally, and for just the same reason, my tendency is so to hesitate as to stay paralysed and do nothing with regard to either. But if one attracts me for one reason (*e.g.* that it is pleasant) and the other for another (*e.g.* that it is good), my mind can bring itself so to attend to the one, that the other practically fades out of sight, and the attraction of the former becomes stronger. Then it will turn from being an idea into being an ideal, and it will no more be a mere attracting force, but a reasonable motive. Then I choose it. Yet even so, not inevitably. I still have the consciousness that I can pause, and not yield to the motive. It is, on the whole, in this negative power of *not yielding* that I catch myself acting “freely.”

Notice then that the real source of the difficulty of “free will” arises from my using the imagination, and imagery drawn from the material world, by means of which to examine and explain the activity of what we have seen to be essentially non-material—spiritual. I cannot but picture my “mind” as a light I turn on to an object. I turn it on to this object rather than that, or on this “feature” in one object rather than on that. But then, *why* do I so turn it? Inevitably? or because I choose to? The problem gets pushed one stage further back. Then I think of an attractive object as “pulling” me towards it. I allow one object to pull me harder than the other. But have I then not already made a choice? Why did I do so? Inevitably? Or freely? Put it thus: In order to choose X rather than Y, I must see X as more desirable, or good, than Y. But why do I so see it? Because I attend to it. But have I chosen to attend to it? If so, why? Apparently because I see a reason for attending to it, and choose to give that reason priority. Observe then that so long as you try to “picture” the process of a free choice, you will always fail. For you will always be introducing metaphors drawn from weights and physical forces, and will never do more than get confused by applying these to the spiritual thing that the soul is.

You will be far better advised to rely upon two facts—one is, your personal consciousness. Nothing will induce you, or has ever really induced anyone, to believe that all your actions are sheerly automatic. Many of them may be: indeed, you can “attend” to this or that fact so hard, that far from being able to choose, you cease to be able so much as to pause, and are swept to the thing that is tugging at you, and whose “tug,” by the very fact of attending to it, you have increased. However, there is always a residuum of activity in your life for which you know quite well you are responsible, for which you deserve reward or punish-

ment, praise or blame. And this radical fact of self-awareness—awareness of self as responsible—clears itself up when you tie it down to the special awareness of “I ought.” Not only that I *can*—*e.g.*, choose tea, or choose coffee—but, that I *ought*, *e.g.* to get up and not stay in bed. If you think this out carefully, you will see that you simply cannot reduce “I ought” to meaning “I must.” Even if you speak of “moral compulsion,” it is not coercion and inevitability. If I “ought” I *can* and I *need* not. Nor certainly is “I ought” the same as “it would pay.” For often it doesn’t. Nor yet, as “people expect of me”; for often I “ought” to do things that people either will know nothing about, or, may even object to my doing. Finally, “I ought” does not mean that I impose an obligation on my *self*. For did it mean merely that, well, the authority that imposes a command, can abrogate it. By “I ought” I imply then two things—an Authority that has the right to impose an obligation on me, and freedom in myself to disregard it if I choose. It is not here the place to prove that in the long run the source of such Obligation must be God,¹ but so indeed it is.

With these two irresistible data of our consciousness the whole world is obviously and ever has been in accord. So true is this, that not one of those very few theorists who argue that we are in no sense free, can behave for five minutes as if they were not, nor treat anyone else as if they were not. A “determinist” will refuse absolutely to be treated as a machine; and will not dream of bringing up his child as if it were a machine. And even a naughty child knows it isn’t a machine. When you tell it to do so and so, its characteristic answer is: “Shan’t!” It asserts its wicked little will against you. It just *won’t*, and its joy is in its “won’t!”²

It remains then that we have the power, and the obligation, of choosing what is for our good, when we see it so to be.

§ III: MATTER AND SPIRIT

It is worth noticing that already we have got, I think, quite clearly the idea that there are two interacting elements in man; if I have presented the instincts rather as in conflict with thought than as merely differing from it, that is because in *conflict* the idea of *contrast* is more obvious.

¹ See Essay iii, pp. 84-85, 87.

² I might add that a confusion arises sometimes, owing to people thinking that free-will implies that you can act *without* a motive. We have not said that; but, that you are not forced instantly to act according to even the stronger motive. And again confusion arises owing to its being thought that we suggest that all human acts are as a matter of fact “free.” I suppose there are very few fully free acts in a day of life; and many that are not free at all. Much is automatic; much is impulsive; much is very largely just instinctive.

I have now to speak of this thinking element as such, and in doing so, I shall be forced to repeat parts of what I have already said : but in view of the immense importance of the subject, this does not matter in the least.

*Properties
of matter*

Unless we are prepared to deny that "matter" exists at all we must study it, and we must do so by way of those qualities through which it becomes accessible to physics and to mechanics. These are, on the whole : Extension, configuration, mensurability ; molecular intervallation, elasticity, compressibility, divisibility ; ponderability (according to surfaces, density and volume) ; and inertia, displacement, acceleration (in regard to movement).

The human body is manifestly then material. Moreover, "sensation" and "feeling" (we use these words, at first sight identical in meaning, as referring to more, or less, localised effects — you have the "sensation" of being burnt in your tongue when a dish is unexpectedly peppery : you may have the "all-over-ish" "feeling" of "not being quite so well") are activities of living *matter*, which, because it is living, does not for that lose the properties of matter, but has them in its own *way* merely. After a sense has been occupied with its proper object for some time, it grows *tired* and can no longer function readily. Sensation then and feeling are states of the whole organism in general and of special parts in particular, and not merely of brain or nervous system. It remains that they are material, and belong to a material subject, *i.e.* the body. I add, that they at least share in the general determinism of matter : given the proper stimulus, they cannot, normally, *but* react ; and they do so in response to the actual interior state of the organism, its movement, tone, and impressions, and also, in regard to its physical action and reaction connected with other material bodies. Even sense "appetency" or bodily instinct and emotion, correspond normally to sense-perception and to feeling, and are limited therefore to the material organism.¹

Now we have already suggested that when we are aware of a thing, we are not only experimentally aware of *it*, but also of the fact that we are aware. There is an "over-knowledge." I know that this is a red-hot coal, and that I have burnt myself with it and that I am hurt. Being hurt is not the same as the coal ; and knowing that I am hurt is not the same as being hurt. A reviewing faculty exists, higher than what it reviews, which recognises and

¹ It does not follow from this that sense-activity occurs in isolation from the rational life, of which we shall speak in a moment. It has already been insisted that man is a whole, and, speaking of what is normal, his activity is *total*. I feel so and so, and think so and so concomitantly : I think so and so, and experience emotion. A whispered word can make me faint ; and a scent can revive memories that fill me with sorrow or delight. But it will be seen, once more, that the sensation of scent *is* not the thought, nor even the sadness or delight. Nor does the sensation turn into the thought.

assesses and correlates sensations and other things. "I touched that coal: that is why I am burnt and suffering: this is bad for my hand—it will be sore—and most unfortunate because I am booked to play at a concert to-morrow."

We have already seen that none of the properties of matter, such as those enumerated above, can be applied to these thoughts or to any thought. I cannot cut an inch off my thoughts about my finger, though I can burn an inch off my finger, and so forth. Correspondingly, what is proper to thought cannot be said about matter. The "idea," which is the primary product of intelligence, not only has *not* the properties above mentioned as belonging to matter, but *has* "meaning," which matter as such has not got. What it "means" involves mind-play upon it. The mental act, moreover, of seeing "relations" between ideas, lies outside the scope of matter, and so, in fact, does the power of seeing relations between material objects. If I see two men, all that I do see is "two men": it is my mind that "relates" them as father and son or even as bigger and smaller. And when it comes to inter-relating two ideas, I see better still that I see them as two and yet make them co-exist. The two operations issuing into two ideas can yet be brought under a single operation, "thinking them together" and not merely in succession, and seeing in one single glance their *relation* as similar or different.

It is worth stating at once that this cannot take place in matter, which consists of "part outside part" and is susceptible only of *succession* in its modifications. The mind which can be aware of two things simultaneously and of their relation, is, therefore, to be called "simple." This is here a technical word meaning, precisely, that a substance that is thus simple has no parts outside parts. The mind then is in substance and in kind different from the body, which is material.

No single judgement, classification, distinction or inference can be made without involving this substantial simplicity of the mind, for, not only have the two or more ideas to co-exist, but I have to be able to think one in terms of the other—for example, the man George, as King, and as Fifth and so on. I must see these two ideas at the same time in one "medium." Did my mind consist of parts outside parts, as matter does, I could not do this.

Still more does reasoning involve the "immateriality" of the intelligence which reasons. For I either pass from a general idea to a particular one, *e.g.* impurity is evil—therefore adultery is: or, from a particular one to a general one—men are part body; therefore they must be classed as animals. But an *idea* cannot fall under the senses or the cognisance of any material thing whatsoever. The thinking mind must retain its identity of consciousness throughout the operation, and yet be able to modify itself as it forms the new ideas without any intervention or stimulus

external to itself. But the inertia of matter renders such immanent activity impossible. The mind thus seeing the meaning of the relation of two ideas, involves not only its knowing the two ideas each with its meaning, but also forming within itself further ideas concerning them which are not actually there in the data supplied to it.

Personally, I see the immateriality of the knowing self best from the fact of self-consciousness. I not only am conscious of this and that, but I am aware of that very consciousness as *mine*, as "I-conscious." It is obvious that the *subjective* aspect—the *I-knowing*—is not given to me by those objects that are not I. That would contradict their identity. So the notion of Self arises from what is *not* those objects, and yet in some sense has become identical with them. *I am my ideas*. I do not merely mirror them to myself. I am they, and they are I. No material object is, or can be, thus *self-aware*. No form of "relation" is given by sense-perception, and least of all, this most intimate and impressive of relations—of one's own acts to one's own nature. The power here involved is therefore of a quite different order from that of the senses and of matter. Perhaps in the act of choice is the identity of one's acts with one's self revealed with supreme cogency. Even when I see my motives to be interior to me—my self, in short, presenting certain "final causes" to my self, I still have the power of *self-direction* which is excluded from matter by reason of its "inertia."

*Spirituality
of the soul*

If you reflect upon this characteristic of "simplicity"—of existing *not* so as to have "parts outside parts"—you will see that so to exist is to be indestructible. For from what does the destructibility of a thing emerge? From its being composed of parts. A blow from outside can shatter it: a force acting from within can explode it. In no other way can it cease to exist, unless, of course, God withdraws his sustaining power. An object therefore can be destroyed by being reduced to its component parts; that, then, which is not composed of parts provides no starting-point for its destruction. Therefore the immaterial, "spiritual" element in man is imperishable—for I prefer to reserve the word "immortal" for religious considerations later on.

It is true that this order of ideas is an abstract one, and approached with reluctance and difficulty by one who is not accustomed to thinking in that sort of way. It does not therefore follow that it is a bad way. And even those who do not apply this sort of thinking to this sort of topic, constantly apply it to others—for they theorise. Even when they deny the immateriality of the mind, they are exercising *reason* when they offer "proofs." Yet, again, nothing is more common in the periodical discussions about the immortality of the soul than to observe sentimental reasons being given for the belief that it *is* immortal, such as: "Surely we shall see those whom

we loved once more?" or, "surely the Beautiful, the Noble and the True are Eternal Values," whatever that may mean. And other reasons given against it are no less sentimental, and indeed are more so, being most decidedly not intellectual: such as, "I see no trace of two principles, material and spiritual, in the brain": "When I alter the brain, I alter thoughts; therefore when the brain crumbles, thought ceases altogether; there is nothing left to survive." It is *because* the soul is immaterial—spiritual (to put the word positively)—that no scalpel ever will discover it. The scalpel, a material object like the brain, can deal *with* the brain; and the brain, a material object, contains material elements proper to itself, and will not reveal the spirit any more than the analysis of a wire as such will reveal the electricity with which it is electrified—and even that is not a very good comparison, since after all electricity is, ultimately, in the same order of existence as the wire is.

Still, an *electrified* wire may be compared to the *animated* body, which is then "I." The electricity does not run through the wire like water through a tube; it is not even in the wire as water is in sponge, or air in lungs. Still, there it is, and it works; and if you modify the wire, you modify the way in which the electricity is able to work in and through it; and no one has begun to say anything whatsoever against the immateriality of the soul when they have said that by stimulating or injuring some part of the brain they have altered your powers of thinking. Of course. They have made one of the two human coefficients more, or less, apt to co-operate in the total activity of the self.

It merely remains to say that while we can quite easily say negative things of the soul—that it is immaterial, and therefore non-spatial, and indestructible—it is obviously harder to describe it positively, precisely because all our language is drawn from what is reached through our senses, and necessarily keeps the qualities of its starting-point—as, when I say "I see," meaning "I understand." Yet we can say that spirit is self-conscious, produces ideas, sees their meaning, relation, value, becomes all things without losing its sense of personal identity, is itself in all its acts, recognises at once its limitations and its possibilities. While then it finds no adequate solution to the problem of the universe within itself, it craves to solve it, and asks therefore to pass beyond the prison of material things and to profit by its imperishable nature. Yet even so, and seeing that its explanation of things scarcely less limited than it is itself must needs be but a partial explanation, it cries aloud for communion with that Being to which it must ultimately be related in order even to exist, a Being not discernible by sense, nor exhaustible even by intelligence, yet containing in its independent Existence the adequate explanation of all that it is not. Finite Reality was that which first evoked thought; and finite reality is thus seen to lead, inevitably, towards the Infinite

Reality, source and end of the finite, and Alpha thus and Omega of all existence.

*Unique
nature of
man*

Without going any further, we can see how mysterious and unique a thing is Man. At times he might seem to us almost a richer nature than that which the Angels are: for they are unmitigated spirits, just as a stone is matter and nothing more; man, however, includes in himself matter and spirit too. I could not, however, admit that this is so, for, if there is space, I shall have to show that association with "body" does quite as much to cramp and interfere with the full and free action of man's spirit, as it does towards supplying it with material for thought. But already we can admire the richness, at any rate, of God's creative action, which leaves no unbridged gulfs in his Universe, but has linked spiritual with material in the person at any rate of man. One more, and only one, Union of a *personal* sort remains to be exhibited by Divine Revelation—that of God and Man in the Person of Jesus Christ. But that is not for this essay. I might, however, suggest that the whole of God's action can be contemplated by us as tending to more and more perfect unions. God is no schismatic: he binds the separate together in Communions each more marvellous than what went before: and though the Universe itself is never to be one *person*, and though men are not to be one person with God, yet already you are finding a hint as to their destiny—one of perfect harmony not only within themselves, but with all that is, and indeed, through the God made Man, with God.¹

§ IV: SUMMARY OF PRECEDING

BEFORE concluding this part, I must point out that Man experiences in himself an instinct quite as profound as any that we have mentioned—that which prompts him not to live in isolation: which urges him to form groups: to fulfil himself in a "society." Man, to use the old phrase, is a "social animal." We all recognise that the complete hermit is somehow abnormal. We recognise that certain actions are bad most obviously because they destroy the links that knit society closely together and make thus for its well-being and permanence—lying, for example, not to insist on murder or adultery. The supreme form that society will take for each man is the State; and while on the one hand we see that "treason" makes a man an "outlaw" or at any rate is regarded as the worst crime of which he can be socially guilty, we also see that if a State, as expressed in its Government or its Chief, has become such as really to prevent the mass of the citizens, or even their great majority, from developing their lives properly and being able to live suitably as individuals, it has ceased to be a true State at all, and should

¹ The concept of "spirituality" will be found more fully explained in Essay iii. See pp. 101 ff.

disappear. I cannot here embark on the discussion of when, for example, revolution is permissible: suffice it to say that the citizen does not exist for the sake of the State, but the State for that of the citizen, and for that very reason must take the greatest possible care of that perfect human unit which the family is. Of families the great unit of the State is composed. Anything that injures the family, rots the very texture of Society. You may therefore say that the individual man or woman finds, in normal circumstances, his or her perfection in the family: and families that are right and happy so compose the State as to make it a good State, and to derive yet more strength, stability, and general well-being from their mutual association within that State.

We see then that whatever else may prove to be the destiny of Man, it is one that must take cognisance of his body, his mind, his will, and his aptitude for "social" life, and, what is more, of the fact that there is in him somewhat that survives physical death, so that all his bodily life, his use of ideas, and of his will and its choices, and of his life as member of a family and as a citizen, lead up to the producing of a thing that shall pass into a further way of being *in good condition*.

Hence to me, the eternal fascination of human nature consists largely in this—that it is one, yet manifold; complete, yet growing, and ever changing without losing its identity; unique in its position, yet with an infinity of attachments in this direction and in that—driving its roots to the very depths of material existence, yet flinging its shoots and tendrils high towards things that are wholly spiritual; adjusting itself, that it may be the more permanent; yet shielding itself and retreating ever into the secret recesses of personality, that never may, never can, be shared; uniting itself with one, with a score, with a million individuals, yet never fusing itself even with one, let alone with the race in its entirety; a thing manifestly of time and place, yet peering over into unfathomable futures, and reaching into worlds beyond all systems of unimagined suns.

Thus, you behold man standing up on the surface of the earth and striding over it, hunting its beasts and living on their flesh and on the plants, and increasing thus his bones and blood and his muscles. He seems so solid, so one with the other solids of existence, with all that you can see and taste and handle and make no mistake about. And then you suddenly find that you are thinking of man in his maturity, of healthy man, of well-developed man, and are forgetting the helplessness of his babyhood, and (what the Greeks, who loved the body, did so detest and passionately shrink from) the fallings-to-pieces of old age. You realise that the prime of bodily life is a laboriously achieved and swiftly passing hour; that there have been growing-pains, stresses and strains, and that generally man notices his strength, and seeks to enjoy the

gifts of the body, most when they force themselves on his attention by their unreliability.

Since then the most solid-seeming turns out to be beyond all else most wraith-like, you half expect the paradox to verify itself, that the most unsubstantial, the invisible, unseizable thing, thought, vision, the "dream that cometh through the multitude of the business," will prove to be the strongest thing of all. You turn then from the flashing glowing limbs to that which after all alone appreciates so much as the pleasure of bodily life—for without thought you would not know you were alive, nor be conscious even of pleasure.

Note on Geocentricism

It is often asserted that the whole medieval way of thinking about *man* has been destroyed beyond hope of repair by the discovery that our planet, the Earth, is not the material centre of the Universe. We are constantly being told that our earth is but a whirling grain of dust, one among millions of millions of such grains. How, then, we are asked, can anything very dignified be perceived in human nature? And anyhow, the medieval notion of man's being the crown of creation, and of all things else having been created for his sake, must be once and for all abandoned.

Those who write this are, first of all, victims of their imagination as never the medievals were; and further, have but a faulty knowledge of history, philosophical and theological; and finally, are guilty of logical lapses in their reasoning. For (1), medieval thinkers were never so silly as to suppose that man was great in origin or in destiny because he lived in a place that was centre of the universe: it was because they saw that man, being part spiritual, was intrinsically great, that it seemed appropriate to them that his domicile should hold even physically a central position among places where there was no reason to suppose there were any inhabitants at all. But (2), they are not to be supposed to have been the *victims* of such a notion, as they would have been if they had held that anything *depended* on a mere physical centrality of the earth. That would have been to succumb to the vulgarest of illusions, one, that is, of the imagination. But the thinkers who worked out the theory of, say, transubstantiation were the very last persons to succumb to the imagination, since the exclusion of all imaginative data is the most obvious of prerequisites if anyone is even to begin to understand the dogma—and discussion often shows that non-Catholic controversialists are quite unable to grasp what Catholics mean by transubstantiation because, precisely, they are unable to divest themselves of their imagination, and persist in thinking that Substance means a lump of something. Medieval writers surrounded their doctrine with all sorts of imaginative decoration, but they never confused the two, any more than our

Lord did, when he described heaven in terms of feasting. And (3) even if there are "inhabitants" on *e.g.* the planets, even we are able to perceive that they are not "men," since human life could not be lived on gaseous Jupiter or frozen moon and so forth. But that our Universe is densely "populated" by beings other than men, which indeed far outstrip men in natural dignity, the Christian tradition has always maintained, and tells of spiritual beings manifold in grade of excellence—indeed, St Thomas was perfectly prepared to admit (by way of a quite different line of reasoning) that every "angel" or "pure spirit" was a species in itself! So since the Christian religion does not even profess to exist save for *man's* sake, and to tell us more about *man* and his destiny and how he should achieve it, and since the centre of that religion is Christ who was *Man* and upon *this* earth, the earth most certainly is and ever must be the physical centre of the Christian's universe, and, for him, everything else lies round it. Of what may exist upon other planets or in the stars, and what wonders God may work there, we know nothing at all, save the general truth that through the Second Person of the most Holy Trinity God wills to establish a communion between himself and all that he has created. Enough for men that they live upon this earth, are what they are, and achieve what they were created for by means of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man. There is indeed a singularly beautiful poem by the late Mrs. Alice Meynell on this very subject. Neither the geocentric theory, then, nor the heliocentric theory, have anything whatsoever to do with the view we take of Man, nor ever had.

§ V: GOD THE END OF MAN

WE have, so far, considered Man as it were in himself, examining the constituents of nature, albeit these displayed themselves forth-^{Evidence of order in man} with as *tending* to this or that (truth, good, social life, etc.). We are now able to think of him as it were from God's end, and thus to perceive more clearly man's destiny. Everything that exists is so interlocked, interactive, that just as it has been impossible even hitherto to speak about what man is, without insisting upon that towards which he is tending, so now it will be impossible to speak of what God means that man should become, without assuming all that we have said as to what man already by nature *is*.

We can at any rate see this—first, that man is made on a certain *plan*; that he grows. Even his body grows, though save in cases of violent abnormality a man does not grow eight foot tall nor exist under eight inches long. But the very fact that we can call a dwarf or a giant abnormal, proves that there is a *norm*—a set of natural limits within which a human body develops and establishes itself. The human mind appears at first sight not to have any such limits for its growth; for you can always learn more and

more. But this is a confused way of looking at the facts ; for, however much the human mind can always go on acquiring knowledge and thereby growing, it is always the same *sort* of knowledge that it gets, namely, limited ideas which are always associated in some way with a physical coefficient, and we shall have to say this even when the soul has become discarnate after physical death ; for, say Catholic theologians, it always has and retains an aptitude and even an appetite for association with “ body,” whereas an angel never has any such thing. Hence “ man ” lives within a certain “ order ” of nature ; it is “ out of order ” that he should be an imbecile, and he cannot struggle out of his co-natural limits and *be* an angel. If you throw a heap of stones down on the ground, however much you may go on chucking stones on to the top of it, the group has no order within itself, though it can *enter into* an intellectual “ order ” with regard to its surroundings, like a cairn, for instance, which I can build “ in order to ” show the way to travellers over a fell-side, or even, “ in order to ” remind them that someone has died there. It then enters into the “ order ” of cairns and is not a mere haphazard heap any more. But I can put order into and among the very stones that I thus place one on the top of another, so as for example to produce a house by means of them : then the building definitely enters into the order of architectural stonework. Indeed, I can pick and choose the *kind* of order with which I infuse the stonework, and I have not merely a column, but a Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian order of column-work ; I can put stones together so as to make a building, and a building which is a cathedral, and a cathedral which is Gothic, and a Gothic cathedral which is Early English, Decorated, or Perpendicular according to the “ order ” of architecture I am using or creating.

Therefore it is seen what God’s making man “ according to plan ” means—man has a certain structure within himself, and he is meant to fit in with a plan that God (to use human language) has in his mind. Again, there is a certain “ order ” within man—all that is in him is disposed so that each part “ sets towards ” each other part, and all conspire so as to make a “ whole,” and yet man himself exists “ in order to ” other things, is what he is that he may fit in with other parts of God’s far greater scheme, and *is* in order that he may *become*, and so become as at last adequately to *be*.

Now God cannot possibly make or do anything save, in the last resort, for his own glory. What does that mean ? I neither can nor need go into details here, since the nature of God has been spoken of elsewhere.¹ But God cannot have any *end* outside himself, since he would then be subordinated to that end, and God

*Man made
for God*

¹ Essay iii.

is the crown of all that is, and the summit as well as the source of all Order whatsoever. "From him are all things, and unto him, and in him they all of them subsist." Yet, in this no "selfishness" is to be discerned; for created things *are* God's exterior glory, just by being what they should be. Therefore man, at his most perfect, is a marvellous exterior Glory given to God. More than anything in our world, man is "in the image, in the likeness" of God, for among all things of which we are aware, man *knows*, and is *free*. But when man is at his most perfect, he is in his *best* way of *being*; but happiness is nothing else than the consciousness of well-being. Therefore when Man is most truly giving glory to God and fulfilling the final end of his existence, he is at his happiest. So God made man to *be* happy.

We have then first of all to say that *God* made man what he is in *order* that he may *become* perfect in his "order" or "line," and reach thereby his happiness and give the perfect glory to his Creator.

Hence God, in creating man, wished that a perfect harmony should exist, first of all, between the body and the spirit that unite to make up man. Such perfect harmony between the body with its instincts and the soul with its power of knowing and choosing, was brought about by the "gift of integrity," a "preternatural" gift of which more will be said in another essay.¹ Moreover, he willed that man should continue to be body-soul. Hence in Catholic dogma the assertion of the resurrection of the body is included.² When my body dies, my soul survives, and survives, as I said, with an aptitude for reanimating flesh. The moment God's omnipotence reunites them, the complete man, "I," is there once more. Such, we are taught, is in fact our destiny—to be once more and for ever truly man and nothing else whatsoever—perfected man.

Next, God created us to use our most noble possession, our *Man made to know God* intelligence, in the best way of all, that is, upon the noblest object, that is, upon himself. Hence the knowledge of God is at the root of our true happiness, for after all you cannot love nor enjoy that of which you are quite ignorant; and the destined happiness of our race is always, in Scripture, stated in terms of this true knowledge—The earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea—This is Life Eternal, to know thee, the only true God. This, once more, is a topic which is officially treated in other pages; it is not for me here to prove that we *can* know God at all, nor, by means of what intellectual mechanism, so to say. I will but emphasise one fact of experience, as I believe it to be. At the bottom of modern irreligion, but also, of modern forms of religion itself, lies—I most definitely hold—an often unconfessed conviction

¹ See Essay x: *The Fall of Man and Original Sin*.

² See Essay xxxiv: *The Resurrection of the Body*.

that you cannot and do not really know God at all. In this country, where everyone in some way believes in God, it occurs to no one that you can prove his existence or anything else about him. Nothing seems to astonish a convert more than what you are able to tell him and to show to him about God. Perhaps this is partly due to our national temperament: we hate abstract reasoning, and we have been taught to distrust all authority in religion. But a piece of reasoning is, most definitely, authority, for it may bring us to a conclusion that we do not like, or that anyway we do not "feel" to be true.

But if the Englishman does not "feel" a thing, he is lost. Not long ago a whole series of books on "Faiths" was published, of which the authors were explicitly exhorted not to make any mere catalogue of the articles of their creed, not to adduce arguments on its behalf, but to inform an inquisitive public what their creed "Meant to Them": "*I do feel . . .* May one not feel . . . ?"—which has a psychological or personal interest, but is, religiously, quite the least important fact that you can know. I may be interested to hear that Prof. X., Lady Y. (the earnest social worker), the Rev. Mr. Z., the novelist A., the film-actress B., and a football international C. "do feel" about God—I can even thank God, in my heart, that they are occupied with him at all: but all this implies that my only way of knowing anything about God is by way of studying the impressions of my fellow-men, and that I cannot win any quite certain knowledge of him at all, which can and must survive even in hours when I do not feel anything whatsoever towards or about him, just as (to use a brutal example) a newly married couple continue to love one another, not to insist on the fact that they continue to know one another, even when, on their honeymoon, they are both being sea-sick and are not feeling anything whatsoever about one another. It must most definitely be stated that this uncertainty about God is sub-human, and not what is intended for mankind; and that the kind of cult of uncertainty that you often see to-day in sophisticated persons, is due, perhaps, at its very best, to a Zulu-like timidity of any close contact with God, and a confusion of reverential awe with indecent familiarity, but also, at its frequent worst, to a real fear of finding yourself too compromised—too committed to consequences—should you have to acknowledge that you knew certain things about God "for sure." It might demand of you certain ways of behaving, based not upon your "feeling them to be right," but upon your knowing that they *are* right, little as you enjoyed that knowledge.

To be honest, feeling (if it is to exist at all) should as a rule be itself a consequence; and an habitual association with certain ideas about God does generate very often a profound and quiet contentment which is far more substantial, abiding, and productive than gusts of spiritual emotion are. Truths about God that seem

at first sight to be abstract and chill, like those of his Eternity, his Unchangingness, his Omnipresence, and of course his All-power, All-wisdom, and All-goodness, are able to produce in the soul, even here and now, a very deep happiness. So even the intellectual knowledge we can already gain concerning God, leads us very far towards our true End, which is, as I said, so far as it regards ourselves, Happiness.

I am very far from saying that God cannot or does not impress the knowledge of himself upon human minds in all manner of ways. But I am saying that since the human mind is made by him to know Truth, and can know much about himself, it ought to do so, and is not fulfilling its end if it does not, nor providing man with that happiness which God means him to have. And I will even add a practical conclusion, which is, that children *ought* to be taught about God, assimilating, first, the *conclusions* of right reasoning about him, till they can begin to assimilate the reasoning itself. But in any case and by whatsoever method be judged best, they ought to be *taught*, for, why should the human mind be expected to succeed in this matter all by itself, if no one dreams that in any other department of knowledge it will succeed without due training? I repeat, the mere fact that people say: "A child ought to be allowed to choose its own religion" (when no one would say the same about its food, its dress, or its education in "lay" topics), or "no particular view ought to be taught in schools—the child's mind must not be put into a religious strait-jacket"—this sort of language proves that people do not really think you can know anything for certain about God, but that one person feels this way, another person that, and no one has the right to quarrel with either. Yet it is strictly true to say that it is far more certain that God exists, and is what Catholic theology says he is, than that two plus two make four. Because God is the source of that truth, as of every subordinate and created truth.

Néxt, God is the only true end of the *will*. I mean, one chooses *Man made to love God* things because they seem "good." I don't mean that one may not choose a thing that one knows very well to be bad for one—but one chooses even that because from some narrowed standpoint it seems somehow to be good; *e.g.*, one knows that another glass of wine will be bad for one in an hour's time; but at the moment it seems pleasant and "good" for the satisfying of one's sensual appetite, which indeed it is. Even if a child does what in all but every way is "bad" for it, and by sulking, for example, knows that it is merely hurting itself and will be refused a treat it very much wants to have, and "cuts off its nose to spite its face," it still is giving itself a queer satisfaction at the moment, even if it be nothing else than making its parents miserable or annoyed. We ought therefore to desire and to choose always the fuller, richer, "better" good, in so far as we can; and we become able to do so

by doing so. The best good is what God sees to be best; and since there is nothing better than himself, we ought always to aim at choosing him, and we do so by acting according to his "will," for in choosing thus, we are choosing *his* choice.

*Doing the
will of God*

The first step in this direction is never to choose what we know to be in opposition to God's will, for this is simply to oppose our wills, *i.e.* ourselves, to what is God himself, that is, to Truth and to Life—that is, to slay ourselves out of reality—to divert ourselves away from our only true "end," and to "come to nothing." The next step is positively to do whatsoever we know that God commands us to do, for this is in keeping with God's own nature, and therefore we approximate ever more closely to him who is the absolute Good and source of good and happiness. Then we ought to try to find out those things which are not actually commanded by him, but which in one way or another we know that he loves and prefers. No doubt it is in part because this is so hard a thing to do, God being invisible and unimaginable, that he wills us, as Christians, to contemplate himself in the person of Christ, who has made God manifest to us. But we are not speaking for the moment of the Christian Revelation; and even without it, there is possible for us a real love of God and adhesion to him, for to choose ever what God wills marks a "love of preference," carrying with it an austere joy, devoid maybe of those "pathetic" experiences, those sympathies, which the study of the human life of Christ can hardly fail to arouse in us. But it is worth always remembering that no emotion, however sublime or tender or noble or pitiful, no ecstasy, however marvellous, *is* God. I am not actually, at such moments, "feeling God," but experiencing results in myself—why, in my very nerves—that may be the overflow into those semi-physical regions of a spiritual union with him. It may indeed be much better for me to experience no such emotions: for I continually tend to attach importance to them; to think myself good when I have them, and to become attached to *them*. But that would be to make idols of them, and to remove my spiritual eye from its true object, and to fasten my will to what is not God at all.

*Duty of
social
religion*

Finally, God wishes me to tend to him as to my last End *socially*, since my nature, made by himself, is "social." From the outset, it has been known that I am "my brother's keeper." That is to say, putting it at a minimum, that along of what I *am*, I "influence." I am all the while influencing my surroundings. If I am dislocated, as within God's plan, I put all with which I am in contact "out of joint"; what is rotten, rots. If, on the other hand, I am moving ever towards my Centre, my magnetism draws others with me towards it. All "social" workers should remember this. They endeavour might and main to bring men in closer contact with one another; but they try ever to do so by shunting them, so to say, towards each other upon a vast circum-

ference. As likely as not, thus to push one nearer to a second, is merely to push him further from a third. But if I try to "set towards" the Centre, and to carry others with me towards It, necessarily all these disparate items move nearer to one another too. Such is the good Communion between men that Communion with God necessarily produces.

I think that it becomes at once clear how grateful we should be to God for telling us so clearly the way to Truth, to Right, and to Union. The believer in God, even though he be not a Christian, ought I think to see that any plan for social unification, or pacification, or amelioration, is second-rate and partial, if not bound to fail, if the origin and end of all reality be disregarded. Once you can *start* from God, you already possess the foundation for all fraternity and equality and liberty, for which you will find no adequate foundation if you just examine human nature as it *is*. You must see it as what it is meant to be, and that towards which it tends, no less than that which starts from the One most Perfect God. And when you can be certain about God, you are emancipated from much fumbling and guessing and speculating, and also from the paralysis of scepticism, and again from the fatuity of succumbing to the intellectual fashion of the hour. You need no more be guilty of the snobbishness of trying to keep "up to date," or "in harmony with modern thought." God is neither in date nor out of date. I have no reason to suppose that "modern thought" is more right than any other thought. For, after all, modern thought is what most people think at the moment, or more probably what a group of people who like to imagine that they are leaders of thought are thinking at the moment. But it has constantly occurred in history that the thought of a certain epoch has been less good than that which went before. Thought in our eighth century was not so good as that of our fifth century; and that of our eighteenth century incomparably less good than that of the thirteenth. God's Truth is timeless, and we are able, as we have seen, to participate more and more in it. Even in this part, then, of life, we find more peace and happiness in knowing God than in any amount of material research or discovery.

Moreover, it is goodness on God's part if he chooses to let us know what is right and what wrong. "Religion" is not a mass of arbitrary taboos. God is not playing a cat's part, on the look-out for wretched mice, to seize and worry them. We are able to find sign-posts on our path: we are able to distinguish what *is* path. We are shown the precipice, and the morass. Hence we can move with safety and rapidity. I cannot imagine anything more silly, or, at its worst, more conceited, than to announce that you are going to carry a difficult thing through without any help. What people would describe as the behaviour suited to an unlicked young cub, fresh to his job in business or in civil service, coming out with

*God the
solution of
man's
problems*

his own ideas and impressions and methods and regarding his predecessors as old fogies or reactionary, is quite often recommended as the ideal way of approaching the part of life that concerns the most enormous issues imaginable. "Think your own thoughts: obey your private conscience: express your Self." Granted, if you are so sure that your conscience is instructed sufficiently; that your ideas are as true as they are original; that you possess a self worth expressing, and not one that it would be more decent to keep discreetly veiled for a time, until it has grown a little—until the days of awkward wrists and ankles and gawky foal-like limbs be just a little passed, and some spiritual elegance be discernible in you. . . . Where a self-expression is modest and diffident, tentative and most ready to ask advice, well and good. And the best advice is God's.

It will have been observed that hitherto I have not appealed to Catholic doctrine as such, or as authoritative (which, for us Catholics, it is) to recommend what I have said about the nature of man, or of God, or about the relation in which man stands to God. It is not even necessary so to appeal in order to decide that the human soul is indestructible. Alone the notion of the "resurrection of the body" needs such appeal. It follows quite clearly from what I have said that the soul, on separating itself from the body, stands in a relation to God which is substantial—I mean, either it is thinking what God thinks and choosing what he wills, or it is not. If it is not, it is either totally alien to God in these matters, or partially so. Possibly human reasoning cannot *prove* that the soul is irrevocably united with God once it is totally so at all; nor yet that it can totally exhale itself, so to speak, in an irrevocable act of alienation from God. Still, we can see that human reason is in no way conflicted with, if we find further reason to assert that the soul which leaves the body in complete union with God, stays for ever thus united; or that the soul which has absolutely willed its own separation from the Truth and Right of God, remains for ever thus dis-united. It is hard for human thought to arrive at an "always," "never," "wholly." What we can very easily imagine, and would most naturally assume, is, that souls leave the body in as mixed a state as they have been while united with the body—for is not ordinary experience entirely on the side of men being mixtures? And if the soul leaves the body, mixedly good and bad, may we not find it easy to suppose that in the "next world" it pursues its course of degeneration or improvement? As a matter of fact, Catholic doctrine will be wholly on the side of improvement. Unless a soul has so completely expressed itself in an anti-God act, bad as its state may be, it yet is destined to improve. A word upon this below! At least we can see that the destiny put before man by God is the perfect union of the intelligent soul with the Source of Truth, and of the

soul's free will with God as Source of Right and Good itself. And since there is no reason to suppose that God will ever annihilate a soul, we can see that the proper destiny of a soul is to endure forever, thinking what God thinks, loving what he loves, and therefore united with him in intelligence and will, and happy beyond words in consequence. This is caught up into the Church's doctrine and no part of it is denied, but all of it is expanded as shall now be explained.¹

§ VI: THE SUPERNATURAL LIFE

WE now pass into quite a different world—that of the Christian Revelation and of Catholic Religion. I hope that it has been perfectly clear that in what I have written so far, I have not appealed to authority of any sort—whether scriptural or ecclesiastical. I have only alluded to these, if at all, as sanctioning or corroborating what intelligence is able, unaided, to discover, save indeed in the note concerning re-incarnation. There exists, however, the Christian Revelation. This Revelation contains, as St Paul says, precisely what “eye hath *not* seen, what ear hath *not* heard, and what it hath not so much as entered into man's heart to conceive.” We are told things that we not only do not, but cannot, find out by ourselves. And one of these is, that we are to be made to live by a life essentially higher than this our co-natural human life—a supernatural life, which God always intended for us, so that our true end is a supernatural end, such that we can neither earn nor merit it, nor most certainly be “improved into” it, by any mere

¹ The doctrine of successive reincarnations can neither be proved nor disproved philosophically. That a soul requires further education after physical death, to accomplish in it the perfect assimilation in thought and will to God, is intelligible and usually true. But nothing can show that this occurs by means of such new unions with a body. The arguments usually adduced are, that certain people “remember” that they were this or that in a previous “incarnation.” Such claimants are anyhow very few; and if they “remembered” that they had been Cleopatra's scullery-maid as often as they “remember” they have been Cleopatra, they might carry more conviction. That you “feel you have been here before,” or take sudden likes and dislikes to people you have never seen before, goes on distance as an argument. Nor do inequalities in birth or condition demand that we should see in them the consequences of behaviour in an earlier life. For the mere fact that so and so is in bad material conditions, viewed as uncomfortable, has nothing to do with his moral or spiritual state: to suggest that the poor have less chance of becoming “good” than the rich, and are therefore paying for pre-natal sin, is rebutted by the fact that they are often much more good than the rich. Finally, since no one is conscious of his previous state, if any, there has been a moral snap in personality, and the continuity would be purely mechanical. Hence I, who now am living, would be perfectly right to resent paying for the misdemeanours of Julius Caesar, assuming I had once been he. Catholic doctrine, however, forbids us to entertain the notion of successive incarnations.

development of our human nature and its constituents, as a wild-rose may be developed into a garden rose. The gift of this supernatural life has therefore to be a free gift from God, for which reason it is named "grace," or the "life of grace," for *gratia* means a "free gift."

Immediate vision of God No discovery of scientific men has ever shown what was not alive turning into a living thing, nor even a vegetable into an animal, still less, an animal turning into a man. Were an animal to turn abruptly into a man, this would be due to a life *above its nature* being infused into it. It would have been given, from the point of view of an animal, a "supernatural" life. You might ask, then, at once, whether I suggest that Man, when a supernatural life has been given to him, is no more *man*? Does he shift right out of his "species"? I will answer forthwith that he does not. He is and will remain *man*, though supernaturalised. How can this be? Because, as you will see, the first result of his "supernaturalisation" is, that he *knows* God in a way in which man, by his own natural forces, cannot know him. But observe—man *is* constructed *to know*. A stone is not constructed so as to grow—a plant is not constructed so as to feel—an animal is not constructed so as to know at all. For a stone to grow, for a plant to feel, for an animal to know intellectually, a totally new *sort* of element, of constituent, would have to be inserted into it. In the case of man, the power of knowing is already there. He is already a spiritual being. But he knows only by means of ideas. Even in his discarnate state, when ideas will not reach him by way of his senses, he would still know what he knows by means of ideas and of reasoning. True, the reasoning would be much more rapid, and his intuitions much more complete, than they are at present. But in no case would that be verified of him, which St Paul asserts concerning the Christian's state in heaven—"At present," says St Paul,¹ "I see as by means of a mirror, dimly—but then, face to face. Now I know in a fragmentary way, but then, I shall know even as I am known." He means, that I know God, now, by means of ideas, and even, ideas derived from creatures of which I first have knowledge: but in my destined state, I shall contemplate God *immediately*. Now, I know only *truths about God*: then, I shall know "as I am known"—that is, directly and by contemplation. He does not mean that I shall know God comprehensively, as God knows me comprehensively—for so to know God would mean that I had an exhaustive knowledge of God: but he means that I shall know God without any *medium* between me and him, even as he requires no interposed ideas in order to know me. We shall, therefore, "see God as he is,"² and for that reason, says St John, we shall be "like him," no more with that likeness and in that image which is inevitable in those who are spiritual creatures,

¹ 1 Cor. xiii 12.

² 1 John iii 2.

as we are, but to those to whom power has been given to become, from children of men, "sons of God";¹ who not only are named such sons of God, but truly are so,² who have been born not from human marriage merely nor by desire of man, but of God—who have been "born anew"—born a second time, and, this time, supernaturally.³

Hence, because there is a new and supernatural life in us, we shall "see God," and because we see him that new life, already fully constituted in us by grace, will spread and triumph and reveal itself within us and assimilate us, so far as our human nature can admit of such a thing, to God himself, having been made "partakers," says St Peter,⁴ "of the Divine Nature."

The actual history of the gift of grace is related, we have *The Fall and Redemption* recalled, in other essays. Here I have but to say that the Church teaches that this gift was given to our first father, Adam, yet given to him under condition, and held by him precariously. A moral command, of which he was sufficiently conscious, was imposed upon him, upon the fulfilment of which depended his retention of that supernatural gift—since God will not force even his best gifts on man's free will. Adam disobeyed, and was deprived of grace, and of those preternatural gifts of immortality and "integrity"—or interior harmony of all the constituent elements of his nature—that were the suitable complement of grace. This was the Fall. Because however Adam stood not for himself alone, but for us, and was truly the Head of the human race, and because we were "incorporate" in him, therefore we too in him were deprived of that supernatural life that God meant us to possess, and "in Adam, all died." We are therefore conceived and born deprived of somewhat that we were meant to have, "in Original Sin," to use the technical phrase. In some way, then, or another, this Original Sin had to be made away with—Death had to be slain—were we to live again supernaturally, and attain the true end for which we were created. We regain our life by being incorporated afresh in a Second Adam, a Second Head to the human race—that is, in Christ, who being true man *can* be for us, as he is in himself, the first of all men, and who, being God, has in him no participated life merely, but the very source of life itself. Hence, if a man be *in Christ*—behold! a *new creature*:⁵ and on this theme, were it here in place, we could linger very long. But, as I have said, its proper place is in another essay, and all that I have to do here is to insist with a minimum of development, but sufficiently clearly, that the triumph in man of this supernatural life is his only true destiny in the full sense, and that for which God created him, and that into which he redeemed him.

Experience has taught me that the paragraphs I have just written *The modern reaction to this doctrine*

¹ John i 12.

² I John iii 2.

³ John i 13; iii 3.

⁴ 2 Peter i 4.

⁵ 2 Cor. v 17.

are those which the "modern" non-Catholic Christian will above all others dislike. I had occasion not long ago to repeat their contents in a society composed of several modernist clergymen, of science-professors, and of undergraduates. It was interesting to observe the several reactions of my listeners. The younger men had nothing to say against this supernatural presupposition of my actual subject, which was sacrifice. Young men and women, I suppose, not least to-day, have an appetite for life, which is a very healthy asset and symptom! They "take kindly" to any suggestion that they may have more life even than they have. They see that should the Catholic doctrine of supernatural life be proved false, men simply stand to lose. They lose a whole *sort* of life. A whole world of vitality is shut to them. All that they can do is to improve what they have got, and in a human earth-lifetime, you cannot as a rule get very far with that, and a generation taken as a whole most certainly does not get very far. Therefore, among the very sensible questions that they asked and criticisms that they made—all of which I was delighted to see were to the point, which was more than could be said of most of the rest—no sign was noticeable of dislike for the notion that God could thus infuse a supernatural life into man, and indeed they appeared to welcome the possibility of its being true. So far has the genuinely modern generation, when it thinks at all, travelled from the old materialist days of, say, 1880.

There was a time when it was the fashion positively to exult if it could be argued that nothing spiritual existed at all. Materialism is now a system grimy with disuse, and rationalism hardly less "dated." Not that a system need be the worse for being unpopular at the moment, as I shall say very soon. But our modern generation is showing that the race, in history, has been right when it has refused to think that matter is everything and that there is no mind, and even, that a quite fatuous conceit is needed for a man to assert that there *is* nothing higher than human thought, or even, that if there is, men are for ever and totally shut out from coming into any contact—having any dealings—with it.

A representative of scientific anthropology suggested that whatever might be the possibility or desirability of a supernatural life, its "history" as I had outlined it was manifestly impossible, if research failed to show any sign of things having happened like that, and if, in fact, it displayed man as having struggled upwards from a low level, and not as descending from a high one. I had to ask the elementary question, first—what *could* research of the kind that he and his companions most properly went in for, display to him? He had to examine ancient bones. Even if the entire series of skeletons could be produced from the first "man" down to his own father's, what would that tell him about even the mental dispositions of those men? Nothing at all. No analysis of our

physical structure will tell us about our mind, any more than the analysis of printer's ink upon a page will tell us of the music in the musician's mind, close though the link be between what the musician thinks and what he prints. Further, since the whole doctrine of the supernatural life *is* supernatural, how should a study of nature *expect* to tell us anything about it? At least, no study of nature can show us its *impossibility*.

The speaker was prepared to acknowledge the justice of these considerations, but also, that being unable to make use of any method other than the observation of concrete facts for the formation of his theories, and being unable (though he should not have been) to reach by that road any clear belief in the existence or nature of God, he naturally could not understand a belief like that in Supernatural Grace, which involves a very definite belief in God and his power of entering into and acting within his universe on his own conditions, so to say.

But the attitude taken by the clergymen was far the most significant and I may say discreditable, though they were eminent men in their departments. They merely uttered lamentations to the effect that "all this kind of thing" was so "alien to modern thought"—so remote from up-to-date interests"—the very words "grace, sanctification, original righteousness" and so forth, had long ago become meaningless to them. It was necessary to insist, first of all, that their difficulties arose from an inability to achieve a clear and intelligible notion of what *God* was. They had, certainly, given up any attempt to reach a *reasonable* idea of God—an idea obtained along the intelligible lines that are explained in the essay in this volume which discusses the Existence and the Nature of God, and how we know them. Therefore they were reduced to impressionism, and, since men's feelings may quite likely differ from generation to generation, they were right, up to a point, in trying to observe what men are "feeling" about God to-day. But, they far outstripped the legitimate gifts of observation, when they assumed that what men are feeling to-day is necessarily better than what they felt a generation or a century or nineteen centuries ago. I have already insisted that every sort of thought has at some time or other been "modern" and up to date; but that there is not the slightest grounds for assuming that it has always been better than what preceded it. And apart from all this, there was a grave begging of the question in what they said. For, *does* "modern thought" coincide with what the intellectual laboratories of Oxford and of Cambridge produce? Most certainly not. It is true that in any case I cannot imagine what "modern thought" *is*, for the only general characteristic I can observe about it is, confusion. But it is impertinence to suppose that the ordinary man cannot think, and that only professors in their studies do so. There is a deal of robust and honest thought outside such places, and indeed, I

have felt regularly that the mental air there is exhausted, and I have sought intellectual bracing in very different haunts. Indeed, I had to say, then and there, that the two best definitions of Art had come to me, first, from St Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, and, from ■ gentleman who described himself as a Street-Corner Bruiser in a mining town. . . .

Revelation

But to sum up this parenthesis. While we hold that Thought, ancient or modern, is quite capable of reaching the certainty that God exists, and that he created us, and has perfect power over us, and while we might even surmise that he could raise us to a supernatural way of living, we could never know that he had done so, or even meant to do so, save by revelation. Hence neither anthropological research nor any other kind of study of material facts will ever begin to show us anything one way or the other about this, nor can sheer intellectual deduction prove it to us. It is, I repeat, an affair of revelation. If God has not revealed the matter to us, well and good: if he has, his revelation is true eternally, and fashions do not alter it. It is for us to adapt our minds to God, and not to adapt God and his message to the preferences of our minds.

Some of the implications of the life of grace

What remains to be said is far more a matter for meditation than for explanation. I recall that we are taught that into us God wishes to infuse a supernatural life, of which the eternal consequence is that we "see God face to face," and thereby love him supernaturally, for the very fact of contemplating the Infinite Beauty makes the purified soul to love It—and no soul could thus contemplate It unless its purification had already been accomplished. But, says St John, "we shall be *like* him, for we shall see him as he is." Love *assimilates*: and since we cannot assimilate the eternal and immutable God to ourselves, the likeness fulfils itself in us, who see him without the shadow of falseness in our minds, and adhere to him without any defection in our will being any more allowed. Therefore in his Presence we shall taste for ever the fulness of joy.

Catholic dogma fears no consequence of this principle of our supernatural union with God. Indeed, Scripture anticipates the deductions of dogma, and there is little left for the theologian to do but to fit the assertions of Scripture into their several places in his scheme. Thus, for example, united with God, we are united with that One God who is the Most Blessed Trinity. To the essay on that Mystery we refer our readers. Enough to say that while what God does, he does in his most simple Totality, yet there is this activity or that which can be "appropriated," as they say, to each several Person. We have told how the Fatherhood of God is as it were re-enacted in our favour, owing to our new manner of filiation—I mean, we are now adopted into so lofty a position as his sons, that we become truly brethren of his Sole-

Begotten. Incredible prerogative—God actually adopts us into a position hitherto held by him alone who is the Eternal Son by nature. And since he is Son, and we now are sons, we are brothers with him, and also co-heirs with him, co-heirs of his own glory. And, through our entry into his Church, we are also supernaturally incorporated into him, and are in him, and he is in us. Finally, we are taught that although God, by his very immensity, is ever wholly “in” us, now, by virtue of our new supernatural union with him, the Holy Spirit of God dwells in a special way within us, so that our very bodies are become “temples of the Holy Ghost.”

We are, then, to be associated in a special way with the whole Most Blessed Trinity, and are united thus inevitably with whatsoever else is united with It. Inanimate nature, and living yet non-human creatures, are united with God after their several kinds; and other human creatures besides ourselves are no less united with him. Therefore with all these are we “in union.” In what way, precisely, will the *communion* between them and us be effected? There is little need to speculate on that. At any rate we can see that it would suffice if we contemplated them, and loved them, as God sees them, and loves them—as they are “in himself.” In him we shall see love, and meet all these good things radiant with the qualities that *he* sees to be theirs, as *he* intends them to be. And how far more rich our understanding of them, and more intimate our love for them, than when we merely saw and tried to love that travesty of themselves that things at present, in this low world of imperfection, are!

This essay must have appeared very abstract, especially in its last part, to those who are not accustomed to “endure as seeing him that is invisible.”¹ Indeed, the Catholic is often attacked on the grounds that he shifts the centre of gravity of life into the “next world.” Hence, it is argued, he will not take trouble over improving the sad conditions that prevail upon this earth. It is curious that other critics of the Church are fond of calling her “worldly,” “opportunist,” “materialist,” and so forth; and indeed it is true that objections lodged against her cancel one another out, for it is quite impossible that she should really be so many contradictory things simultaneously.

This is not the place, I think, to sing the praises of the Church’s history of beneficence among men. Enough to say that though it is perfectly true that our “conversation is in heaven”—that is, our proper and full life will be hereafter, and our life here below has to be ordered in view of this fact—yet precisely because of that we are, first, able to be happy even in the hardest of earthly circumstances, even as “for the joy set before him,” Christ “endured the Cross, despising the shame,” and even as Saints and Martyrs have displayed to the very eyes of men their joy in the midst of suffering;

¹ Heb. xi 27.

and second, inspired to help our brothers in life's struggle, with motives of unique strength because they are all the more our brothers seeing that we all possess that title because of Christ, which is far better than the dubious consideration of our equality and fraternity as sons of Adam. Moreover, we who are Christians have the most explicit of injunctions from our Lord, that we should work on behalf of our fellow-men for his sake. Again and again I have been told that nuns, who regard their entire service of their fellow-creatures as vocational, are the only ones who can, as a class, be enduringly patient and self-forgotten in their toil. Allowing for exaggeration here, we at least may say that they who *can* regard themselves as working for Christ and with him, ought to be able to do a thousand times more and better than they who have to tread their rough and lonely path, with its myriad disappointments, upon the dry bread of mere philanthropical ideals, or social theories or hopes. Therefore we dare to say that how supernatural soever we judge man's destiny to be, Catholics will not be found wanting in the simple honest works of "corporal mercy," nor on the whole are they, and perhaps among them only is to be found, on a general scale, and enduringly, the lofty practice of *heroism*.

Summary

God created men therefore for a purpose. That purpose is, that men should become their true selves, as he sees and intends them, and thereby give him glory, and be happy.

This happiness is therefore not merely an affair of the years we spend on earth, but shall endure so long as we do ourselves, that is, for ever, since, if God shall not let our soul lapse out of existence, it cannot of itself cease to exist.

None the less, this destiny, and this happiness, do not concern our soul only, for Man is not merely soul. He is also body, and in him body and soul are so joined as to make one *person*—a unit complete yet twofold—not a gross amalgam, nor yet a mere container and contained. It is *man* therefore whom God makes for happiness.

All then that God has made, he has made according to a plan—a plan already realised, so far as a man is a man at all, and to be realised hereafter, since a man grows and only tends to become what God means him, when perfect, to be.

In order then to become this, man has to live according to certain rules; else, he spoils himself. He must therefore respect, yet subordinate his body, and govern it according to reason, and by free choices. His mind too must ever seek to know, and to know truth; just as his will must ever perfect itself by choosing and adhering ever more and more constantly and closely to what is Good.

Thus man shall pass into his eternity, the consummate Man, the perfect success that God intends, and already we see reasons

for expecting that somehow he *will* continue to be man, and not change into some discarnate spirit only. He can also see that it may be at least possible so to spoil himself as to become waste product—the total unsuccess.

But God has done more than equip man with reasoning powers, able to reach to these certainties and these surmises. He has given him a revelation.

This revelation tells him over again, and with divine authority, many things that his reason already has told him, such as all those truths that we have just recalled ; also, it confirms certain surmises of his, such as, that he *will* for ever be truly man, body-soul ; and that there *can* be total ruin in store for him, alongside of complete success. God also reveals certain definite rules for success, and indicates certain mortal dangers.

However, God also reveals truth that no reason might discover, no guess descry. He tells us that the co-natural union of our minds and wills with himself is to be raised to a supernatural level—our whole human life is to be supernaturalised, so that whatever happiness would by nature have been ours, shall be enhanced not only in quantity or intensity, but in kind. This is to be done for us through the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom we may be, if we but will, incorporated so as to live by his life, and in him to “ see God,” and, in him, all that *is* in him.

Hereby the perfect Communion establishes itself. The Bread of God is kneaded, and gives life to the world : the Vine has blossomed, has reddened into clusters, and of that Wine God himself shall drink. The House is built ; the Temple becomes perfect from foundation up to roof ; the Body lives, and the Marriage of Christ is consummated. From heaven the New Jerusalem descends, and clothes the earthly Sion that becomes all the world, and that which is in us now in germ—that secret Grace that is ours—manifests itself as Glory, and thereafter “ our joy no man taketh from us.”

C. C. MARTINDALE, S.J.

X

THE FALL OF MAN AND ORIGINAL SIN

§ I: ADAM BEFORE HIS FALL

THE study of the dogma of the fall of man and its corollary, original sin, is interesting from many points of view. If we look at its first beginnings at the dawn of human history, and its echoes or analogies or counterparts, whichever they be, that are found in the traditions, myths, and legends of many ancient peoples, we are led into a vast field of research in which, of late years, many scholars of eminence have busied themselves, and where, only too often, imagination and the desire to justify preconceived theories have taken the place of argument and sound reasoning upon sure evidence.

If we confine our attention to the course of the dogma within the Church, we are introduced to some of the greatest names in the Church's story, and to some of the movements and controversies that have cut the deepest traces across her history. The Pelagians, in the fifth century, struck at the very roots of the supernatural life and religion, but though their fundamental heresy was concerned with grace, their denial of original sin, which of necessity followed, became one of the pivotal points around which controversy ranged, and afforded the Catholic champion, St Augustine, matter for much thought and many writings.

In the sixteenth century the Protestant religious leaders did not, indeed, deny the doctrine of original sin—many of them, in fact, exaggerated it; but while they kept the sound form of words, they understood them in a new way, and the nature of their doctrinal content was altered and degraded. Since then the process of disintegration has been carried to its logical end, especially of late years, under the influence of the theory of evolution. This, in its extreme form, necessitates the biblical story of Adam and Eve being looked upon as a myth, or at best, as a piece of mere folk-lore, enshrining some spiritual truths. Consequently, while many Protestants deny the doctrine of the fall altogether, others, less bold, less logical, but more ingenious, retain the old phraseology, but interpret it in the sense of a lapse or a series of lapses in primitive and brutelike man's struggle towards higher things. We have even been told, in all seriousness, that the fall was a "fall upwards." Original sin, then, becomes nothing but the deep impress of man's animal nature upon his slowly dawning spiritual consciousness.

To meet these adversaries is the apologist's task, not ours. Our aim is much more modest. We have to take for granted the Church's authority and her interpretation of the sacred Scriptures given into

her care. Upon this sure foundation we have simply to build an edifice of doctrinal exposition and explanation, setting in view what the Church means by and teaches in the dogma of the fall and original sin, and gathering together and explaining, as best we can, its various theological consequences and implications. The task is not without its difficulties ; it should not be without some interest to those who have an appreciation of the things of faith, and it may have some small apologetic value as showing the utter reasonableness of the Catholic teaching, both in itself and in its close relations with other fundamental articles of Catholic belief.

To understand man's fall we must know whence he fell and what his condition was before he fell.

The tradition of a golden age at the beginning of man's history is widespread ; recent investigations have shown it to be almost universal among the races, nations, and tribes of men throughout the world. The existence of this tradition might, perhaps, be taken as evidence in favour of the Christian belief in man's original state of innocence and happiness, since the trend of historical research is to show that there is always some foundation of fact for ancient, deep-rooted, and widespread traditions. But even if we allow the fullest possible weight to this piece of evidence, it amounts to very little, for the tradition, varying from race to race and tribe to tribe, is so much overgrown and corrupted by fable, myth, and legend that the core of truth, even if it could be with certainty discovered and determined, would be too slight and vague to be of any real use.

We have, however, a surer and purer source of information. Just as the story of the creation told in the Hebrew sacred writings is far superior in its noble purity and religious simplicity to the complicated and often immoral myths and legends preserved in the books of other ancient peoples, so likewise does the biblical account of the primitive happiness of the first man and woman surpass all the legends of a golden age which the traditions and folk-lore of other nations have handed down to us.

It is not for us to vindicate the historical character of this narrative against the view, so widely prevalent outside the Church, that it is simply another, even if a superior, piece of ancient folk-lore. As to the method of interpretation, something has been said in Essay VI, *God the Creator*. Here we need only note the decision given by the Biblical Commission in 1909 when deciding certain questions about the historical character of the first three chapters of Genesis. The third question was "whether in particular the literal, historical character can be called in question when things are narrated touching the foundations of the Christian religion, such as among others . . . the original happiness of our first parents in a state of justice, integrity, and immortality ; the command

laid upon man by God to test his obedience ; the transgression of the divine command through the persuasion of the devil under the appearance of a serpent ; the fall of our first parents from that primitive state of innocence ; and the promise of a future Redeemer ? ” The answer is in the negative.

*Original
state of first
parents*

It is therefore to this inspired record, guaranteed by the Church's authority, and confirmed by many other parts of sacred Scripture, that we go as our principal source of information for all that concerns man's state when first God had breathed into him the breath of life. This decree of the Biblical Commission says that, according to the literal, historical sense of the record in Genesis, our first parents before their fall were endowed with the three qualities of justice, integrity, and immortality. What these were and how exactly they are to be understood we must now examine.

*Supernatural
grace*

We need not here, however, say much about the first, though it is quite the most important, for it is fully explained in other essays.¹ It is only necessary to note that the word *justice*, as here used, means first and principally the supernatural gift of sanctifying grace, which raised Adam to a higher state and nobler dignity, which put him into a relationship of real friendship with God in this life, and gave him the pledge of eternal happiness in the closest union with him in the next.

But of the other two qualities mentioned we must speak at greater length. These, immortality and integrity, are called preternatural gifts. This term is used to show that, although these qualities did not belong to Adam by virtue of his human nature, and were no part of that bodily and mental equipment necessary to his being and life as man, and although, therefore, they were bestowed upon him of God's sheer benevolence, as something over and above his purely human faculties and capacities, yet they did not put him, as grace did, into a different and altogether higher order of existence. They gave him additional and greater perfection without raising him above the purely human level.

Immortality

We take first the gift of immortality. “ And he (God) commanded him, saying : Of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat : but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.”² Then in the next chapter, after Adam had eaten of the forbidden tree, God lays upon him the punishment of his sin, a life of hard toil to be ended by death ; “ for dust thou art and into dust thou shalt return.”³ Whence it is clear that death was positively the penalty of Adam's sin, and that if he had not sinned he would not have had to die. He was made to be immortal. This was the traditional belief of the Jews. As a modern writer well puts it : “ This penal sense of death colours all that the Old Testament says

¹ See especially Essays ix and xvi.

² Gen. ii 16-17.

³ Gen. iii 19.

of man's end. It is in its thoughts where it is not in its words. It is the background of pathetic passages in which the immediate subject is the misery or the transiency of life, rather than death itself. It gives to the thought of death, as it is expressed, for example, in the goth Psalm, and to those lamentations over man's frailty and the grave's rapacity which recur in the Psalter and the Prophets, in Ecclesiastes and in Job, a meaning and an elevation which such things have not in ethnic literatures, the best of which know death only as a thing of nature, and know it not in its relation to sin and to the wrath of God." ¹

St Paul's clear teaching on the matter, in the epistle to the Romans, is well known to all, and, as we shall have to deal with it later, his witness need not be quoted here. More than once the Church has had occasion to define her faith upon this subject against heretical errors, notably in the Council of Trent, where in Canon I, Session V, they are condemned who deny that Adam by "the offence of this prevarication incurred the wrath and indignation of God, and therewith death, with which God had previously threatened him." In other words, had Adam not sinned he would not have died; made to be immortal, he brought death upon himself as the punishment of his sin.

Closely connected with this gift of immortality was that of *Impassibility* or freedom from pain and suffering. It is the common teaching of theologians that Adam enjoyed this privilege, but it is not a part of Catholic faith, for it has neither been defined by the Church, nor is it explicitly taught in the sacred Scriptures. It is, however, easily deduced from the sentence passed by God upon Adam and Eve after they had sinned. In this matter all exaggeration must be avoided. It is not necessary to suppose that Adam was wholly incapable of feeling pain; the possession of impassibility simply means that he was secured against all those pains and evils which are, directly and indirectly, the consequence of sin, ignorance, and folly.

Theologians commonly also hold that Adam was endowed with knowledge infused by God, and not acquired by the exercise of his human faculties. Here also a warning against exaggeration is not out of place, for some, indulging their love of ingenious speculation, have credited him with possessing an all-embracing wisdom. Scripture gives us no explicit information on this point, and the Church has decided nothing. But from general principles it may be safely concluded that, at the moment of Adam's creation, God infused into his mind the knowledge which, though he had had no chance of acquiring it for himself, was necessary to enable him to lead a properly ordered human life. More than this it would, perhaps, be unwise to assert. Undoubtedly also God endowed him with excellent mental faculties and powers of observation, by

¹ Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 197.

which he would be able to equip himself quickly with all necessary and convenient knowledge.

Integrity

The other preternatural quality mentioned in the Biblical Commission's decree as belonging to Adam before his fall is of even greater importance than the gift of immortality. Theologically it is called integrity, which, first and foremost, consists in the total absence of concupiscence. In modern English concupiscence is generally understood as applying only to fleshly desire; it is usually restricted to that field wherein it is most violent. But in theological language the word is of much wider application. It indicates any and every motion or impulse of the lower, the sensitive and imaginative, faculties or appetites of man's nature that is not under the perfect rule and dominion of his higher faculties, reason and will. All our faculties and appetites, even the lowest, are from God and are good in themselves. They tend naturally to find satisfaction in their appropriate acts, and this tendency in itself is good. Above all man's sensitive faculties stand his reason and will, his noblest natural endowments, which should govern and direct all his actions if he is to live rightly and worthily as a man. In the possession of these lies essentially his human dignity, by these he is raised immeasurably above all the lower animals. As his highest faculties they have the natural right of dominion over the lower elements of his nature. Experience, however, proves that this dominion is by no means absolute. Our sensitive and imaginative faculties are so quickly and so strongly excited to action that, even when they do not overcome the rational will and lead it captive, as too often happens, they can be dominated and regulated by it only with much effort and often painful striving. "For I do not that good which I will, but the evil which I hate, that I do. . . . For to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do. . . . I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law of God according to the inward man; but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members."¹

This unhappy state so vividly pictured by St Paul is called the state of concupiscence. Every impulse of man's lower nature not in accord with the dictates of his reason and the urge of his will is a manifestation of concupiscence; it is a proof of the two-sidedness of his nature not yet brought into a perfect oneness or wholeness of activity—a proof, that is, of the absence of *integrity*.

Adam, before his sin, did not suffer from concupiscence; he was gifted with integrity. Although this has not been explicitly, in so many words, defined by the Church, the Council of Trent

¹ Rom. vii 15-23.

clearly presupposes it when, in the fifth canon on original sin, it says that concupiscence is sometimes called sin because it arises from sin and inclines man to sin; whence it follows that before there was sin in Adam there was no concupiscence in him.

This is very simply and delicately expressed in the second chapter of Genesis. Eve, fresh from God's creative hand, is presented to Adam, "and they were both naked and were not ashamed." Shame arises when a person is overcome by an enemy whom he ought to have conquered, or when the danger of defeat just escaped has brought him a lively sense of his unworthy weakness. So the inspired writer in noting that Adam and Eve were not ashamed, despite their nakedness, wishes to indicate that they felt no undue, disordered impulse of the strongest of sensitive appetites, that their reason and will held such complete and easy rule that they felt no weakness and had no cause for shame. But having sinned, as we read a little farther on, they at once experienced the sense of shame, caused by the unruly urge of passion, and covering their nakedness, tried thus to lessen the danger to which they now felt themselves exposed.

To prevent misunderstanding, we may add that, in exempting Adam from concupiscence, we by no means deny to him the enjoyment of all the pleasures of sensitive life. St Thomas,¹ indeed, teaches that, in his state of innocence, he enjoyed these even more than we do, since his natural faculties were purer and therefore keener. But the whole of his sensitive life and activity was in complete subjection to the rule of his reason.

Such, then, was the condition of our first parents when they came from the hand of God. They were in a state of supernatural grace, they were free from all concupiscence, and they were not subject to death. These three points belong to the deposit of faith, guaranteed by the Church's authority. Further, it is common theological teaching, though not a part of Catholic faith, that they were free from all pain and suffering, and possessed some measure, impossible to determine, of divinely given or infused knowledge.

About their material circumstances, their culture and civilisation, we know practically nothing. The Bible seems to show that they led a life of great simplicity, God's bounty supplying all their needs with but little trouble on their part. But however interesting this question may be to our human curiosity, it has no theological importance. From this point of view all we need to know is that they were capable of leading a really human life, however simple.

Now a question arises with a direct bearing upon the doctrine, *Præternatural* to be expounded later, of original sin. We have seen what Adam's *gifts* condition was at the beginning of his life, but, although we have spoken of his endowments as supernatural and præternatural, in so doing we have been guilty, in reality, of begging the question, for

¹ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. 98, a. 2, ad 3.

we have not determined whether these endowments did really and of right belong to him as man, or were something given to him over and above his natural due. The question is both important and delicate. Its importance, which will become clearer as we proceed, lies in this that, if Adam's endowments, as already described, were natural, then, since by his sin he lost them both for himself and for us, it will follow that man's nature now is intrinsically and essentially vitiated by being deprived of some elements originally proper to it; it will therefore be in itself an evil thing. This is, in fact, the position taken by many of the early Protestant theologians, and later maintained by the Jansenists. If, on the other hand, these endowments were something given to Adam over and above all that went to make up his full manhood, then it follows that, in spite of their loss, human nature remains complete, in essence unimpaired by original sin, intrinsically whole and good in itself.

The delicacy of the problem lies in determining with accuracy what is meant by the word *natural*, and by its correlatives, supernatural and preternatural. Some little has already been said, but more careful definition is now necessary. The word *natural* has many meanings. It would be but a waste of time to enquire into most of them. We shall confine ourselves to the strict theological sense in which theologians use the word when treating of this present question, and of all matters touching the doctrine of grace. And for the sake of clearness and brevity we shall speak of man alone among all creatures.

It is clear that man, to be man, to answer to the idea of man eternal in God's mind, must be made according to a certain definite pattern. He must consist of body and soul, and must be endowed with certain faculties, capacities, and powers. All these are his natural constituent elements, properties, and possessions, and in their sum make up a complete human nature. Further, to keep him in life and to give due play to his powers many other things are necessary. He cannot live without food and air, for example; these, therefore, though not a part of his being, though external to him, are yet natural to him, a part of his natural surroundings and requirements. Again, the powers that God has given him as elements in his nature, especially his intellectual powers, are of such vast stretch and grasp that, to provide them with enough to work upon with some sort of satisfaction, a whole universe of almost immeasurable immensity, complexity, beauty, ingenuity, intricacy, harmony has been created by God for his dwelling-place and workshop. All this created universe is man's natural environment and inheritance, and all that he can do with it and all his discoveries in it are his natural achievements and attainments. So, to take an example, though countless millions of men have lived full human lives without being able to fly, flying is quite natural to man, since

it has come about by the application of his own innate powers to the material objects and forces of the created world.

But by the exercise of these same powers without any outside help he can rise still higher, soaring above the created world to the Creator himself. He can gain an extensive knowledge of God and his nature and conceive for him a real love. That this is possible to man's unaided natural powers—at least, as regards the knowledge of God—was defined by the Vatican Council.

Taking into consideration, therefore, all these points, we conclude by defining as natural to man all that goes to his making and being, all that is possible to his unaided powers, all that is necessary for the due and sufficient satisfaction and activity of his innate appetites and faculties. With this in mind we can answer the question put above.

The truly supernatural character of grace will be found fully explained elsewhere.¹ Now it is enough to note that the Church teaches that, while God could have left Adam with his own natural powers to work out his own natural end by the unaided exercise of the powers, he did in fact destine him for an end infinitely beyond the reach and exigencies of these powers left to themselves. This end was an unending life of perfect happiness, produced by immediate union with and direct sight of the very being of God, by the beatific vision, as it is called in Catholic phraseology. And for the preparation for and meriting of this supernatural end God gave Adam a new nature and life, the supernature and supernatural life of sanctifying grace. Beyond this we need not go, but shall confine our attention to the gifts of immortality and integrity.

Adam's immortality was, in reality, only potential, not actual—that is, it was something that would have been given to him if he had observed the conditions accompanying God's promise of it, but of which he was deprived owing to his failure to observe them. This is fairly clear from an attentive study of the second chapter of Genesis, where it is explicitly stated that the fruit of one tree will bring death, and implied that the result of eating of the other, when God should allow it, would be unending life. Therefore, while death was truly the penalty for Adam's sin, it was a penalty that consisted in not giving a conditionally promised additional privilege, but not in taking away something already held by natural right. Death, therefore, was Adam's natural lot; immortality was not natural to him. So we find that when Michael du Bay, a theologian of Louvain, taught that "the immortality of the first man was not a free gift but his natural condition," this teaching was condemned by St Pius V in 1567.²

As St Augustine well expresses it: "It is one thing not to be able to die, as is the case with some beings (viz., the angels) whom

¹ Cf. Essays ix, xvi and xvii.

² Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, No. 1078.

God created ; but it is another thing to be able not to die, which was the way the first man was made immortal ; his immortality came from the tree of life, not from his natural constitution. He was mortal therefore by the condition of his animal nature, but immortal by the free gift of his Creator." ¹

Yet immortality cannot be called strictly supernatural, for it does not raise man's life to a level above itself, but only prolongs it, in its own order, along the line of duration. Hence it is called by theologians a preternatural gift.

The preternatural character of Adam's freedom from concupiscence is not, at first sight, so clear. For it would seem that, in a state of sinlessness, there ought to exist perfect harmony between the various elements of man's nature, and that the lower ought to be in complete subjection to the higher. But, without going deeply into the psychology of the matter, we may point out that concupiscence is a natural effect of man's dual nature, of his having two kinds of appetites, sensitive and rational. Between the objects of sense and of reason there must often, of necessity, be opposition, and since the sensitive faculties and appetites are directly, easily, and strongly excited and stimulated by external objects, it comes about inevitably that they begin to act without the co-operation or the consent of the reason, and that sometimes they act so forcefully as to put the reason to great stress before it can impose its power of control. Concupiscence, therefore, is a natural concomitant of man's composite being, and integrity a special and free gift of God, but preternatural and not strictly supernatural, as it does not raise man's nature above itself to a higher level of being or action.

This happy state in which our first parents were created, and which we have been describing, did not continue. Instead of enjoying this blissful condition of life, when Adam dwelt in God's intimate friendship, untroubled by pain or sorrow or the assaults of concupiscence or the doom of impending death, man is now born into sorrow, lives in suffering, is overwhelmed with concupiscence, sins much and often, and even with death and the threat of damnation hanging over him, finds it hard to remember God, to live in his presence and to love him. Whence comes the change ? Only revelation can enlighten us, and we have now to see what it teaches.

§ II : ADAM'S FALL

IN treating of Adam's fall various points must be carefully distinguished. First we must establish the fact of his sin, determine with accuracy, as far as possible, in what it consisted, and enquire how he came to commit it. Then we must consider what effect his sin had upon Adam himself, and finally we shall have to see how it affected his posterity. In this section we shall treat of the fact, the nature and the motive of Adam's sin.

¹ *De Genesi ad litteram*, Bk. vi, ch. 15.

That it belongs to the Catholic faith, as defined by the Church, *The sin of Adam* that Adam sinned, is too well known to need any elaboration. But we have to enquire what exactly this means. Two conditions are necessary for there to be a sin against God. The first is that there must be a command imposed by God, whose authority and right to command are supreme; the second is that he who is bound by this command must deliberately and consciously transgress it. The narrative of Genesis makes it quite clear that in Adam's case both of these conditions were fulfilled. God imposed upon him the command to abstain from the tree of knowledge; Adam deliberately broke the command, and so sinned. But the fact of his sinning, which stands out so clearly, raises some interesting matters which, though not affecting directly the substance of the faith, will help to put it in a reasonable and easily acceptable setting.

In the first place, we may note that, according to many accredited theologians and exegetes, it is not necessary to understand in a literal sense the prohibition against eating the fruit of some particular tree. We may take it, without offence, as a vivid but symbolical way of representing God's command which may have been of some wholly different character. But, on the other hand, there is no good reason compelling us to give up the literal acceptance of this narrative. Since God wished to try Adam by testing his obedience, by laying upon him some positive command over and above the natural law, it seems a matter of indifference what form the command should take or what thing should be commanded or forbidden. And in view of the conditions of Adam's life, it seems altogether suitable that the prohibition should fall upon the fruit of some one tree among the many whence he gained his sustenance. Then, inevitably, the question suggests itself: Why should God wish to impose such a prohibition upon him? If he had been left with nothing but the natural law to obey, it would have been much easier to avoid sin. Why did God make obedience harder?

It is evident that God's prohibition put a limit to Adam's liberty and narrowed the range of his lordship over the rest of the visible creation. *Reason of divine prohibition* This points the way to the answer to our question, for it was most fitting that man, so splendidly endowed and ennobled by God, should make some offering, some sacrifice of what he had received, as an acknowledgement of his indebtedness to God for all he had, and as a sign of his ready obedience and entire submission to his Creator. And what better sacrifice could he offer than that of his will and his freedom? God therefore laid this command upon Adam, with the condition that disobedience would bring about the loss of those supernatural and preternatural gifts that had been bestowed upon him, which implies necessarily that obedience would have meant their retention until the time should have come for him to be taken from this world into the life of heavenly glory. There was, therefore, an implied pact or covenant

between God and Adam, the observance of which by Adam was a grave obligation, for God's will is the highest law, and it was his will that Adam should pass from this life into the beatific vision ; he was therefore bound to keep those means which God had given him for the attainment of that end, to wit, sanctifying grace and its concomitants.

*Possibility
of sin in
Adam*

Turning now from the command to its transgression, we are faced with another and a more difficult question. How came it about that Adam, in all the circumstances of his holiness, his happiness, his spiritual and intellectual clear-sightedness, his intimacy with God, could possibly sin ? The question has intrigued enquirers for ages. Many answers have been given, and if none is wholly satisfactory, some are much less wise and cautious than others. It is of no use to make Adam's sin consist in any act involving the insurgence of concupiscence, for, as we have seen, this had no place in him. This consideration at once disposes of many answers that have been suggested, and at the same time cuts away the ground from all those who attack and ridicule the faith because of the disproportion between the price of an apple and eternal life. Again, we shall not go far towards a solution of the problem if we look at Adam's sin as simply a matter of ordinary morality, as a mere disobedience, for in view of his perfect moral state and unclouded spiritual perception, it is more than hard to understand how he could, in such a simple case, have fallen. We must go deeper.

*Nature of
Adam's sin*

The first thing to note is the intrinsic possibility of sin. This, as is explained elsewhere, is a necessary accompaniment of the possession of freewill in the absence of the vision of God face to face. Then also, Adam was in a state of probation, and therefore, with God's permission, subject to temptation by Satan. His position was one of wonderful dignity and nobility. He had no equal upon the earth, none even to come near him in power and honour and endowments. All living things were subject to him. He was lord of all. But he was not supreme. God was above him, and God had restricted his freedom of action by forbidding him to touch one tree. Then to him came Satan, speaking through the serpent, and asking why he did not eat of that tree.

"Why should so noble a being as you suffer such a restriction upon your liberty ? Eat of the tree, break through the bonds imposed upon you, let your freedom be unfettered. Become as God yourself, knowing all things and daring all ; be subject to no one, have no master ; be lord of yourself, serving none other." In some such way, as the sacred writer himself indicates, the temptation entered into Adam's mind. There is in it no insurgence of concupiscence, no mere simple disobedience to a moral precept ; but there is the sheer rebellion of mind and will against the ultimate supernatural claims and rights of God. It is the elementary conflict between the natural and the supernatural, which must always

be possible to created freedom, until all its capacities and desires are fully extended and satisfied by the immediate possession of the Infinite Good in the beatific vision.

Let it be noted that this explanation in no way goes against the scriptural narrative, which is almost wholly confined to outward things, whereas we have tried, following St Thomas,¹ to go below the surface. We may still marvel at the apparent ease with which Adam fell, but we must remember that only the outlines of the position and circumstances have been revealed to us. If we knew more of his life during the time preceding the fall, how long it lasted, more of the actual circumstances of the temptation and of Satan's subtle and persuasive arguments, much that now puzzles us might become clear. Meanwhile we accept the fact on God's authority, and pass on to examine the effects produced in Adam by his sin.

§ III: ADAM AFTER HIS FALL

THE Council of Trent sums up under one canon the Catholic teaching about the immediate effects produced in Adam by his sin, to wit, that he lost the sanctity and justice in which he had been established, that he incurred the wrath and indignation of God, and thereby death, likewise captivity under the power of the devil, and that both as to soul and body he was changed for the worse.² That Adam lost his holiness and justice is too clear to need any long demonstration. It is at the root of the whole of Catholic teaching on the Redemption. One of the themes running all through St Paul's epistles is that Jesus Christ, the second Adam, died to regain for us what the first Adam had lost, and that through his redemptive and re-creative work we are revived by sanctifying grace, and become, by adoption, the sons of God. This is what the second Adam won for us ; this is what the first Adam lost.

And, indeed, such a loss is easily seen to be inevitable. Adam's original condition of holiness constituted a special relationship with God. He was destined to a supernatural end ; he was given the means of attaining it ; he was given, that is to say, a higher life principle in his soul, sanctifying grace. This higher life, now here on earth, and still more, of course, its perfection in the next world, postulates and implies conformity between man's mind and will and God's, for it consists in the close union of the soul and the soul's activity with the divine life. But where there is disunion of wills there can be no oneness of life. Adam, therefore, by putting his will in opposition to God's, deprived himself necessarily of this union with and sharing in the divine life, which is sanctifying grace. By his sin he also lost his preternatural gifts of immortality and

¹ *S. Theol.*, II-II, Q. 163, art. 1 and 2.

² Session V, can. 1.

integrity. The threat of death was over him, to fall if he disobeyed God. The natural law of death was conditionally suspended; but as the result of his sin it was allowed to work itself out, the conditional promise of immortality was cancelled, and death came into the world; "by one man sin entered into this world and by sin death."¹

*Loss of
immortality*

Here we may be forgiven a reference to an objection which of recent years has become a common one. It is urged that St Paul's teaching about the origin of death is clearly erroneous since science has proved that death stalked through the world for countless ages before man appeared on the earth. It is hard to believe that such an objection can be seriously made. Those who bring it are, as a rule, ready enough to find an acceptable interpretation of any passage of Scripture, even at the risk of distortion, if it will agree with their theories, or if the literal sense offends their own susceptibilities. The only reason for not using some like indulgence here would seem to be that they are only too well pleased to be able to attack the inerrancy of the Bible. For to the unprejudiced reader it is evident that the only world St Paul is here thinking about is the world of men. His subject is sin and grace which affect men only; he is outlining the spiritual history of mankind, and therefore the only death he speaks of is the death of men, not that which is the lot of all the brute creation.

*Loss of
integrity*

The biblical story of the fall makes it equally clear that Adam lost his integrity or freedom from concupiscence. We have already, in describing his endowments, said enough about this to dispense us from any further elaboration of it.

The Council of Trent mentions also, as an effect of Adam's sin, "captivity under the power of the devil," but it will be more convenient to deal with this in another section and to go on now to a matter of greater difficulty.

*Human
nature as such
unimpaired*

Did the effects of Adam's sin reach beyond his supernatural and preternatural gifts and penetrate into the very core of his human nature so as to spoil and vitiate, to poison and infect, the substance of his being? We are speaking of the direct and immediate effects of his sin, not of those which might, conceivably, have followed from a long course of indulgence in sin if he had not at once repented, as Catholic tradition supposes him to have done.

Certain enactments of some early Church councils, as well as the Council of Trent, seem, at first sight, to teach that it was so. For example, the second Council of Orange, held in 529 to combat Pelagianism, lays down in its first canon that "anyone who holds that Adam was not wholly, that is, both in body and soul, changed for the worse, but that his liberty of soul remaining uninjured, his body alone was made liable to corruption, is deceived by the error of Pelagius and contradicts Scripture"; and again, in the eighth

¹ Rom. v 12.

canon, it speaks of the will being vitiated. The Council of Trent, as we have seen, speaks, at the end of the canon describing the effects of his sin, of the "whole Adam, both as to body and soul, being changed for the worse." Theologians commonly, in summing up this teaching, speak of Adam being deprived of his supernatural, and wounded in his natural endowments.

The right interpretation of these decrees is a matter of the greatest importance, for it has serious consequences. We may first of all, for the sake of completeness, set aside an extreme opinion which no Catholic could ever hold, but which was the position taken by Luther, Calvin, and Jansen, and is still set forth in some Protestant formularies. The foundation of this opinion is the denial of the reality of sanctifying grace as a supernatural gift and the consequent assertion that Adam's condition, before his fall, was purely natural. After his fall, therefore, it will follow that his nature was intrinsically depraved and corrupted, and a thing evil in itself. This is a fatal and truly horrible teaching. It means that every human act is of itself and in itself evil. It makes man to be a sink of moral corruption by nature. Natural virtue becomes impossible, and unregenerate man can do nothing of himself but sin. Needless to say, the Church has more than once condemned this doctrine, which is a blasphemy against God's goodness. But even among those who fully admit the Catholic teaching about the supernatural character of Adam's original state, traces of this Protestant and Jansenist poison are sometimes to be found. There are those who, while, indeed, keeping clear of the heretical errors just mentioned, yet speak of man's nature having been in some way positively infected, and possessing in itself a positive and natural inclination to evil. Various explanations are given as to how this comes about and in what it consists. It will be enough to speak of one. It has been suggested that Adam, in sinning, produced some sort of cataclysmic disturbance in the depths of his hitherto harmonious being, a disturbance that upset everything, clouding his intellect, weakening his will, and violently inflaming his passions, so that even his restoration to grace was powerless to restore his shattered natural forces. The only comment that needs to be made upon this suggestion is that it is imaginary and improbable. There is no trace of authority for it, and when we recall that, to fall, Adam had to commit but one sin and not a whole series going on for months or years, and that his sin, being in the intellectual order, was unaccompanied by any violent movements of concupiscence, it cannot be conceded that it produced such a far-reaching, deep-going disturbance of his whole nature, in both body and soul, as this theory requires.

The truth of the matter is both simpler and pleasanter. Adam indeed lost, by his sin, all his supernatural and preternatural gifts, but did not lose anything belonging to his nature as man. All the

elements, properties, and endowments that constituted his manhood he kept intact and unspoilt. So also the human nature that he handed on to his children was perfect in its kind, having in it no natural defect or infection or evil inclination that can be looked upon as the direct result of his sin.

*The language
of the
Councils*

It may appear that this does not do full justice to the decrees of Orange and Trent, or even that it is a flat contradiction of them. As regards the decrees of Orange, an examination of their historical circumstances will dissipate the apparent contradiction. The Pelagian heretics, against whom they were directed, denied that there is any difference between Adam's state before his sin and that in which we are born. His state, they said, was purely natural, a state of subjection to death, concupiscence, and suffering. Adam's sin, they also contended, was a purely personal matter, entailing no consequences upon his children except in so far as they are apt to follow his bad example. It is also to be remarked that, in the course of this controversy, both Catholics and Pelagians always considered Adam from the historical, not from the philosophical, point of view; in other words, they took him as he really was, without distinguishing between his actual condition and the hypothetical condition in which he would have been if God had given him nothing beyond his merely human endowments, if he had been created in the state of pure nature, as theologians call it. This distinction was a refinement of later theological thought, unused at that time.

Now the Catholics, while condemning the Pelagians' tenets, used their language, and basing themselves always on the comparison between the historical Adam before his fall and the same man after his sin, found no difficulty in saying that, through sin, the whole man in both body and soul was changed for the worse, suffering injury to his liberty and the vitiation of his will. In thus decreeing they did not mean to affirm that he was any the less a complete and perfect man than he had been at first; they only wished to make it clear that man in a state of sin is, in every way, a much less perfect being, especially when looked upon as a voyager to heaven, than man in the state of original justice and sanctity. The continuation and conclusion of the decree confirm this interpretation, and show that the Fathers of the council simply wished to emphasise the incapacity under which Adam lay, after his sin, to perform any "salutary act," that is, any act which would positively help him along the road to heaven.

Moreover, a little thought will show how deeply the deprivation of the gifts in question affected Adam's human nature in its entirety, and thus will justify the language of the conciliar decree. Though they were not natural to him, yet they were seated and rooted deep in his nature, in his soul; they were an adornment and perfection of his whole being, raising him to a higher level, giving him new capacities, and setting up a perfect harmony between all the elements

of his nature. Therefore their loss, while not depriving him of any natural perfection, while leaving his manhood intact and unspoilt in itself, yet left it without all those added ornaments and graces which gave it such strength and beauty.

If we turn from the decree of Orange to that of Trent, which, as far as concerns this particular point, but repeats the phrase used in the earlier council, we find confirmation of our interpretation in the explanation of the words given by a theologian who took a leading part in the formulation and discussion of the Tridentine doctrinal decrees, to wit Dominic Soto, whose comment runs thus : "Man is said to be wounded in his natural endowments. For since it belongs to man's nature to act according to reason, which he is prevented from doing by sensuality, the gift of justice, by repressing sensuality, perfected man in his nature, by removing the obstacle preventing him from acting according to reason, as is natural to man. So therefore the privation of this supernatural gift was an injury and a wound inflicted upon his nature, in so far as it left man defenceless and open to the attacks of the devil, the world, and the flesh, so that he could not always act as nature meant him to do. It is as if, it being a man's nature to walk straight, he had a dog tied to him pulling him this way and that ; then anyone controlling the dog would perfect the man in his natural endowments, and anyone removing the control would, in the same way, injure him. And this is how we are to understand the first canon of the fifth session of our synod (viz., the Council of Trent), where, dealing with the effects of original sin, it lays down that, because of it, we have incurred captivity under the power of the devil, and that the whole Adam and therefore we also have been changed for the worse both as to body and soul. Whence it follows that a man with original sin alone upon his soul, and free from the habits contracted by actual sins, has no greater propensity towards the objects of sense than he would have in a state of pure nature."¹

We conclude, then, that Adam's sin did not deprive him of any of his purely natural endowments ; after it, as before, his manhood was intrinsically whole and perfect.

A further difficulty now meets us. When we repent after sinning and are taken back into God's friendship, we recover everything—grace, virtues, merits—that we had lost by sin. Why cannot the same be said of Adam, if, as Catholic tradition believes, he did penance for his sin and was forgiven ? If grace was given back to him, why were integrity and immortality withheld ?

As regards immortality the answer is at hand, implied in what has been said above. He was promised immortality conditionally, if he kept God's command. He was only potentially immortal, subject to a condition that affected one act alone, and not any others that might follow. Hence this one condition being unfulfilled,

*Connection
of integrity
with grace*

¹ Dom. Soto, *De Natura et Gratia*, Bk. I, ch. 13.

his loss of the promised gift was final ; repentance could not recover it for him. But this argument does not apply to the gift of integrity which he actually possessed ; some other reason must be sought. This is found in the very nature of sin and in the special circumstances of Adam's sin. Sin (we refer to mortal sin only) is essentially an act of the will which perversely turns away from God, seeking its full satisfaction and final good elsewhere. Any sin is incompatible with the presence of sanctifying grace in the soul, but it does not necessarily affect all of man's spiritual powers or therefore drive out all his supernatural virtues, some of which may have their immediate seat in the unaffected powers, and may exist apart from grace. So, for example, the virtue of faith is not destroyed by every mortal sin ; it is seated immediately in the intellect and is destroyed only by that sin whereby the intellect turns away from God, the sin of unbelief. Similarly our other and lower natural faculties are not directly affected by every sin. Hence repentance, which means the rectification of the will and of the particular faculty affected by the sin, and its consequence, forgiveness, restore to us all that the sin had lost us.

But let us now take the case of a man who, through long indulgence in some sin, such as drunkenness, has contracted a strong, habitual inclination towards it. The act of repentance restores him to grace and rectifies his will, in the purpose of amendment, with regard to that sin, but it does not take away his inclination towards it. Putting right his will does not put right the habit acquired by his lower appetite, and he has a struggle in front of him before the inclination is overcome and he regains balance and control. So in this case, repentance does not restore all that is lost by sin ; it does not restore the right inclination of the appetite perverted by the habit of sin, because this inclination, set up by repeated acts, affects a part of his nature which is not wholly within his will's controlling power. Similar principles apply in Adam's case. Integrity is evidently not a necessary accompaniment of grace, but in him it depended upon grace, so that losing the one by sin he lost the other. But there is no intrinsic reason why getting back the one should mean getting back the other. Adam could rectify his will by repentance, which involves by God's benevolence the restoration of grace ; but integrity, or its contrary, concupiscence, is not a thing within the power and control of his will, but something affecting the impulses and movements of his sensitive appetites under the stimulus of external objects ; hence the rectification of his will in repentance did not involve the restoration of integrity. God could have given it back to him, but we need not investigate the reasons why he did not ; it is enough to have shown why its restoration was not involved in Adam's repentance. Before going on to discuss the transmission of original sin, a little more must be said about the effect produced in Adam from a special point of view, which has some bearing upon questions to be treated later.

In one way or another all the evils suffered by Adam after the fall were the punishment of his sin, even though some of them were not caused by any positive action on God's part, but were simply the result of the withdrawal of his non-natural endowments. Thus the insurgence of concupiscence was the natural result of the loss of integrity. God did not put concupiscence into Adam as a positive punishment; he took off the special brake that he had provided, and natural laws were allowed to have a free course.

But the matter must be looked at from another angle also. Sanctifying grace was not merely a favour given to Adam to keep or to throw away as he pleased. He was under a strict obligation to keep it, because it was the necessary means to the fulfilment of God's design in his regard, the necessary means to the attaining of the end which it was God's will that he should reach. Therefore the rejection of it was in itself sinful; the loss of sanctifying grace was not only the consequence of his sin, not only the penalty of his sin, but also in itself had its share in the guilt of sin. The same is true, in due proportion, of the loss of integrity. In itself this gift is morally indifferent, in the sense that it is not a virtue (just as its opposite concupiscence is not a vice or a sin, as was explicitly defined, as regards those who have been baptised, by the Council of Trent), but in tendency, or what may be called intention, it is decidedly and positively moral, since through the perfect harmony it sets up between man's lower nature and his higher, and the easy and full dominion it gives to the latter over the former, it removes all the perils of temptation arising from the senses and so makes sin much less easy. It was, consequently, a means, subsidiary indeed, but highly important for the attainment of the end set before Adam by God, and he was therefore under strict obligation to preserve it. Further, its loss exposed him to the grave and proximate danger of falling into many more sins, and for this reason also its rejection, just as that of grace, was in itself sinful.

This line of reasoning, however, will not hold if applied to the loss of immortality, which did not share in the nature of a sin, but was exclusively a punishment. In the first place, as we have seen, Adam did not actually possess this gift; it had only been promised him conditionally. Secondly, it is morally a thing wholly indifferent, both in itself and in its implications and bearings. To be immortal is certainly a great privilege, but to be subject to death cannot be a fault. Death is not, even indirectly, a moral evil to be avoided, as is the absence of grace, and likewise, in its way and measure, the absence or loss of integrity. Subjection to death, then, unlike the loss of grace and integrity, was exclusively the penalty of sin, but not, in itself, partaking of the nature of sin. And, we may note in passing, this consideration will help us to understand why our blessed Lady, though conceived immaculate and free from concupiscence, though placed, as far as these two endowments are

concerned, in the same exalted position as Adam had been before his fall, was yet not made immortal. The presence in her soul of original sin would have been a moral blemish, so also would have been the existence of concupiscence in her nature, by reason of its close connection with sin, whereas subjection to death is wholly outside the sphere of morality.

§ IV: ORIGINAL SIN IN ADAM'S CHILDREN

So far we have confined our attention to the results of Adam's sin as they were personal to himself. We have now to consider its consequences as they affect all his descendants, always excepting, of course, Jesus Christ himself and his immaculate mother, Mary.

The Church's teaching, which we have to expound, is contained in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Canons of the Fifth Session of the Council of Trent. For our purpose in this section the 2nd Canon is the most important. Herein it is decreed that they incur anathema who assert "that Adam's sin wrought injury to himself alone and not to his posterity; that he brought upon himself only and not upon us also the loss of sanctity and justice which he had received from God; or that he . . . transmitted to the whole human race death and bodily sufferings alone, and not sin which is the death of the soul."

First of all, a few words of preparatory definition and explanation. Theologians define sin as a turning away from God, our last end, and seeking our end in some created good. We are speaking of mortal sin, which alone is sin in the full sense of the word. This is an abstract or formal definition. In concrete terms sin is any act (and *act* includes words, thoughts, and omissions) whereby man, by violating the divine command and rebelling against God's will, turns his back on God. This is actual sin. The act, however, which may be the work of but a moment, passes, but it has brought about a state of the soul which persists. It has expelled grace from the sinner's soul. Graceless, he is in a state of aversion from and hostility to God. His soul, deprived of its supernatural life, is spiritually dead. He is in a condition of moral disorder; he has left the path to heaven and set his feet on the road to hell. This state is called the state of habitual sin. A warning against possible confusion is here necessary. In ordinary colloquial English habitual sin generally means something quite different; it denotes some sinful act committed so often that it has become an acquired habit; so we speak of an habitual liar or drunkard. We are using the term now in its closer theological sense, as meaning the permanence or fixity of a condition of sinfulness, which results from the committal of any one sin. This condition of habitual sin persists, until the sinner, helped and urged by actual grace, repents, puts himself right with God, whether in the sacrament of Penance or otherwise, is

*Act of sin
and state of
sin*

received again into God's friendship, and made holy by the renewed in-pouring of sanctifying grace into his soul.

As we have seen, Adam was put into the supernatural order and enriched with many gifts, with sanctifying grace, integrity, and potential or conditional immortality. By his sin he lost all these and, though he repented and recovered grace, it is Catholic teaching that, as the result of his sin, all men, except Jesus Christ and his blessed mother, are born without these gifts, which, but for Adam's sin, they would have possessed, born,¹ therefore, subject to death and concupiscence, and deprived of grace.

This condition in which we are born is contrary to God's primary intention with regard to man, it is a state of privation, and, considered in its totality, is called the state of fallen nature or of original sin. It is clear that all the elements of this state are not of equal importance, or equally pertinent to the essential constitution of original sin, and later on we shall have to discuss their relative values.

Our immediate task is to set forth the fact that we are born in this state, and that it is, in fact, the consequence of Adam's sin. Since the aim of these essays is mainly expository and explanatory, it is not for us to set out and examine in full the scriptural proof of the dogma of original sin, or to follow its unfolding from the first indistinct indications of it in some of the Old Testament writings, to its clear and definite formulation by St Paul. We cannot, however, pass over in silence St Paul's witness to this dogma, and his emphatic and clear exposition of its fundamental importance, although this must be well known to all Catholics.

The relevant passage is from the 12th to the 21st verse of the *Romans v.* fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Let us look for a moment at the setting of this passage. In the first four chapters the Apostle treats at length of man's justification, showing that it cannot be brought about by doing the works prescribed in the law of Moses, but that Christ's grace is necessary. In the sixth chapter he begins to speak about the life of man after his justification and his progressive sanctification if he lives according to the spirit of Christ. The fifth chapter forms a kind of bridge connecting these two parts and is itself divided into two distinct portions. In the first half he shows how justification, acquired by the grace of Jesus Christ, is of itself a sure pledge of salvation and is the way that leads to future glory. Then from the twelfth verse onwards he gives a sort of historical explanation of all that he has already said about justification, and so makes it of universal application. Few passages in St Paul's writings are more vivid and dramatic than this, with its continual swing and movement from one extreme to the other, its repeated contrasting of opposing hostile forces, sin and grace, life

¹ A partial exception must be made in the case of St John the Baptist, "conceived" being substituted for "born."

and death, Adam the sinner, Christ the saviour, and its joyful celebration of the final triumph of grace :

“ 12. Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death ; and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned. 13. For until the law sin was in the world ; but sin was not imputed when the law was not. 14. But death reigned from Adam unto Moses, even over them also who have not sinned after the similitude of the transgression of Adam, who is a figure of him who was to come.”

So runs the Douai version of the first three and the most pertinent verses of the passage. This, however, does not give the full force of St Paul's words as they stand in the original Greek. In verse 12, for example, the words “ in whom ” should, according to the most probable interpretation, be replaced by “ because ” or “ in that ” to get his real meaning. Thus he says that death came upon all men because all sinned. And how they sinned is clear from the argument that he at once goes on to state, which, though faulty, perhaps, in construction, is cogent in its demonstrative force. There was sin in the world from the beginning, but it was not imputed—that is, it was not imputed unto death ; until the law of Moses was enacted there was no positive law among the Hebrews, none at least with divine sanction, making any particular sin punishable with death ; and yet during this time death reigned and exercised dominion over all, even over those just men who did not imitate Adam by committing personal, actual sins.

So, to put it briefly, the argument runs thus : Death is the penalty of sin ; death afflicts all men, therefore all have sinned ; but not all men have committed personal sins ; therefore the sin under which all labour, and for which all suffer death, is the sin that all committed when Adam sinned. As his death made all men mortal, so likewise his sin made all men sinful.

So far as this particular point is concerned the rest of the passage adds nothing to the argument. St Paul does not explain how Adam's sin has come down to us, or how we can be said to have sinned, in any true sense, through or in his sin, or what exactly this sin of ours consists in, or several other points that depend upon or result from this teaching. The elucidation of these questions was to be the work of the Church and her doctors and theologians in later ages ; before, however, we turn our attention to these matters, we may briefly consider the fact of the existence of original sin in all mankind from another point of view.

We have, so far, been looking at this doctrine from the point of view of revelation alone. We wish now to ask what, if anything, human reason has to say about it. It is, of course, evident that reason cannot prove directly that the soul of a newly-born infant is deprived of sanctifying grace, and is in a state displeasing to God, a state of sin. This can be known by faith alone, in much the same

way as, for example, the real presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist. But in a more general way has reason anything to say in the matter? Can the human reason, unaided by the light of divine revelation, deduce from man's history and present condition that the race is in a fallen state, that there has been some primeval moral catastrophe, which has so affected all mankind that the whole race is oppressed by its weight and subject to its consequent penalty?

Many have answered affirmatively. Looking round upon all the evils that afflict mankind and fill the world, they have concluded that there is no adequate explanation of this terrible state of things except that afforded by the dogma of original sin. The best-known exposition of this view in English is, probably, the one given by Cardinal Newman. "To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of man; their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship; their enterprises, their aimless courses, their random achievements and acquirements, the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the tokens so faint and broken of a superintending design, the blind evolution of what turn out to be great powers or truths, the progress of things, as if from unreasoning elements, not towards final causes, the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity, the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race, so fearfully yet exactly described in the Apostle's words, 'having no hope and without God in the world'—all this is a vision to dizzy and appal, and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution.

"What shall we say to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact? I can only answer, that either there is no Creator, or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from his presence. Did I see a boy of good make and mind, with the tokens on him of a refined nature, cast upon the world without provision, unable to say whence he came, his birthplace or his family connections, I should conclude that there was some mystery connected with his history, and that he was one of whom, from one cause or another, his parents were ashamed. Thus only should I be able to account for the contrast between the promise and the condition of his being. And so I argue about the world: *if* there be a God, *since* there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. It is out of joint with the purposes of its Creator. This is a fact, a fact as true as the fact of its existence; and thus the doctrine of what is theologically called original sin becomes to me almost as certain as that the world exists, and as the existence of God." ¹

¹ Newman, *Apologia pro Vita sua*, ch. v.

*Critique of
argument
from reason*

In much the same way Pascal argues.¹ Both he and Cardinal Newman set out the argument in quite a general way. Others, wishing to strengthen it, come down to particulars and details; some, by appealing to physical and moral evils indifferently, try to prove that the discord, confusion, pains and wickedness of the world cannot be reconciled with the notion of a good, wise, and omnipotent God, except upon the hypothesis of some great primeval catastrophe which upset everything; others, for the material of their argument, bring up moral evil alone, in so far as it results from concupiscence, and insist upon its universal and almost complete dominion over mankind, with the resultant enormity and universality of human malice. If for no other reason than the genius and just renown of those who have sponsored them, these arguments cannot be lightly dismissed. But they all seem to lie open to one fatal objection which robs them of real demonstrative power. When we recall that immunity from death, suffering, and concupiscence was a gratuitous privilege added to human nature and not a constitutive part of it, it becomes impossible to say with certainty that human evils and miseries cannot be wholly explained by purely natural causes, that they are not the result of the ordinary action and interplay of simple human and natural passions and tendencies, without postulating some far-off fall from a higher state, some aboriginal break with the Creator's purposes.

The argument, then, is not absolutely conclusive; it is, however, by no means valueless. It is a strong confirmation of the truth of the revealed dogma, and shows that this is the most satisfying solution of the riddle of human affairs. On this point, as on others, St Thomas speaks with that caution and prudence characteristic of him, his conclusion being that, if we take into account divine providence and the dignity of the higher part of human nature, it can with great probability be shown that the evils afflicting mankind are of a penal nature, whence it can be gathered that the human race is from its origin infected with some sin.²

Now that we have established the bare fact of the existence of original sin, derived from Adam, in all his children, many questions at once confront us. What is the precise nature of this sin and how can it be called sin, in any true sense of the word, seeing that it does not depend upon the individual's free will? How can it be handed down from father to son? How can its existence and results be reconciled with God's goodness?

The pivotal question is the first, to which our next section must be given.

¹ Pascal, *Pensées*, sect. vii.

² *Contra Gentiles* (Engl., *God and His Creatures*), Bk. IV, ch. 52.

§ V: THE NATURE OF ORIGINAL SIN

THIS is a matter on which Catholic theologians have differed among themselves, a matter as to which there has been a progressive elucidation of the content of divine revelation, and wherein the defined teaching of the Church still leaves some little room for speculation.

St Augustine was the first great theologian who was called upon *St Augustine* to deal specifically and in any detail with the nature of original sin.¹ His treatment, however, was far from being systematic, and his thought is so elusive that, even to-day, though his doctrine has been closely studied by many, there is no general agreement as to what he really held. According to some authorities he thought that original sin consisted in unruly concupiscence, especially sexual concupiscence, and it must be admitted that there is much in his writings to support this opinion. Others, however, acquit him of so crude and almost materialistic a conception, and maintain that he taught that original sin lay rather in the guilt or imputability of concupiscence, in so far as, all men being morally contained in Adam, all human nature being morally summed up in his, it follows that the whole race of men is not only subject to concupiscence, but also shares in the guilt attaching to the existence of concupiscence. As we have seen, the existence of concupiscence in Adam is to be imputed to him as a sin, since his rejection of integrity was sinful. St Augustine, then, would have it that this guilt is shared by all men, and constitutes the original sin. This is probably the truer interpretation of St Augustine's thought.

In the succeeding centuries most theologians followed more or *Protestant* less faithfully in St Augustine's footsteps; but, though something *exaggerations* was done towards clearing away the uncertainties, it was left to St Thomas to find in this, as in so many other difficult matters, the true way of reconciliation between revelation and the demands of sound reason. With the coming of Protestantism in all its many forms, the whole dogma of original sin became once more the subject matter of attack, denial, and controversy. Some of the Protestant theologians attenuated its importance and its effects, others exaggerated them beyond all measure, even going so far as to say that human nature was wholly corrupted and free will destroyed. The spread of these errors made it necessary for the Church to define her teaching somewhat more accurately than had hitherto been done. In the decrees of the Council of Trent, therefore, the following points are made clear: Man's primitive holiness and justice have been lost, and to all of Adam's descendants have been transmitted both bodily death and sin, which is the death

¹ Perhaps a partial reservation should be made in favour of St Irenaeus, but as his teaching on the question had no influence upon later doctors, he may here be neglected.

of the soul ;¹ original sin is not caused by our imitating Adam's sin, but is produced by natural propagation—that is, it is not actual sin, yet it is proper or personal to each soul ;² it is heretical to say that through baptism it is merely covered up or not imputed, for it is utterly taken away. Concupiscence, however, remains, which, though sometimes called sin, is not sin really and strictly speaking, the name being given to it because it arises from and tends to sin.³

A few years later the condemnation of certain propositions extracted from the writings of Michael du Bay of Louvain made it clear that original sin is to be taken as voluntary with respect to the free will of Adam in whom it began.

These definitions are not complete, nor are they meant to be ; they were not intended to cover the whole ground, but were framed simply in view of the particular errors then current, as is usually the Church's way in defining her teaching. But they give us a solid foundation, upon which, by the application of approved principles, and by a faithful following of St Thomas in particular, it is easy to build a positive explanation without fear of going astray.

The enquiry into the exact nature of original sin demands close attention ; the matter is by no means as simple as it may seem ; it is, on the contrary, somewhat subtle, and it behoves us to speak with a nice appreciation of phraseology and care in the use of words. But any trouble will be well repaid by the better and deeper understanding of the truth, by the enhanced appreciation of the reasonableness of the Catholic doctrine, and the clearer view of the harmonious agreement between its various parts.

St Thomas

St Thomas, then, whom we take as our guide, begins his exposition of the subject by laying down the evident principle, that nothing can be included under the concept of original sin except what is derived from the sin committed by Adam as head of the human race.⁴ But in his sin, as in every other, there are two elements to be taken into account : the first is the turning away from God, our last end, and the direct result of this is the loss of sanctifying grace ; the second element is the undue and inordinate cleaving to some created, lesser good in place of God, and to this element corresponds the introduction of concupiscence. Hence we find both of these elements existing in all Adam's posterity. By a process of reasoning which we need not follow in detail, he goes on to show that the deprivation of grace is the more important element, the distinctive, determining, or, in scholastic language, the formal element, while concupiscence is secondary, complementary, and participates in the nature of sin only under the influence of the former element ; in scholastic speech, it is the material or quasi-material element. It will make this clear if we suppose, for a moment, that Adam had been created in a state of grace, but yet,

¹ Can. 2.

² Can. 3.

³ Can. 5.

⁴ *Quaest. Disp. De Malo*, iv, a. 2.

at the same time, subject to concupiscence. Then his sin would have deprived him of grace, but would not have *introduced* concupiscence, as this was already present. In that case concupiscence would not have been a constituent element in his sinfulness, because it would not have been influenced, determined, brought into existence by the sinful act entailing the loss of grace.

Finally, since there can be no sinfulness where the element of willing is altogether absent, St Thomas proceeds to show how the loss of grace in us, and the presence of concupiscence, can be said to be voluntary. Here he invokes that principle, so dear to St Paul, that governs the whole economy or dispensation of the spiritual relationships of men in the fall, the redemption, the Church, the communion of saints, and, indeed, is nowadays coming to be more and more clearly recognised as the connecting thread of all human affairs, the principle of the physical and moral and spiritual solidarity or oneness of all mankind.

Upon this principle, Adam sinned not merely as an individual, but as the moral head and spiritual representative of the whole race ; when he rebelled it was all mankind that, through the rebellious will of its head, refused obedience to God, and thus it is this relationship of our dependence upon Adam, and this alone that brings us, born without grace and with concupiscence, under the category and denomination of sinners, in a real and proper, though evidently a very special, sense. And so we come to the definition of original sin, which, according to St Thomas, is the culpable privation of original justice (the word "justice" including both grace and integrity), the culpability, so far as it affects us, being due to the fact that it results from the act of our moral and spiritual head and representative.

Some later theologians, striving after an even greater accuracy of expression, leave out the element of concupiscence (the loss of integrity), and so define original sin as the privation of sanctifying grace, whereby we are averted from God, our supernatural end, and which is, in a way, voluntary in us by reason of our dependence upon Adam. It would be wholly out of place to look more closely into the comparative merits of these two definitions. The trained theologian will appreciate the difference between them and will see wherein one may, perchance, serve better than the other for the solving of subtle objections against the Catholic dogma ; but without a doubt both are satisfactory as enshrining and guarding the substance of the dogma.

In this connection it is interesting to note what was done at the Vatican Council in 1870. Had the Council been able to finish its labours, cut short by the Italian invasion of Rome, it had been intended to include among the definitions of doctrine some on the subject of original sin, in view of a fresh crop of errors that had sprung up. The canons or decrees had been drawn up, examined,

*Proposed
canons of
Vatican
Council*

revised and amended by the committee of theologians appointed for the purpose, and were ready to be submitted to the fathers of the Council in full session. They have, of course, no conciliar authority, but they have the authority attaching to the representative body of theologians who framed them, and, judging from what happened in the case of other decrees that were actually approved and issued by the Council—for example, those on the Pope's infallibility—we may conclude that these on original sin do represent, in substance, what would have become defined dogma had circumstances allowed. The relevant canons are as follows: Canon 4: If anyone shall say that original sin is not truly and properly a sin in Adam's descendants, unless they, by sinning, actually consent to it, let him be anathema; Canon 5: If anyone shall say that original sin is formally¹ concupiscence itself, or some physical or substantial disease of human nature, and shall deny that the privation of sanctifying grace is an essential constituent of it, let him be anathema.²

In the explanatory notes accompanying these canons it is set forth that the fifth is directed against those who, holding various and discordant opinions, agree in denying that the privation of sanctifying grace enters into its essence; and it is then noted that the canon does not define that the essence of original sin is nothing but the privation of grace, but that this privation does enter into its essence.³ This is stressed in another annotation which recognises that among Catholic theologians there are different ways of defining the essence of original sin which quite safeguard the dogma, and again asserts that the only intention of the canon is to define that the privation of grace does belong to that essence.⁴

The primary essential element of original sin is, therefore, the deprivation of sanctifying grace, while, according to St Thomas, a complementary element is the deprivation of integrity, or, speaking in positive terms, the existence of concupiscence.

It now remains to be seen how this state of deprivation in which we are born, this loss of original justice, can be said to be sinful, displeasing to God, and morally evil, or in other words, how it can, as it exists in us, be brought under the denomination of voluntary; for otherwise it cannot in any true sense be called sinful, since sin is essentially a matter of free will. Some little has already been said when expounding St Thomas's doctrine on the essence of original sin, but we must now enquire more closely into it.

To solve this question we must go back to the beginning when God bestowed original justice upon Adam, so that by considering the conditions upon which it was given, we may the better under-

¹ *Formally*, a word of common occurrence in scholastic theology, which may be rendered here as "precisely identical with."

² *Collectio Lacensis*, vol. vii, col. 566.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 558.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 549.

stand the results flowing from its loss. Or it would be truer to say that from the known results we can come to a knowledge of the original conditions of the gift, since these are, at the most, implied and not explicitly stated in Holy Scripture.

Original justice, then, was not given to Adam for himself alone, but given to him for all men; it was not just a privilege personal to him, but was a gift to all mankind, who potentially were in him and were, in the future, to derive their human nature from him. So it was to have been passed on to all through the channel of natural generation, in the sense that, according to the divine plan, it would have been given to all men as the inevitable but supernatural consequence of their coming into human existence by way of natural procreation. The state of grace, with all that it implies, was to have been mankind's inheritance, on condition that it had been preserved by Adam, who was thus put into the position of the official and, as it were, the juridical head and representative of the whole human family. This is clearly implied by the Council of Trent¹ when it rejects and condemns the opinion that Adam's loss of the holiness and justice that he had received from God was his loss alone, and not ours also, for he could not have lost it for us unless he had also received it for us, as a sacred trust and inheritance to be handed on to us.

Now it must be noted that this divine dispensation or arrangement depends upon God's positive ordinance; it does not result from the very nature of things. There is nothing in the nature of grace to make the universality of its distribution dependent upon the oneness of the human race; had God so chosen, he could have raised every individual to the state of grace from the moment of conception, without taking any account of what Adam had done, of whether he had sinned or not. As Creator of both nature and grace he has supreme and unfettered liberty in all his dealings with men on either plane. Hence by giving Adam this power of handing on grace to all men or of cutting it off from them he gave him a special privilege and responsibility; he constituted him the head and representative of all mankind in a new way, in the spiritual order, the order of grace; he set up another and new kind of unity and solidarity between Adam and all his children. Adam became the human spring whence grace was to flow and pass through the whole human stream. Yet, at the same time, this new, high office of his, though strictly supernatural and dependent upon God's special ordinance and positive dispensation, was based and raised upon Adam's natural office as the fount and spring of human nature; it was closely connected with it, and may even be looked upon as the same office raised to the supernatural order. As all men were seminally in Adam from the point of view of their human elements and nature, so it was God's dispensation that they should all be in

¹ Session VI, can. 2.

him, as a river in its source, with regard to their supernatural endowments. Hence Adam's probation or trial and his reaction to it were matters of the greatest moment to all his children. If he had proved staunch and faithful he would have been confirmed in his high office as the human source of supernatural life for all mankind. There would have been no need for the "second Adam," Jesus Christ, to have been installed in that office. But as he failed under trial, the office was taken from him, and he became, instead of the supernatural spring of life, the natural source of death, of both body and soul, for all men.

We see then, that, by reason of Adam's representative character, and on account of the supernatural unity and solidarity established by God, between him and all his posterity, when he was put on trial, it was the whole human race that was being tested, and all mankind that was found wanting. It was not simply the will of an individual, isolated man that rebelled against God, but a will that represented and acted in behalf of the whole human family.

Thus original sin, as it is in each one of us, is voluntary, not indeed by any act of our personal will, but through the act of the "family will,"¹ through our relationship of spiritual dependence upon and solidarity with our first, divinely appointed, supernatural head and representative Adam. This explanation may seem, at first sight, to be far-fetched, or to be merely an arbitrary theory concocted in order to escape the difficulties caused by a harsh and unreasonable dogma. It is, in fact, strictly scriptural. It is implied in all that St Paul says about the fall and the redemption. His epistles are full of this idea of moral unity and solidarity, on the one hand, between Adam and his posterity, on the other, between Jesus Christ and his members or brethren. We have already seen how his incisive words, "For all sinned"² can refer only to the sin that all committed in Adam; again he writes: "For by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive,"³ where he invokes the same principle to explain the whole dispensation of the fall and the redemption.

The same explanation was given by the theologians who framed and annotated the decrees and definitions which were to have been submitted to the consideration of the Vatican Council. "In this form of the definition," they write, "three things are to be noticed: (a) what is said to belong to the essence of original sin is not a mere negation, the absence of sanctifying grace, but is the privation of grace, that is, the absence of that sanctity which, according to God's ordinance, ought to have been found in all Adam's descendants, inasmuch as God raised the whole human race to the supernatural

¹ As St Thomas calls it, the *voluntas naturae*, the will, not of the person, but of humankind taken collectively.

² Rom. v 12.

³ 1 Cor. xv 21-22.

order of grace, in its source and head, whereas now all are deprived of grace. But this privation (*b*) neither does nor can exist without a fault committed by free will ; this free will, however, is not that which is personal to each individual, but the free will of the head of the whole human race, of Adam himself, who, sinning, lost not only that grace which belonged to him personally, but also that which, according to God's plan, would have been passed on to all his children. Hence Adam's sin was the sin of human nature and becomes the habitual sin inhering in all who, by carnal generation, share in the nature derived from Adam. . . ." ¹

It was necessary to treat of this rather subtle matter at some length because it forms the centre and core of the whole dogma of original sin from the explanatory point of view. The points to be remembered are these : original sin, as it is in each individual, is not an actual sin but an habitual sin or a state of sin ; the free will concerned in it is not the free will of the individual, but the free will of the head of the family or race, in so far as Adam was appointed the family or race representative in the supernatural order ; and therefore the individual is not responsible personally, for through no fault of his own is he a member of the family despoiled by its father's sin of its supernatural privileges. These points being established, everything else follows almost as a matter of course.

§ VI: TRANSMISSION OF ORIGINAL SIN

THE question of the transmission of original sin from generation to generation presents no great difficulty once its nature has been settled, but it is interesting from the point of view of historical *Theological development* theology. It is a good example of the way in which, with the progress of time and the incidence of conflict and discussion, the meaning of some revealed doctrine grows clearer, though in substance and reality it has been firmly believed from the beginning. From the very first the Church taught that all the children of Adam are born in a state of enmity with God and need to be reborn and cleansed in the Sacrament of Baptism. The whole dogma of original sin is bound up in this belief, but, as is clear, it is implicit only. It was but gradually that the implications were worked out, and that many points of truth, hitherto hidden or unheeded, began to be seen clearly. During the first four centuries the process of development had already gone some way, but the Pelagian controversy in the fifth did more to carry it forward than anything that had hitherto happened. But even this did not bring full enlightenment, one point upon which there was still some obscurity being that of how original sin is passed on from generation to generation. The ante-Pelagian fathers had stressed, even to exaggeration, the act of generation as the medium of transmission ; some of them, indeed, seem

¹ Acta Conc. Vatican, *Collectio Lacensis*, vol. vii, col. 549.

to regard it as the true effective cause of original sin. The Pelagians put the question in a new light. The soul, they said, is spiritual and, therefore, cannot be produced by the physical act of generation ; neither can a father transfuse or pass on some of his soul to his son, for being spiritual, it is indivisible. The soul, then, must be directly created by God. So far the argument is sound, but, because they had a wrong notion of original sin, they drew a false conclusion, for they said to the Catholics : " If the soul is created in a state of sin, as you contend, God must be the author of the sin, a blasphemous doctrine that no Christian can hold. Therefore, you must give up your false dogma of original sin."

St Augustine's difficulty

St Augustine felt the force of the objection which has its full effect to-day upon those who hold erroneous opinions upon the nature of original sin. He could not see a good way out of the difficulty, and consequently against his instinctive inclination and his better judgement, could not bring himself to accept without reserve the teaching that each soul is immediately and directly created by God. He hoped that some justification could be found for the theory of traducianism, according to which the father exerts a real causative and productive efficiency in the production of his son's soul. His letter to St Jerome on the subject ¹ proves both his painful hesitation on the point and his profound intellectual humility ; whatever his preferences might be, and however great the difficulties entailed by the truth, he would accept it wholeheartedly. The real cause of his difficulty lay, of course, in his imperfect understanding of the nature of original sin. This problem had not yet been worked out to its final solution. Though St Augustine, probably, did not hold that original sin is identical with concupiscence, as he has often been accused of doing, though he did not conceive of it as some positive poison infecting the soul, yet he was overmuch inclined to look upon its positive aspect, and over-estimated the part played in it by concupiscence. But if we bear in mind the definition that has been given and its explanation, the difficulty that bothered him disappears and the transmission of original sin through the act of generation is easily understood.

Explanation

It is a result of mankind's solidarity, physical and spiritual, with Adam. We are burdened with original sin only in so far as we are one family with Adam as our head and representative. His headship in the supernatural order is founded on and co-extensive with his physical headship, and therefore affects all those and only those who are descended from him by physical generation. Or, again, original sin is not a matter of the individual's will, but of the " family " will, the representative's will ; it partakes of the nature of sin only in so far as it is derived from Adam. But everything derived from him comes to us by the way of physical generation whereby human nature is handed on from father to son. Hence

¹ *Epist. S. Augustini*, 166.

original sin, just as every other human inheritance, comes to us by this channel. This is not to say that the act of generation is the efficient cause of the existence of original sin in the individual. That act is not the efficient or productive cause even of the existence of the child's soul.¹ All it does is so to dispose the material body, to put it into such a condition that, according to the divinely established laws of nature, it calls for and, if we may be allowed the word, necessitates the creation of the soul by God. But this soul, good and, indeed, a perfect thing in the natural order, is deprived of that sanctifying grace which it ought to have had, according to God's original but conditional design; instead of being supernaturalised, as it ought to have been, it is a purely natural thing; at the same time, and owing to the same cause, the whole human being, body and soul, is deprived of the gift of integrity, which it ought to have possessed, and, therefore, subject to concupiscence. But all this comes into effect when, and only when, the complete human being comes into existence, which is the result of the act of generation. This act, then, is the vehicle of the transmission of original sin.

After all that has been said, it is hardly necessary to enter upon the process of argument by which God is defended against the charge of injustice commonly made against him in this connection. If original sin were a positive thing made or created by him, the charge could not be met; but such an hypothesis is blasphemous. Again, if original sin lay in the deprivation of something belonging, of right, to man's nature, even though this natural right be God's gift, the accusation could be sustained. But since it consists in the deprivation of something to which man has not the shadow of a claim or right, of something that is farther above his own capacity of attainment, farther beyond the stretch of his own faculties to reach, than even reason would be above the powers of the lower animals, the deprivation, to wit, of sanctifying grace, the bottom drops out of the charge altogether. God chose to give this supernatural gift to man out of the abundance of his love. His decision was unfettered, divinely free. Similarly, therefore, he was completely free to make the conditions upon which the gift should be given, kept, and handed on. In the supernatural order, it cannot be too often repeated, man has and can have no rights against God, no claims upon him; God can have no duties towards man. On his side it is all a matter of free bestowal; on ours of undeserved receiving. Even our merits, real as they are, are not ours in principle, but come from God's grace through Jesus Christ. Therefore there can be no question of injustice arising out of the existence and transmission of original sin, because this is a matter concerning the supernatural order of grace, wherein God's freedom is above all measure and understanding. Many Catholic writers, in dealing with this question, use as an illustration the example of a king who,

*Answers
to some
objections*

¹ See Essay vi, pp. 211-12.

out of pure benevolence, raises one of his lowest subjects, an unlettered, unknown peasant, to the highest and most honourable position in the kingdom, with the promise that, should he prove himself faithful and deserving, his honours and estates will be confirmed to his heirs for ever, while, on the other hand, the consequence of unfaithfulness will be the reduction of himself and them to the lowly condition wherefrom he had been raised. Put to the test, the ungrateful subject fails and rebels against his king. As a result he is stripped of all his possessions, and not only does he sink back to his former state of poverty and misery, but he and all his children, as long as men keep the remembrance of his history, lie under the stigma and disgrace of ingratitude, rebellion, and treason. As far as it goes the illustration is good; it shows that no accusation of injustice against God can be upheld, but it is only an illustration, and, like all analogies between the human and the divine, falls far short of being an adequate picture of the reality, since there can be no true measure of proportion between the highest worldly position and the divine, adoptive sonship conferred by grace. We have now to see what effects are produced in us by original sin, first as regards this present life, then as far as the future life is concerned.

§ VII: EFFECTS OF ORIGINAL SIN

Loss of grace THE first effect of original sin, as regards this present life, is, of course, the loss of sanctifying grace with all therein involved, to wit, the loss of the theological and moral virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Although this loss, as we have seen, is of the very essence of original sin, it may also, from another point of view, be regarded as an effect.

The canon of the Council of Trent¹ which defines the Catholic teaching on this point, indicates that the deprivation of grace has two aspects: it has the nature of sin in so far as it is an aversion from God, and the nature of a penalty in so far as we are thereby left bereft of the power and means of attaining the final end to which we were destined.

Loss of preternatural gifts The second effect is the loss of the preternatural gifts, namely, integrity, immortality, and freedom from pain and suffering. The Council of Trent clearly defined that subjection to death is the result of original sin, but does not speak in such explicit terms about the loss of integrity. Since, however, as seen above, it says that concupiscence "comes from sin," it implies, clearly enough, that Adam's sin is responsible for the loss of integrity, and this is the unanimous teaching of all theologians.

Wound in man's nature As for the other gifts bestowed upon Adam, their loss is included under the general phrase that "the whole man, both in body and soul, suffered a change for the worse." This loss of the pre-

¹ Session V, can. 2.

ternatural gifts is often spoken of as a wound in man's nature. A wound is cut in the body, a severance of parts or tissues which ought to be united, thus creating disunion and disorder and preventing the proper functioning of the parts affected. Similarly by original sin the perfect harmony and unity, that originally reigned throughout the various levels of man's nature, are broken, with the result that his different faculties, especially his higher powers of will and intellect, cannot work with that ease and sureness and peace that otherwise would have been theirs.

These effects had to be mentioned here, even at the cost of some repetition; but after what has already been set down about them there is no need to say more. There is, however, another effect that must be more fully explained. The Council of Trent speaks in two places of "captivity under the power of the devil" as being the result of Adam's sin.¹ Modern thought, so called, cannot abide the idea of a personal devil, and to its votaries the Tridentine doctrine will appear absurd; many Catholics, even, are a little shy of such teaching, and few, perhaps, realise all that it means. Yet the New Testament is full of it: "Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey, whether it be of sin, unto death, or of obedience, unto justice,"² and, "By whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave;"³ it is, indeed, but one special aspect of a universal natural truth and law.

God, in creating the world, established it as a vast hierarchy of beings, according to a plan of an ascending scale of natural dignity and perfection. From inanimate beings we rise through the different degrees of living things to man, who is supreme among material creatures. Above man is the world of pure spirits, the angels, who, according to Catholic teaching, are divided into choirs according to the varying degrees of their natural dignity. Above all, infinitely transcending all, is God. Now it is the general law of nature that power and dominion correspond with natural perfection and dignity. Every being has some sort of natural dominion over those lower in the scale of perfection, and may make use of them to serve its own lawful ends and convenience. So we may use the lower creatures, animate and inanimate, for our own good, as our servants. We have natural rights over them. These rights are not unlimited, and may be abused. It is, perhaps, impossible to determine the exact limits of this dominion, but as to its real existence there can be no doubt. Similarly in the angelic world, according to Catholic theology, the higher angels exercise a certain empire over the lower, in many ways, as St Thomas sets forth at length in his treatise on the angels.

Finally, the angels, by virtue of their higher place in the scale

¹ Session V, can. 1, and Session VI, cap. 1.

² Rom. vi 16.

³ 2 Peter ii 19.

of natural perfection, have certain natural rights of dominion over their inferiors—men, brutes, and lifeless creatures. How far this empire extends we cannot say; of course, it does not destroy man's autonomy, but there is no doubt of its existence as a natural corollary of the hierarchy of things. The story told in the Book of Job is an illustration of it.

*Natural
empire of
Lucifer*

Consider, now, the angels who rebelled and fell. They were shut out from the supernatural kingdom, but there is no reason whatever to suppose that they suffered any loss or hurt in their natural qualities and endowments. They kept all their wonderful natural gifts of intellect and power, their natural dignity and superiority, and therefore, likewise, their natural rights of dominion, over the lower creatures. And if we accept the common teaching that Lucifer was one of the very highest of God's angels, it follows that his natural empire is of immense power and extent. But another factor in the ordering of things has here to be taken into account. The angels had not been left in their natural state, but had been raised to the supernatural plane, becoming sharers in God's life and glory. Hence when Lucifer was cast down he lost all his natural rights of dominion over those of the lower angels who remained faithful, since the least of those who are in the supernatural order is superior in dignity and perfection to the highest of them who are possessed of natural gifts alone. Satan was despoiled of his kingdom. He suffered a further and greater rebuff to his dignity when man was created and raised by grace to the supernatural plane. Here was a creature who, by all the laws of nature, should have been a lowly subject in Satan's kingdom, yet who, through God's magnificent generosity, had been raised above him and set upon a height of dignity and perfection which he could envy but never reach. Lucifer the proud, "the prince of this world,"¹ found himself humbled, deprived of his natural rights, forced to take a lower place even than man, so far beneath him in the hierarchy of nature. No wonder that he tried to recover his lost empire. Against the faithful angels all assaults must, of necessity, be vain, but man was still open to attack, and when attacked, succumbed. But we must not confuse the issue. This first struggle was purely a battle between the natural and the supernatural. It was not a conflict of good and evil in the merely moral or ethical order. Satan wished to rob man of his supernatural dignity and to pull him down to his purely natural level, so as to enrol him in the ranks of his own subjects. The attack was successful; Adam, for himself and his children, rejected the supernatural, proposing to be his own end and his own ruler, chose the merely natural, fell to the lower level, and so doing, came once more beneath the empire of Satan, who recovered his natural rights over him as an inferior being, which man's elevation to the supernatural

¹ John xii 31.

level had taken away from him. Herein lies the basis of man's captivity under the devil's power. It is but the working of a general natural law.

But God's goodness was not defeated. The Redeemer was appointed and, by his merits, drawn upon in advance, mankind was again raised to the supernatural order, and Satan once more despoiled of his natural rights of empire. While, however, man's fall was actually universal, affecting every individual, the redemption, though universal in principle, does not become individually effective until the individual is incorporated with Christ, until Christ's merits are applied to him personally, and sanctifying grace is thus infused into his soul. Being born, then, without grace and subject to the universal effect of Adam's fall, he is born a citizen of the natural kingdom only, where Satan still has and wields his rights and powers of empire. He is born a subject of the devil. In essence, therefore, this subjection to Satan is a quite natural thing, resulting from the natural superiority of angelic to human nature. There is still, however, a reservation to be made. It is true that Christ's redemptive merits are not actually applied to the new-born child until, in baptism, he is incorporated with Christ. But Christ died for all the members of the human family into which the child is born; Christ wishes all to be saved; the child, therefore, is included in the all-embracing supernatural destiny of mankind; if not actually, he is already potentially supernaturalised, and it would seem to follow from this that God does, in fact, curtail to some extent Satan's natural rights of empire. Besides, since the infant is not yet capable of using his reason and will, since they are beyond the influence of his nascent imaginative faculty, in the stimulation of which Satan's power over men principally lies, his dominion over the child is almost wholly, if not quite, passive and ineffectual; he cannot produce in him any actual evil effects or sinful acts. We need not here enquire into the consequences of this captivity, either in infants or adults, which is set forth in the essay on the angels. It is enough to have established its reality and to have shown that it means that the child, until its rebirth in baptism, is enrolled under Satan's flag and subject to his natural dominion. Hence, when the priest, in the prayer of exorcism before baptism, admonishes Satan to "go out and depart" from the child, he is not indulging in ecclesiastical rhetoric or repeating the tags of ancient superstition; he is speaking the language of stark realism. Whence it is easy to understand the desire of the Church that children should be baptised as soon as possible, to put them beyond Satan's power, and enrol them in the supernatural kingdom of Christ.

So far we have been considering the effects resulting from original sin, as regards this life. We have now to see what effects it will have upon the soul's destiny in the next life. For the sake of clearness we shall take the case of the soul that passes into the other world, *Fate of unbaptised infants*

unstained by actual sin, but yet still burdened with original sin. Though some who come to the full use of reason may die in this condition, which is a matter of dispute among theologians, it is evident that the question principally concerns children who die without baptism, and in view of their immense numbers, it is of great practical interest and importance. Opponents of the Church, neglecting her authoritative pronouncements and the general and current teaching of her theologians, are given to seizing upon some opinion held by St Augustine or some other early father, to putting this individual view forward as representative of Catholic doctrine, and then denouncing this as harsh, inhuman, and incompatible with God's loving mercy.

We do not deny that some of the early fathers or later theologians may have spoken about this matter in terms of exaggeration, or held opinions that to us seem harsh and unreasonable, especially when they were excited by the denials of heretics, with whom controversy was often violent and bitter, and led, not seldom, to overstatements on both sides. Notwithstanding the reverence due to these earlier champions of the faith, and the authority and prestige rightly attaching to their names and teachings, it must be borne always in mind that no father and no doctor is infallible; and where the Church has spoken, or even shown the bent of her mind, it is not only our right but our duty to throw over even an Athanasius or an Augustine, if his teaching is not wholly at one with hers.

On this present question the Church has had occasion to make clear certain points of her faith, sometimes when issuing conciliar decrees, sometimes when publishing condemnations of erroneous doctrines. In the Council of Florence, A.D. 1439, which effected a short-lived reunion between the Church and the schismatical Easterns, she included as an article of her creed the affirmation that "the souls of those who depart from this life, either in actual mortal sin or in original sin only, go down at once into hell, there however to suffer disparate penalties." In 1567 Pope St Pius V condemned a number of propositions taken from the writings of Michael du Bay of Louvain; among them is one asserting that the unbaptised child, attaining the use of his reason after death, will actually hate and blaspheme God and set himself against God's law. In 1794 Pius VI condemned a great many of the errors propounded by the Erastian synod recently held at Pistoia in Tuscany, among them being the "doctrine that rejects as a Pelagian fable that part of the lower regions (generally known as the limbo of infants) in which the souls of those dying in original sin alone are punished with the pain of loss (*i.e.*, the beatific vision) without the pain of fire. . . ."

From these pronouncements we draw the following conclusions: unbaptised children are deprived of the beatific vision of God, which is man's true final end; this is a part of the defined Catholic faith.

It is certain that they neither hate nor blaspheme God nor rebel against his law, and it is, at least, most improbable that they suffer from the fire of hell or any sort of positive, sensible pain; while, on the contrary, it is most likely that their state is one of true peace and natural happiness. The dogma of faith is clearly contained in Christ's words to Nicodemus: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,"¹ and is, also, the direct theological consequence of all that has been said about the nature of original sin. This consists primarily in the privation of sanctifying grace, which is the principle of divine sonship, and, hence, the necessary condition for entry into God's eternal kingdom. The beatific vision is the full flowering of grace; when the soul in grace is freed from the bonds of flesh and cleansed from its lesser impurities and from the debts it owes to God's justice, it passes naturally into glory. Where, however, the bud has not formed no flower can bloom.

On the other hand, there is no ecclesiastical authority for the opinion, now almost universally rejected, that the child who dies unbaptised suffers any pain of sense, that is, any positive punishment such as is inflicted upon those who die with unforgiven, actual, mortal sins upon their souls. On this point Catholic doctors and theologians have not always been in full agreement among themselves. St Augustine, for example, held that such children would suffer some sort of positive pain, though he admitted that he did not know how or what, and was, as a rule, careful to add that it would be of a kind very light and easy to bear. He was followed by many in the West, whereas the Greek fathers, generally, were inclined to the view that these children suffer nothing except the pain of loss or deprivation of the beatific vision. The theological reason for this opinion, which is now held by all, is clearly explained by St Thomas: "The punishment," he writes, "bears a proportion to the sin. Now in actual sin there is, first, the turning away from God, the corresponding punishment being the loss of the beatific vision; and secondly, the inordinate cleaving to some created good, and the punishment corresponding with this is the pain of sense. But in original sin there is no inordinate cleaving to created good, . . . and therefore it is not punished by the pain of sense."²

From this follows our third conclusion, to wit, that it is most probable that the state of unbaptised children in the next world is one of peace and natural happiness. Since they do not suffer any pain of sense, and since they do not hate God or set themselves against his law, the only thing that could trouble their peace or spoil their happiness would be a sorrow or anguish resulting from the knowledge of the supernatural happiness for which they were intended, but which is for ever lost to them. Some eminent theologians, as St Robert Bellarmine, have held that they do

¹ John iii 5.

² *Quaest. Disp., De Malo, v, a. 2.*

suffer in this way. Apart from the authority of some of the fathers, their main reason for thinking thus is that the child will see and understand his loss and therefore grieve over it. St Thomas, however, denies this and his reasoning seems conclusive.¹ It is based on the truth, fundamental in Catholic theology, that grace and, therefore, the possession of the beatific vision, which is the final culmination of grace, are absolutely and in the strictest sense of the word supernatural. They not only exceed man's natural powers of attainment, but also and equally his natural powers of knowing. It is impossible for a man to know, by natural reason alone, without the help of revelation and the gift of faith, that his final happiness consists in the immediate sight and possession of God. Consequently unbaptised children, not having received the sacrament of faith, have not the supernatural knowledge, without which they cannot know what they have lost. Hence their loss causes them no anguish of soul.

Although these considerations may bring some little consolation to the Catholic mother grieving over the fate of her child who has died unbaptised, they will not relieve the weight upon her conscience, should hers have been the fault, or free parents from the obligation to have their children baptised as soon as possible, since there is no measure or proportion between the natural happiness that will be their lot in limbo, and the inconceivable felicity of heaven, of which man's carelessness may so easily deprive them. Moreover, it must be clearly understood that the child dying without baptism is definitely lost. He is not in some midway state between salvation and damnation. He was made for one end only, a supernatural end; and failure to reach that, whether the fault be his own or another's, is complete failure, is eternal loss, even though unaccompanied by the positive tortures of a soul that has wilfully damned itself.

Conclusion

To conclude this short study of the fall and original sin, we may call attention to the fact that the whole of it is based upon the truth and the reality and the supernatural character of sanctifying grace. Without this the fall becomes a myth and original sin an absurdity. Consequently, since the most fundamental error of Protestantism is its denial of the reality or its grievous misunderstanding of the nature of grace, Protestant theology is always hopelessly at sea and at loggerheads with itself when dealing with original sin.

Again, the dependence of the dogma of the fall and original sin upon the reality of grace at once puts this dogma into its place among those that are essentially mysterious. It is beyond the power of our reason fully to understand it, or even to prove its existence. This we know only by revelation. But once it is accepted it makes nearly everything else clear. The fall explains the life and death of Jesus Christ, and the whole sacramental system. Without

¹ *Quaest. Disp., De Malo*, v, a. 3.

original sin the Church, which is the permanent means established by God to make good the damage done by Adam's sin, would be a useless encumbrance, and without the Church religion, in the full meaning of the word, would soon flounder and disappear. And even the history of the world, especially that of the chosen people, can only be properly understood in the light of this dogma. Mysterious, then, as it is, it is lit up and made easy of belief by all around us, by everything that touches us most nearly; unpalatable as it may be to our natural taste, it is sweetened by its necessary connection with all those things that are our greatest joy in this world and our only hope for the next.

B. V. MILLER.

XI

JESUS CHRIST, GOD AND MAN

§ I: INTRODUCTORY

AN essay so small upon a subject so vast as "Jesus Christ, God and Man" seems to require a few preliminary words to define its scope. This is the first of four essays in the present volume devoted to the theology of the Incarnation, and its object is to explain, so far as space will permit, the doctrine of the hypostatic union, that is, the admirable union of the human and the divine nature in the adorable Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this is the fundamental truth regarding our holy Redeemer, and if this is denied or misconstrued all else that is said of him must be either false or inadequate.

Christ is the model of manhood, he is the exemplar of every human virtue and perfection, he is the man who has been loved and revered more than any other since the world began. But his human nature is perfect because it is the humanity of God himself; his love has won all hearts because it is the human love of God. He is the Man of Sorrows, he stands out in history as the Sufferer. Well could he say through the mouth of his prophet, "Attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow";¹ there could be no other such sorrow because there could be no other human nature so sensitive and so perfect, none with such capacity for suffering as the humanity which God had made his own. He is our High Priest and Redeemer. But he could have been neither, unless he were both God and Man. By reason of his very Person he is the ideal Mediator between God and men; being man he can offer sacrifice to God; and because he is God his sacrifice is of infinite value.

The hypostatic union, therefore, is the foundation of the whole of the Catholic teaching about Christ. In fact, so dominated are Catholic theologians by the vital importance of this fundamental truth that they have been accused of emphasising the divinity of Christ at the expense of his true manhood. "Although the Church theoretically maintains the humanity of Christ side by side with his divinity," wrote Sabatier,² "the latter inevitably absorbs everything. The traditional Christology is incurably docetist; so much so that from this point of view it has become practically impossible to write a serious life of Jesus Christ." How little this accusation is justified may be seen from several monumental works on the life of Christ which have appeared in late years from the pen of Catholic

¹ Jer. Lament. i 12.

² *Esquisse d'une philosophie de la religion* (Paris, 1897), pp. 179-180.

scholars,¹ and also from the two immediately succeeding essays in which an account is given of the human life and experience of our Saviour. If the Church jealously safeguards the true divinity of Christ, she is no less intransigent upon his real humanity; for the one no less than the other is revealed by God, the one no less than the other is essential to the work of the Redemption.

Comparatively little space will be devoted in the present essay to the purely scriptural basis of our faith in the divinity of Christ, in the first place because for those who accept the gospels as the inspired word of God, as all Catholics do, it is enough to read a few pages of the gospel of St John to be persuaded that Christ is truly God, and secondly because the faith of the Church on this point becomes luminously clear as we follow the Christological controversies of the first six centuries. The Catholic Church has ever re-echoed the profession of faith of St Peter, the rock and foundation upon which she is built: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; so that the dogmatic letter of Pope Leo I (449), in which the dogma of the hypostatic union was defined in precisely the same terms in which theologians teach it to-day, was acclaimed by the Fathers of the Council of Chalcedon with the cry: "Peter has spoken by the mouth of Leo."

To the history of these controversies more particular attention will be paid, since the study of them will enable us to understand the exact meaning of the famous dogmatic definitions of the Church on the union of the two natures in the one person of Christ. The fuller appreciation of all that is involved in the hypostatic union will lead us to consider its consequences as far as they concern the Person of the Word Incarnate, and in particular the preternatural and supernatural perfections of his human nature.

The theme is profound—for we are dealing with a mystery—and the manner of treatment must accordingly reflect something of the abstruse character of the subject. "So then, let our human weakness sink under God's glory, and ever find itself inadequate to the exposition of the works of his mercy. Let our thoughts fail, let our minds be at a loss, let our utterance fade; for it is good that we should feel how imperfect are even our true thoughts concerning the majesty of the Lord."²

§ II: GOD WITH US

CHRISTIANITY has been defined as the religion of the Fatherhood *The Father-* of God; and, properly understood, the definition is perhaps as *hood of God* good as any that could be given. Even a superficial reading of

¹ E.g. L. Fillion: *The Life of Christ*, tr. (Herder, 1928-30), 3 vols.; Archbishop Goodier: *The Public Life of Jesus Christ* (Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1930), 2 vols.

² St Leo, Sermon 11, *de Passione Domini*.

the Gospels leaves the predominant impression that God is the Father; and St John himself seems to regard this as a suitable summing up of the Christian revelation when he says, "No man hath seen God at any time. The only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."¹

But the definition is one which needs explanation. An entirely inadequate conception of Christianity would restrict the revelation of Christ to the bare statement that God is the provident Father of all his creatures, and in particular that he has a special care for the human race. If this were so then Christ would have added little to what was already common knowledge among the Patriarchs of the Old Testament, or indeed to what the human reason is able, even without revelation, to discern. The Jews, who knew their Scriptures well, could have found in any one page of their sacred books abundant evidence of the providential care of God for the chosen people of Israel, and the author of the Book of Wisdom speaks clearly enough of the wisdom of God that "reacheth from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly,² ordering all things in measure and number and weight";³ for "he made the little and the great, and he hath equally care of all." But the revelation of Christ concerning the Fatherhood of God is a mystery "which in other generations was not known to the sons of men"; it had been "hidden from eternity in God, who created all things";⁴ it is a "wisdom which is hidden, which God ordained before the world, unto our glory." Hence when St Peter made his profession of faith in Christ, saying: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Christ answered him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Thus the apparently simple statement, that God is the Father, has a meaning unspeakably profound. Let us try, with all reverence, to penetrate it.

It is clear, first of all, that Christ presents himself as standing in a unique relation to God his Father. Already St Augustine had acutely remarked that he never places himself on a level with the rest of mankind by addressing God as "our Father."⁵ He refers to God as *his* Father, and when he has occasion to associate himself with us he seems careful to preserve the distinction between our sonship and the much higher relationship in which he himself stands to God.⁶ What that relationship is emerges clearly from numerous passages of the New Testament: he is the only-begotten of the Father. "God hath sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we may live by him";⁷ formerly God had spoken to men through the prophets, now he spoke in his son;⁸ formerly

¹ John i, 18.² viii 1.³ xi 21.⁴ Eph. iii 5, 9.⁵ *In Joannem*, tr. 21, 3.⁶ See Matt. xxv 34; xxvi 29; Luke xxiv 49.⁷ 1 John iv 9.⁸ Heb. i 1-2.

he had sent his "servants," and these had been mocked and spurned, now he sent "his own most dear son," whom he thought they might reverence.¹ He sent him that he might reveal the Father to mankind; for he alone had seen the Father.

It was an axiom with the Jews that no man could see God and live. "No man," says St John, "hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."² The consequence is evident: Christ is God. He is the Son of God in the strictest sense of the word, the Son of God because he has received the divine nature from the Father by eternal generation. "All things," he says, "are delivered to me by my Father. And no one knoweth the Son but the Father, neither doth anyone know the Father but the Son and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal him."³ The Father and the Son have an intimate and exclusive knowledge of each other, a knowledge which can be imparted to others only by a special favour. Christ could not have expressed more clearly his claim to be God; for none but God can see God as he is.

Christ, then, is the son of God by nature; and he came to reveal to us the Father, whose sons we are by adoption. "Behold," says St John,⁴ "what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called and should be the sons of God. Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear we shall be like to him, for we shall see him as he is"; or, according to St Paul, "then I shall know even as I am known."⁵ We are the sons of God by adoption, partakers of the divine nature, as St Peter calls us, because we are destined by divine supernatural favour to enjoy that vision of God which is naturally proper to God himself alone. Christ is shown to be the only-begotten son of God, not merely a partaker of the divine nature, but truly and essentially God, because he enjoys this intimate and intuitive knowledge of the divinity as his own natural right.

This then is the meaning of the divine Fatherhood which Christ came to reveal to us: the true and only-begotten Son of God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, assumes our human nature that we may be made partakers of his divinity; the divine life, which is in the Word incarnate in all its fulness, is communicated to us through his humanity; God's own Son lives and dies as man in our midst in order that we may become co-heirs with him of eternal life, adopted sons of God by a real participation in that divine nature which is his by eternal generation. This association of mankind with Christ in his filial relation to the Father, and yet this contrast between his natural filiation and our own adoptive sonship, may truly be said to constitute the essence of the Christian revelation.

¹ Mark xii 1-12.

⁴ I John iii 1 seq.

² John i 18.

⁵ I Cor. xiii 12.

³ Matt. xi 27.

*Christ truly
God*

In the light of Christ's divine sonship strictly so-called the mysterious announcement of the Angel Gabriel to his blessed Mother becomes luminously clear: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and therefore also the Holy that shall be born of thee shall be called¹ the Son of God."² No wonder then that her cousin Elizabeth hailed her as blessed among women, humbly confused by the honour of this visit from the "mother of her Lord"; no wonder that the Precursor himself, though yet unborn, is constrained to give testimony to the presence of the divine Messiah by leaping in his mother's womb. We may also note as particularly significant the fact that the first spoken words of Christ related in the Gospel are a reference to his divine Sonship—"Know you not that I must be about my Father's business?"³—and that his public life begins with a most solemn revelation of his unique relationship to the Father: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."⁴ Hence he justly claimed a love and a reverence due to God alone;⁵ since he is eternal he lived before the time of Abraham;⁶ he has power to forgive sins by his own authority, a power which the Pharisees recognised to be divine.⁷ Being the Son of God he spoke with authority, no longer merely conveying a message from God, as the prophets had done, "Thus saith the Lord," but making laws in his own name: "I say unto you"; he had power to perfect, and if necessary even to set aside as obsolete, the prescriptions of the Old Testament; he is greater than David, he is Lord of the Sabbath. Nor did the Jews misunderstand his claim. They knew well that he was calling himself God. "Art thou then the Son of God?" asked Caiaphas; and when Jesus answered that he was indeed, he was accused of blasphemy and regarded as worthy of death.⁸ This was the reason why from the beginning they had sought to kill him. It was not because of his works that they took up stones to cast at him, but for blasphemy, and because being a man, he made himself God,⁹ and "because he said that God was his Father, making himself equal to God."¹⁰

His disciples, too, had well understood their Master's teaching. "Being in the form of God," says St Paul,¹¹ "he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man." The same Apostle in his epistle to the Colossians gives us a sublime description of the person and prerogatives of Christ. Having called him the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creatures (*i.e.* born before all creatures), he continues, in a

¹ A hebraism for "shall be."

³ Luke ii 49.

⁴ Matt. iii 17.

² Luke i 35.

⁶ John vi 29-47; xi 26; xiv 1; xiv 21-28; xvi 7-13.

⁶ *Ibid.* viii 52-56.

⁷ Mark ii 1-12.

⁸ Luke xxii 67-71.

⁹ John x 30-33.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* v 18.

¹¹ Phil. ii 6-7.

passage so magnificent that any commentary would but weaken its force: "In him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible . . . and he is before all, and by him all things consist." ¹ The opening words of the epistle to the Hebrews are reminiscent of the first chapter of the Gospel of St John, so explicitly do they affirm that Christ is God: "God . . . in these days hath spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world. Who being the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power . . . sitteth on the right hand of the majesty on high. Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels hath he said at any time, 'Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee'?"

But most clearly of all speaks St John, the disciple whom Jesus loved. It was to prove that Christ was God that he wrote what we know as the fourth gospel. "These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." ² His account of the life of Christ opens with words very similar to the first words of the book of Genesis. But whereas the author of the Pentateuch was concerned only with the origin of created things, St John speaks of the timeless origin of the Word, born of the Father from all eternity: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." When the universe came into being he, the Word, already was, for it was through him that all things were made. He came forth from God into the world as the light into the darkness, to reveal the Father to mankind and to enable men to be born again as the adopted sons of God, raised by God's favour to be brethren of Christ, the only-begotten of the Father. Such is the theme of the prologue of the fourth gospel; such is the theme throughout: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us."

But he who proclaims himself so clearly to be God is un-^{Christ truly} doubtedly also a man. He is conceived and born of a human ^{man} mother. We see him now as an infant, now as a young boy, growing in stature and in wisdom. He grows to manhood, living in subjection to his parents. We see him finally as a grown man; he is truly a man, subject to the ordinary laws of human life; he is hungry and eats, he is weary and rests, he is sorrowful and weeps, he suffers and dies. In all things he behaves as a man; he is a man. St John, who is so solicitous to show that Christ is God, is no less emphatic concerning the reality of his human nature. The Apostles had touched him with their hands, they had seen him with their eyes; they knew that he was a man.³ And they knew also that he was God.

¹ i 15 seq.

² xx 31.

³ i John i 1.

God with us ; Jesus Christ, God and Man. This is the mystery of the Incarnation.

§ III: DENIALS AND DEFINITIONS

THE doctrine of the Incarnation as stated above is a stupendous truth, but its formulation contains no words that may be called technically philosophical. Equally simple is the language of the Apostles' Creed in which we profess our belief in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified and died for us. And so indeed the dogma of the Incarnation was expressed during the first two centuries of the Christian era. The early (or Apostolic) Fathers, in teaching this, as the other doctrines of the Church, use the terminology of Scripture. It was only when, with the rise of heresy, it became important to emphasise now this and now that aspect of the truth, that the dogmas of the faith were formulated with greater technical precision.

*Gnostics,
Manicheans,
Docetists*

Of the first heresies concerning the Person of Christ we already find mention in the New Testament. These errors take the form either of denying the true humanity of Christ or of rejecting his true divinity, and in either form they had a more or less continuous history during the first four centuries of the Christian era. The Gnostics, and later the Manicheans of the second and third centuries, held that matter was essentially evil, the product of the god of evil. For this reason they denied the resurrection of the body and also the possibility of any association of God with matter. Evidently to such the idea of a divine incarnation was repugnant. In the endeavour to make a compromise between Christianity and their philosophical tenets they taught that Christ had not a real body, but merely the appearance of a body, thus reducing the whole of Christ's human life to a pretence ; hence the name given to these heretics, the Docetists (from *δοκεῖν*, to appear). St Paul is probably referring to early advocates of this view when, in his second epistle to Timothy,¹ he speaks of the followers of a false science that merits not the name, and insists upon the mediatorship of the *man* Christ Jesus. The epistles of St John also contain clear references to these early opponents of the Incarnation. "Everyone," he says, "that confesseth not Jesus in the flesh is not of God."² Hence the emphatic opening of his first letter: "What we have seen with our eyes and touched with our hands of the word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard we declare unto you."

Docetism was refuted later in turn by St Irenaeus, Tertullian, and St Augustine. Tertullian, in particular, wrote a complete work, *De Carne Christi*, against the docetism of the Marcionites.

But more dangerous and more long-lived were the heresies that denied the divinity of Christ. A Jewish sect, the Ebionites,

Ebionites

¹ vi 20.

² 1 John iv 3 ; cf. 2 John 7.

held that Christ, the son of Joseph and Mary, was a great man indeed, but yet a mere man. The spirit of God, they said, descended upon him at his baptism, raising him to the dignity of adopted son of God. It was against this heresy that St John wrote his Gospel to prove the divinity of Christ, and it is to this sect that he refers in his first epistle as the antichrist who denies that Jesus is the Son of God.¹ Certain Jews who set the angels higher than Jesus are refuted by St Paul in his epistle to the Colossians, and the same are probably in his mind when, at the beginning of his epistle to the Hebrews, he extols the majesty of Christ above all the categories of the heavenly spirits: "To whom of the angels hath he said at any time, 'Thou art my son, this day I have begotten thee'?"

This error appeared again in Rome at the end of the second century under the name of Adoptionism, associated with the names of Theodotus the Currier and Theodotus the Banker. Here too the champion of orthodoxy was Tertullian, who in this connection has given us a treatise on the divinity of Christ, *Adversus Praxean*. In fact it is in this work that Tertullian provides the first attempt at a technical formulation of the mystery of the Incarnation: "We see plainly the twofold state, which is not confounded, but conjoined in one Person, Jesus Christ, God and man. . . . Forasmuch as the two substances² acted distinctly each in its own character, there necessarily accrued to them severally their own operations and their own issues."³

A similar doctrine to that of Theodotus—but with a more important outcome—was taught in the East by Paul of Samosata, Bishop of Antioch (c. 260). The mention of the see of Antioch makes it opportune at this point to call attention to the two great theological schools of Alexandria and Antioch, which played so important a part in the Christological controversies of the fifth century. The school of Antioch was characterised by a spirit of rigid adherence to the letter of Scripture and by the tendency to view theological problems from a positive standpoint. Thus the Antiochenes approached the study of the Person of Christ from what we may call the historical angle. Christ was portrayed in the Gospels as being God and as being also man; hence they tended to insist upon the distinction of the two natures in Christ. The Alexandrian spirit, on the other hand, was mystical and speculative, and the theologians of that school were inclined to stress rather the unity of Christ than the distinction of his two natures. The exaggeration of these tendencies led respectively to the heresies of Nestorianism and Monophysism. Paul of Samosata, then, taught that Christ was a man, but a man in whom the mind of God

¹ ii 22, 23.

² "Natures," we should say.

³ Ch. 27. Note the similarity between this passage and the famous Dogmatic Letter of Leo the Great. Cf. p. 373.

—the Logos—dwelt in a special way; if he is called God it is only by reason of his intimate union with the Word of God. This doctrine, condemned in a synod of Antioch (267-268), is important because it was the prelude to Arianism which denied the divinity of the Word.

The end of the third century and the beginning of the fourth were occupied with the great Trinitarian heresies, into which we cannot enter here, except to remark that the Christological problem could not be precisely formulated or solved until the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity of Persons in God had been put beyond misunderstanding. It was obviously premature to discuss the exact relation of the human nature to the divine nature in Christ until the divinity of the Word was vindicated against heretics. With the Council of Nicaea in 325 this was done, and the arena was thus cleared for the great Christological controversies of the fourth and fifth centuries.

Diodore

We may conveniently resume our study of these with Diodore, Bishop of Tarsus (378), founder of the second great school of Antioch. Anxious, in accordance with the Antiochene tradition, to safeguard the integrity of the two natures in Christ, Diodore, as far as we are able to gather from the fragments of his works that remain, accentuated the distinction between Christ's humanity and divinity to the point of separation, so that for him God is one person and Christ another. These two were intimately united, indeed, but only as God is intimately united with a creature in whom he dwells as in a temple and in whom he works his will. The influence of Paul of Samosata is manifest. Nevertheless it is only fair to remember that other influences were at work. The school of Alexandria at the same time had a leader whose exaggerations in the opposite sense Diodore justly reprobated, namely, Apollinaris, Bishop of Laodicea (360).

Apollinaris

The teaching of Apollinaris is typical as showing the excesses to which insistence upon the unity of Christ could lead. It seemed to him that if the human nature of Christ was admitted to be complete it must constitute a human person distinct from the Person of the Word. One would thus, he argued, be reduced to the heresy of Paul of Samosata, now renewed by Diodore of Tarsus, that Christ the son of Mary was one person and the Son of God another. The only way, he thought, of saving the unity of Christ was to admit that his humanity was incomplete, lacking in some essential element which the Word, by uniting himself with it, would supply. He therefore taught that Christ lacked an intellectual soul,¹ the place of this being taken by the second Person of the

¹ Arius had taught that the Word took the place of a human soul in Christ. But Apollinaris differed from Arius inasmuch as he distinguished three elements in man: body, soul, and spirit, *i.e.* intellect. The last-named is proper to man and this, according to Apollinaris, was lacking to the humanity of Christ.

Blessed Trinity. Hence while Diodore sacrificed the unity of the Person of Christ to the integrity of his two natures, Apollinaris had recourse to the mutilation of his humanity in order to save the unity of his Person.

These two opposite excesses, that of Diodore and that of Apollinaris, led subsequently to the two famous heresies of Nestorianism and Monophysism. It may not, however, be out of place here to remind the reader that these men were, as far as we know, sincerely groping after a precise statement of the scriptural truth that Christ is both God and man. Neither school, Antiochene or Alexandrian, set out with the professed object of denying either the integrity of his human nature or the unity of his Person. It was no doubt their honest endeavour to safeguard both; but the fact is that in seeking for an expression of the truth they fell into heresy.

More famous than Diodore was his pupil, Theodore of Mopsuestia *Theodore* (392-428), who synthesised and developed the theory already outlined by his master. True to the Antiochene tradition, he emphasised the reality and the completeness of Christ's human nature. The humanity of Christ was united to God, he said, because God dwelt therein as in a temple. In Christ God had put his complacence, and in him willed to accomplish all things; and since Christ was the temple of the divinity he shared with God the honours of divine worship. Nevertheless, in spite of the exuberant terms in which Theodore extols the union of Christ with God, it remains that Christ and God are two different persons; God was in Christ, but Christ was not God.

Throughout this controversy it is the so-called "communication of properties" that is the touchstone of orthodoxy. If Christ was one individual who was truly God and truly man, then the properties and activities of either the human or the divine nature might with equal truth be attributed to him. If God truly became man, while remaining God, one might say of him that God died on the cross, that he was born of the Virgin Mary, that Mary was the mother of God, that Christ, who was passible and mortal according to his humanity, was omnipotent, eternal, the Creator of all things, according to his divinity. Now it was precisely here that the Christology of Theodore failed. He refused to admit that Mary was Theotokos—Mother of God. The same acid test revealed the heresy of his still better known disciple, Nestorius.

This man, with whom the heresy we have been describing is *Nestorius* historically always associated, became Patriarch of Constantinople in the year 427. In the following year he made known his views on the Person of Christ when he defended one of his priests, Anastasius, who in a sermon had refused to Our Lady the title of Mother of God. It was the teaching of Theodore of Mopsuestia publicly proclaimed, and it caused a great stir in Constantinople, where both clergy and laity soon became divided into two parties.

*St Cyril of
Alexandria*

St Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, now entered the lists against Nestorius, and an acrimonious dispute followed which culminated in the condemnation of the latter at the Council of Ephesus in 431. It is beyond the scope of this little essay to describe at any length the intrigues that preceded, accompanied, and followed the Council. Some modern historians have tried to show that Cyril was actuated chiefly, if not solely, by motives of jealousy in his opposition to Nestorius; the latter being represented as the champion of orthodoxy, unjustly persecuted by his powerful rival at Alexandria. But a sober consideration of the documents leads one inevitably to the conclusion that, while the antagonism between the rival sees cannot be overlooked as a factor in the situation, nevertheless Nestorius was definitely unorthodox, while Cyril, despite some inexactitudes of expression—not unnatural in view of the vagueness of current terminology—stood for the traditional teaching of the Church on the Person of the Word Incarnate.

Terminology

It is impossible to form anything like a just estimate of the merits of this monumental controversy without some understanding of the terms used by the participants. In fact the vagueness of the language of either side contributed in no small measure to the prolongation of the dispute. The words used nowadays by the Catholic theologian in formulating the dogma of the Incarnation have a definite meaning, so that, to the Catholic at any rate, it is clear enough what is meant when it is said that in Christ there are two natures and one person. Not so to the Greek of the fifth century. He did not possess even the clear Greek equivalents of "nature" and "person." The difficulty of terminology had already been acutely felt in the discussions on the Trinity, in which it had been necessary to find words to express the unity of the divine essence or nature on the one hand, and the Trinity of divine persons on the other. Four words were available: οὐσία, φύσις, ὑπόστασις, πρόσωπον. After a great deal of discussion it was agreed to use the word *ousia* to indicate the one divine essence and to reserve the word *hypostasis* for person. The word *phusis* (nature) was little used in connection with the Trinity. The word *prosopon*, the exact Greek equivalent of the Latin *persona*, was for a long time suspect, since it had been used by the Sabellians in an unorthodox sense;¹ but eventually it was accepted as the equivalent of *hypostasis*. For the purposes of Trinitarian doctrine the rough and ready distinction made by St Basil between *ousia* and *hypostasis* served well enough. The essence, he said, is that which is common to all the individuals of a species, while the person adds to the essence the individual characteristics that distinguish them one from another. But the explanation is superficial, and its inade-

¹The Sabellians used the word in the etymological sense of a mask, or character, and said the one person was called Father, Son or Holy Ghost according to the activities he exercised in relation to creatures. See Essay iv, p. 114.

quacy became apparent when applied to the Christological problem of two concrete natures subsisting in one person.

Nestorius said that in Christ there were two *φυσικά πρόσωπα*, two physical persons, but only one *πρόσωπον ένωσης*, one person of union. What did he mean? Apparently, that so far as their physical reality was concerned the human nature and the divine nature in Christ were distinct. This, of course, was perfectly true. But what did he mean by the "person of union"? The person of union, for Nestorius, had a particular name: "Christ," and was simply the man Christ, considered as endowed with the special indwelling of God. Hence Mary, he said, was *Christotokos*, Mother of Christ; to call her *Theotokos*, Mother of God, was to confuse the natures and to make Mary the mother of the divinity.

On the other hand, Cyril of Alexandria made frequent use of the word *phusis*, nature. His axiom was: "The incarnate nature of the Word is one." Nestorius said that this was simply the heresy of Apollinaris; and surely enough it was, if Cyril had used the words in the sense in which Apollinaris had used them. But by *phusis* or nature Cyril did not mean what Apollinaris meant, nor what we mean by nature. When Cyril said that the incarnate nature of the Word was one he meant that Christ was one concrete individual, God and Man, which of course was perfectly orthodox. Why, then, did he not say that Christ was one person who had two natures? Simply because there were no words which were quite unequivocal to indicate person and nature. If he had said "one *prosopon*" he would not sufficiently have distinguished his doctrine from that of Nestorius, who also, but in his own sense, admitted one *prosopon* in Christ, namely, the *prosopon* of union, by which God dwelt in Christ as in a temple. Hence Cyril, to indicate that the union of divinity and humanity in Christ was in the substantial order of personality, used the word *phusis*, and spoke of a "physical union" as opposed to a moral union. "A physical union," he explains, "that is, a true union, . . . a union according to hypostasis."¹

But it is easy to understand why Nestorius, and many others, took exception to the language of Cyril. To speak of a physical union of the two natures in Christ was to lay himself open to the accusation of holding with Apollinaris that the two natures are merged in one, and that the human nature of Christ was not complete. He found it necessary on this account to justify himself and to explain the sense in which he used these equivocal phrases.

This being so, the real discussion was centred upon a point *Theotokos* which is really a consequence of the unity of Christ's person, that of the divine Motherhood of Mary. Here Cyril was on firm ground and here the heresy of Nestorius became manifest. It was vain for the latter to declare that to admit the Divine Motherhood

¹ *Apol. pro xii cap.* (P.G. 76, 332, 405.)

of Mary was to make Mary the mother of the divine nature. What Cyril insisted was, not that Mary had given birth to the divinity—that would be absurd—but that the same individual, the Word, who was born eternally of the Father according to the divinity, was born in time of the Virgin Mary according to his humanity. It was precisely this that Nestorius denied, and his denial of Mary's divine Motherhood showed him to be unorthodox on the Incarnation.

Nestorius, then, was condemned and deposed from his see by the Council of Ephesus. John, the Patriarch of Antioch, for some time defended Nestorius, but two years later he was reconciled with Cyril, and the agreement of Alexandrians and Antiochenes was recorded in the "Symbol of Union" of 433. In this document the Antiochene contention that the two natures of Christ, human and divine, were complete and unmingled was embodied, while the Alexandrian solicitude for the unity of the person of Christ was fully satisfied by the statement that one and the same individual who was born eternally of the Father according to the divinity was the son of Mary according to his humanity, and the right of Mary to the title of "Mother of God" was explicitly acknowledged.

Ephesus—
"Symbol of
Union"

Monophysism

The exaggerations of what we may call the "separatist" school of thought had been condemned and the unity of the person of Christ was vindicated. But not everybody was yet satisfied. There was still no terminology sufficiently exact to exclude all misunderstanding. It has been seen that Cyril had spoken of one nature in Christ, and although this expression had been excluded from the "Symbol of Union" and Cyril, for the rest, had used it in an orthodox sense as meaning one person in Christ, yet some of the disciples of Cyril were not so orthodox as their master. Among these was Eutyches who, by his indiscreet zeal and ignorance, gave rise in the year 448 to a further doctrinal dispute, regrettable no doubt for the peace of his contemporaries, but providential inasmuch as it led to that amplification and exactness given to the formularies of belief which made all further equivocation impossible.

Eutyches refused to admit that the body of our Lord was consubstantial (of the same nature) with ours, or that after the union in him of human and divine natures it was legitimate to speak of *two* natures. Whatever may have been the inner belief of the simple old monk, the refusal to admit that Christ had a body like ours gave rise to suspicion since it left room to doubt whether, according to such a view, there had been any real Incarnation at all. As for his rejection of the phrase "two natures," he said, Cyril had spoken of one nature, and he did not intend to depart from the teaching of his master. It was the old difficulty of terminology again.

Leo I

Without considering the various phases of the new heresy of Monophysism, it is sufficient to note two things: first, that just as Nestorianism represented the *reductio ad absurdum* of the Antiochene tendency to separate the natures, so Monophysism is the heresy

involved in exaggerating the unity of Christ. Cyril had said "one nature" and had been orthodox in meaning; the Monophysites said "one nature" and were unorthodox, because they meant that the two natures were merged into one. The second important thing about Monophysism is that, on appeal being made to Rome to settle this further dispute, the Dogmatic Letter of Pope Leo I was written, a letter afterwards adopted as the rule of faith by the Council of Chalcedon in the year 451.

This famous letter is important by reason of its wonderful precision of language. While in the East there had been the verbal misunderstandings which we have described, the theologians of the West had been but little troubled with such difficulties. We have seen that the Latin terminology was already clearly defined at the beginning of the third century with Tertullian, who already speaks of a "twofold state, not confounded but conjoined in one Person Jesus Christ." Thanks to this early crystallisation of the dogma, theologians in the West were little affected by the Christological controversies which divided the East for well-nigh a hundred years. Clear thinking, clearly expressed is the keynote of Pope Leo's letter: "The properties of the two natures being safeguarded and being united in one person, majesty took upon itself humility, power weakness, eternity mortality; and to pay our debts an impassible nature was united to a passible one, so that one and the same mediator of God and men, the man Jesus Christ, might on the one hand die and on the other be immortal. . . . Each nature keeps what is proper to it, and just as his divine condition does not destroy his human condition, so his condition of servant does not diminish his divinity."

Little else remained to be done in the Councils of Chalcedon (451) and Constantinople II (553) than to consolidate the advance already made, by enshrining in an official formula the terminology upon which agreement had been achieved. The following extracts from their decrees need no commentary. From the Council of Chalcedon: "In accordance with the teaching of the holy Fathers we all profess our faith in one and the same Son and Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in his divinity, perfect in his humanity, having a rational soul and a body,¹ consubstantial with the Father according to the divinity,² the same consubstantial with us according to his humanity, 'in all things like as we are except sin'; born before all ages of the Father according to the divinity, and the same in these last days born of Mary the Virgin Mother of God for us and for our salvation; one and the same Christ the Lord and only-begotten Son *in two natures* without confusion, change, division or separation, the difference of the natures being in no way suppressed by their union, but the proper manner of existence of each being safeguarded, while each nature is united with the other *in one person*

*Councils of
Chalcedon
and Con-
stantinople II*

¹ As against Apollinarianism.

² As against Arianism.

and hypostasis.”¹ From the second Council of Constantinople: “If any one understand the one hypostasis of our Lord Jesus Christ as if it might mean several hypostases and therefore attempt to introduce into the mystery of Christ two hypostases or two *prosopa*, saying that the two *prosopa* thus introduced are one according to dignity and honour and adoration, as Theodore (of Mopsuestia) and Nestorius in their madness wrote; calumniating the holy Synod of Chalcedon as if it had used the words ‘one hypostasis’ in this impious sense; and does not rather confess that the Word of God was united to flesh *according to hypostasis*, and that on this account his hypostasis or *prosopon* is one, and that in this sense the holy Council of Chalcedon confessed the hypostasis of our Lord Jesus Christ to be one, let such an one be anathema.”

§ IV: ONE PERSON

“Person”
and
“Nature”

THE doctrine of the Incarnation as revealed to us in Scripture may be stated in these simple terms: Christ is one individual who is both God and man. The Council of Chalcedon defined that Christ is one person who has two natures, united by a hypostatic union. The second formulation of the mystery contains nothing more than the first; it merely states the same truth in technical and precise terms. But although the terms nature and person may have a particular philosophical connotation, the Fathers of the Council of Chalcedon in defining the dogma of the hypostatic union had not in mind any esoteric meaning to be attached to them: the words were used in their popular sense.

What they meant when they said that Christ was one person may be clearly seen from the controversies which led up to the definition. They meant that he is one individual, one subject of attribution; and this is the meaning that we ordinarily attach to the word. When we speak of a person we mean a complete existing rational² being who has his own distinct individuality, incommunicable to others; one to whom we attribute his own actions, saying that *he* thinks, *he* sits, *he* walks, and so on. This “selfness” or personality we understand to be absolutely incommunicable; and it is here, perhaps, that we reach the essential element of personality. The sense of being alone when I am in mental distress, the feeling that “I must work this out for myself,” that nobody can possibly understand my difficulties, these are but evidences in my consciousness of that splendid, yet in many ways awesome, isolation from every other individual of my species which constitutes my personality.

¹ As against Monophysism and Nestorianism.

² The name “person” is reserved for rational or intellectual beings. An irrational or inanimate individual is called by the generic name of “individual,” philosophically a “hypostasis,” or *suppositum*.

The word nature, too, has a definite meaning in popular usage. The nature is that which makes a thing *what* it is ; it is that composite unity of substances, qualities, and powers by means of which a person acts in a particular way, and in consequence of which he belongs to a particular category or class of being. Now ordinarily a complete existing human nature is a human person. But the Council of Chalcedon defined that there is an unique exception to this rule in the case of the humanity of Christ which, although it is complete and existing, is nevertheless not a human person. The humanity of Christ was from the very first moment assumed, appropriated, by the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, so that Christ is a divine Person, having two natures, a human nature and the divine.

It can hardly be stressed too much that the doctrine of the *The hypostatic union* thus defined is nothing more than the revealed doctrine of the Incarnation : "The Word was made flesh." It is not the fruit of human speculation upon the revealed word of God ; it is not a theological conclusion ; it is itself a divine revelation. Hence the hypostatic union precisely as such can never be the subject of debate among Catholic theologians. Upon this all Catholics are, and must be, agreed : that the human nature of Christ, though real and complete, does not constitute a human person distinct from the Son of God ; that the one person of Christ is the divine Person of the Word who, subsisting eternally in the divine nature, in the fulness of time took upon himself a human nature and thus is both truly God and truly man.

But the theologian is not content to stop here. In his legitimate *Theological theories* desire to enter more deeply into the meaning of the divine mysteries by applying to them the principles of human reason, in order to show that although these mysteries are beyond our comprehension they are not contrary to reason, he analyses the ideas which are used in the formulation of revealed truth, thus arriving at what the Vatican Council calls "a most fruitful understanding of mysteries." Hence Catholic theologians, while admitting, as in duty bound, that the humanity of Christ is not a human person, proceed further to inquire the reason why. What is lacking, they ask, to this humanity, the presence of which would make it a human person ? What does the Word supply in this mysterious union so as to make Christ a divine Person ? What, in other words, precisely constitutes personality ? Three questions, clearly, which are really one ; put in the first two forms the question is theological ; in its last form it is purely philosophical. And as the answer given to the third question varies, so also different answers are given by theologians to the other two.

Since the problem of personality is primarily a philosophical one it does not belong to the theologian as such to attempt to solve it. Nevertheless the Catholic philosopher is not entirely free to

solve it as he wills. Suppose, for example, that he forms the opinion—for the rest an erroneous one—that what constitutes personality is the human soul; there have been philosophers who have held this view. Even apart from the metaphysical objections to the theory, such a position is impossible for the Catholic as a theologian, because it would lead him logically to the heresy of Arius concerning the person of Christ. Holding as a Catholic theologian that the humanity of Christ lacked what was necessary to make him a human person, he would be forced to the conclusion that Christ had no human soul and that the place of this was taken by the Word; this is exactly what Arius taught. Or, if as a philosopher he held that the human intellect is the essential element in personality, as a theologian he would logically be an Apollinarist, holding that Christ lacked a human intellect, the place of this being supplied by the divine Logos.

Hence the answer given to the philosophical question is by no means a matter of indifference to the theologian. He cannot accept a philosophical view of personality which is irreconcilable with the dogma of the Incarnation. In fact a moment's thought will show that, if the truth of the hypostatic union is to be safeguarded, the constitutive element of personality must be sought outside the nature itself. Any philosophical theory identifying the notion of person with that of nature, or making some element of the nature (such as intellect, will, consciousness) the essential constituent of personality cannot but have disastrous results in Christology. And the reason is that Christ has a perfect and complete human nature, and yet is not a human person. Whatever it may be, therefore, that the Word supplies to the humanity of Christ to make him a divine person, it is certainly not a part of his human nature.

That this distinction between nature and person is crucial in the matter of the hypostatic union was felt strongly by the Fathers of the Vatican Council, who, in view of certain errors current in Germany in the nineteenth century, had prepared the following draft for a definition on the mystery of the Incarnation: "Just as in the holy Trinity three distinct persons subsist in one nature, so in Christ, on the other hand, one person subsists in two distinct and different natures. Therefore, in accordance with the teaching of the Fathers all must understand that the notion of essence, substance, or nature is by no means to be confused with the notion of hypostasis, subsistence¹ or person, lest one be led into making the statement—manifestly subversive of the sacred dogmas—that there are as many persons as there are intellectual or—to use the modern expression—conscious natures."²

¹ The Latin equivalent of hypostasis.

² It is important, however, to notice that the above statement enjoys no greater authority than that of the theologians who formulated it. It is a theological statement upon which all Catholics are agreed; but, since it was never discussed or embodied by the Council in its published decrees, it is not as such an article of faith.

But within the just limits set by orthodoxy theologians enjoy freedom of discussion. Some content themselves with the theory that the humanity of Christ was prevented from being a human person by the very fact that it was assumed by the Word. A human nature is a person, they maintain, if it is not assumed by another; but the humanity of Christ was assumed by the Word; therefore it is not a human person. But this explanation, it is urged, fails to explain anything. The question is precisely why the humanity of Christ was capable of being assumed, why, in other words, it was not incommunicable. To answer that in fact it was assumed, or communicated, seems equivalent to evading the point at issue. If, as these theologians maintain, the humanity of Christ possessed the whole reality that is required to constitute it as a human person, it is difficult to see why it actually lacked human personality. Hence others, dissatisfied with this theory, have seen the need of postulating some real complementary entity which, added to the nature, makes it a person, and have held that personality consists in what they call a "substantial mode" distinct from the nature, which has the effect of rendering the nature complete in itself and incommunicable. Others, finally—and with these the writer is inclined to agree—find the constituent of personality in the real act of existence which is the connatural complement of every created nature or essence.

It has been pointed out elsewhere¹ that "the universe and the minds of men are composite, for in them essence and existence are not one, but are two distinct (though inseparable) principles. . . . The distinction between 'essence' and 'existence' in the universe (whether considered in part or whole) is no invention of the human mind, but, like all other real distinctions, is objective in things themselves. Observation makes us aware that things not only have existence, but over and above existence they have each also a distinct fabric of a given kind which we call their nature or essence. Existence tells us *that* a thing is, while knowledge of its essence tells us *what* a thing is. To know *that* a thing exists is very different from knowing what particular nature it consists in. Consequently we always think of things and persons as *possessing* existence rather than as constituting it."

Hence, according to this commonly accepted view, an individual nature receives that incommunicability which is characteristic of the hypostasis or person from its own act of existence, an activity distinct from the nature as such. Why is the human nature which I possess incommunicable to any other individual of the same species? Precisely because I exist, because this nature of mine has the act of existence which is its natural complement. If, therefore, a human nature were without its own connatural existence it would not be a human person. And this was the case with the humanity of Christ which, having all that is required for the perfection of humanity

¹ Essay iii, *The One God*, p. 79.

—body, soul, and faculties—even as we have, existed not by its own connatural act of existence, but by the infinite subsistence of the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who thus communicated to that human nature a divine Personality. Christ, therefore, is a divine Person because that in him which constitutes personality, namely, the act of existence, is not human but divine.

But whatever may be the solution of the metaphysical problem of personality, the hypostatic union still remains a mystery, a truth beyond human comprehension. That a human nature should not possess its own connatural human personality is a fact which transcends the order of nature; that upon this humanity should be bestowed a divine Personality is a sublime and ineffable condescension of God to our race; and no theologian by his speculations intends or hopes to explain the hypostatic union as if it were a natural phenomenon. All that he is able to do is show that, since the concepts of nature and person are distinct from each other, there is no evident contradiction involved in the revealed truth that God has made a created nature his own, by uniting it to his own Person. Whatever be his method of showing this, whether he favour the theory of “mere assumption,” or of the substantial mode, or of substantial existence communicated to the humanity of Christ, in common with every other Catholic, theologian or layman, learned or unlettered, he bows in humility before the mystery of a God who unites a human nature to his own Person in order, through that lowly nature of ours, to raise us up to a participation of his.

The first important consequence of the hypostatic union is what is known as the “communication of properties.” The person is the subject of attribution; hence it is to the person that the nature and all the properties and activities of the nature are attributed. But Christ is one person who has two natures. It follows that to him may be rightly attributed either the human nature or the divine nature, and the properties and activities of each. We may say with equal truth that Christ is God and that he is man, that he is the Creator and that—according to his human nature—he is finite. Hence also concrete names signifying one nature may be predicated of concrete names signifying or referring to the other; thus, God is man; the Eternal died upon the cross; God was born of the Virgin Mary; Mary is the Mother of God. It will be noted that only concrete names may be used in this way; and the reason is evident, for only concrete names indicate the person in whom the two natures subsist. Abstract names signify the nature—or properties of the nature—“abstracting” from its existence in a given individual or person. Thus while it is true to say that Mary is the Mother of God, it is false to say that she is the Mother of the divinity. It has been seen in the previous section how the whole discussion between Cyril and Nestorius centred in the title of *Theotokos* given to Our Lady. Whatever might be the meaning

*The
mystery
remains*

*The “com-
munication of
properties”*

attached by either side to such words as nature, person, or hypostasis, here was an infallible means of testing the orthodoxy of Nestorius. Were Christ and the Word the same person or two different persons? In answering this question it was possible to dissemble; but with regard to the divine Motherhood of Our Lady all equivocation was impossible. If this were admitted, then Christ and God were evidently recognised to be one and the same individual, the same person, the same subject of attribution.

From the fact that Christ is one Person, God and man, it follows also that he may not be called the adopted son of God. He is God's *Christ not the adopted Son of God* own son. A heresy arose in the eighth century called Adoptionism,¹ which consisted in asserting that Christ, admitted to be the natural son of God according to his divinity, was nevertheless his adopted son according to his human nature. This doctrine was condemned by Pope Hadrian I in the year 794. The truth is that in no sense can Christ be said to be the adopted son of God. If Christ, the Word Incarnate, is the natural son of God, born of the Father from all eternity, God cannot adopt him, because to adopt is to elevate to the condition of sonship one who by nature does not possess that status. This form of Adoptionism is thus seen to be a thinly veiled compromise with Nestorianism.

Logically connected with the doctrine of the hypostatic union is the obligation of paying to Christ divine worship. If Christ is *Worship due to Christ* God, then we must adore him; the conclusion is evident. What is perhaps less obvious is the duty of paying divine cult to the human nature of Christ: less obvious, because to worship the humanity of Christ would seem at first sight equivalent to worshipping a creature. However, it should be noted that theologians distinguish between what they call the material object and the formal object of worship. By the material object they mean the person to whom worship is rendered, by the formal object, the excellence or the perfection in the person which is the motive of the honour paid to him. Clearly, when we worship Christ we worship his whole person, the Word Incarnate, God and man. It is not because he is man that we adore him, but because he is God; nevertheless we do not dissect him, we do not separate his humanity from his divinity in order to adore the latter alone. "The incarnate Word of God," says St Cyril,² "since he is the one Son of God, is to be adored, not apart from his flesh, but together with it, just as in honouring a man we honour his soul together with his body." Likewise St Athanasius:³ "Although the flesh (*i.e.* the humanity of Christ) regarded separately is a part of created things, yet it has become the body of God. Thus we do not divide this body from the Word to adore it, nor when we wish to adore the Word do we separate

¹ To be distinguished from the Adoptionism of the third century to which reference is made above, p. 367.

² *Apol. contra Orient.*, 8.

³ *Ad Adelpium*, 3.

him from his body ; but mindful of the words ' The Word became flesh ' we recognise as God the one Word incarnate. Who then will be so foolish as to say to the Lord : ' Depart from thy body that I may adore thee ' ? " Theologians express this truth technically when they say that the humanity of Christ is part of the material object of divine worship, while its formal object is the divinity.

Hence devotion to Christ is not devotion to a mere man, it is the worship of the Word Incarnate, and that worship embraces all that is in him, all that is united with his divine Person. It is here that the wisdom of God's merciful dispensation becomes especially apparent. God became man, in the words of the beautiful Preface for Christmas, *ut dum visibiliter Deum cognoscimus, per hunc in invisibilium amorem rapiamur*, " that while we know God visibly we may be led to the love of things invisible."

This doctrine has an important application in the popular devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Jansenists in the synod of Pistoia (1794) attacked this practice on the ground that to worship the human heart of Christ was to give divine honour to a creature. Pope Pius VI in condemning the Jansenists indicated the dogmatic truth which underlies the devotion to the Sacred Heart ; for he accused the Jansenists of " detracting from the pious and proper cult which the faithful pay to the humanity of Christ." In paying divine honour to the Sacred Heart of Jesus the faithful do nothing more than worship the Word Incarnate, with special reference, however, to his humanity, and indeed to that part of his humanity—his Sacred Heart—which custom regards as chiefly affected by human emotions and consequently uses as the symbol of love. " The faithful adore the Heart of Jesus," says Pope Pius VI (*l.c.*), " considered as the heart of Jesus, that is, as the Heart of the Person of the Word to whom it is inseparably united, just as the body of Christ was adorable when for three days it lay dead in the tomb, unsevered and unseparated from the divinity." ¹ The object of devotion to the Sacred Heart, therefore, is the physical heart of the Word Incarnate considered as the symbol of his human love for God and for mankind. In addition we adore that human love itself, for it is the human love of the Word Incarnate, the sacred love with which he loved Mary and Joseph, the merciful love that converted the Magdalen and Peter, the love that poured itself out in pity upon all that suffer, the heroic love for mankind that knew no limit, the love of him who " having loved his own who were in the world, loved them unto the end."

The popularity of this devotion among all faithful Catholics is in fact a sign of their unflinching adherence to the traditional faith of the Church in the unity of the divine Person of Christ. For the Catholic Christ is not merely a great moral teacher, not merely a

¹ The same may be said of the living soul of Christ in Limbo.

lovable man, not merely a man who lived in the closest possible union with God; he is God himself. The human perfections that we admire in him and strive to imitate are the human perfections of God, the sympathetic understanding, the human lovable-ness which has attracted men in all ages to follow him and, if need be, to die for him, have their seat in the heart that has won all hearts, in the human Heart of God himself.

§ V: TWO DISTINCT NATURES

SINCE the hypostatic union is essentially supernatural, there is no union in nature with which it can properly be compared. Nevertheless, as it is only by comparison with the natural that we are able to form any conception of the supernatural, the Fathers have made use of various analogies in order to illustrate what can never in this life be adequately understood. Of these the best known and most striking is certainly that of the union of body and soul in man. "Just as rational soul and flesh are one man," we read in the Athanasian Creed, "so God and man are one Christ." In man body and soul are two (incomplete) substances substantially united to form one person; likewise the humanity of Christ and the divinity are substantially united to constitute one person. But, like all analogies, this must not be pressed too far. Body and soul in man indeed constitute one person, but they form one nature too; whereas in Christ the human nature and the divinity remain distinct and physically unaltered by each other. Thus to exaggerate the analogy used in the Athanasian Creed would be to fall into the error of Apollinaris or of Eutyches.

The Incarnation involves no change in the Godhead. In God there is no change or shadow of alteration. Hence when St John tells us that the Word became flesh he does not mean that God was changed into man; he can only mean that God, remaining truly God, became truly man also. "Man was raised up to God," says St Augustine; "God did not descend from himself."¹ It has been suggested by some non-Catholic theologians that the Word in becoming man abdicated his divinity for the period of his life upon earth, or at least voluntarily deprived himself of those divine attributes which he found to be incompatible with a truly human experience. The Catholic Church has always resisted such an idea. She has ever strenuously maintained the reality of Christ's human nature against the Docetists; but she is no less emphatic in asserting his perfect and immutable divinity. In the words of St Leo: "Each nature keeps what is proper to it, and just as his divine condition does not destroy his human condition, so his condition of servant does not diminish his divinity."

¹ Ep. 136.

The words "condition of servant" show that St Leo has in mind the famous text of St Paul in the epistle to the Philippians :¹ "Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and in habit found as a man." Now it is to this text that appeal is made by the supporters of the "kenotic" theory above mentioned. The words, "emptied himself," they claim, can only mean that God deprived himself either wholly or partially of his divinity. And in this, they say, God has given us the most sublime example of humility, inasmuch as he has vouchsafed for our sakes to strip himself of his divine omnipotence. The metaphysical difficulties in the way of this doctrine are, they admit, insuperable, but these are more than counterbalanced by its moral value.

Such a doctrine, however, is quite inadmissible ; and no statement can have any moral value if it is a contradiction in terms. However useful it may appear—and the moral utility of the doctrine is, to say the least, debatable—that God should cease to be God, the necessary Being cannot change his nature. The words of St Paul, therefore, must be so interpreted as not to contradict the evident truth that God is immutable. The following paraphrase, perhaps, better renders the meaning of the original text : "Christ, while he was in the form of God, that is, while he had the nature of God, did not regard his equal rank with God as something to be jealously guarded, but he deprived himself of this, taking the form (or nature) of a servant, so that he appeared externally to be nothing more than a mere man." The second Person of the Blessed Trinity was willing to forgo the external honour which man owed to him as God, being content to appear in the eyes of the world as if he were not God, but merely a man. God deprived himself, therefore, not of the divinity, but of the outward marks of honour due to his divine nature, which was hidden from the eyes of men.

But if God loses nothing by his ineffable union with the humanity of Christ, still less is his divine perfection increased thereby. God incarnate is not greater than God, considered simply as God. One may be inclined, perhaps, by a process of mathematical addition, to think of the Word Incarnate as being in sum of reality more than God before the Incarnation. The truth is that, far from any perfection accruing to the infinite essence of God by his union with humanity, it is the human nature which the Word assumed that is raised to an infinite dignity. But at least, it may be urged, God acquires a new relation to finite reality, inasmuch as he is now united personally to a human nature, whereas formerly he was not. To which it may be answered that the divine relation to finite reality involved in the hypostatic union is no more an increment of divine perfection than the act whereby God creates the universe. The

whole change is in the creature ; the Creator is eternally changeless. We may apply to the humanity of Christ what St Augustine says of the relation of creatures to God in general : " Without God thou wouldst be less ; if thou art with God, he is not the greater on that account. He is not the greater because of thee ; but thou without him art less." ¹ Hence instead of saying that God formerly was not united to a human nature, but now is united to it, it is more accurate to say with St Thomas that " the humanity which formerly was not united to the divinity now becomes united thereto." ²

Another difficulty needs to be faced. It is shown in the Essay *Incarnation proper to the Son* on *The Blessed Trinity* that in God " everything is common to all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity with the exception of those properties which are radicated in the relative opposition between the Persons." ³ Thus all the operations of God in regard to creatures are common to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. How then is it true that the Incarnation, or the assumption of a human nature, is peculiar to the second Person of the Blessed Trinity ? The answer is seen if we distinguish a twofold aspect of the hypostatic union. This may be regarded actively, that is, as a divine operation whereby God creates a human nature and unites it to a divine Person ; and in this sense the work of the Incarnation is common to all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. But it may also be considered passively, that is, in its term, inasmuch as the divine Personality is communicated to the human nature assumed ; and in this sense the Incarnation is proper to the Son of God, since he alone made that humanity his own by giving to it his own distinct Personality. To illustrate this point the Fathers use the analogy of three men combining to clothe one of themselves. As St Thomas puts it : " The three Persons operated to unite humanity to the one Person of the Son." ⁴

The hypostatic union, therefore, does not change the nature *A true human nature* of God. But nor is the humanity of Christ physically altered by the divinity to which it is personally united. The human nature receives personality indeed ; but it has been shown that what constitutes personality as such is something distinct from the nature—in the view of the writer, the act of substantial existence—and this does not change the nature to which it is united. The humanity of Christ, therefore, is in all essential respects similar to our own ; Christ became " in all things like as we are, except sin."

The Docetists denied the reality of the body of Christ ; they held it impossible that God should be intimately associated with anything material, which they conceived to be essentially evil. In addition to refuting the false presupposition of the Manicheans

¹ *In Joannem*, tr. xi.

² *S. Theol.* III, Q. 1, art. 1, ad 1.

³ Essay iv, p. 137.

⁴ *S. Theol.* III, Q. 3, art. 4.

concerning the origin of matter, the champions of Christian orthodoxy insisted upon the axiom that God assumed our nature in order to save it, and that consequently whatever he did not assume he did not save. The reality of Christ's body was re-asserted later against the Monophysites in the Council of Chalcedon and in the Dogmatic Letter of Pope Leo, where we read that "in order to pay our debt an impassible nature was united to a passible one, so that for the sake of our salvation there might be one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who on the one hand was able to die, and on the other hand was immortal."

The Church was no less prompt to reject the error of the Arians who denied that Christ had a human soul, and that of Apollinaris who denied him a human intellect. It was vain for the latter to claim that the place of the human soul was taken by the Word. Such a substitution is impossible; God cannot become a part of the nature of man; the result of such a combination would be monstrous, a being who is neither man nor God. But of the human intellect of Christ we shall have more to say in the following section.

The human will of Christ

It would seem superfluous, when once it has been stated that the humanity of Christ is perfect in all essentials, to emphasise the fact that he had a human will. Yet there were some in the seventh century who denied this. Just as the Adoptionism of the eighth century was an attempted compromise with Nestorianism, so this heresy of Monotheletism was a faint-hearted concession to Monophysism. The Monotheletes argued somewhat after this manner: if in Christ we admit two wills, the human will and the divine will, we must admit that the will of Christ as man was not the will of God, and that the one was contrary to the other; but Christ is impeccable; therefore in Christ there can have been only one will, the will of God. The argument is not conclusive. It does not follow, if there are two wills in Christ, that they must be contrary to each other. Christ himself has told us that he came not to do his own will but the will of the Father who sent him; his whole life was one of constant submission to the will of the Father. Physically in Christ there were two wills, although morally speaking there was but one, because the human will was in all things subject to the divine. If he had no human will his humanity would have been an inert instrument in the hands of the divinity; without a human will all his submission to the will of the Father—"Not my will but thine be done"—would have been an hypocritical pretence. If he had no human will he had no human virtue, he had no merit, his death was no free-will offering, the Cross is void and we are still in our sins. Christ, therefore, had a human will as well as his divine will, but these were not contrary to each other. In this consisted his obedience unto death; his human will was perfectly free, but through grace it was ever in perfect conformity with the divine will.

To say that in Christ there are two natures is equivalently to profess a duality of operations in him; for to every nature corresponds its proper operation. One and the same divine Person, the Word Incarnate, performed through his human nature all those operations which are proper to man, while as God he remained for ever in the ineffable exercise of his divine life and activity. Yet although these operations are physically distinct from each other, the oneness of the divine Agent lent to the whole complex of his human and divine activities a wonderful unity and coherence. All his human operations were under the complete and unfailing control of his holy will, even those wayward emotions which in us are so often an occasion of sin. He was angry, but there was no sin in his anger; his heart was filled with love for men, but in his human emotion of love there was none of that selfishness that so often mars the perfection of human friendship; he wept for the sorrows of others, but there was no despair in his grief; his sensitive heart was cut to the quick by the betrayal of Judas, by the desertion of his friends in his hour of need; he shrank from physical suffering and from death. But not for a moment did his will allow itself to be led by his emotions; he was ever captain of his soul. Holding all his human activities in complete subjection, his human will was none the less itself completely, though freely, subject to the will of the Father. Thus there is a true sense in which we may speak of *one* operation in Christ, namely, by reason of the complete subordination of the whole of his being and activity to his own divine will. In fact it seems to have been an undue insistence upon what we may call this moral unity of operation in Christ that led to the heresy of Monotheletism.¹

One further point remains to be explained before we conclude this section. The Fathers and theologians of the Church use the expression "theandric operations." What does this mean? It does not mean that any action of Christ is a mixture of the human and the divine; this would be equivalent to the error of the Monotheletes, and the expression was used by them in that sense. But

¹ It was for his failure to make a definite and unequivocal pronouncement on the subject of two wills and operations in Christ that Pope Honorius I was condemned. The third Council of Constantinople (680-681) condemned him as "following the false doctrines of heretics" and for "confirming the impious dogmas of Sergius" of Constantinople, who was the leader of the Monotheletes. But, as is well known, an Oecumenical Council has validity only inasmuch as it is confirmed by the Pope, the head of the Council, and therefore the condemnation of Honorius is to be understood in the sense in which it was approved by Pope Leo II, who wrote as follows: "We anathematise the inventors of this error . . . and also Honorius who did not shed lustre upon this apostolic (Roman) Church by the doctrine of apostolic tradition, but allowed this immaculate Church to be stained by a false betrayal." Hence Honorius was anathematised for a practical rather than a dogmatic error, because he failed to condemn a heresy when he should have done so. For a fuller treatment of this controversial question see Dom Chapman: *The Condemnation of Honorius* (C.T.S.).

as used by Catholics it means primarily those actions of Christ in which both his human nature and his divine nature took part. So when Christ worked a miracle his action was strictly theandric. His divine nature was the principal cause of the miracle, while his humanity co-operated as an instrument.¹ In a wider sense all the human actions of Christ may be called theandric, *i.e.* both human and divine, human by reason of the nature from which they proceed as their principle, divine by reason of the hypostasis or Person whose actions they are. It is for this reason that theologians point out that the human actions of our Redeemer, though they are finite from a physical point of view, are nevertheless of infinite dignity since they are the acts of God himself, and that therefore any act of the Word Incarnate would have been sufficient to save the world from sin.

APPENDIX ON MODERN ERRORS

Such is the Catholic doctrine of the two natures in the one divine Person of Jesus Christ. What we shall have to say subsequently is but a consequence of this portentous fact that Christ is one individual, God and man. But before we proceed to consider these consequences it may not be out of place to give some account of modern erroneous views concerning the Incarnation, not with a view to refuting them—that is not the object of the present essays—but in order that Catholic doctrine by contrast may stand out with greater clearness.

It is significant that all those who, since the Reformation, have departed from the traditional lines laid down so clearly in the Councils of Chalcedon and Constantinople (II), have—at least equivalently—fallen into one of the two heresies of Nestorianism or Monophysism. Certain among the followers of Luther invented a doctrine known as Ubiquitarianism. Having rejected the Catholic teaching concerning the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, and faced with the necessity, under pain of parting company with the whole of Tradition, of admitting some sort of presence of Christ in this sacrament, Chemnitz and other Lutherans taught that some of the properties of the divinity were communicated to the human nature of Christ, in particular the attribute of ubiquity. In this manner, they said, the human nature of Christ, since it is everywhere, is present also in the Eucharist. Evidently this is to confuse the two natures. It is true that the communication of properties is one of the consequences of the hypostatic union. But this does not mean that the properties of one nature are communicated to the other. It is one thing to attribute to the *one Person* of Christ the properties and activities of both the human and the divine natures; but it is quite another to predicate divine

¹ See below, p. 397.

attributes of the human nature and vice-versa. The basis of the communication of properties is not the confusion of natures, but the unity of Person.

The philosophy of Descartes in the seventeenth century, and to an even greater extent the critical system of Kant in the early nineteenth, resulted in a secession from what we may call the philosophy of substance. It came to be held by nearly all who were outside the current of the Scholastic philosophy that the "thing in itself," the substance, as distinct from phenomena, was unknowable. In fact the very existence of substance came later to be denied. Nothing exists, it was held, but the modifications which we experience either within ourselves or from without. What we call substance is nothing else than the sum of the qualities, activities and modifications which we perceive. Hence for most modern philosophers outside the Church the person is simply consciousness, "a series of feelings" as Stuart Mill called it, "with a background of possibilities of feeling."

Gunther attempted to reconcile this view of personality with the Catholic dogma of the hypostatic union. In Christ there is a human consciousness and a divine consciousness; but he is only one person, he said, because the human consciousness was absorbed by the divine. Rosmini explained the unity of the Person of Christ by supposing that his human will which, according to him, is the dominant factor in personality, completely abdicated the government of his humanity in favour of the divine will to which it was completely subject. In either case Nestorianism is the evident consequence. Ontologically there would be two persons in Christ, a human and a divine, and they would be united only by some psychological or accidental function.

The fact is that neither consciousness nor will *constitutes* personality. Consciousness is the apprehension of the self, it is not the self. The will is an indication of the presence of a personality; ontologically the person is the existing rational substance which thinks and wills. Both the above views have been condemned by the Church because neither is reconcilable with the Catholic doctrine of the hypostatic union.

At the present day all Christians—thus excluding rationalists who, like the Arians and Adoptionists of old, regard Christ as a mere man—admit that in Christ there is a divine as well as a human element. Outside the Catholic Church, however, nearly all are on common ground in rejecting the definitions of Ephesus and Chalcedon, relics, they say, of an effete philosophy. They are thus reduced to the necessity of combining these two elements in Christ in terms of the modern psychological conception of personality. It is precisely here that non-Catholic Christologies fail.

It cannot be too much emphasised that the Incarnation was not revealed to us by God in philosophical terms. It is not as if

God, after the manner of the Delphic oracle, had propounded a riddle to mankind: "Christ is one person having two natures," so that philosophers in the ages to come might discuss the meaning of the words person and nature, and thus arrive at some understanding of what the divine oracle meant. If this were so the meaning of God's revelation would change from age to age, subject to the vagaries of the human mind as it invented now one, now another signification of the words person and nature. It was this modernist conception of the development of Christian doctrine that was condemned by Pope Pius X, and this is the reason of the chaos of modern non-Catholic thought as it endeavours to "re-state" the doctrine of the Incarnation according to the requirements of present-day research. No development of the philosophy of personality, however much more it may teach us concerning the person of Christ, can ever change the meaning of the simple statement: the Word was made flesh. The Gospel story represents Christ as being God, and as being also man. It was found convenient in the course of time to state this truth by saying that Christ is one person having two natures. Other words might have been used to express the same truth, as long as they did not distort it. The criterion to be applied is not: What is the philosophical meaning of personality as I use the word, but: What did God reveal? If, therefore, any conception of personality, when applied to the doctrine of the hypostatic union, is seen to destroy the truth of the simple statement that Christ is truly God and truly man, then the hypostatic union understood in terms of that philosophy is not the revelation that God has committed to his Church.

The more advanced, or Modernistic, school among non-Catholics tends to attenuate the divine element in Christ. God is in Christ, according to these theologians, very much in the same way as he is in any holy man or prophet. God, they say, has expressed himself in Christ as perfectly as it is possible for God to express himself in a creature. But however superlative the terms used to describe the intimacy of the union between Christ and God, it remains, in this theory, that Christ and God are distinct individuals. This teaching does not differ materially from that of Nestorius.

Others are more careful to safeguard the divinity of Christ, but they are fatally handicapped in their praiseworthy endeavour by their psychological conception of personality. Obsessed with the idea that a person is constituted as such by his consciousness of his individuality, and faced with a human consciousness side by side with a divine consciousness in Christ, they have been forced, in order not to admit two persons in him, to merge the one consciousness in the other, or—as others put it—to make one continuous with the other. But whatever be the process of identification it is inevitable that one of the two is in some way absorbed or suspended. It is here that the kenosis enters as an essential element

of their Christology. It is clear, they say, that Christ is truly man ; his human consciousness is written large on every page of the New Testament. But many of the divine attributes are irreconcilable with a truly human consciousness and experience. Hence the Deity was temporarily suspended, not indeed essentially, but in some of its attributes, in order to render possible a truly human experience. Evidently these attempts to re-interpret Catholic doctrine in the light of the modern philosophy of person issue only in a form of Monophysism. In the Catholic conception of the hypostatic union Christ has two consciousnesses, a human consciousness which is a property of his humanity, and a divine consciousness which is identical with his divinity. To merge them would be to confuse the two natures.¹ Each nature operates in the manner proper to it. Neither absorbs the other, neither interferes with the activities proper to the other, and yet both are united in the one divine Person of the Word made flesh.

That such a mysterious union of two natures in one person should give rise to psychological problems of a unique order is to be expected, and the Catholic theologian is not surprised or disappointed if he is unable to solve them. The Incarnation is a mystery, a truth which apart from divine revelation we could never have known and which, even when we know it, the human mind is unable to fathom. But the fundamental mystery of the Incarnation is not psychological but ontological ; the primordial mystery concerning Christ is not so much what he knows or feels about himself, but rather what he is in himself, namely, true God and true man. With this fact in mind the Catholic theologian, guided by revelation, approaches with reverence the study of the human soul of Christ. He knows from the beginning that he cannot hope to explain by the principles of natural human psychology the unique complex of perfections that adorn that soul ; he is content to be wise unto sobriety. He asks himself the question : What is certain concerning the soul of Christ ? If truths which are certain appear to contradict each other, he knows that the contradiction is merely apparent ; so he proceeds, with a full realisation of the limits of his knowledge not only concerning God but also concerning the psychology of human nature, to try to harmonise them. If he fails in his reverent attempt to understand, he does not cease to adore him in whom are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

§ VI: FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH

HOLINESS, in the ordinary acceptance of the word, means voluntary "Sub- adherence to God, the sovereign Good. Hence God, who infinitely *stantial* loves himself, is infinitely holy and the source of all holiness in *holiness of* creatures. We call holy those men and women who entirely and *Christ*

¹ How Christ is humanly conscious of his divinity is shown below, pp. 393-394.

voluntarily devote themselves to God, who seek perfectly to conform their lives and actions to God's holy will. But there is a holiness which, as distinct from this holiness of operation, may be called static or substantial holiness, and this we attribute to a creature that is closely connected with God or with divine worship. Thus the person of the Pope is holy or sacred, whatever may be the goodness or otherwise of his moral life, precisely by reason of his office which consecrates him in a special way to God. In this sense even inanimate things—buildings, vessels, and other objects used for the worship of God—are called holy or sacred.

If any creature that is intimately associated with God may on that account be called sacred, it is clear that the humanity of Christ in this sense is infinitely holy. Nothing could be more closely united to God than the human nature which he has made his own, which is anointed with the divinity itself, which is joined with God in the substantial order of personality. This is the fundamental reason of the reverence which, apart from the consideration of any moral goodness or human virtue in Christ, we owe to his sacred humanity. To that humanity, as has been said, we pay the cult which is due to God alone. The hypostatic union confers upon the human nature of Christ an infinite substantial holiness.

This substantial holiness of the humanity of Christ is the root and foundation of his Impeccability and of what we may call his dynamic sanctity. It is unthinkable that sin should besmirch the beauty of the soul which God has made his own. From the law of original sin, evidently, the human nature of Christ was exempt because he was not born by the natural process, his body being formed in the most pure womb of the Virgin Mary. But not only could he not inherit sin, he could not commit it. The hypostatic union requires that all the operations of the assumed human nature should be attributed to the divine Person of the Word; we should therefore have to say, if Christ could sin, that the Word Incarnate, as man, is able to offend God. The repugnance of such an idea, if it is not metaphysical, is at any rate absolute. If God assumes a human nature, that humanity must be not only sinless but impeccable.

But human holiness is something more than the mere absence of sin; it is a positive supernatural perfection. Elsewhere in these essays¹ it is shown that man has been raised to a destiny immeasurably above his nature, that in addition to his natural life he is called upon to live a supernatural, divine life which during our period of probation upon earth consists in sanctifying grace, and in heaven reaches its consummation in the beatific vision. By this grace we are made partakers of the divine nature, adopted sons of God and heirs to eternal life. Hence to be holy, to be pleasing in God's sight, means to possess this divine life of grace, and since Christ is

¹ See Essays ix, xvi, xxxv.

the source of all grace he possesses it in all its fulness. "We saw his glory," writes St John, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth . . . and of his fulness we have all received, grace upon grace."

Sanctifying grace in the soul of Christ "may be conceived," says St Thomas Aquinas, "as resulting from the hypostatic union as light proceeds from the sun."¹ Christ is God's own Son. As God he possesses the divine life not merely by participation but essentially by reason of his eternal generation from the Father. Will he not then, as man, be made a partaker of the divine nature? If to us, whom he has predestined to be conformable to the image of his Son, God has given grace so that we are made his sons by adoption, capable of meriting in God's sight because we are no longer merely his servants but his sons and his friends, surely then upon the human soul which he has made his own he will shower every most precious gift that will make it pleasing in his sight, and especially sanctifying grace by which his human nature is made to partake of the divine life. For, although the hypostatic union raises that human nature to an ineffable dignity, although it confers upon it a substantial sanctity which is rightly said to be infinite, yet the assumption of humanity as such brings about no physical change in the human nature assumed; it does not make it a partaker in the divine life, unless there are infused into the human soul those finite habits, sanctifying grace together with the supernatural virtues, which are the principles of supernatural operation.

Christ, therefore, has sanctifying grace. He possesses it in his soul, not as the physical resultant of the hypostatic union, but as that to which, being God's only-begotten Son, he has an hereditary right: "We saw his glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace. . . ." Hence the important consequence, that he possessed that grace in all its fulness from the very first moment in which he was conceived in Mary's womb. We receive grace by baptism, thus becoming adopted sons of God, and by hard striving are able to merit an increase of it. Christ, even as man, is the natural son of God, and therefore from the beginning of his human life he received that fulness of grace which it was fitting that God's human soul should have. When, therefore, we are told that he increased in grace² we must understand this development, says St Thomas, "in the sense that he worked more perfectly according to the progress of his age to show himself truly man in all that regards God and in all that regards man."

With sanctifying grace are inseparably connected the infused *Virtues of Christ* virtues, theological and moral, and so too it was in the soul of Christ. But with his human virtues I have not to deal here, since they are fully described in another essay.³ I have only to remark that those

¹ *S. Theol.* III, Q. 7, a. 13.

² Luke ii 52.

³ Essay xii, *Jesus Christ, the Model of Manhood.*

virtues must be excluded from the soul of Christ which are incompatible with his impeccability and with the extraordinary perfection of his state. Hence, in the first place, there is no room in his soul for the virtue of repentance, since he had, and could have, no sin of which to repent. Nor could he possess the virtue of temperance, so far as it is concerned with the repression of disordered desire, since concupiscence, the effect of original sin in us, could have no place in him. Finally, Christ had not, properly speaking, the virtues of faith or hope. We believe what we do not see; we hope for what we do not possess; but, as will be seen below, such was the perfection of the soul of Christ that from the first moment of his human existence he enjoyed the beatific vision, seeing the God-head face to face, and delighting in undisturbed possession of the sovereign Good. The gifts of the Holy Ghost, too, were in the soul of Christ in all their fulness, rendering the whole of that delicate supernatural organism an apt instrument upon which God with his actual grace played that symphony of celestial melody and harmony which is the life on earth of the Word Incarnate.

*The human
knowledge of
Christ*

We come now to the study of a subject which is full of difficulty: that of the human knowledge of Christ. The difficulty does not arise formally from the fact that Christ, as well as being truly man, is also truly God. When once it has been understood that the two natures exist side by side, unconfused, in the same person, it follows as a necessary and obvious consequence that in Christ there is a divine knowledge identical with his divine nature and a human knowledge which is an inseparable property of his humanity; and as the natures are unconfused, so there can be no confusion of his divine knowledge with his human knowledge. The one does not take the place of the other, as Apollinaris suggested, nor is the one absorbed or in any way limited by the other, as those would have it who uphold the kenotic theory. If there were any such substitution, intermingling, or absorption, then indeed the difficulty would be insoluble; in fact, as we have seen, any such theories totally destroy the truth of the Incarnation. The real difficulty arises, not from the confusion of one knowledge with the other, but rather from the extraordinary supernatural perfections with which, in consequence of the hypostatic union, the human intellect of Christ was endowed. Natural psychology, or the study of the natural operations of the human mind, is already sufficiently complex, but when we have to include in our study types of knowledge of which on earth we have no experience, then the difficulty of the subject is immeasurably increased. In the human intellect of Christ we have to consider the knowledge that was natural to him as man, the infused knowledge with which he was preternaturally endowed, and his beatific knowledge, whereby during the whole of his life on earth he saw God face to face.

That Christ had natural human knowledge, few since the time

*Acquired
knowledge*

of Apollinaris have dreamed of denying, the tendency outside the Church to-day being rather to deny that he has any other. For the rest, St Luke tells us that he advanced in wisdom and, unless all the questions that he asked of others and the surprise that on some occasions he showed are to be treated as a mere pretence, we must needs admit that Christ acquired knowledge by natural experience even as we do. His senses and his intellect were essentially similar to ours, and there appears no reason why they should have been denied their normal exercise. On the contrary, if Christ had not the natural use of these faculties it would be difficult to understand why he should have possessed them. Thus the country, the village in which he was reared, the home in which he received instruction and education from his holy Mother and St Joseph, the environment, racial, physical, and social, in which he gradually grew to manhood, all these had, in the all-wise Providence of God, their influence in the formation of his natural character and outlook, a natural character which, it is important to remember, is a necessary substratum for the perfection of supernatural virtue which makes Jesus Christ the model of perfect manhood. For it is no less true of Christ than it is of us that the supernatural perfects nature, but does not destroy it.

But if it would be erroneous to say that the human knowledge of Christ was in no way subject to development, it would be still more seriously wrong to restrict that knowledge to what he could learn by purely natural means. It is the teaching of the Church, not indeed explicitly defined by any Pope or Council, but enshrined in the unanimous consent of all theologians, that the human intellect of Christ, in addition to knowledge naturally obtained, was supernaturally endowed with the beatific vision of God. The faithful, with that instinct for divine truth which is a sign of the constant presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, have felt that the fulness of grace which befits the humanity assumed by the Word requires that he should possess the divine life, not merely in its incipient stage of sanctifying grace, but in the perfection of its ultimate development, to wit, the beatific vision; that if we, who are but God's adopted sons, must pass through a time of probation that we may be found worthy to enter into our inheritance, he, who is the only-begotten of the Father, must possess that divine heritage from the moment in which he first had a human nature; that he who is to lead us to beatitude must himself be already in enjoyment of it; that the human mind which God has made his own should not be debarred by any veil from looking upon the Godhead with whom it is hypostatically united.

*The Beatific
Vision in
Christ*

Can we suppose that he "that was the true light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world," that he who gave witness to what he had seen, walked in the relative darkness of faith? Christ, as man, knew that he was God; he knew that with his human

nature the second Person of the Blessed Trinity was hypostatically united, and his knowledge of the hypostatic union and all that was involved in the mystery of the Incarnation must have been perfect and complete. Consciousness of personality is an immediate perception of self, and the only way in which the human intellect of Christ could have had intuitive knowledge of his divine personality was by seeing God face to face. Even the infused knowledge that is given to the angels could not give him a full understanding of the mystery that so closely touched his own personality. Christ as man knew that he was God because, being truly and in the fullest sense the son of God, with his human mind he saw God "as he is."

Wayfarers on this earth, we see God as he is imperfectly reflected in the finite works of his hands. The blessed in heaven, on the contrary, see creatures as mirrored in the essence of God, the first Cause of them all. Thus Christ by his beatific knowledge not only sees God but in God he sees also all creatures that are, have been or will be; he sees the whole created universe of which he is appointed heir and king; he sees the innermost thoughts of all men, of whom he is the Judge, he sees the salvation or—alas—the damnation of the souls of which he is the Redeemer; in a word, although, his human intellect being finite, he cannot exhaust the divine intelligibility, he knows all things that in any point of time have existence. Add to this the infused knowledge which, according to the common view of theologians, Christ also possessed, and we may well understand how St Paul could speak of Christ as one "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."¹

That God should thus have lavished all his most precious gifts upon the human nature which he had assumed is what we should have expected. In fact theologians lay down as an indubitable principle that the soul of Christ is endowed with every perfection, natural or supernatural, which a human soul is capable of receiving. As the king honours his spouse, so God has delighted to honour the soul to which he has indissolubly wedded his divine Person. Small wonder, then, that the soul of Christ is impeccable; for he who sees God face to face can find nothing in creatures to diminish his loyalty to the sovereign Good; well might the wise men of the synagogue be confounded by the questions and answers of the boy of twelve, and those who heard his discourses say among themselves, "Never did anyone speak as this man"; for Christ spoke to them in human language the truth that he derived directly from the vision of God, who is infinite Truth itself.

Hence the faithful have ever refused to admit in Christ as man ignorance concerning any matter pertaining to his person or office. It is true that some of the Fathers in their controversial writings

*No ignorance
in Christ*

¹ Col. ii 3.

against Arianism said that Christ, who was omniscient according to his divine nature, was ignorant according to his humanity.¹ But it should be borne in mind that in these cases the human knowledge of Christ was not the question directly at issue. The Arians, who held that the Word was not God but a creature, pointed to certain texts of the Gospels where it is stated that Christ grew in knowledge, or that he asked questions, or that he was ignorant of the day of judgement, as showing that the Word is not omniscient and therefore not God. Catholics found an easy reply to such arguments in attributing such development and ignorance to his human intellect.

But when in the sixth century the question of Christ's human omniscience was explicitly raised and ignorance attributed to the human intellect of Christ by the sect of Agnoëtes, such a contention was rejected as impious and contrary to Catholic tradition. Suffice it to quote these words of St Gregory the Great, written to St Eulogius, Patriarch of Alexandria: "I write to your Holiness to tell you what I think of your book against the heretical Agnoëtes, and also to explain my delay. . . . In your teaching against these heretics there is much that I admire and nothing that displeases me. . . . So perfect is the harmony between your teaching and that of the Latin Fathers that I see, without surprise, that the Holy Spirit is the same in spite of the difference of language."²

The chief difficulty, of course, was the famous text:³ "Of *Difficulties:* that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, *The day of judgement* nor the Son, but the Father." Space does not allow of an enumeration, still less of a discussion of the various explanations of this text given by the Fathers in order to reconcile it with the traditional doctrine of the omniscience of Christ.⁴ It is sufficient for our present purpose to remark that their very attempt to make such a reconciliation is a proof that they regarded it as uncatholic to attribute ignorance to Christ.

The first difficulty presented by the co-existence in Christ of *His human* these three types of knowledge—natural or experimental, infused, *experience* and beatific—is that, given the third, the former two would seem to be superfluous. It is a difficulty, but not a very serious one. If Christ

¹ E.g. St Athanasius, *Or. contra Arianos*, III, n. 37.

² *Epist.* Bk. X, Ep. 39.

³ Mark xiii 32.

⁴ Of all the explanations proposed the following seems to the writer the most satisfactory. Christ often disclaims powers, which he really possesses, inasmuch as it does not pertain to his mission to use them. Thus he says that he has not come to judge the world (John xii 47); although elsewhere he says that the Father has given him all judgement (*ibid.* v 22); that it is not his to grant that one may sit on his right or on his left in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. xx 23), although this is indeed the right of the Judge of all mankind. In the same sense he denies that he, the Son, knows the day of judgement; it is not among the things which he has come from the Father to reveal. Cf. John viii 26, 28; xiv 10: "The words that I speak to you I speak not of myself."

had possessed only beatific and infused knowledge his natural powers of intellect would have remained inoperative, and the whole of his natural human experience as depicted to us in the gospel-story would have been fictitious. Nor is his infused knowledge superfluous, since this gives to his natural intellect a preternatural perfection which otherwise he could never have acquired. It is true that the first two types of knowledge did not add to the sum of what he already knew in contemplating the essence of God, but, mysterious as the whole of this supernatural psychology must ever remain, even we are able to appreciate that to know a thing in three ways is better than to know it only in one. Nor did this superior knowledge render his human experience nugatory or merely apparent. He truly advanced in wisdom, adding experience to experience, he learned obedience through the things that he had suffered, he truly wondered at the faith of the humble as he was shocked by the incredulity of the Pharisees. In his natural human life nothing was abnormal, for, again, grace perfects nature but does not destroy it.

The Passion

More formidable is the mystery of Christ's Passion. It is not for me to describe his sufferings : bodily torments, emotional sorrows, mental distress and pain beyond all human conception, sufferings which were increased by the very perfection of his knowledge. A picture of them is drawn in another essay.¹ But how, if Christ really enjoyed the beatific vision during the whole of his human life, can he have suffered these unspeakable torments ? Surely, if we admit that the soul of Christ was delighted with the possession of the sovereign Good, all the sufferings of which we read in the gospels must have been a pretence, or at any rate must have been considerably alleviated by his beatific knowledge.

The incompatibility of his joy with his very real suffering is but apparent. The beatific vision is a purely intellectual operation, and even our own experience tells us that spiritual joy is not incompatible with intense bodily pain. It is true that in us physical pain may eventually occasion such spiritual exhaustion that the joy of the mind begins to fade, but this is due to the fact that none of our spiritual operations is entirely independent of the body ; the human mind cannot work without the co-operation of the brain. The beatific vision, however, is entirely independent of bodily organs, and the joy of the mind in the contemplation of God is unruffled by the torments that the body may endure. Have we not seen heroes suffer tortures for an ideal and rejoice in their pain ? Was not the face of St Stephen transfigured by spiritual joy while in his mangled body he suffered still ?

Even the more refined torments that the imagination begets may co-exist with the joy of the mind, because here again the suffering is in the sensitive or emotional part of man, and thus may leave the spirit undisturbed. Hence Christ was able to be supremely happy

¹ Essay xiii, *Jesus Christ, Man of Sorrows.*

in the contemplation of the divine essence and yet, although he accepted his Passion willingly and with joy, to feel all the shrinking horror that a sensitive nature must experience at the thought of suffering and death to come, an emotional stress to which he gave utterance in his prayer to his Father: "If it be possible, let this chalice pass from me; yet not my will but thine be done."

But more grievous far than all this was the mental torture that he felt when he thought of the sins of mankind, of the many souls for whom his Passion would be in vain, of the friend that had betrayed him to death, of the false friends that would betray him until the end of time. Here was a sorrow that sorely afflicted his spirit, and yet he was ever filled with a spiritual joy that no sorrow could abate. It is here that we reach the heart of the psychological mystery of Christ. Are we not perhaps too venturesome when we seek to analyse the mysteries of his spirit? Our human loves, our human joys and sorrows are but puny affections when compared with the beatific love, the superhuman joy and the unfathomable sorrow of the Redeemer. But it is only by looking into our own hearts that we are able to see some reflection of the great heart of Christ. There is no purer love, no love more unselfish than the love of the mother for her child. Yet a mother will give her only child to God with joy, a joy that is not abated by her very real pain at the thought that she may never see her child again on earth. Does this perhaps help us to understand that the sins of mankind, which so grieved our Redeemer in his agony, could yet be a subject for intense rejoicing as he contemplated in the beatific vision the mercy of God for sinners and the infinite wisdom whereby he draws good even out of evil? That his pain at the neglect and scorn of many had its counterpart in the joy and consolation that many others would give him by offering themselves in reparation? That his every torment added to his joy, that he delighted in his sorrow, because he suffered for love of us? I end this subject on a questioning note, for none may dare to say that he has solved the mystery of Jesus Christ.

Of one more perfection of the soul of Christ a few words must be written, namely, his miraculous power. It is a commonplace with the Fathers to speak of the humanity of Christ as the "organ," or the instrument, of his divinity. The principal author of miracles, evidently, is God, who alone is able by his omnipotence to supersede the forces of nature. But history attests that on many occasions God has used instruments to bring about these marvels, either to authenticate a message to mankind¹ or to manifest the sanctity of the miracle-worker. Greatest of all wonder-workers, however, is Christ, both by reason of the number of his miracles and their

¹ See Essay i, *Faith and Revealed Truth*, p. 13.

extraordinary and varied character, and by reason of the permanence of this miraculous power in his human nature. I say that this power was habitual in him, not in the sense that it was a property of his human nature but that, unlike others whom God has from time to time used as the instruments of his omnipotence, Christ was able, in virtue of the power constantly communicated to his human nature by God, to work a miracle whenever he wished.¹ As to its extent St Thomas thus expresses the traditional view: "He had power to bring about any miraculous change which might be directed to the end of the Incarnation, which is to renew all things in heaven or on earth."²

More marvellous still than this power of working miracles is the power of sanctifying the souls of men which both Scripture and Tradition assert to have been inherent in the humanity of Christ. Thus, as a proof that he had worked the invisible wonder of forgiving sin, he worked the visible miracle of curing a man's bodily infirmity,³ and the woman who had anointed his feet was privileged to hear from his lips those comforting words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee."⁴ Hence it is too little to say that Christ merited grace for us through his humanity. He does more than this; he is also the efficient instrumental cause of our sanctification, inasmuch as God uses this sacred humanity as the instrument for infusing grace into our souls. It is in this that our condition differs from that of the just under the Old Testament. They received grace in view of the merits of Christ who was to come; for those who preceded his coming Christ could not be other than the meritorious cause of sanctification. But for us who live after him his humanity is also the instrument by means of which that grace is produced in us; and it is for this reason that the Council of Ephesus calls the flesh of Christ "life-giving." It was the source of supernatural life to those who, like St. John, saw him with their eyes and handled him with their hands;⁵ it is the source of grace to all men who still receive of his fulness. "To give grace or the Holy Spirit," says

¹ Cf. Matt. viii 2-3. The permanence of this miraculous power in Christ is compared by some theologians to the habitual power of consecrating the Eucharist possessed by the priest.

² *S. Theol.* III, Q. 13, art. 2. To this miraculous power also belongs the complete control that Christ possessed over his own life. He died because he willed to die; not only in the sense that he offered himself voluntarily to his executioners, but that, even when his physical weakness had reached the stage at which naturally he must have died, he was able, had he so willed, to keep himself in life. "I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from me; but I lay it down of myself, and I have power to take it up again" (John x 17-18). Hence also Christ as man was the (instrumental) cause of his own resurrection, although its principal author was his divinity. Thus we read in the Scriptures both that God raised Christ from the dead (*e.g.* 1 Cor. xv 15) and also that Christ raised himself (John ii 19).

³ Matt. ix 2-6.

⁴ Luke vii 48.

⁵ Cf. 1 John i 1.

St Thomas,¹ "belongs to Christ as God authoritatively (*i.e.* as principal cause); but it belongs to him also as man to give grace as an instrument; for his humanity was the instrument of the divinity; and therefore the actions of that humanity were salutary to us, causing grace in us not only by way of merit but also by a certain efficiency (*i.e.* as an efficient instrumental cause)." During his life on earth Christ exercised this instrumental causality in respect of grace directly through his human nature. Now, however, it is communicated to the sacraments which he has instituted. "The principal efficient cause of grace," to quote St Thomas again,² "is God himself, to whom the humanity of Christ stands in the relation of conjoined instrument and the sacraments as separate instruments; hence salutary virtue flows from the divinity of Christ through his humanity into the sacraments."

It is significant that our study of the humanity of Christ should have brought us finally to the mention of the sacraments; so true is it that the sacramental system, since it is but the continuance of the divine economy of the Incarnation, is essential in Catholic doctrine and practice. For the centre of that system is one Sacrament of unique excellence, the sacrament which is the source of the sanctifying power of all the others, because it contains the life-giving humanity of the Redeemer: the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ himself.

In speaking of the Eucharist, which he proposed to institute, Christ uses words which I cannot but quote here, because they seem to sum up in a wonderful way the whole purpose of the Incarnation of the Son of God: "As the living Father sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me the same also shall live by me." Christ lives by the Father according to his divinity, because he has received the divine nature by eternal generation. But he lives by the Father also according to his humanity, for his soul is filled with sanctifying grace, which is nothing else than a participation in man of the divine nature and of the life of God. Sent by the living Father to bestow that life upon us, the Son of God through his human nature pours out into our souls the grace which he possesses in all its fulness, and in order that the source of grace may be accessible to all men in all ages he institutes a Sacrament under the form of food and drink, wherein his life-giving humanity is truly, really and substantially present, so that by eating his flesh and drinking his blood all men may live by Christ as he lives by the Father, with that supernatural life of grace which is a participation of the divine life of the Blessed Trinity.

And so we have returned to the point from which we set out. Christianity is the religion of the Fatherhood of God, from whom

¹ *S. Theol.* III, Q. 8, art. 1, ad 1.

² *S. Theol.* III, Q. 62, art. 5.

all Paternity in heaven and earth is named. Father from all eternity of his only-begotten Son, God has willed through the humanity of his Incarnate Son to raise up to himself other sons, sons by adoption and co-heirs with Christ of eternal life, sons "who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

EPILOGUE

CHRIST THE KING

THEREFORE Christ is King. "A child is born to us and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace. His empire shall be multiplied, and there shall be no end of peace. He shall sit upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom; to establish it and strengthen it with judgement and with justice, from henceforth and for ever."¹ Christ is King, not only as God, but as man also. He is King, not only by reason of the perfection of his humanity, not only because he has purchased us as his people by redeeming us; he is King because he is the Word Incarnate. "He has dominion over all creatures," says St Cyril of Alexandria, the great champion of orthodoxy against Nestorius,² "a dominion not seized by violence nor usurped, but his by essence and by nature." As God he is the eternal Lord and Creator of all; becoming man he received from his Father the royal dignity as the rightful attribute of his human nature; for it was only fitting that a manhood joined in unity of Person with the Godhead should be "appointed heir of all things";³ it is his birthright as the Word Incarnate to receive the homage of all creatures. Hence the whole of creation hails his advent with the cry of the Psalmist:⁴ "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates; and the King of Glory shall enter in."

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¹ *Isaias ix 6-7.*

³ *Heb. i 2.*

² *In Luc. x.*

⁴ *Ps. xxiii 7.*

XII

JESUS CHRIST, THE MODEL OF MANHOOD

§ I: INTRODUCTION

1. *England and Jesus Christ*

It is fortunate, it is very much more, that in this country, to the present day at least, whatever vagaries our religion has gone through during the last four centuries, men generally have clung to the belief in the reality and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. England may have broken away from the common faith of Christendom, but she has not yet broken away from the common faith in Christ. She may have split up into many divisions, Catholic and Protestant, Protestant and Nonconformist, Nonconformist and one knows not what, but always there has been a rallying round the Name which is above every name, always there has been a willingness to bend the knee before it. While in other countries history has witnessed the formation of the most determined hostile camps against it, and determined war waged to overthrow it, among ourselves we have had little more than individual voices raised, and these for the most part have not known what they did; usually they have uttered little else than echoes of what has been already heard abroad. With all our differences, with all our indifferentism, England has always been, and still is, essentially Christian; even our Modernism, when it finds itself bringing into question the belief in Jesus Christ and what he stands for, looks at itself with not a little unrest and hesitates to draw conclusions.

This is particularly marked in the attitude of the British mind towards the Bible. At times, especially in the nineteenth century, we have been overwhelmed by German learning, or Dutch analysis, or French brilliance; we have indeed produced some kind of imitation of them all; but always in the end we have recovered our feet, and by far our best, certainly our most lasting, work has been done in defence of the sacred text and all that it contains. We have had no Strauss or Renan; we have no Tübingen school; our higher criticism, such as it is, if really our own and not merely borrowed from elsewhere, has gone steadily in favour of the Bible and of our Lord Jesus Christ as he is therein portrayed. If at any time a writer has denied any of its contents, its miracles, or its supernatural element—at least, until these days when Modernism has come to shake the foundations of all faith—such a man has been more condoned as an eccentric, or pitied as one prejudiced, or feared as a danger, than followed. He has never formed a lasting school; he has never even founded a new rationalism; his permanent

influence on English religious thought has been, almost without exception, virtually none.

What is true of Great Britain in general has its reflection in the British Catholic mind. Before the unhappy sixteenth century, if we may judge from the spiritual literature of that time, our forefathers were marked by a deep devotion to the person of Jesus Christ and his Mother. In those days poets and play-writers gloried in singing for the people the praises or the sorrows of Mary and her Son, or in setting them in all their attractiveness upon our village stages. If we had not ascetics of the same type as Italy or Spain, we had our anchorites and hermits and recluses, who were never tired of repeating the holy Name of Jesus to many tunes. Men went out to battle with the Blessed Sacrament in their breasts; their women stayed at home and worked chasubles and vestments for the holy sacrifice; when there was peace, and leisure for other things, they spent their time and their means multiplying everywhere across the land homes for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and dedicating them to his Mother.

Nor is the modern Catholic mind very different; it easily responds to the names of Jesus and Mary. It seems to know them personally; witness its devotion to the Sacred Heart, its ever-increasing love of the Blessed Sacrament, seen especially in frequent communion, in the processions of Corpus Christi, in the practice of the Forty Hours now universal, and, on Mary's side, in the love of our Lady of Lourdes. It is seen in the type of our pictures and statues, in our books, in our hymns; no one who watches the devotion of our faithful in their churches can doubt their conspicuous veneration and love for the sacred humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our poorest and least instructed may be ignorant of many things, but, if their faith has not been sapped by the blight of circumstances, to them Jesus is a real fact, whom they know, and in whose hands they can safely trust themselves, whatever lot this world may mete out to them.

It is therefore with no little relief that, in writing for English readers on a subject of this kind, one feels oneself entitled to set aside for the moment all controversy concerning the New Testament or the Person of Jesus Christ. In doing so we have little fear of being accused either of shirking difficulty or of making use of premisses which are unwarranted. From the beginning the destructive schools have found many of their chief opponents among our own scholars; these have done their work so well that it still stands the test of keen attack, and upon it we may rely. To English students as a whole the Gospels are both genuine and credible; if, until this generation, there has been a tendency to err, it has been rather on the other side, the side of over-literalness, finding too much in the human words and forms of Scripture, reading into them more than they were meant to contain.

2. *The model of perfect manhood*

We may assume, then, the truth of the Gospels ; we may assume, as established elsewhere in these essays, the reality of Jesus Christ, truly man, truly God ; it will be enough for us here to dwell upon the human character of him who is both God and man, and to show how in matter of fact this character has revealed itself to be that of the Perfect man. Indeed, we may limit ourselves still further. It will be enough to confine ourselves to that aspect of his character which concerns us men who follow him ; what belongs to him in his higher aspects, as Prophet, as Redeemer, and the rest, may well be left to another Essay which treats of him as God and Man. Here we look for the Model of Manhood and no more.

Many philosophers in the past, many novelists and poets in more recent times, have attempted to describe for us the perfect man. From the very nature of the case their descriptions have differed one from another ; while, perhaps, all have been good so far as they have gone, none has been able to include in his description the whole idea of man's perfection. For man is limited and finite ; he cannot conceive in his mind an ideal which contains in itself the whole scope of perfection, not though his vision confines itself to the plane of nature alone. And even if he could, when he comes to describe it, he can do so only in the limited terms of his own imagination and language. He will speak from his own experience of himself, especially his own shortcomings, from his knowledge of and insight into other men, possibly from the ideal picture which his imagination has conjured up after the sordidness of real life has been eliminated. But in every case it will be his own vision and perspective, his own point of view, which will be expressed ; true, noble, complete, perfect in its degree, but nevertheless with the confining limitations and lacunæ which human nature cannot escape. In fact or in fiction, in history or in drama, the altogether perfect man does not exist ; if he did, if he were in all things and always perfect, he would be something more than human.

So we say, speaking of ourselves and of one another, of all men as we know them, of all men as they have been described by others ; the knowledge of this truth leads us to judge not that we may not be judged, to forgive as we would be forgiven, to see not the mote in our brother's eye, being only too conscious of the beam within our own. Human nature, because it is human nature, is faulty. And yet we are compelled to make one exception. There has lived in this world one Man in whom, if he is taken wholly, no fault whatsoever has been found, who has shown himself in all things perfect, whose accurate picture, moreover, has been handed down for us all to study ; the impossible has been done before our eyes. The more closely the portrait is examined, and the more in detail the character is revealed, so much the more is this amazing fact found to be true ; and that not only by followers who love his Name,

and may therefore be predisposed to see in him "the most beautiful of the sons of men," but by unbelievers also, who would look on him with cold eyes, unenthusiastic in his cause, what they would call unprejudiced and scientific, and yet would be honest and sincere. They have scrutinised Jesus, the Carpenter of Nazareth, and have found him to be "the Lamb of God," "the King of Israel." They have listened to and sifted his words, and have acknowledged that "never did man speak as this man spoke." They have weighed all his deeds and have declared that "he hath done all things well." They have compared him with others and have concluded: "We have never seen the like." They have looked for a charge against him and have owned with Pilate: "I find no fault in this just man." They have pierced his heart, and what they have found there has made them confess: "Indeed this was the Son of God."

This conclusion, however vague in its final expression, we may well be justified in claiming as the glorious outcome of the long-drawn battle which a century and more has seen waged round the name of Jesus Christ. Whatever adverse and less enlightened criticism may have attempted in the past, whatever specious science may attempt to-day, sober scholarship all the world over comes more and more to acknowledge this at least—not only the full fact of Jesus Christ as the Scriptures give him to us, not only that he stands out pre-eminently the greatest man this world has ever seen, but also the further fact that he is so great, so complete, so universally perfect, as to be unique, in some sublime sense more than ordinary man either is, or could be, or could ever of himself fashion in his mind. Students have naturally looked for limitations, and have found none; some have assumed shortcomings, and others have proved their assumptions to be contrary to the facts. They have searched for the shadows corresponding to his established virtues, and have found them not to be there; powers and gifts which in other men do not co-exist are discovered united in him. He is undefinable; limited though he may be because of his humanity, still we cannot fix the limits; if we try to lay hands on him, if we say that because he is this therefore he is not that, he slips through our fingers and escapes us. No one quality can be ascribed to him as characteristic to the exclusion of another; he possesses them all; the ideal which man of himself cannot so much as imagine has been found in him in real life. We live in an age of discoveries, but no discovery of our time has been more momentous, more epoch-making, than this.

3. *Points of view*

It is not that we have discovered anything we have not known before; fortunately for the world the knowledge of Jesus Christ never has been and never can be lost. Rather it is the angle of vision which may be considered comparatively new. From the days of St Paul it has been well understood that Jesus Christ, the

true Son of God, since he chose to become man, could not but be Perfect Man ; since he came for man, for man's redemption and to be man's model, he could not but be man's perfect model. Given the Godhead and the truth of the Scriptures, there was only one light in which those Scriptures could be read by the Fathers and the early Church, and that was " the Light which was the life of men, the true Light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world." But in our own time the tendency has been to begin at the opposite extreme ; to argue not from the Godhead to the Manhood, but from the Manhood to wherever the argument might lead. It was a course inevitable for those to whom God had come to have little or no meaning, who were therefore compelled to investigate the facts of history as historic facts alone, incapable of being anything more. Since the Sonship of God to them meant nothing, the truth had to be read and interpreted by them in the absence of that guiding light ; and though, even in that darkness, the picture obtained of Jesus Christ has been of surpassing human beauty, yet has it fallen far short of the whole. By way of contrast and example, compare the *Life of Jesus Christ* by Ludolph of Saxony, written in the fifteenth century, and the *Life* by Renan in the nineteenth ; the *Life* by Ludolph still lives, while that by Renan, with all its charm, has been long repudiated, by none more than by his own disciples.

The same tendency has been followed, and seems now to be increasingly followed, by another school. To this school God is indeed a great reality, but it has made so much of the kenosis, the " emptying-out " of the God-made-man, as virtually to assume that Jesus, if he is rightly to be understood, must be studied as being man only, prescinding entirely, or almost entirely, from his divinity. To this school would seem to belong an ever-growing number of English Protestant writers to-day. To it the Jesus of history must be considered apart from the Jesus of faith ; where history records a fact, that fact must be understood as man by his experience understands it and no more. In this restricted light much of necessity has been distorted. Jesus Christ, considered as man and man only, whatever might lie hidden in the background, forced into the mould of other men, has rendered disconcerting conclusions. Many words and actions and events in the Gospels have been surrendered ; their riddle can only be read when his own full light has been turned upon them. And yet, even to this school, in spite of its assertion of his ignorance, his groping to the discovery of himself, and other limitations put upon him, he stands out as a perfect being, unique, more than man.

But in this simple exposition of the Catholic mind, or rather let us say of one single aspect of the Catholic mind, in regard to Jesus Christ, there is neither room nor need for controversy. Except perchance by way of confirmation, we need not dwell upon

the opinions of others. We stand on sure ground, we walk along paths that have long been well-trodden, and from whatever goal men of goodwill set out, they arrive in the end at the same centre. Jesus Christ, being God, is also as Man the Model of Perfect Manhood; Jesus Christ, being Man, is found to be more than man, is found to be what he declared himself to be, the true Son of God made truly man, yet remaining one with the Father. In this way the revelation grew upon those who first learnt to read the Carpenter of Nazareth; when they had read him, then the overwhelming truth took hold of them, and in the light of the Godhead the Manhood became more manifestly clear. Thus does the one truth reflect upon and clarify the other; the Light that is the Life of men is the Word made flesh, the Word made flesh is the Light of the world, whose "glory we have seen, the glory as it were of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

§ II: A GENERAL BACKGROUND

1. *A first impression*

WHEN we read the four Gospels with attention, one thing at least must strike us of their respective authors—that is, the conviction deep down in them all that every word they wrote was true. There is no attempt to emphasise what they have to say, as will one who narrates the naturally incredible, or who is eager to convince either himself or his audience; miracles are told with the same simplicity as other events; in dealing with the central figure they pass from the sublime to the commonplace with disconcerting ease. But in regard to that central figure this has a wonderful effect; it is alive; it walks out of its surroundings and stands apart; it detaches itself, it would seem, from its own generation and walks through all ages, belongs to all time.

Before any attempt is made to draw out the features of this portrait, it will be well, for the sake of a background, to look at the life of Jesus as a whole. Of the earliest phase little need be said: that phase of miraculous promise, of "good tidings of great joy" and yet of humble infancy, of that combination of joy and sorrow, adoration and subject helplessness, submission to the Law and yet supremacy, command and obedience, which at once prepares us for the paradoxes, the seemingly impossible contrasts, which mark his whole career. The period closes with his first recorded words: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke ii 49). They are the motto of his life.

Until he was thirty years of age all we are told is that "he was subject to them" (Luke ii 51); that "he grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom, and the grace of God was in him" (Luke ii 40); and that he "advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace before God and men" (Luke ii 52). At the age of thirty he came down to the

Jordan, a sinner it would have seemed among sinners, to be baptised by John. From the Jordan he again passes out of sight into the desert ; not only will he be accounted a sinner among sinners, but, like every sinner, he will be tempted even as they.

So completely is this willingness to be unknown and unnoticed a part of his nature, that not until he is revealed by John, and not until some followers of John of their own accord come to him, does he make the least effort to be found. But as soon as they come, then follows a quick response. They are welcomed as dear companions ; by mere contact with him they are stirred with an enthusiasm they had never known before ; instantly they go away and bring others to him ; the fascination captures them all, and they long to be with him always. And he rewards them ; he takes them with him into Galilee ; before their eyes he turns water into wine ; back he comes with them to Jerusalem, and again before their eyes he drives out the buyers and sellers from the temple ; they learn from the beginning what he can do, what power over things and men is behind this Carpenter of Nazareth. They have begun in love, they are at once led on to faith and trust.

Nevertheless, so long as John the Baptist is in the field, Jesus is content to bide his time and wait ; not until the Precursor is taken and clapped into prison does he show himself before the world. But when that deed is done, then he begins to move. With a daring that defies all opposition, of Pharisees and doctors of the Law, of Herod and all his myrmidons, of ignorant Galilæans and all their prejudices, of dwellers in Jerusalem and all their bigotry, he comes out boldly and proclaims that the Kingdom is at hand, and that he, Jesus, is the messenger sent to found it. From this moment he moves quickly and surely. There is no hesitation in his method, no drawing back because of opposition. His own men of Nazareth reject him, and at once he calls others to his aid ; the people of Capharnaum accept him, and he pours out upon them all he has to give in a very torrent. Pharisees set themselves to catch him in word or deed, and before their eyes he proves his power, not only of healing, but of forgiving sins. This first outburst of authority carries all before him ; men look on and ask themselves : " What thing is this ? What is this new doctrine ? What word is this ? For with authority and power he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him and go out " (Mark i 27 ; Luke iv 36). " And all the multitudes were astonished and filled with fear, and wondered and glorified God that gave such power to men " (Matt. ix 8 ; Mark ii 12 ; Luke v 26).

Endurance of friends, equal endurance of enemies ; forbearance, silent and ignoring, with those who knew no better, encouragement, gentle, cheerful, happy, fascinating, to those from whom he hoped for and expected more ; equally considerate to rich and poor, learned and unlearned, sophisticated citizens of Judæa and narrow country-

folk of Galilee, Pharisees and publicans, rulers in the city and lepers on the road, disciples and strangers, believers and harsh critics ; intimate with all but depending on none, appealing to them to believe in him, but not despondent if he failed, giving all he had to give if they would but receive it, inviting all, refusing none, striking friends and rivals dumb by his lavish and unconditional generosity ; and when abused for the gifts he gave, never closing up his hand, sparing himself in nothing, though he knew that the seed he sowed fell on stony or thorn-choked soil ; and underneath, like a thundering, awful, underground torrent, a life apart and independent, of prayer and spiritual understanding that could not be ruffled by the gales and storms upon the surface—such is an impression of Jesus in the first and most active, yet perhaps the least self-revealing, period of his public life.

2. *To the confession of Peter*

So he prepared the ground. Then up on the hill behind Capharnaum, after a whole night spent in prayer—"And he passed the whole night in the prayer of God" (Luke vi 12)—he called to himself his Twelve Apostles, choosing "whom he would himself" (Mark iii 7-19 ; Luke vi 12-19), and no man should interfere or deny him. It was an act of high command ; it was followed by that momentous sermon, the charter of the new kingdom, the challenge thrown down in his own name to all the world (Matt. v 1-7, 29). This again was confirmed by deeds of singular mercy : by praise and reward of a pagan's faith (Matt. viii 5-18 ; Luke vii 1), by singular pity for a widowed mother's tears (Luke vii 11-17), by the befriending of a "woman in the city, a sinner" whom no self-respecting man would touch (Luke vii 36-50), by permitting that women should come with him, to help him in his need (Luke viii 1-3).

And yet it was not all victory. Indeed, at every turn he met with disappointment. Already from the first, by the Jordan in Judæa, suspicion and jealousy had hunted him out ; now in Galilee he was not to be left alone. His rivals could not do what he did ; therefore must he be proved a deceiver. He went about doing good ; therefore must he be stopped : "And they were filled with madness ; and they talked one with another, what they might do to Jesus" (Luke vi 11). He spoke "as one having authority" ; therefore he was a blasphemer : "Who is this who speaketh blasphemies ?" (Luke v 21). The miracles could not be denied ; therefore in them must be found ground for accusation. He did them on the sabbath day, and thereby broke the sabbath (Matt. xii 9-14 ; Mark iii 1-6 ; Luke vi 1-11) ; he did them by no human power, and thereby proved that he was himself possessed : "This man hath Beelzebub, and casteth out devils by the prince of devils" (Matt. xii 24 ; Mark iii 22).

And to some extent, as must always be the case, the people were

influenced by these insinuations of their leaders. They, too, began to wonder and to doubt. From this time we see him turning more and more away from them, as they turned more away from him. He still has deep compassion for them, for they are lying "like sheep that have no shepherd" (Matt. ix 35-38; Mark vi 6); he still lets them crowd about him, and jostle him in the streets (Mark v 31; Luke viii 45); but he knows that not on them can the Kingdom be founded. He must attend more and more to the Twelve. To them apart from henceforth he gives special instructions (Matt. xiii 11; Mark iv 11; Luke viii 10); for them alone he works special miracles, stirring them to ever more faith (Matt. viii 23-27; Mark iv 35-41; Luke viii 22-25); filling them at once with awe and confidence (Matt. viii 28-34; Mark v 1-20; Luke viii 26-39); before them allowing his simple, childlike affection to appear in the midst of his weary disappointment (Matt. ix 23-26; Mark v 35-43; Luke viii 49-56); endowing them with his powers and sending them forth that they may learn in practice the work to which they have been called (Matt. x 5-15; Mark vi 7-13; Luke ix 1-6).

They went out over Galilee while he remained at home. They preached; they worked wonders in his name; they came back happy men. They came to him like children to one who understood them, and told him all that they had done; they rejoiced with him and he rejoiced with them (Mark vi 30; Luke ix 10). In spite of the gathering of the gloom about him, in spite of the threats and warnings which of late had been coming from his lips, he had not lost, he never lost, that inward peace and fascination and familiarity by which those about him were made glad. Never throughout his life does Jesus lose this trait. If he is roused to anger, the next instant proves that he is always controlled; if he is stung to the quick, however he may show that he feels it, there is never any change in his heart. Once only, at the end, in the Garden of Gethsemani, does the cloud seem to enclose him altogether; but even then his will is bent to the will of his Father, and he can face his death with calm.

The first period, of wonders and success, had led up to the choosing of the Twelve and the Sermon on the Mount; the second, of reaction, had been marked by the instruction of the Twelve apart from all the rest. He would close it with a new high-water mark. He drew his best apart into the desert; there he fed them, five thousand men, beside women and children; he stirred their zeal till they called him "the Prophet," and would hail him as their king; in the plain of Genesareth, by a yet more lavish outpouring of miracles, he deepened the impression; then, when they at last professed their allegiance as they had never professed it before, he gave them the one test of all; he offered them his flesh to eat, and his blood to drink. And at this last moment they failed him; in spite of all they had received, in spite of all they had promised, they

failed him. "Many of his disciples, hearing it said: This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" (John vi 61). And "after this, many of his disciples went back, and walked with him no more" (John vi 67).

Jesus left Capharnaum with a saddened heart; we do not hear that he ever set foot in it again. He had made the one great offer for which all these months he had been preparing, and it had been rejected; the one offer which, had they but shut their eyes to their own questionings and accepted the truth of him that was all truth, would have revealed to those men the wealth of power and love and generosity which was within their grasp, and which was more than belonged to any mortal man to give. He left the place; he left Galilee; he went out of the land of the Jews into pagan Tyre and Sidon. For months he wandered abroad, keeping the Twelve continually with him, giving to them in this alien land an utterly new outlook on life. Since the mission on which he had sent them through Galilee there had been a long respite: miracles a few, and they were less spontaneous than before; preaching very little, and that with a continued note of warning; avoidance but not fear of his enemies, for when he met them he defied them to their faces; prayer and solitude in abundance; all the time a deepening upon them of personal influence, in familiarity along with dignity, leaving through these hot summer months the seed he had sown to grow within their hearts. More and more he had confined himself to them; at length the time came when their faith, too, must be finally tested.

"And it came to pass in the way, as he was alone praying, his disciples also were with him, and he asked them: Whom do the people say that I am? Whom do men say that the Son of man is?"

They gave him an answer which now concerned him little. Then he asked:

"But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. xvi 13-16; Mark viii 27-29; Luke ix 18-20).

It was enough; at last, by a single man on earth, with the light of the Father from heaven, he had been discovered and owned for what he was. There and then, upon that man, the Church of God was founded; henceforth it mattered little what Pharisees or doctors might say or do. His work was now assured; now he could march on boldly to his death.

3. *To Palm Sunday*

With the confession of Peter the manner of Jesus seemed completely to change. At once he cut short his wanderings into foreign lands. He returned into Galilee; on Mount Thabor, to reward them for their faith, and to prepare them for what was yet to come, he showed to three of them a shadow of his Godhead. For a month

or thereabouts he still hung about the upper province. But he seemed no longer to care to preach. He no longer busied himself with miracles ; instead he took means to hide himself away, content only with deepening the faith of his Twelve, strengthening them for the great ordeal that would soon now be upon them.

Nevertheless, how little after all did these poor men from Galilee understand ! In many places we are reminded of their ignorance, even at this late hour (Mark ix 32) ; patience and forbearance he had to show them to the end, perhaps more at the end than in the early days of hope and promise. Nor only to his own ; he had to show it also to his enemies. One might say that the rest of his life is but a continued manifestation of unwearied patience and long-suffering to all who came within its range. On the Feast of Tabernacles he marched again into Jerusalem. Let his enemies do what they would, he stayed there all the time, moving in and out of the Temple as he pleased. He came again for the Feast of Dedication ; in the intervals he remained for the most part in the neighbourhood, in Judæa or Peræa, for any of his foes to meet him who chose. The atmosphere is heavy with storm ; his death is continually on the lips of men ; more than one attempt is made to take him ; we need to bear all this in mind if we would understand aright the depth and warmth and all-enduring patience of his last appeals.

“ If any man thirst let him come to me and drink ” (John vii 37).

“ I am the light of the world. He that followeth me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life ” (John viii 12).

“ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep ” (John x 11).

“ I am the good shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me ” (John x 14).

“ Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart ; and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is sweet, and my burden light ” (Matt. xi 28-30).

With language such as this Jesus fought his great campaign against his bitterest enemies in Jerusalem, only a few months before he died. It was the forgiveness of “ seventy times seven times ” put into practice. Such enduring forbearance could never have been invented ; the whole story teems with emotion, the man who speaks has his heart full. Incredible bearing of abuse and insult and trickery, understanding sympathy with friends and foes, quick response to any least sign of recognition, fascinating imagery linking his words with all around him, firm, consistent assertion of the truth that seemed to compel belief, exact interpretation of the past, clear and unflinching vision of the future, seeing at once both death and victory, beneath it all peace and assurance and strength in the knowledge and love and intimate union with the Father—all this was evident to all, and portrayed a soul so perfect as to be more

than human ; his enemies even better than his friends knew what it implied.

With this last cry, one might almost say, the portrait of Jesus for our present purpose is completed. It is strong as a tower, yet delicate as a feather ; yielding as a blade of grass to every breath of wind, yet firm as a rock before the heaviest wash of water. For the rest the evangelists, among them chiefly St Luke, are content merely to touch in the lights and shadows, all in keeping with this last impression. For instance, soon after this, down the highroad from the city a lawyer asks him what is the great commandment of the Law, and he is made to answer his own question, that it is the love of God and the love of one's neighbour. He asks who is his neighbour, and he is given that perfect story of the Good Samaritan (Luke x 25-37). It is at this time that we find him accepting hospitality from two simple women of Bethania (Luke x 38-48) ; at this time that he is found alone in prayer, and by his example makes others long to pray like him (Luke xi 1-13) ; at this time that he sees a poor, aged woman bent double, and puts unasked his gentle hand upon her, and makes her stand up straight (Luke xiii 10-17). While the enmity about him grows ever more bitter, while he is compelled to become ever more emphatic in his retort, nevertheless precisely at this time, and it would seem precisely in proportion, does his tenderness of heart reveal itself, in the parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke xv 1-7), and of the Prodigal Son (Luke xv 11-32), in his weeping over the tomb of his friend Lazarus, and his raising him to life (John xi 1-46), in his healing of the ten lepers, and his expression of regret that only one came back to thank him (Luke xvii 12-19), in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke xviii 9-14), in the welcome he gave to the little children and their mothers (Matt. xix 13-15 ; Mark x 13-16 ; Luke xviii 15-17), in the love he showed to the young man who fain would follow him : " Jesus looked on him and loved him " (Matt. xix 16 ; Mark 17 ; Luke xviii 18), in the hearty, even merry greeting to the publican Zacheus (Luke xix 1-10), last of all in the defence he made of the woman who poured out upon him of her best (Matt. xxvi 6-13 ; Mark xiv 3-9 ; John xii 1-11).

4. *To the Passion*

That last scene ended all ; the rest was but the conclusion of the tragedy. In the triumphant Procession of Palms he told the world that he was its Master (Matt. xxi 1-11 ; Mark xi 1-11 ; Luke xix 29-44 ; John xii 12-19) ; on the next day, when again he cleansed the Temple, he told the priests and the doctors of the Law that he was their Master too (Matt. xxi 12-17 ; Mark xi 15-19 ; Luke xix 45-48). For two days more he came into their midst and let them gather round him ; he permitted them to harry him with bickerings and questions, as they had never harried him before ; with a power

at once noble and crushing he silenced them every one, so that from that time forward they dared ask him no more questions (Matt. xxii 46). Then with an eloquence that is unsurpassed he pronounced upon them their doom (Matt. xxiii 1-39). With that he passed out of the Temple, never to enter it again; on the hillside of Olivet he warned his own of the evil days that would be (Matt. xxiv 25; Mark xiii; Luke xxi 5-36); he retired to Bethania, and there he hid himself away, preparing for the last great surrender.

In what follows, though through it all the character of Jesus is seen as it is seen nowhere else, we must be content to move quickly. It was paschal time, the last of his life, and a place must be found in which he might celebrate it; like the King he was, the Son of David proclaimed on the Sunday preceding, though on other nights he had yielded to his enemies and fled the city, on this night he would choose, for this ever memorable ceremony, a noble mansion in the noblest quarter of the town, under the very walls of Annas and Caiphas, and not a soul should deny him (Matt. xxvi 17-19; Mark xiv 12-16; Luke xxii 7-13). When the hour arrived he would go up with his own, and to them alone he would reveal the secret of his heart; this last bequest he would leave to them before he died, the key to all that had gone before, and to all that was to come after.

“Before the festival day of the pasch, Jesus knowing that his hour was come, and that he should pass out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world he loved them unto the end” (John xiii 1).

He sat down with them at table; restlessly he rose and washed their feet; his heart fluttered at the remembrance that in spite of all he was to them, and of all they were to him, one among them would betray him, another would deny him, all would desert him in his hour of need. Still he would not stay his hand; for them he had never before stayed it, he would not do it then. Instead, even to them, even at this hour of utter disappointment, he would surpass himself in generosity. He gave them his flesh to eat; he gave them his blood to drink; he gave himself to them for all time, that they might eat him and drink him when they chose, and, when they chose, give him to be food and drink to others. He gave as only God could give, and that only the God of utter love (Matt. xxvi 26-29; Mark xiv 22-25; Luke xxii 19, 20).

Love and service, mastership and lowly submission, we have seen them manifested all through his life, but never more conspicuously than now. Sensitive agony because of desertion, overwhelming gratitude because of the least recognition, sadness unto death because of failure, encouragement because of the certainty of victory beyond, all these lights and shadows play upon his soul during all that supper night; but always in the end love conquers, and always to these men, no matter what they may then be, no matter what they may soon do, there is nothing but hope and

encouragement, and love and sympathy poured out. They will be separated from him, but let them not mind ; he will not leave them orphans, he will come back to them. They will be scandalised in him, but let them not mind ; he has prayed for them, for Simon in particular, and all will yet be well. They will be hated by the world, but let them not mind ; the world has hated him before them. They will be persecuted by men, to put them to death will be deemed a duty, but let them not mind ; he himself has overcome the world, the prince of this world is already conquered.

Even that is not enough. Such consolation is only negative, and Jesus can never stop there. They are his own, he loves them to the end, they must partake of his reward. "With a strong cry and tears" he makes to his Father a further claim, and it is based on an argument which no man but he, none but the Son of God made man could make.

"I have glorified thee on the earth : I have finished the work thou gavest me to do" (John xvii 4).

He had lived a perfect life ; the Manhood had corresponded with the Godhead ; while other men had to learn : "Forgive us our trespasses," he could with truth say this only of himself, and because of it could ask of his Father what he would. And what did he ask ? For himself nothing, for them everything. That these his own should be preserved from evil ; that they should be made one among themselves ; that they should be for ever one with him ; "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John xvii 26).

That was the final goal. We take that last expression of his soul and look back, and in the light of it all the life of Jesus is aglow with a new significance. This is his Kingdom, as he himself esteems it ; for this he has laboured all the time ; to satisfy his own outpouring love for men, to win their love to himself, to stir within them a love for one another such as mankind has never known before.

§ III: JESUS CHRIST PERFECT IN HIMSELF

1. *The human limitations of Jesus*

"It behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God, that he might be a propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that wherein he himself hath suffered and been tempted he is able to succour them also that are tempted" (Heb. ii 17, 18).

"For we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities : but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin" (Heb. iv 15).

"Who in the days of his flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to him that was able to save

him from death, was heard for his reverence. And whereas indeed he was the Son of God, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. v 7, 8).

"It was fitting that we should have a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. vii 26).

In these and many other passages of the later New Testament we are shown how the real humanity of Jesus Christ, with all its limitations and weaknesses, remained impressed, after he was gone, upon the minds of his first disciples. When the whole picture had been completed, then, and then only, they saw the significance of all its parts. Then at last they realised the meaning of that lowliness and meekness which in his lifetime, especially at the latter end, had tended to be to them a scandal. They understood at last the purpose of the Child lying helpless in the manger at Bethlehem, dependent on the care of a mother and foster-father, flying in fear from his enemies; of the Boy growing up among other boys, "in wisdom, and age, and grace before God and men," at Nazareth, and plying a carpenter's trade; of the Man standing as a sinner among sinners at the Jordan, on that memorable day when they first met him, waiting his turn to be baptised by John.

They knew at last why, like other men, even more than other men, he underwent the fire of temptation; why he hungered and thirsted, and endured fatigue of body, and was weary and slept. They knew why he showed so simply the affections of his sensitive nature, sympathy for suffering on one side, indignation with injustice on another, tenderness at one time with weak human nature, at another firmness stern and unflinching, love of friends and denunciation of enemies, childlike expression alike of joy and pain, of gratitude and of disappointment, overflowing thanks when men gave him cause for consolation, grief unto tears in face of loss. Even after he had died, and had risen again, they saw why and how he had been so eager that his own should recognise him once again for what he was, truly man, and not a disembodied spirit; letting them embrace his feet (Matt. xxviii 9), speaking with a plaintive voice that could not be mistaken (John xx 16), eating before them (Luke xxiv 30), bidding them to handle him (Luke xxiv 29-43), coming down to any condition they might lay down in order that they might be convinced (John xx 27).

In another way, again, now that all was over, they saw the complete and perfect human nature of Jesus manifested. It was in his full submission to God the Father. The will of the Father—that was for him the beginning and the end. To carry out that will was his life's work (John v 19), to preach his commission was his allotted task (John viii 28); the mind of the Father was above all things else (Matt. xxiv 36), the wish of the Father was the final goal (Matt. xxiv 39). He would seek no glory but such as should

redound to the glory of the Father (Mark v 19 ; John viii 49, xiv 13) ; upon the Father he would lean and depend for everything. With the Father he would constantly unite himself in prayer (Luke vi 12, ix 18, 28 ; etc. ; Matt. xiv 23), thanking him alike in joy and in sorrow (Luke x 21 ; John xi 1-46), when things were hard appealing to him (John xii 27), often for his miracles seeking his assistance (Mark vii 34 ; John xi 38, 41). In all the story of the end submission of the real human will of Jesus to the will of the Father in heaven is continually repeated, from the prayer against his own petition in the Garden (Matt. xvi 39), till on Calvary are heard first the cry of desolation (Matt. xxvii 46), then the last word of all, with which in fullest confidence he gives his soul into his Father's keeping (Luke xxiii 46).

Without any doubt, therefore, Jesus had impressed upon those who had lived most intimately with him the fact of his human limitations. So much was he a child to his mother that she could never speak to him nor treat him as other than her own son ; complaining to him when he did what she could not understand (Luke ii 48), putting the needs of others before him (John ii 3), seeking him out when trouble threatened him (Matt. xii 19), when he died claiming a mother's place by his suffering body (John xix 25). Neighbours had known him only as the carpenter of Nazareth, and the impression never left them. His fellow-villagers despised him because he was just that, and therefore could not be more (Luke iv 16-30). Publicans and sinners could presume so much upon their acquaintance with him as to invite him to sit with them at table (Matt. ix 9-17) ; women realised his needs and were glad to follow him and help him (Luke viii 1-3). Crowds could knock up against him in the streets (Mark v 31), could hold him hemmed in among them so that he must needs be rescued from them (Mark iii 21), when he said what seemed to them absurd could openly jeer before him (Matt. ix 24). Friends could blame him when he let himself be hustled to and fro, and say he was becoming mad (Mark iii 21) ; could warn him against impending danger which his seeming imprudence provoked (Matt. xv 12) ; could contradict him to his face (Matt. vi 22) ; even when he was transfigured before them could come to themselves and discover that, after all, he was "only Jesus" (Matt. xvii 8). They could wrangle in his company, forgetting that he was there (Mark ix 33) ; they could offer him wise counsel as to what he ought to do (John vii 3, 4) ; they could take it upon themselves to decide who should come near him and who should not (Matt. xix 13, xx 31) ; in his very presence they could complain of those who honoured him in ways which he accepted, but which did not suit their fancy (Matt. xxvi 8). If intimacy and familiarity may prove how completely Jesus was a man among men, then on every page of the Gospels we have the evidence in abundance.

2. *The sinlessness of Jesus* : (i) *The witness of friends*

To men living so intimately with him, especially to those with whom he dwelt habitually, at whose board he ate, by whose side he slept in their cottages upon the floors, whom he kept with him in all his journeys, it was inevitable that as man he should be well known. What, then, is the account they give of him? We are often told that "No man is a hero to his valet," and by that we are given to understand that familiarity discovers weaknesses even in a hero. Yet what do we learn from the intimates of Jesus Christ? From the day when the sinless John the Baptist acknowledges him to be far more sinless than himself (Matt. iii 17), and pointed him out to all as the spotless Lamb of God, who would take away the sin of the world (John i 36), there is never the slightest deviation. Simon, a year later, shows the impression that has deepened in him when he cries: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke v 8); and on that occasion, as on so many others, he spoke for the handful of men who had reason to know him best. He chose them apart from all others, and they clung closely to him; he gave them himself as an example, and as such they studied him in every detail; he called them his brothers and sisters, and they were beside themselves with joy. They do his work for him; they are tested concerning their fidelity; others may abandon him, but again Simon sums up the impression of them all: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John vi 69).

A little later, and it has grown deeper; once more Simon speaks for his companions. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. xvi 16). It is the height of their confession of faith, but it is founded on their knowledge of the perfection of the man of whom they spoke. And there were deeper things to follow; from henceforth they studied him more closely as the model for their lives; "Come to me," had now grown into "Learn of me," and they felt the justice of the claim. They saw his infinite forgiveness, and asked how many times they were to forgive (Matt. xviii 21). They watched him often in prayer, and asked him that they might be taught to do the same (Luke xi 1). He told them to forgive as they themselves would wish to be forgiven; he taught them to pray every day that their sins might be condoned; by word he taught them that which he could not teach them by example. The nearer he comes to the end the more are they compelled to remark on the two striking features of his life: on the one hand his bold condemnation of evil-doers, on the other his never-ceasing sympathy for the weak, and the sinful, and the down-trodden, and the contemned. They say very little; after the confession of Peter at Cæsarea, less than others do the Apostles express their feelings and beliefs; but the impression is unmistakable: their Master is the Master indeed, who had the word of God, was the beloved

of God, and taught more by example than by precept, and who by his utter truth won all to himself. He was wholly true, he was wholly to be trusted, he was wholly worthy to be loved: "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee" (John xxi 16).

But if the Apostles said little there were others about them both more voluble and more demonstrative, and the evangelists quote their words and describe their actions with evident approval and delight. In every case it is the homage paid to the utter genuineness of their Master that delights them. The learned Pharisee Nicodemus knew to whom he was speaking when he said: "Rabbi, we know that thou art come a teacher from God" (John iii 2); no less did that poor woman of Samaria, a little later, a creature at the opposite extreme, who after one conversation could go away and say: "Is not this the Christ?" (John iv 29). The Roman soldier in Capharnaum had learnt much of this Jew before he could submit to pray: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof" (Matt. viii 15); as well as the woman, the sinner in the city, before without any conditions she could lay at his feet the whole of her miserable burden (Luke vii 36-50). When the multitude cried out with enthusiasm, "He hath done all things well" (Mark vii 37), clearly they spoke of more than miracles; it was more than miracles that made the common people of Jerusalem say to one another in the streets: "He is a good man" (John vii 12), and use this as an answer to his enemies, who tried to seduce them.

So we may go on; as the clouds thicken the Light of the world seems only to become more manifest. The mother's heart that cried out in the crowd: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee" (Luke ix 27), proclaimed what a good mother's instinct is quick to discern; so too was it with the ever-growing believers in Judæa, who in response to the abuse of his enemies fell back on the evidence of the Baptist, confirmed by what they themselves had seen: "John, indeed, did no sign, but all things whatsoever John said of this man were true" (John x 41, 42). The infants that ran to him and clung about him on the road up from Peræa, and the mothers that so easily committed them to his care (Matt. xix 10-15), the women who gladly entertained him in their homes (Luke x 38), the young men fired at the sight of him to be themselves great and true and noble (Matt. xix 16, xx 20), the publicans and sinners, men who had accepted their fate, but who needed from him no more than a look or a word to find their whole lives changed (Luke xix 1-10), all these and more, coming from so many varied angles, are witnesses more eloquent than any declarations of the crystal clearness of his life.

At the end of all, this is made only the more conspicuous. When remorse compels his betrayer to confess, in the sight of his destroyers: "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood" (Matt. xxvii 4), they cannot contradict him; tacitly they confess that what

he says is true. When the wife of Pilate warns the Roman governor : "Have thou nothing to do with this just man" (Matt. xxvii 19); when Pilate himself in feeble self-defence declares : "I am innocent of the blood of this just man" (Matt. xxvii 24); when on the cross the criminal hanging by his side defends him with the words : "This man hath done no evil" (Luke xxiii 41); when, after he is dead, the guard beneath the gibbet sums up all he has witnessed in the sentence : "Indeed this was a just man" (Luke xxiii 47); we know something of the minds of those about him at the moment when of all times in his life it was most essential that he should be thought guilty.

Hence it was that after he had left this earth, when Peter, for the first time, stood before the people of Jerusalem to give his witness, it was natural and easy for him to speak to them of Jesus as "the Holy One and the Just" (Acts iii 14); it was natural for him, before such an audience, to sum up his life in the single phrase : "Jesus of Nazareth : how God anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good" (Acts x 38). When later he wrote to his neophytes he could best so describe him : "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, did not revile : when he suffered, he threatened not, but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly. Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree" (1 Pet. ii 22-24). And again : "Christ died once for our sins, the just for the unjust" (1 Pet. iii 18).

Precisely the same is the evidence of the other Apostles ; they dwell, not upon his wonder-working, not upon his preaching, but upon the surpassing, positive sinlessness of Jesus. Thus St John sums up his Master and his work : "You know that he appeared to take away our sins : and in him there is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not ; and whosoever sinneth hath not seen him nor known him" (1 John iii 5). The same he puts elsewhere in another form : "My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just" (1 John ii 1). So much does the disciple whom Jesus loved make of the spotless innocence of his Beloved. And akin to it is the single sentence of St James, the "Brother of the Lord" : "You have condemned and put to death the Just One : and he resisted you not" (James v 6).

(ii) *The witness of enemies*

All this and more we have from those who were his friends, who were won by him, or at least were not disposed to stand against him. But there were other eyes than those turned upon him : eyes that looked, not merely for any flaw in word or deed, but for any pretext whatsoever, for any show of evidence, whether true or false, which might be turned to his destruction. We find them first

in Judæa, their suspicions roused and their machinations working before he has yet begun to move (John iv 1). We find them next in Galilee, early in his public life, combining with Herodians whom otherwise they would have scorned to know (Mark iii 6); later, in Judæa, Pharisees and Sadducees join hands to catch him in any way they can. In the streets of Jerusalem, after their manner, in the hearing of the people, they boldly say: "Thou hast a devil" (John vii 20); "We know that this man is a sinner" (John ix 24); but when they are asked to specify their charge it is shamefully little that they can rake together. Three times at least Jesus challenged them to frame an accusation. "Why seek you to kill me?" he asked them in the Temple court at the last Feast of Tabernacles (John vii 20); and a little later: "Which of you shall accuse me of sin?" (John viii 46). Again in the same place at the Feast of Dedication, four months only before his death: "Many good works I have showed you from my Father. For which of those works do you stone me?" (John x 32). In the Garden of Gethsemani, when at last they seized him, there is more than rebuke, there is overwhelming evidence in his favour which could not be denied in his simple words: "Are ye come out as it were against a thief with swords and clubs? When I was daily with you in the temple, you did not stretch forth your hands against me" (Luke xxii 52, 53).

In spite of these searching eyes kept incessantly upon him from the beginning to the end of his career, and in spite of the challenge with which he confronted them, what did these experts in duplicity find?

"What sign dost thou show, seeing thou dost these things?" (John ii 18).

"Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus because he did these things on the sabbath" (John v 16).

"Is not this the son of Joseph? And his mother, do we not know her?" (Luke iv 22).

"He blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mark ii 7).

"Why doth your master eat with publicans and sinners?" (Matt. ix 11).

"This man, if he were a prophet, would know surely who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner" (Luke vii 39).

"This man casteth not out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils" (Matt. xii 24).

"How came this man by all these things? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" (Mark vi 23).

"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (John vi 53).

"Thou hast a devil" (John vii 20).

"We know this man whence he is: but when the Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is" (John vii 27).

“ Doth the Christ come out of Galilee ? ” (John vii 41).

“ Search the Scriptures and see that out of Galilee a prophet riseth not ” (John vii 52).

“ Thou givest testimony of thyself ; thy testimony is not true ” (John viii 13).

“ Do not we say well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil ? ” (John viii 48).

“ Now we know that thou hast a devil ” (John viii 52).

“ This man is not of God, who keepeth not the sabbath ” (John ix 16).

“ Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner ” (John ix 24).

“ We know that God spoke to Moses : but as to this man, we know not whence he is ” (John ix 29).

“ He hath a devil and is mad. Why hear you him ? ” (John x 20).

“ For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy ; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God ” (John x 33).

“ What do we, for this man doth many miracles ? ” (John xi 47).

“ It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not ” (John xi 50).

“ Do you see that we prevail nothing ? Behold the whole world is gone after him ” (John xii 19).

The series wearies us. His enemies themselves were weary of this vain repetition of empty phrases. On the last day of his public teaching they were compelled to change their tactics.

“ And they sent to him their disciples, with the Herodians, saying : Master, we know that thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth. Neither carest thou for any man : for thou dost not regard the person of men ” (Matt. xxii 16).

It is no wonder, then, that at the end, when at last they have him at their mercy, they must deliberately seek false witness, they must deliberately garble and twist his words, that they may have wherewith to accuse him even among themselves (Mark xiv 55) ; before others they must conclude with assumptions they could never attempt to prove : “ If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee ” (John xviii 30) ; and after he was dead and buried, and as it seemed could no longer speak, they must still emit their slander : “ That seducer ” (Matt. xxvii 63).

This, then, was all. Never before or since has any man been subjected to so keen a scrutiny, never has hatred been so watchful, so determined to destroy ; and yet this was all. Any trifle would have sufficed, an imprudent word however true, a hasty deed however justified, a look, a gesture that could have indicated a hard or bitter mind ; yet not so much as a trifle could be found. Jesus Christ ! Weighed in the balance and found perfect, tried in the severest furnace and found to be purest gold !

(iii) *His witness of himself*

But now, upon all this, we have a further evidence, which at once puts Jesus on another plane from that of other men. It is the witness he gives of himself. Whatever else he was, on the evidence alike of friends and enemies, he was true, he was sincere, he was transparently genuine : indeed, it was his utter genuineness that in the end was the final proof to his friends, to his enemies was their despair. As then with others who are true, when he speaks of himself he must be heard. And what does he say ? Other men and women have been holy ; a few by the grace of God have been preserved in simple innocence from childhood to old age, and on that account alone have been treasured as the jewels of our race ; but no man, save only Jesus Christ, has dared to claim holiness and innocence as belonging to himself from his very nature. No saint, however confirmed in grace, has ever ceased to own himself a sinner, or to be in constant fear of his own rejection. " I chastise my body," says St Paul, " and bring it into subjection, lest while preaching to others I myself may become a castaway " (1 Cor. ix 27). And more pertinently St John : " If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us " (1 John i 8).

Very differently, as we have seen, does the same saint speak of Jesus Christ. " If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity " (1 John i 9) ; and when he so emphatically marks the contrast he does but repeat that which Jesus, again and again, implicitly at least declared of himself. He came to the Jordan and was baptised with sinners, but not until he who baptised him had expressly proclaimed him to be more sinless than himself (Matt. iii 14). He ate and drank with, and permitted himself to be called the friend of, publicans and sinners, but never did he allow, and never did they pretend, that he was one of them (Matt. ix 10). He taught men to pray that they might have their sins forgiven ; but it was always in the second person, never did he unite himself with them in that petition. For them he said : " Thus, therefore, shall you pray : . . . Forgive us our trespasses," and in that he included all men ; but for himself : " Father, the hour is come. . . . I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now glorify thou me, O Father, with thyself " (John xvii 4, 5).

So in practice does he make a sharp distinction between himself and other men. But he does it also explicitly. In the Sermon on the Mount, in very marked words, he speaks to his hearers : " If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children," carefully separating them from himself (Matt. vii 11). By the well of Samaria he says to his disciples : " My meat is to do the will of him that sent me " (John iv 34), a first lesson in their understanding of him. Before the Jews in the Temple he is most emphatic :

“He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh the glory of him that sent him, he is true and there is no injustice in him” (John vii 18).

“And he that sent me is with me: and he hath not left me alone. For I do always the things that please him” (John viii 29).

“Which of you shall convince me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe me?” (John viii 46).

“If I glorify myself my glory is nothing. It is my Father that glorifieth me, of whom you say that he is your God. And you have not known him: but I know him. And if I say that I know him not, I shall be like to you, a liar. But I do know him and do keep his word” (John viii 54, 55).

“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though you will not believe me, believe the works: that you may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in the Father” (John x 37, 38).

Add to this his words in the Supper room.

“The prince of this world cometh: and in me he hath not anything” (John xiv 30).

So he speaks of himself, but his actions are yet more eloquent. In his attitude to evil of any kind he assumes a position which he only could assume who is conscious of being its absolute master. His very name has this significance; it is given because “He will save his people from their sins” (Matt. i 21). He is first announced by the Baptist as “the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world” (John i 29), as just before he had been declared from heaven to be one in whom God “was well pleased” (Matt. iii 17). From the first he is the avowed enemy of sin, who will drive it always before him, will conquer its kingdom, will bid its master begone (Matt. iv 10); never for an instant will he be subject to it or fear it. In whatever form it appears he denounces and defies it (Mark iii 28); in his own name he lays down fresh standards concerning it: “I say to you” (Matt. v 18, etc.). On the other hand, when the guilty soul comes penitent before him, he forgives us by his own right (Matt. ix 2; Luke vii 48; John viii 11); nay more, he hands on to others the power to forgive sins in his own name. Devils declare his independence of them: “What have we to do with thee, thou Holy One of God?” (Mark i 24); they cringe before him and appeal to him, as to one who is wholly their Lord (Mark v 10). John had described him as one whose wand would be in his hand, and who would sift the chaff from the grain (Matt. iii 12); he himself declares that he is the Judge of sinners (Matt. xxv 31), he will reward and he will punish (Matt. xxv 46).

As the end draws near the claim grows ever more prominent. His last days witness, as it were, a struggle in his soul between justice and mercy towards those who offended his Father, but for himself there is never a shadow of doubt or fear or apprehension.

In the Garden he takes upon himself the iniquity of us all ; for man he is " made sin," and as such he suffers. When at last he comes to die he does not, like other men, pray for forgiveness ; he prays only that others may be forgiven : " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do " (Luke xxiii 34). In him there is no repentance ; for him that would be untrue ; instead, when another repents, even from the cross, he exercises his prerogative : " Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise " (Luke xxiii 43). There is desolation, but there is no remorse in the cry : " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? " (Matt. xxvii 46). It is answered by the last word of all : " Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit " (Luke xxiii 46).

NOTE.—This is not the place in which to discuss at length the question of the sanctity of Christ. For clearly, when we speak of his sanctity, we speak of that which belongs to him as God as well as Man ; and here we are concerned with that which belongs to him as Man alone, as the Model of Manhood. We have seen that he did not sin ; we might go on to show—were we studying him in all his perfection we would go on to show—that he was incapable of sinning : " Holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners " (Heb. vii 26). Nor would that be all. It would remain to be shown that in virtue of the union of the human soul of Jesus with the Word of God, sanctity, holiness came to him as of his very nature ; he was not only sanctified by grace, as other men are sanctified, he was sanctified as being the incarnate Son of God : " The holy one which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God " (Luke i 35).

One reminder, however, we must not omit. It has been shown in the Essay *Jesus Christ, God and Man* (pp. 390 ff) that Jesus, the source of all grace, is himself full of grace. " And we saw his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth . . . and of his fulness we have all received," says St John (i 14). We must therefore not think of the human perfections of Jesus otherwise than as the manifestation and fruit of the fulness of supernatural life that is in him. So St Luke tells us that " Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men " (ii 52).

§ IV: JESUS CHRIST PERFECT TOWARDS MEN

1. *An example : The Sermon on the Mount*

" AND it came to pass when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration at his doctrine. For he was teaching them as one having power : and not as the scribes and Pharisees " (Matt. vii 28, 29).

There are points in the story of the Gospels when the figure in the centre seems to rise out from its surroundings, when the

reader's vision expands, when in that vision that central figure seems to occupy at once, not only all that period of years during which it lived, but the whole of this world's history :

“ Jesus Christ, yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever ” (Heb. xiii 8).

At one of these points, in a summary such as the present, we may do best to study him ; though in consequence many other details may be lost, though we may miss that variety, and universality, and all-embracing sympathy of soul which the whole story portrays, still by so doing we may hope to catch the more essential details, from which we may judge of the rest.

Such a point we have at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. It is comparatively early in his public life. Hitherto he has confined himself, for the most part, in and about Capharnaum. By generosity overflowing he has won the hearts of the people ; by personal contact he has stirred the enthusiasm of his disciples ; now the moment has come for the more formal opening of the kingdom. For an hour or more that morning, on the mountain-side that runs up behind the little town, Jesus has been speaking and the people have listened ; they have listened in silence, and the fascination of his words has carried them out of themselves. For an hour or more that single voice has been pouring itself out, and has lifted them above their sordid surroundings, into a world where sorrow has been turned into blessedness (Matt. v 3) ; has given them new joy and courage in the good tidings that after all they are of some account in the eyes of their Father (Matt. v 16) ; has freed them from the bondage of the Law, making it a glory to brave things yet harder than the Law had ever enjoined (Matt. v 21) ; has given them a new understanding of sin, till innocence, and truth, and simplicity, and forgiveness, and loving-kindness, and charity have shone out as the real honour of mankind (Matt. v 44) ; has given the noblest possible ideal for life and character, even the ideal of the Father God himself : “ Be you therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect ” (Matt. v 48) ; has taught them to pray, to speak to that Father, in terms that can never be forgotten (Mark vi 9) ; has cut through all hypocrisy and brought to perfect light the genuine truth of the soul (Matt. vi 16) ; has shown them where absolute confidence can reach, higher than the flight of the birds of the air, lower than the grass beneath their feet (Matt. vi 26) ; has defined and vindicated true justice, which is also mercy, and equality, and meekness (Matt. vii 1) ; and though what has been said has ended on a note of warning, still has it been with joy, and hope, and love unutterable in the air (Matt. vii 24).

He has said all this, and he has said it in their own language. Never once has he needed to go beyond their own vocabulary, the vocabulary of that Galilæan countryside, their own ideas, their own surroundings, to teach and to illustrate his teaching ; they

have caught and understood every word. As on a former occasion, speaking to poor working men at their street corner, he had made use of their patched clothing, their bottles and their wine, to bring home to them the truth of the Kingdom (Matt. ix 16), so now he has caught hold of the things about him and them by which to teach them the word. He speaks of their everyday joys and sorrows, (Matt. v 3), the salt of their everyday meal (Matt. v 13); the village perched up there on the hill above them (Matt. v 14); the candlestick in the window-sill (Matt. v 15); their daily conversation with its oaths and loose language (Matt. v 22); their daily bickerings before the local judge (Matt. v 25); their household quarrels (Matt. v 33); the local thief (Matt. vi 20); the local borrower of money (Matt. v 42); the sun now beating down upon them (Matt. v 45); the rain which had but recently ceased for the season (*ibid.*); the pompous display of religion in the streets (Matt. vi 2); their daily toil and their daily wages (Matt. vi 19), carefully stored and hidden away in their money-bags at home, the rust and the moth which were a constant trouble (*ibid.*); the raven at that moment hovering above them (Luke xii 24); the flowers flourishing abundantly around them (Matt. vi 28); the green grass on the plain with all its rich promise (Matt. vi 30); their food, their drink, their clothing, their need of daily sustenance (Matt. vi 31); the ditch over there between the fields (Luke vi 39); their dogs (Matt. vii 6); their swine (*ibid.*); their fish and their eggs (Matt. vii 9); the stones on the hill-side with the danger of snakes and scorpions beneath them (*ibid.*); the gate in the wall hard by (Matt. vii 13); their sheep and the wolves they knew only too well (Matt. vii 14); their vines and their fig-trees (Matt. vii 16); their thorns and thistles (*ibid.*); their fruit trees good and bad (Matt. vii 19); their house of detention (Matt. vii 23); last, down there below on the lake-side, a cottage that has fallen to ruins in a storm, and another that stands secure (Matt. vii 24).

2. *The speaker and the people*

He has spoken to them in their own language. He has said what he has said in the language of their lives. He has seen them in their poverty. He has seen them broken and weighed down by cruelty and injustice and misunderstanding, and has blessed them for it all; he has blessed them for it and has poured soothing oil into their wounds (Matt. v 11). He has listened to them in their heated quarrels, a brother against a brother, and has given them the means of reconciliation (Matt. v 22). He has noticed their proneness to coarse vices and has forewarned them (Matt. v 28); he has heard their loose talk, their ribald oaths, their cursing that has led to other abuses, their rising hatred one of another with revenge to follow as an imagined duty, and has pulled them up with a word that has swept all rancour aside (Matt. v 37). He has

watched them at their prayer, in their almsgiving, during the fasting season, and has warned them against mere outward show (Matt. vi 3). He has compassionated with them in their daily cares, their anxiety for their daily bread and their daily clothing, their eagerness to hoard their daily earnings, their eyes keenly watching the tradesman's scales in the bazaar, and has boldly and assuringly lifted them above it all (Matt. vi 33). He has weighed the love of father and son, of friend and neighbour, and has accurately gauged how far they can be tried (Matt. vii 11). He has gazed on the good workman and the negligent, and has judged the value of their work (Matt. vii 26). He has lived their lives, he is one of themselves, he knows them through and through, their good points and their bad points, and he loves them; in spite of all, he loves them and gives them all this.

And yet on the other side, while he remains but one among them, how much above not only them but all others does he claim to be! With an assurance such as no man, no, not even any prophet before him had ever ventured to assume, he pronounces blessing upon them (Luke vi 22); with the might of a monarch he pronounces woe on others (Luke vi 24). He speaks as of his own authority: "I am come to fulfil" (Matt. v 17); "I say to you" (Matt. v 22); "I tell you" (Matt. v 20). Who is this who so speaks of himself? He quotes Moses and the prophets, and sets up himself and his new doctrine as something that shall transcend them all (Matt. v 19). He gives them commands beyond those of the Law, boldly contradicting those of scribes and Pharisees (Matt. v 20), yet promises rewards of which neither Law nor Pharisees have ever dreamt: "Your reward shall be great" (Matt. v 12); "You shall be the children of the Father" (Matt. v 45); "Your heavenly Father shall repay you" (Matt. vi 4). He takes it upon himself to teach all men how to pray, how to commune with Almighty God, and God he boldly calls his own Father and theirs. He speaks of this Father as of one with whom he is personally familiar, tells them of his providence and care for them as of something with which he is intimate, of his mercy as of a characteristic trait, of his perfection as an ideal towards which they themselves, as being sons, might hope to aspire (Matt. v 48). He speaks of the Kingdom of heaven as if it were his own, promises it to whom he will (Matt. vii 20), strange things indeed he adds about the value of his word and the keeping of it, as if the very being of men and of the world depended on it (Matt. vii 23).

Still with it all there has been no arrogance, no sense of false assumption, not a single word that has not rung true; assurance, yes, and certainty, and dignity, and grandeur of ideal, but no arrogance. Truth has sounded in every word he has said, human truth, the truth that lies at the root of all that is best in man, to which the heart of man instantly responds; bravery in face of trial (Matt. v 11),

moral courage to its last extreme (Matt. v 44), which has sent a thrill of honour and glory tingling through the veins of all who have heard him ; at the same time a lowliness, a submissiveness, a contentment, a joy in whatever might befall, which has made the most crushed life noble. And with it has gone a gentleness of touch upon the most sensitive of suffering, a compassion that has entered into, and condoned, and lifted up, and made bright again the most downcast and the most sinful ; an understanding of the love of friend and enemy, and the extremes to which it would venture ; a love of the Father, an unquestioning surrender to the Father, a familiar dealing with the Father, as became a well-loved son, a simple reliance on the Father, tender and human as that of any child, even while he sat there master of them all, strong as adamant.

Thus inevitably from the words he said did these people come to gaze at and think upon the man who said them. All gazed at him ; all alike were drawn to him ; none of any kind were omitted. The little children gazed open-mouthed, and under the spell forgot their mothers whose arms were around them (*cf.* Matt. xix 13) ; the mothers gazed and for the time forgot their children. Old age bent double leaning on its stick looked up at him where he sat upon his stone and was stirred to new life (*cf.* Luke xiii 11) ; youth with its dreams looked, and was fascinated, and longed to do great things (*cf.* Matt. x 17). Ignorance, stupidity, listened and rejoiced that it heard what it could understand (*cf.* Matt. xiii 11) ; learning, cleverness listened, and was weighed down with the burden of thought that it bore away (*cf.* Matt. xix 10). Men in high station came, with intent to test him, and stood before him paralysed, feeling the force of his every word (*cf.* Luke x 37) ; crawling men of low degree and stricken down sat on the edge of the crowd, and knew no less that the message was for them (*cf.* Luke xiv 25). Innocent, true souls were there, and came away rejoicing, spurred to yet more truth of life and sacrifice (*cf.* Matt. xx 21) ; guilty souls, shameless hearts, felt their guilt the more, yet through it all were able to brush away the tears of despair, and look up with hope such as they had never known before, and love revived within them, the love that came out from and went back to that Man (*cf.* Luke xv 1).

3. *The people and the speaker*

Who was he ? What was he ? What should they think of him ? How should they describe him to themselves ? What portrait of him should they bear away, stamped upon their hearts ? They gazed and gazed, speechless and entranced, longing to enter into his soul. They saw the fire of zeal flashing from his eyes, flying from his words like sparks from iron, yet never a shadow fell upon the patience, the patience without limit, revealed in his face. They bowed before the grandeur, the nobility, the fervour for the truth, and for all that was best in men, yet did they recognise the lenient

condoning, the gentle indulgence and compassion where they failed. They felt the holiness, the earnestness, the seriousness of purpose that compelled to silence, yet with it all was there a brightness, a gaiety of heart, a cheerful vision, a pouring out of blessing and reward that made all life a sheer joy. They were awed by his extolling of prayer, and of self-surrender, as if nothing else were of moment, yet alongside was a knowledge of the active things of life which only experience could have taught. They were lifted up by the sight of a greatness of soul, and of outlook, and of ideal, and of endeavour that might have paralysed them, were it not for the deep lowliness and union with them every one, that made them feel he was their servant even while he was their Master ; and along with him all things were possible (Matt. xix 26), they could do all things in him that strengthened them (Phil. iv 13).

They looked at him and they saw much that lay beneath. There was determination that never looked aside, that never for a moment flinched or hesitated, never bent or swerved, pressing on to a goal straight before it ; yet was it ever gentle, ever considerate, ever forbearing, taking poor weakness by the hand, lifting up the fallen, carrying the cripple on its shoulder. There was energy, action, daring to rush forward that carried all before it, yet none the less never losing self-control, always composed, always at peace within itself, a sense of quiet reigning all around it. There was hatred of everything evil, indignation, wrath, condemnation, fire and death, death undying, meted out in fierce anger against it ; yet never did a sinner feel himself condemned or his hope extinguished, but only knew that forgiveness, and love, and warm pressure to a warm heart awaited him if he would have it. There was a keen sense of justice, justice idealised, justice defended, strict justice without favour, yet was the hand that dealt it out soft and tender and soothing. There was passionate love of truth, truth that feared nothing, truth open and outspoken, to saint and sinner, to selfish rich and to sensitive poor, to men in high places and to those downtrodden ; yet for them all an attraction they could none of them resist, a sincerity that forestalled opposition or resentment. He was tolerant and he was stern ; he bent to the weakest, yet he stood up like a tower ; he yielded, yet he held his own ; he was a mountain of strength, yet a mother could not be more gentle ; he was lost like a child in the arms of his Father, yet was he ever fully conscious and master of himself. All this was uttered in every word he spoke, was expressed in every look and gesture. Who was this man ? What was he ? They longed to know him more, and they did not know that the longing within them was the first-fruit of love.

For indeed throughout his address love and love only had spoken all the time. Nothing else could have given such insight into the souls of other men ; nothing else could have fostered so great a craving to bless, and to give, and to receive back, and to make secure.

There was love for the poor, for the meek and lowly, for the sorrowful; love for the hungry of heart, for the merciful of heart, for the clean of heart; love for the makers of peace, and for those who failed to make peace and therefore endured persecution; love on the other side for the rich, and the happy, and the contented, warning them against false security; love for them all, both the motley crowd before him, and the chosen Twelve who stood around the throne where he sat. Indeed, for these last he had special affection; they were his own, the salt of the earth (Matt. v 12), the light of the world (Matt. v 13), the Apostles that were to be. For them in particular he had come; he had chosen them, he was living for them, soon he would die for them, and for them would rise again from the dead. With them he would always abide, with them and with all who would have him, the Lover of each, longing for each, speaking to each the same winning words he had just spoken on that mountain-side, the bosom friend of every hungry soul and its complete satisfaction, if only it would come up the hill and look for him, and find him, and listen to him, and lose its heart to him, as he had already lost his own to it. In the light of all that came after, it is not too much to say that this was the Jesus Christ men saw as he spoke to them on the mountain-side.

“And it came to pass when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration at his doctrine. For he was teaching them as one having power: and not as the scribes and Pharisees.”

§ V: A SUMMARY CONCLUSION

1. *Equality with men, yet sinlessness and truth*

IN the last sections we have been content to look at Jesus Christ as he reveals himself in but one scene of his life. To complete the picture, and to prove its entire consistency, it would be necessary to go through all the Gospels, and to draw out each chapter in at least the same detail. But this would be a work of many volumes; nay, as St John says, “the whole world would not be able to contain the books that should be written” (John xxi 25).

But, instead, can we bring together our impressions of this Model of Perfect Man, so as to distinguish him from other men? Can we say what are his special, individual features? We cannot; intensely individual as he is, easily known and recognised, nevertheless, as has been already said, the more we try to fix him down, to appoint limitations, to declare him to be this and not that, so much the more does he elude us. On the other hand, the more we appreciate and see, the more he grows upon us, till any description of him seems a mere shadow of the truth, wholly inadequate.

For how shall we define him? We watch him from the begin-

ning coming down from Nazareth to the Jordan, one among a multitude, differing from none ; or if there is a difference it has been only this, that he has been so like, not simply to all men in general, but to every man with whom he has come into contact. From that moment to the end on Calvary he has never lost this equality. His office of preacher has not destroyed it, his working of wonders has not set him on a pedestal apart ; whatever men, in moments of enthusiasm, have said of him, they have never been able to resist this intimate union and equality of Jesus Christ with every man he has met. They have been struck with awe, yet have they remained familiar ; they have proclaimed him a prophet, "the prophet," and have wished to make him their king, yet they have continued to press upon him in their streets ; they have called him the Son of God, and almost in the same breath, when he spoke, they have contradicted and corrected him (Mark viii 32).

Nevertheless, by a strange paradox, as the life expands it grows upon us that in one thing at least he has differed from others ; nay, in this one point he has claimed for himself an abiding difference. No matter how otherwise he has been weak and has been humbled in body and in soul like other men, no matter how much he has been tempted, yet never could friend or enemy, when it occurred to them to search, find in him anything that so much as partook of the nature of an evil deed. He has known sin and its dread significance as other men have not known it ; he has hated it as other men could never hate it ; he has set himself to destroy it, to "save his people from their sins" (Matt. i 21), as the first great mission of his life ; boldly he has invited every man to come to him, that he may remove their evil, and that they may then begin really to live (Matt. xi 28), and no man has accused him, on this account at least, of arrogance.

And this is his next characteristic. Really Man, equal with each and all ; sinless Man, the implacable enemy of sin as man's one and only evil ; out of these there rises up that utter truthfulness which is stamped on his whole nature, on his every word and deed. Men meet him, and read him through, and know at a glance that in him there is no guile. Women, even of that pitied class that is most bitter and disillusioned, come in contact with him and at once put themselves wholly in his hands. They hear him speak, and though he does not prove or argue, though he asserts on his own authority and no more, yet do they know that what he says is true. They watch him, in public and in private, working miracles and submitting to be fed, preaching to the ignorant poor and refuting learned Pharisees, and in everything, with everyone, the most convincing proof of all is his utter genuineness ; in nothing is there affectation, or mere show, or double-dealing, or self-seeking, or pose, or sham, or arrogance of any kind. He hates hypocrisy ; above all, when it struts and slithers in high places. From first to

last, in every circumstance, he lives his life simple and true ; when later he claims to be " the Truth, the Way, and the Life," not only is no one found to contradict him, but all listen to him as if the claim he made were in harmony with what they had seen and experienced.

§ 2. *Universality : In understanding, sympathy, word, action*

Thus, by his meekness and equality with each and all, by his sinless sincerity, by his transparent truthfulness, does Jesus make his way into the hearts and affections of men. The sinless find in him quick recognition and response, sinners no less quickly find in him their cure. The truthful hear in their own hearts an immediate echo to every word he says, an immediate understanding of every deed he does ; the untruthful, by a kind of instinct, at once recognise in him a mortal and unyielding enemy. But to all alike, enemies or friends, there is always the same understanding displayed, the same open frankness and simplicity. Whatever his enemies may say or do to him, before his face or covertly behind his back, his consciousness of utter truth prevents him from retaliating, from any counter-machinations, from any the least attempt to overreach them, or ever to treat them otherwise than as fellow-men. However his friends may fail or disappoint him, he endures. If one is weak and unfaithful, he will wait for him to rise : " Thou being again converted confirm thy brethren " (Luke xxii 32) ; if those he trusts are not to be relied upon, still will he find cause to thank them : " You are they who have stood with me in my temptations " (Luke xxii 28) ; if his enemies have their way and do him to death, still will he seek excuse for them : " Father, forgive them, they know not what they do " (Luke xxiii 34). No matter who they are, he understands them better than they understand themselves ; the timorous he could fill with courage : " Fear not, henceforth thou shalt catch men " (Luke v 10) ; the repentant he could fill with the joy of friendship : " Be of good heart, son ; thy sins are forgiven thee " (Matt. ix 2) ; even the unrepentant traitor he could still call " Friend ! " (Matt. xxvi 50).

Universal understanding such as this is the mother of universal sympathy. He seems unable to meet a crowd but he " has compassion on them " (Matt. ix 36) ; whenever the people gather about him, in Galilee, in Decapolis, in Peræa, in Judæa, he must yield to them and give them all he can. And to the fascination of it they respond ; among high and low, good and bad, educated and ignorant, young and old, men and women, Jew and pagan, goodwill wherever it is found no sooner comes in touch with him than it knows that it is understood, is met more than halfway, and that on its side it knows him. We sometimes hear of men with what is called a genius for friendship ; we see others who look on the power of making friends as the highest ideal of a man. In Jesus such a genius was

something immediate ; by those who had eyes to see, either he was at first sight known and loved, or he was known and hated.

Nowhere is this universal understanding of and sympathy with men made more manifest than in his teaching. He condescends to the lowest level of life as it is lived about him ; he rises to the highest subtleties of the most sophisticated Pharisee. For his illustrations he chooses the experiences of the humblest cottager (Luke xiv 8), or he follows the millionaire merchant abroad (Matt. xxv 14), and goes into the houses of kings (Luke xvii 20). When it so suits his purpose he uses language which the dullest yokel may understand (Luke xvi 19), or it will be that which shall confound the most enlightened doctor of the Law (Matt. xix 3) ; sometimes, with noble irony, he will speak so that while the ignorant can take his words, their meaning is hidden from the wise (Matt. xiii 24) ; he will rejoice with those who rejoice (Mark vi 31), with those who lament he will break down in sorrow (John xi 33). He will praise (Matt. viii 10), and he will blame (Mark viii 33) ; he will meekly submit (Luke iv 30), and he will be stirred with indignation (Matt. xii 31) ; he will appeal (Luke xiii 34), and will threaten (Matt. xxiii 13) ; he will bless (Matt. xxv 34) and he will curse (Matt. xxv 41) ; with an ease that can come from no training, his language will express every phase of thought, will respond to every humour, and that with such perfection that all literature finds no parallel. It is not only eloquence, it is utter truth that speaks, and in a manner utterly truthful, with the result that what men hear, unpretending, unaggressive, unpremeditated, spontaneous, is found to be the most perfect oratory, the most perfect use of human language that the world has ever known.

As it is with his words so is it with his actions ; in like manner does he adapt himself to all men without distinction. Universal as he is in understanding, universal in sympathy, it is inevitable that in his outpouring of himself he should be no less universal. His miracles are worked for all alike, for strangers as well as for friends, good men and evil, rich as well as poor, deserving and those who had no claim ; though he declares himself to be sent " for the lost sheep of the house of Israel " (Matt. xv 24), and though his disciples believe that this is his only mission (Matt. xv 23), yet when poor pagans appeal to him he must make exceptions, in Galilee (Matt. viii 13), in the country round Tyre (Matt. xv 28), among the mountains of Decapolis (Matt. xv 29). He gives himself to all who seek him (Matt. xv 32) ; he dines with any who invite him : now a group of publicans in Capharnaum (Matt. ix 10), now a more fastidious company in Magdala (Luke vii 36), now simple women in Bethania (Luke x 38), now cautious Pharisees in Judæa (Luke xi 37). He is as much occupied with one as with a crowd, whether that one be a ruler in Israel (John iii 1), or a derelict woman in Samaria (John iv 7), or a loathsome beggar in Jerusalem (John v 6).

At a moment's notice he is ready to receive a willing candidate (Matt. xix 16), or, if need be, he will wait for months and even years (Matt. xxvi 50). Time seems to matter little to him, distance is not considered (Matt. iv 23); circumstances that might well make others pause with him are ignored. Men may laugh him to scorn, but he goes on doing good (Matt. ix 24); they may refuse him admission to their village, and he meekly proceeds to another (Luke ix 53). He will live in the midst of struggle (Matt. xxiii 53), as well as in the house of peace (Luke x 38); he is as much at home on the steps of the Temple as with simple people in Bethania. Though he never ceases to be "Master and Lord," yet is he always among men as "he that serveth" (John xiii 13); so much so that by a chance word we hear that he "has not where to lay his head" (Matt. viii 20).

3. *Strength and independence*

On the other hand, this universal understanding, this universal sympathy and familiarity with men, never degenerates to weakness. His utter sincerity, when it speaks, makes men "astonished at his doctrine, for his speech was with power" (Mark i 27); his strength in action makes them ask one another: "What thing is this? What is this new doctrine? What word is this? For with authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him and go out" (Luke xxi 36). Though at one time the multitudes "pressed upon him" (Luke v 1), "so that he could not go openly into the city" (Mark i 45), yet at another he would so overwhelm them that they "were astonished, and were filled with fear, and wondered, and glorified God, that gave such power to men, saying: We have seen wonderful things to-day; we never saw the like" (Mark ii 12; Luke v 26). Though to his own he is lavish in kindness and service and consideration, though he will seek any excuse to condone their shortcomings, yet when there is need he will rebuke them with a sternness which they can never forget, when they would contradict his prophecies of failure (Mark viii 33), when they were jealous (Luke ix 46), when they would lose patience with those who opposed them (Mark ix 38); when they showed ambition (Matt. xx 20); when they were unforgiving (Matt. xviii 21); when they made little of the devotedness of children (Matt. xix 14).

Thus do his utter truthfulness and simplicity enable him to ride far above every inducement to weak indulgence; they make him immune from any danger of yielding to false glamour and hollow devotion. They may call him "a great prophet," and he just passes up the village out of sight in the evening twilight (Luke vii 16); they may hail him "the prophet that is to come into the world," and wish to make him king, but he slips away from them all into the mountain for his evening prayer (Matt. xiv 23). His disciples may say: "Indeed thou art the Son of God," but he

knows exactly the value of their words, and when at last they have grasped their full meaning. When men cry before him: "Hosanna to the Son of David," he is not deceived; in the midst of their hosannas he sits still, and weeps over the doom that is coming (Luke xix 41).

No less does this utter truth and sincerity make him independent of those who would thwart him. He watches them gathering in numbers about him, and he does not change (Matt. xxi 23); he reads the questionings within their hearts, which they have not the courage to speak openly, and he answers them (Matt. ix 4); what they would conceal among themselves he brings into the light of day (Luke xii 2). They criticise his deeds or the deeds of his followers and he corrects them (Matt. ix 14); to catch him in his speech they ask him subtle questions, and he gives them their reply (Mark xii 13). While he does not conceal his contempt for their meanness and their falsehood (Matt. xv 7), while he warns others against the evil of their ways and example (Mark iv 24), none the less does he deal out to them unlimited patience and forbearance; let one of them speak the truth from his heart and at once he is approved and encouraged (Mark xii 32). In all the pictures of the character of Jesus there is no feature more astonishing than this constant, unflinching endurance of his enemies, his constant entrusting of himself into their hands, even after he has been compelled to confute them (Luke xi 17), publicly to denounce them (Matt. xv 12), to put them to shame before their own disciples (Mark xii 15), to defy them in their own courts (John vii 28), to call them to their faces "hypocrites" (Matt. xxii 18), to warn the people against their example (Matt. xxiii 2), and his own against their falsehood and deceit (Matt. xvi 6). In spite of all this, he would continue to go to them; to none does he make more fervent appeal; the last days of his life are devoted wholly to them. And they in their turn would continue to come to him; the fascination drew them, they would invite him to sit with them at table (Luke xi 37); at times one or another among them would break out and acknowledge that indeed he was the speaker of truth (Mark xii 32).

4. *Prayerfulness and other virtues*

But to those who lived close beside him it was not difficult to discover the secret of this independence. He was with men and among them, but in a true sense he was not of them; while he lived their life to the full, and "bore their sorrows and carried their griefs" more than they carried them themselves, nevertheless, within him and all about him, for those to see who were familiar with him, there was another life and another atmosphere far more real and far more intense than anything this earth had to give him. It was his life of prayer, and with it as a consequence his constant preference for solitude. His friends soon learnt to respect his

hours of prayer in the morning and evening (Mark i 35); when they awoke at dawn and he was not among them they knew where they would find him (Mark i 36). After sunset he had regular places for his prayer (Luke xxii 39); when he went apart to spend a night in prayer (Luke vi 12), they would understand and let him go; if he would take them they would readily go with him (Luke ix 28). Often whole days would pass by, and days would grow into weeks, and he would do apparently nothing. Crowds would gather round him and he would retire from them to pray, up the mountain-side (Luke vi 12), or into desert places (Luke v 16); they would become enthusiastic and wish to make him king, and he would fly "into the mountain alone, to pray" (Matt. xiv 23). Or they would desert him and he would not seem to mind; in the morning his friends would find him lost in prayer (Luke xi 1). During all his long tour, extending to months, outside the borders of Palestine there is no record of a single sermon preached or public demonstration made; his time would seem to have been spent in continual prayer. He is at prayer among the hills of Decapolis when the people find him out (Matt. xv 29); it is after prayer, a few days later, that he asks Simon the momentous question: "Whom do you say that I am?" (Luke ix 18).

Such was the fact, which those who lived with him soon understood, and accepted, and in their feeble way aspired to imitate (Luke xi 1), and which this Man of utter simplicity and truth never made an effort to conceal. The atmosphere of prayer, the retirement apart from men, the personal dealing with the Father at all times, these were the features that most struck those who were most with him. God the Father the beginning and the end, and therefore all that came between; the will of the Father, and that alone, giving everything else its significance, every success, every failure, everything we do and are; this was his only perspective, and its constant repetition, not so much as a doctrine to be taught but as a truth to be assumed, runs through his life from first to last. "I must be about my Father's business" (Luke ii 49). "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me" (John iv 34). "As the Father hath given me commandment, so do I" (John xiv 31). "Heavenly Father, I give thee thanks" (John xi 41). "Father, save me from this hour" (John xii 27). "Father, not my will but thine be done" (Luke xxii 42). "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do" (John xvii 4). "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke xxiii 46). "As the Father hath sent me I also send you" (John xx 21). The life of the soul expressed in these and many more successive cries is unmistakable.

We must come to an end. Hitherto we have marked certain outlines which may help to distinguish the character of Jesus as it revealed itself among men; when we endeavour to descend more to details, when we ask ourselves what were his particular virtues,

we are unable to proceed. He had no one virtue in particular, because he had them all ; and he had them in so perfect a balance, so part of his very human nature, that they passed by unnoticed among men. And this we say, not because, knowing who he was, the Son of God made man, we believe that it must have been so, but because it is written in the actual portrait of the Man as the evangelists have drawn it out for us. We mark the virtues of other men, and we see them to be reflections of the same in him ; we go to the theologians, and we find that what they teach of the virtues finds its best illustrations in his life. Whenever he himself speaks of virtue we know, and the men who listened to him knew, that the model of it all was to be found in him. Thus he enumerates the Beatitudes, and as he does so he draws a picture of himself ; in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount he speaks of forgiveness and innocence, of simplicity in speech, of generosity, of forbearance, of hidden well-doing, of prayer, of trust in God, of contempt of earthly things, of mercy in judgement, of fidelity ; and all who hear him see him to be a model of all that he demands. He declares himself to be the exemplar for all men, not in this virtue or that, but in that which is fundamental to all virtues : " Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart " (Matt. xi 29), and not a voice is raised in protest ; the whole tenor of his life is proof enough that what he says is true.

5. *Love*

But at the last, for to us it is evident even more than it might perhaps have been to those who thronged close about him, the virtue which in him was the source of and the key to all the rest was his unbounded love. Love was at the root of his universal understanding and his universal sympathy ; love made him pour himself out on all the world ; what attracted men to him, what made " all the world go after him," and that though they did not know it, was the fascination of his love. Love as he taught it was a new thing in the world ; love as he practised it has made the world another place, with him and his interpretation of it it became indeed " a new commandment," however ancient might be the words in which it was set. When later the Apostles looked back, and pieced the whole picture together, it was this tremendous love of Jesus that grew upon them, swallowing up all the rest : " Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end " (John xiii 1). The memory of this was their abiding consolation and encouragement for all time, both to him that could call himself " the disciple whom Jesus loved," and to him who could remember that he had one day made a last profession of love for his Master and it had been accepted (John xxi 15).

To illustrate this, even inadequately, it would be necessary to pass again through the whole life of Jesus upon earth ; for love

reveals itself on every page, consistently the same however different in its manifestation. But on this very account there is no need to say more ; if ever in the world love has been associated with the name of any man upon this earth it is with the name of Jesus Christ. When St Paul endeavoured to express him to himself he could only sum him up by speaking of his love (Rom. viii 35-39) ; when since his time fathers and doctors and theologians and saints have tried to do likewise, they have one and all ended on the same theme. Or conversely, when St Paul speaks of love in detail and would endeavour to describe to the people of Corinth this new power that has come into the world, he can only keep the Model before his eyes ; when he has ended, what has he done but portray one aspect of him ?

“ Jesus is patient
Is kind
Jesus envieth not
Dealeth not perversely
Is not puffed up
Is not ambitious
Seeketh not his own
Is not provoked to anger
Thinketh no evil
Rejoiceth not in iniquity
But rejoiceth with the truth
Beareth all things
Believeth all things
Hopeth all things
Endureth all things ”

(Cf. 1 Cor. xiii 4-7).

True, the description is inadequate ; the picture given is rather negative than positive ; but as with God we can more easily say what he is not than what he is, so is it in our effort to describe even the human love of Jesus Christ. St Peter, it would seem, can do no better, for he says :

“ Christ also suffered for us
Leaving you an example
That you should follow his steps
Who did no sin
Neither was guile found in his mouth
Who when he was reviled
Did not revile
When he suffered
He threatened not
But delivered himself
To him that judged him unjustly ”

(1 Pet. ii 21-23).

If St Paul and St Peter can scarcely speak of Jesus and his love in anything but negatives ; if the former by the simple thought,

“ The Son of God loved me
And gave himself for me ”

(Gal. ii 20),

is struck dumb, how can anyone else in this world hope to describe him or it? It is enough to use the words of Jesus himself.

“ Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends ” (John xv 13),

and to realise how completely he has fulfilled this in himself, not on Calvary alone, but in every moment of his days on earth, and even to this day in heaven :

“ Always living
To make intercession for us ”

(Heb. vii 25),

“ With us all days
Even to the consummation of the world ”

(Matt. xxviii 20).

✠ALBAN GOODIER.

XIII

JESUS CHRIST, MAN OF SORROWS

§ I: INTRODUCTION

I. *Man and Sorrow*

IN the previous essay it has been seen how Jesus Christ has shown himself to men as the Model of Manhood. Nevertheless in that study, except as it were in parentheses, one aspect of that Model has been passed over ; and that in a true sense the most important aspect. For we cannot think of man in this world without thinking of him in contact with suffering ; living in the midst of it, enduring it within himself, when need be going forth to face it, taking it not only as the lot of man, but as one of man's distinguishing features ; seeing in it something which in a peculiar way belongs to him apart from all other creatures of this earth, something which he knows to be in the end his glory and his crown.

To enter into a discussion concerning the presence of suffering and sorrow in the life of man would serve no useful purpose here. In the ancient world it was for ever in the minds of men, to pagans a doom, to the Israelites an atonement ; though to both there was everlasting hope in the fact that sorrow was, as experience proved, always the close companion of greatness, and strength, and nobility, and virtue. This was the constant theme of ancient tragedy. In the Old Testament it grows as time advances, from the questionings of Job to the definite solutions of the Son of Sirach ; suffering an evil, suffering an evil out of which comes good, suffering justified because of its fruits and because of those whose lot it is to bear it.

For us let it be enough to take the facts of life as we find them ; and these, or some of these, are not only that suffering and sorrow have always been and always are with us ; not only that human nature itself recognises them as in some way a gift, an atonement for evil done, a means of rising from our dead selves to higher things ; but, on the other side, that suffering and sorrow bring out from man that which is best in him, which could be brought out in no other way ; develops him to his highest point of perfection, as by no other means he could be developed. In the end, as everyday experience proves to us, it is by the standard of suffering, by the power to endure, to stand up to misfortune, when duty or love calls to be ready to meet it, that man is most inclined to judge and reward his fellow-man.

That which man suffers, silently, willingly, generously, is that which, when discovered, wins the regard, the esteem, the love of others ; indeed, what else do we mean by the phrase, "to be a man," than to be ready to face suffering when it comes ? Readiness to suffer beats down all opposition ; its acceptance is taken to condone much that might otherwise be amiss. When we have nothing else to say of any man, let us but show that he has suffered much, and willingly, and for a cause that has been worthy of his manhood, and at once other things are passed over. It may indeed be a hard saying ; in daily life we may shun it, and seek every means to avoid it ; that is only to acknowledge that suffering is suffering, it does not deny that the bravery to face it is a gift than which man, as man, holds none greater. When we dream our dreams of youth we may put before it many other ideals ; but we know very well, and youth itself knows well, that there is no ideal to compare with the power to suffer, no matter under what form suffering may appear. To be able to suffer is to be a man ; to accept it when it comes is to be noble ; voluntarily to choose it for a worthy cause is to be a hero ; heroism has no other definition.

2. *Jesus Christ and Sorrow*

All this, it is obvious, must come within the scope of an ideal of manhood ; indeed, it must be its whole background, giving a meaning to whatever else is said. If, then, we see in Jesus Christ the Model of Manhood, this, too, will be conspicuous in him, and that in its highest form ; the Model of Man will in some way be the Model Man of Sorrows. And it is so. We speak not only of the Passion, though that alone, its cause, its course, and its issue, voluntarily undergone, for no other reason but that other men might be the gainers, their burden shouldered that they might be set free, would of itself suffice to win for him, *par excellence*, the title of the Ideal Man of Sorrows. But we speak also of his whole career ; of all that life which, from the day when he came among men to the end, was one of self-annihilation and subjection,¹ of injustice and mental agony, of contempt and failure and lonely struggle against ingratitude and hatred, of interior trial whose mere shadow, flitting from time to time across the surface, gives us no more than an idea of that which was endured within.

We speak, moreover, of one who alone of all men had no occasion to suffer ; who, from the very nature of his being, knew what suffering and sorrow were more than any other man could know them ; who from the very first foresaw all that was to come to him, and yet at every step deliberately chose it for himself ; who at any given moment might have said, with more than justice on his side, that what he had thus far endured was enough and the rest would have

¹ Phil. ii 6.

been spared him ; who, nevertheless, in ways we can see for ourselves and in ways we cannot hope to discover, took into his soul every barb of sorrow that was hurled at him, every grief that it falls to the lot of man to bear.

We say we cannot hope to discover the full extent of the sufferings and sorrows of Jesus Christ. For we are dealing with one who was not only man but was also God ; what was the consequence of that union on his capacity for suffering, who shall attempt to describe ? True, as God he could not suffer ; but as man, as God-man, set to bear the sorrows of men and to carry their griefs, he must have been, and on the evidence of Scripture was, a subject for suffering beyond all means of ours to measure. The knowledge and foreknowledge it implied ; the knowledge of evil, natural and supernatural, in itself and in its consequences, in regard to God and in regard to the evildoer, man ; the foreknowledge of all that was to come, making all suffering, his own and that of others, always vividly before his eyes ; the ever-present realisation of the Father, what we dimly guess at when we speak of the Beatific Vision, and yet in some mysterious way the brighter light causing the blacker darkness, till his soul was "sorrowful unto death" ; the fine-wrought nature, of body, and mind, and soul, belonging of necessity to him who was God-man—all these considerations, and there are many more, can be but touched upon, yet do they open out vistas of suffering which must make, whatever any man may say, a mere shadow of the truth and no more. From time to time a saint has been given the grace to see and realise, and the sight has drawn the blood from his own body, and opened wounds in his hands, and feet, and side ; the rest of us can but look on, content with the little we may learn, knowing very well that the whole of the truth is as the ocean to the running brook.

Still, leaving all this aside, we have more than enough for our purpose. Confining ourselves to just that which human eyes can see and no more, to just that which Jesus Christ endured on the plane of other men, we shall still find in him the Ideal Man of Sorrows ; ideal in that which he endured, insomuch as none endured more ; ideal in the way he endured it, so that not one drop of the chalice was permitted to escape him ; ideal in the motive which prompted him ; ideal in the full deliberation with which he bore it all to the end ; ideal, last of all, in the fruit his suffering has borne, both in the merit of his sacrifice and in the example he has given to mankind. The merit of his sacrifice we may leave to another essay in this volume ;¹ we may rather dwell on the Man of Sorrows as such, and what his life of sorrow has meant here and now. That because of the sufferings of Jesus Christ this world has become another place no one who has eyes to see, certainly no Christian,

¹ See Essay xiv.

will deny; Christianity itself, with its standard of the cross, and its civilisation ranged around the cross, is the abiding confession of this truth. However much in real life human frailty may induce us to pass him by, still in matter of fact the Christ in whom we believe is Christ crucified; and crucified, not on Calvary alone, but from the first hour of his life in Bethlehem. This is the Jesus Christ who has won the hearts of men in all ages, who has stirred them to great things, who has poured himself out over all the world and wherever he has reached has transformed it.

§ II: THE MAN OF SORROWS IN HIS LIFE

I. *Beginnings*

“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John i 10, 11).

ON many accounts these two sentences may be taken as the text of the Gospel of St John. After many years of reflection, after a generation and more of the new Church's life, this is the summary impression left upon him of his Master's sojourn in the world, this is the side of it which he deems most worthy of remembrance by the children who are to come after him. Again and again during the course of his Gospel he comes back upon the same thought, now in his own words and comments, now in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Underneath all else that happened, underneath whatever other sufferings there might have been, this unending agony was always gnawing at his heart, that he came among men, and men from first to last refused to know him, that he gave himself without reserve to those nearest to him, and they would have nothing to do with him or with what he had to give them.

St Luke, though he begins his Gospel with quite another object in view, soon is compelled to reveal the same colours in his picture. At first he is filled with all the glory of the Incarnation; nevertheless, even as he tells the story of it, he cannot conceal the tremor of her who “was troubled” at the angel's salutation, who “pondered” what it might portend, who in the end accepted with submission her anxious destiny, surmising well enough much that it would imply:

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word.”¹

Nor can he hide the background of privation, and suffering, and distress in the scene of the Child's first coming into the world:

“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger: because there was no room for them in the inn.”²

¹ Luke i 38.

² Luke ii 7.

At the outset, in the midst of all the joy of the story, St Luke has to own it: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, of whose kingdom there was to be no end, was born on the roadside, a homeless out-cast, the shivering child of a tramp or little more.

There follows the Circumcision, the first blood-shedding of the Child, the price of the name he was to bear, the foreshadowing of the further price that must one day be paid that the promise contained in that name might be completely fulfilled. Immediately after is recorded the prophecy which at once puts the Gospel of St Luke on the same plane with that of St John. It would almost seem that in spite of himself Luke is forced to set the future suffering and rejection of Jesus in the forefront of his picture:

“And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother: Behold this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed.”¹

In perfect harmony with these is the Gospel of St Matthew. No sooner has the Evangelist introduced his subject, recording the genealogy,² and the anxious doubting of the foster-father,³ than he passes at once to the first scene of terror and ill-foreboding—the coming of the Magi, the proved understanding of the priests and their first rejection of the light, the craftiness and enmity of Herod, the massacre of the innocents, the lonely, homeless wandering of the Holy Family in Egypt.⁴

Thus did Jesus Christ come into the world, each step marked with suffering and sorrow, and it would seem with needless sorrow, that might easily have been avoided, ending in a cruel orgy of blood. When it is all pieced together, one asks oneself whether any other child has been born into the world under circumstances quite so tragic. With blood so smeared across the first page of his history, and that the blood of helpless infants, with first impressions those of an exile hiding from the hand of death, it was inevitable that in after years he should have blood and death constantly before his eyes. When he grew up, and among the hills of Nazareth reflected on the cruel fact that his birth had occasioned the murder of so many children and the misery of so many mothers, we can understand in part the natural source of that deep sympathy for children and mothers which marked him till his own death upon the cross. The prophecy of Jeremias, fulfilled thus early in his childhood, could never cease ringing in his ears:

“A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning; Rachel bemoaning her children and would not be comforted, because they are not.”⁵

¹ Luke ii 34, 35.

⁴ Matt. ii 1-18.

² Matt. i 1-17.

⁵ Matt. ii 18.

³ Matt. i 18-25.

2. *Nazareth*

For one in sympathy with the hidden life at Nazareth it is not difficult to understand the agony of the long waiting. Thirty years of any life is a long time ; by the end of it the glamour and hope of youth has in great part disappeared. But in a country village such as Nazareth, under such drab conditions as those which he encountered, the glamour is stillborn, and the years drag on into featureless maturity. The monotony of that life ; the companionship of men who saw and could see nothing, whose horizon was confined to the rough village street that crawled up that hillside, who understood and were fixed to understand less than nothing, whose narrow prejudice could never tolerate that any man from among themselves should rise above their own level ; the coarse familiarities, the boorish manner, the galling condescensions, the patronising, the rough language of men blinded with their own conceit ; the work among men with whom gratitude was evidently a thing unknown, who could take as of course and without remark, as though it were their right, the service of one who gave lavishly ; who could find a cause of complaint in the fact that he gave with the same lavish hand to others than themselves—this was but the everyday atmosphere in which he lived, and which for twenty long years never varied.

And on his own side, as his later history revealed, the quick, sensitive, responsive nature, alive to every touch of joy or pain ; the insight, deeper than that of any man, into the souls of other men, so that nothing lay hidden from him, no falsehood, no scheming, no treachery, no sin ; the sympathy with another's sorrow that came of self-forgetfulness, and overflowed on every soul about it ; the service freely rendered, the spontaneous generosity ; the keen longing to do good and the agony because he was not allowed to do it—all these must be brought into the picture if we would estimate aright the human endurance of the thirty years.

This is no mere conjecture, it is no abstract consideration of what must or might have been ; it is more than confirmed by the events that followed. Nazareth, in the esteem even of other Galilæans, was nowhere ; and a man from Nazareth was nobody. Not only have we no mention whatever of Nazareth, either in Old Testament history or in any contemporary document ; not only have we proof of the profound contempt for the Nazarene among his neighbours—

“ Can anything of good come out of Nazareth ? ” ¹
—the Nazarenes themselves made it clear enough what manner of men they were, what esteem they had of one another. When at the beginning of his public life Jesus came back among them bringing the good tidings :

¹ John i 46.

"They rose up and thrust him out of the city : and they brought him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way." ¹

Again another time he came to them, after they had had more opportunity to learn. His miracles they could not deny ; his teaching they tacitly acknowledged ; this only they could not endure, that he should be only a Nazarene, no more than one of themselves.

"How came this man by all these things ? And what wisdom is this that is given to him, and such mighty works as are wrought by his hands ? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph, and Jude, and Simon ? Are not also his sisters here with us ? And they were scandalised in regard of him." ²

Another sign we have yet later. His very kindred were, many of them, no more appreciative than the rest. To them, after all his labours, he was little more than a prodigy, a nine days' wonder, a conjuror who might take a turn at a village fair or city festival. When towards the end of his life he delayed his journey to Jerusalem :

"His brethren said to him : Pass from hence and go into Judæa, that thy disciples also may see the works which thou dost. For there is no man doth anything in secret ; and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, manifest thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him." ³

These, then, were the kind of people with whom he had lived from childhood, who were called his kindred ; and this was all the impression he had made upon them, even he, Jesus Christ !

"And he wondered at their unbelief." ⁴

"No prophet is accepted in his own country."

"The enemies of a man are those of his own household."

"Blessed is he that shall not be scandalised in me." ⁵

When Jesus spoke thus, he spoke from grating experience. Though he was the Son of God, though he was the son of Mary, though he was of the house of David, he had little to boast of in most of his kindred and connections.

3. *Capharnaum*

Jesus left Nazareth. He came to Capharnaum by the Lake of Galilee, and there took up his abode, so that later it could be called "his own city." Here for a few brief months we are given the impression that he had some superficial success and consolation. He called followers to him, and they responded. He worked miracles in abundance among the people, and they were carried away with enthusiasm ; indeed, it would seem that their devotedness, so thoughtless, so hollow, so self-centred, so boisterous, so

¹ Luke iv 29, 30.

⁴ Mark vi 6.

² Mark vi 2, 3.

⁵ Luke vii 23.

³ John vii 3-5.

little considerate of him and of his common needs, soon became a burden to him, and he had to escape it—

“So that they could not so much as eat bread.”¹

“So that he could not go openly into the city, but was without in desert places.”²

“And he retired into the desert and prayed.”³

Nevertheless the little consolation he might have had from this oppressive but well-meaning crowd was soon taken from him. Scarcely has the period of miracles and teaching begun than we hear of:

“Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, that were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judæa, and Jerusalem”;⁴ men prepared to misinterpret and take scandal from every word he said:

“Who is this that speaketh blasphemies?”⁵ to carp at everything he did:

“But the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying to his disciples: Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?”⁶

“Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and the disciples of the Pharisees in like manner, but thine eat and drink?”⁷

“Behold thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do on the sabbath days.”⁸

“And the scribes and Pharisees watched if he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him”;⁹ men ready to ascribe any motive to him, rather than own the patent truth:

“He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils he casteth out devils.”¹⁰

“Behold a man that is a glutton and a wine drinker, a friend of publicans and sinners”;¹¹ men, last of all, who, when nothing else would serve, must seek any means to be rid of him:

“And they were filled with madness”;¹² “and the Pharisees going out immediately made a consultation with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.”¹³

Such are passages to be found in the earliest accounts of his preaching by the Lake of Galilee. Death at Bethlehem, death at Nazareth, death at Capharnaum, always and everywhere hatred unto death—this is the atmosphere in which from the beginning Jesus lived, and worked his miracles, and preached the kingdom of the Father.

¹ Mark iii 20.

⁴ Luke v 17.

⁷ Luke v 33.

¹⁰ Mark iii 22.

¹³ Mark iii 6.

² Mark i 45.

⁵ Luke v 21.

⁸ Matt xii 1.

¹¹ Matt. xi 19.

³ Luke v 16.

⁶ Luke v 30.

⁹ Luke vi 7.

¹² Luke vi 11.

Nor was this all ; it was not even the worst. The enemy he knew how to treat ; it was the failure of his friends that cut deepest. At first the people of Capharnaum and its neighbourhood were all enthusiasm ; very soon they went their own way. It was not long before he had to complain that " hearing they would not hear, nor would they understand." ¹ A very little later they have become so familiar as to laugh him to scorn when he speaks. ² Yet a little more and there came the great rejection :

" After this, many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him " ; ³ and from that day we hear no more of the crowds in Capharnaum. On the contrary, he is exiled from the place ; he is compelled to go abroad. When next the name of the town is on his lips, it is uttered from a pierced heart :

" And thou, Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted up to heaven ? Thou shalt go down even unto hell. For if in Sodom had been wrought the miracles that have been wrought in thee, perhaps it had remained unto this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgement than for thee." ⁴

4. *Jerusalem*

When we pass from Galilee to Judæa, the opposition from the first is yet more manifest. In Galilee it had arisen, for the most part, from ignorance, and dullness, and the contempt that is mere stupidity ; perhaps, too, in Capharnaum, from selfishness and blind guidance ; in Jerusalem men were not ignorant, they were not dull, their enmity was founded on suspicion, which soon, as the truth became more manifest, inevitably developed into hatred. Already we have seen its foreshadowing when, thirty years before, the priests and elders had used their knowledge of the Scriptures only to foster Herod's evil mind, not to guide themselves to Bethlehem ; now, when as a full-grown man Jesus appeared in their midst, it was war to the death from the beginning. He came and cleansed the Temple court of its buyers and sellers ; he was asked for his authority and he gave a sign, the sign of his death and resurrection. Thus, at his first encounter with them, he showed his enemies that he was well aware how the contest would end.

As it began, so the bitterness continued. On the occasion of another festival he came into the city again. At the Probatic Pool he healed the cripple-beggar. The poor man had lain there, day in and day out, for nigh on forty years ; therefore he must have been known as a kind of institution in the place. But what came of the healing ?

" Therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, because he did these things on the sabbath " ; ⁵

¹ Matt. xiii 10-17.

⁴ Matt. xi 23, 24.

² Luke viii 53.

⁵ John v 16.

³ John vi 67.

and when he made an effort to enlighten them, and spoke in his defence :

“ Hereupon, therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he did not only break the sabbath, but also said God was his Father, making himself equal to God.” ¹

His answer is not one of rejection. It is the first of those patient, compassionate, all-enduring appeals which throughout his life characterise his language, above all in his visits to the Holy City.

“ You will not come to me that you may have life.” ²

“ I am come in the name of my Father, and you receive me not : if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive.” ³

Never for a moment did the sky clear in Jerusalem ; and yet Jerusalem was the apple of his eye. On the contrary, it grew ever darker. If in Nazareth he “ wondered at their unbelief,” and “ he could not work many miracles there because of their unbelief,” much more was this true of Jerusalem. In fact, we have a detailed account of only two, and both of these are told us because of the yet greater persecution they entailed.

We need not pursue the subject further ; whenever he appeared the story was the same, aggravated only by constant attempts upon his life. It is enough to hear him at the end, more distressed because of what Jerusalem was doing to him than, it would seem, at all the rest besides. Outside the city in the latter days we hear him crying :

“ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children as the bird doth her brood under her wings, and thou wouldest not ? Behold your house shall be left to you desolate.” ⁴

A short time after, he rides into the city in triumph. But again his pierced heart bleeds.

“ And when he drew near, seeing the city, he wept over it, saying : If thou hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace : but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee : and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee. And they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone : because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation.” ⁵

§ III: THE MAN OF SORROWS IN HIS TEACHING

1. *To men in general*

ON a background such as this the life of Jesus was lived. It might be easily expanded to other places : to the wanderings in enforced

¹ John v 18.

⁴ Luke xiii 34, 35.

² John v 40.

⁵ Luke xix 41-44.

³ John v 43.

exile through Tyre, and Sidon, and Decapolis ; to the journeys through Peræa, where he was warned that Herod sought to catch him ; through Samaria, where the Samaritans would refuse him shelter ; through the other parts of Judæa, where, more than ever as the time advanced, his enemies followed him and " watched him," so that for the people's sake he had to turn upon them. When, then, he came to speak of suffering and trial, everyone who heard him knew that from his own experience he had a right to speak, and that what he uttered was the expression of his very soul.

This is one of the fascinations of the Sermon on the Mount. What is taught in that sermon might well have been given in many other ways : with command, as a rightful lord and master might have given it ; with threats and sanctions, as might a promulgator of laws, even as Moses had done before him, or as John the Baptist had foreshadowed him ; with cold aloofness, as might an independent ruler of his people. But it was not an independent, it was a feeling and fellow-suffering soul which prompted the opening of the Sermon with the Eight Beatitudes : blessing the poor, by one who was himself acquainted with dire poverty ; for the meek, from him who was of all men the meekest, and could claim meekness as specially his own ; for the mournful, for the hungry after justice, from him who was weighed down by the cruelty and injustice of men all about him ; for the merciful and forgiving, a new thing, as he taught it, in those days ; for the clean of heart from him who, on that very account, knew and felt more than others the shameful and horror of sin ; for the makers of peace ; last of all—and this is dwelt upon—for those who suffered persecution. In the conclusion of the series of blessings there was the ring of victory, as of one who had himself already endured and won through :

" Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake : be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you." ¹

This note, once triumphantly sounded, rings through the whole discourse ; at intervals the heart that has suffered breaks out, and always the refrain is the same. It is a constant warning against the bitterness that may come of long-endured cruelty, a constant reminder of the reward that awaits sorrow patiently borne.

" But I say to you, not to resist evil : but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other. And if a man will contend with thee in judgement, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him. And whosoever will force thee one mile, go with him other two." ²

Are such admonitions taken from the life and personal experience of him who uttered them ? Knowing him as we do, we are entitled to believe they are ; without that confirmation they would

¹ Matt. v 11, 12.

² Matt. v 39-41.

have been of little weight ; and if they are, what singular light they throw on the days that are hidden from us, at Nazareth, in Capharnaum, in Judæa ! Had he been so meek as this ? So contemned as this ? When, then, he had come back to Nazareth as a teacher, we may understand a little better why the people of the town " were scandalised because of him."

Listen to him a little further on :

" I say to you, Love your enemies : do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you : that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust." ¹

He who said that had himself been hated, had himself been calumniated, had known it and had felt it, and had looked elsewhere for strength to bear it.

Or again :

" Be not solicitous, therefore, saying : What shall we eat ? or, What shall we drink ? or, Wherewith shall we be clothed ? For your Father knoweth that you have need of these things." ²

He who said that, and all that went before it, had himself shared and endured the squalid poverty and want that stalks through every Eastern town and village like a skeleton in rags. By experience he knew what it meant, and his hearers knew that he knew it. In this as in all things else he was one with themselves ; therefore they accepted the relief he offered them.

" And it came to pass, when Jesus had fully ended these words, that the people were in admiration at his doctrine. For he was teaching them as one having power"—let us say, as one who knew—" and not as the scribes and Pharisees," ³ who, from their own experience, at least, had been careful not to know or learn. In this light, throughout his great discourse to the people, did the Man of Sorrows reveal himself, the Man of others' sorrows as well as of his own, of others' sorrows because they were his own.

2. *To the Twelve in particular*

Jesus chose his Twelve. For a time he kept them with him, that by word and example they might learn of him ; soon he sent them out to preach the Kingdom, and to be witnesses in their turn. Before they parted, he delivered to them an address for their guidance. If the Sermon on the Mount revealed a heart that felt with the sufferings of men in general, much more did this address show sympathy for those who were destined to suffer for his cause. But it did much more ; now a new vista was opened out to them. It taught them to look suffering in the face, to brave it, to seek it, to love it, even to find in it their joy and their glory, and the true measure of their success. The whole address rings with a note almost of

¹ Matt. v 44, 45.

² Matt. vi 31, 32.

³ Matt. vii 28, 29.

defiance ; and the defiance is based precisely on the fact that he has suffered before them, he their Master and Model, the model Man of Sorrows.

“ The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the goodman of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household ? ” ¹

Let us notice the illustration which the Master uses. To have been called that name had stung, and the agony of it had stayed ; otherwise he would scarcely have recalled it.

But what were some of the sufferings that he would bid his disciples defy ? Before, he had blessed the poor in spirit, making them content with their lot ; now, he spoke of a poverty far more complete, of a spirit far more independent, of poverty that should be a glory :

“ Freely have you received, freely give. Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff.” ²

Before, he had spoken of meekness that would endure ; now, his meekness was aggressive :

“ Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves.” ³

Before, he had promised comfort to them that mourn ; now, he spoke of no comfort, he made courage to face whatever trouble might come its own sufficient reward :

“ Beware of men. For they will deliver you up in councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and before kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the gentiles.” ⁴

Before, he had spoken of persecution from men as the price of a great reward ; now, he spoke of hatred as a settled thing, as part of the lot that would be theirs, a sign that would be upon them always, and would never be taken away :

“ And you shall be hated by all men for my name’s sake. But he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.” ⁵

It was a stern if glorious lesson, and it was long before the Twelve learnt it. Nevertheless, after he was gone, the day did come when its full light dawned upon them. One day it would be written of them :

“ And they, indeed, went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.” ⁶

Nor did he stop there. Soon he took yet a further step. In the Sermon on the Mount he had promised blessing to those that suffered ; later, in his sermon to the Twelve, he had encouraged

¹ Matt. x 24, 25.

² Matt. x 8-10.

³ Matt. x 16.

⁴ Matt. x 17, 18.

⁵ Matt. x 22.

⁶ Acts v 41.

his own to find joy in suffering for the simple reason that he had suffered before them; later again, after the foundations of the Church had been laid in the confession of Simon Peter, he hailed suffering, and bade men hail it, as the hall-mark by which alone his true disciples would be known:

“And calling the multitude together with his disciples, he said to them: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”¹

And in the meantime, as he thus strengthens his teaching to them, so does he speak more emphatically about himself. It is just before this time that he begins that series of prophecies:

“From that time Jesus began to show to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the ancients and scribes and chief priests, and be put to death, and the third day rise again.”²

Henceforward the two ideas are never very far from his mind: on the one hand the cross that awaits his followers, on the other the still heavier cross which he would carry before them. Mark the swinging of the pendulum, first to himself and then to his disciples:

“But while all wondered at all the things he did, he said to his disciples: Lay up in your hearts these words, for it shall come to pass that the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.”³

“And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them. And they were astonished, and following were afraid. And taking again the twelve, he began to tell them the things that should befall him, saying: Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes and ancients. And they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles. And they shall mock him, and spit on him, and scourge him and kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.”⁴

Then it swings back to his own:

“Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened: and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden light.”⁵

“I say to you, my friends: Be not afraid of them who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you shall fear: Fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you: Fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten

¹ Mark viii 34-37.

² Matt. xvi 21.

³ Luke ix 44.

⁴ Mark x 32-34.

⁵ Matt. xi 28-30.

before God? Yea, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: you are of more value than many sparrows." ¹

3. *The Last Supper*

One more discourse we have in which the Man of Sorrows revealed himself, and that is by far the most important of them all. It was at the last farewell, the supper with the Twelve. With the experience of his life behind him, with the Passion looming up immediately before him, and the further passion beyond, which these men would one day have to undergo, it was inevitable that again he should revert to the old subject—the place of suffering in life, in his own life and in theirs.

They sat down to the Supper. Almost at once there arose among the Twelve a quarrel. They were concerned about their respective seniority; so little even then did they realise the meaning of that last assembly, or the soul of him who, for the last time, sat at table with them. But he had patience with them. He had endured from them so much before, their uncouth manners, their petty ways, their frowardness, their spirit of contradiction, and then again their shrinking cowardice, their dullness of understanding, and with it their self-assertion; he had endured so much already, he would not surrender them now. They had, indeed, been bought at a great price, and he would not be angry with them now. In a new way he would settle their dispute, and at the same time teach them a lesson. Before, when they had quarrelled on this precise subject, he had taught them by setting a child before them, and making him their model; now he sets himself, he annihilates himself once more, he washes their feet as any slave might wash them. Henceforth let them dispute, not who shall be first, but who shall be the last among them. ²

Thus peace is restored, and he begins to speak his message of farewell. But he cannot proceed, there is one in their midst whose presence seems to paralyse his tongue; not until that man has gone out into the darkness is he able to say what he would. ³ He institutes the Blessed Sacrament; lavishly, as one who knows no limits in his giving, he bestows on them his own body and blood. They are unworthy, what does it matter? This is no time for laying down conditions. Let them have him all; let them eat and drink him; let them take him and, when they like, give him away to others. ⁴

Almost immediately, as if that act of generosity had exhausted him, a reaction begins to set in. He speaks of their coming desertion; that very night those Twelve, to whom he had given so much, who were so much to him, would leave him. They might not believe him; they may protest; but he knows better. In a few hours

¹ Luke xii 4-7.

² Luke xxii 24-30; John xiii 1-20.

³ Matt. xxvi 21-25; Mark xiv 18-21; Luke xxii 21-23; John xiii 21-35.

⁴ Matt. xxvi 26-29; Mark xiv 22-25; Luke xxii 19, 20.

from now one will have betrayed him, and he will permit it ; another will deny him, and he will pass it by and overlook it ; every one of them will be scandalised in him and forsake him, and he will treat them, now and after, as if it were not. Instead he will find excuse for them ; he will see in it all a fulfilment of prophecy and no more. So far as he is able, he will take the blame ; since he is to be so humiliated in their eyes, how can they be expected to stand by him ?

“ For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be fulfilled in me : And with the wicked was he reckoned.”¹

“ With the wicked was he reckoned ! ” It would come to that. At the beginning he had stood to be baptised among sinners, but there John, at least, had known him. He had submitted to be tempted as no man was tempted, but in the end Satan had confessed him “ the holy one of God.” He had forgiven sins, and had been called a blasphemer for it ; but he had vindicated his honour. Other sinners had come to him, and he had stooped down to them ; but though men had taunted him with being their friend, they had hesitated to make him one of them. Later they had ventured. “ We know this man is a sinner,” they had said ; but he had silenced them by the more defiant question : “ Which of you shall convince me of sin ? ” In all his life, whatever else men had said or done to him, this, at least, had been kept secure ; they had not touched, however they had tried, the honour of his good name.

But now this, too, was to go. “ He who knew no sin was made sin ” ; so one day would an apostle describe him. At last his enemies would call him “ a malefactor,” and he would not contradict them ; his own would see him treated as such, and he would offer no resistance ; worst of all, his oneness with sinful man would now press him down with all its fell significance. When we human creatures try to fathom what this means we are lost in darkness ; we know remorse, we know fear, we know our contempt of ourselves, we know indignation, we know sadness, and contrition, and the agony of repentance ; but we see only as in a glass after a dark manner. What would the agony be if we saw sin as it is in itself, as Jesus Christ saw it ? It is here, more than anywhere else, that we should look for the Man of Sorrows, yet it is precisely here that human vision fails. Jesus Christ “ made sin ” ; we know not what we say, but we know that in comparison with this, all the other sorrows of all his life were the merest trifles.

But for the moment he must lay the thought aside. Soon it will come back upon him in all its force and will crush him “ even unto death ” ; now it is enough that he has said what he has said, showing that the shadow of it hangs over him. During the remainder of the Supper he has other work to do ; he must think more of his own than of himself ; he is troubled by the thought of

¹ Luke xxii 37.

their coming sorrow, and he must set himself to prepare them for it. It is his third great lesson. At first, as we have seen, in the Sermon on the Mount he had blessed those who suffered; later, in the sermon to the Twelve, he had filled them with his own courage; now he would inspire them with the joy of it, that joy that it alone could give, in that by its means they would be drawn nearer, ever nearer, to himself. Thus as he speaks, while giving them assurance, we feel him giving a like assurance to his own quivering soul.

“Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me.”¹

“Have I been so long a time with you, and have you not known me?”²

“I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you.”³

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid.”⁴

“These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be filled.”⁵

“Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”⁶

At this point he looks back. He has spoken of love, of that love which alone has made him give and give, and suffer and suffer on, which will make him give and suffer till no more is left. Had he no more to say it would have been enough; for he has just summed all up in the remark that the greatest love is love unto death. But there is the other side. He has given love, and what has he received in return? Had it been nothing at all, that would have been bitter; but it had not been nothing. He had received hatred, hatred positive and malicious; it is much for us to realise the fact, that from first to last Jesus Christ had been faced with men who positively hated him, and that here at the end the thought burns through his heart. He dwells upon it; he reads his own life in its light; he sees that on his account his own will be hated with him. What can he do to save them from the agony he has gone through but give them his own companionship in it all, show them that the hatred will come to them, not on their own account, but because of him?

“If the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember my word that I said to you: The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for my name's sake: because they know not him that sent me. But that the word may

¹ John xiv 1.

⁴ John xiv 27.

² John xiv 9.

⁵ John xv 11.

³ John xiv 18.

⁶ John xv 13.

be fulfilled which is written in their law: They hated me without cause." ¹

This, then, was the picture his life presented to him as he looked back upon it on that last night. Love unto death on the one side, hatred unto death on the other; love giving its all, hatred flinging the gift away; love in the end taking on itself the burden of its enemy, hatred flouting love because of the burden of which itself was guilty.

But he must come back to his own and the lives that were to be theirs. What he had said of himself had been said for a purpose; it would prepare them for what might be their own fate. On it he must build their encouragement now; later they would find it more than encouragement.

"These things have I spoken to you that you may not be scandalised. They will put you out of the synagogue: yea, the hour cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth service to God." ²

"But because I have told you these things, sorrow hath filled your heart." ³

"But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you." ⁴

Once more, and for the last time, the pendulum swings. The mention of his love for men has made him think of their hatred for him; the mention of his fidelity to his own reminds him of their coming infidelity to him. It is his last remark; it seems almost to escape him. But he quickly recovers; on that note he will not end; his last word shall be one of encouragement and strength, for he has much yet before him.

"Behold, the hour cometh, and it is now come, that you shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you shall have distress: but have confidence, I have overcome the world." ⁵

§ IV: THE MAN OF SORROWS IN HIS DEATH

1. *The Immediate Preparation*

"BUT some of them went to the Pharisees, and told them the things that Jesus had done. The chief priests, therefore, and the Pharisees gathered a council and said: What do we, for this man doth many miracles? If we let him alone so, all will believe in him, and the Romans will come, and take away our place and nation. But one of them, named Caiphas, being the high priest that year, said to

¹ John xv 18-25.

² John xvi 1, 2.

³ John xvi 6.

⁴ John xvi 22.

⁵ John xvi 32, 33.

them : You know nothing. Neither do you consider that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation perish not." ¹

In this passage is signalled the coming of the Passion proper. It contains in it a note of cruelty such as we scarcely find, certainly not so deliberately expressed, in any other place in the Gospel story. "It is expedient!" Jesus has just raised Lazarus to life : this is inconvenient to Caiphas ; therefore "it is expedient" for Caiphas that Jesus should die. He "hath done many miracles" : this is inconvenient to the chief priests and Pharisees ; therefore for them as well "it is expedient" that he should die. He has won many to believe in him ; if he is left alone he will win them all : this is inconvenient to the politicians ; therefore "it is expedient" that he should die.

But not on any of these grounds can he be condemned ; what is expedient may not be just ; but with a little cleverness it may be justified ; therefore another pretext must be found. What that pretext might be mattered very little. A word that he had somewhere uttered could be twisted to their purpose, an action could be interpreted in any sense they chose, a motive could be invented. To none of such arguments is there any real answer, to reply to them is often only to make oneself the more suspect. All, then, that was wanted was a formula, a specious premise ; the rest would follow in due course.

The President of the Council was equal to the occasion ; he had not administered justice all these years for nothing. But first, before they sought a ground for accusation, he must satisfy the tender consciences of these just men that they were right. He gave them a proof, worded according to the strictest logic. Of two evils we should always choose the less. *Atqui*, that one man should die is an infinitely less evil than that the whole nation should perish. *Ergo*, in this case we should choose that one man should die. No, not only were they justified ; to carry out this policy was the plain duty of men who had been entrusted with the welfare of the people.

Thus by a pretentious syllogism was Jesus Christ fore-condemned. It is the syllogism by means of which more injustice has been justified, particularly among "good" men, than by anything else in the world. The men who were capable of framing and yielding to such arguments were incapable of any other. They were incapable of seeing the truth, even that elementary truth that one may not do evil that good may come of it ; the end does not justify the means.

Therefore for a time Jesus left them. As at Capharnaum, almost a year before, he had been respected, so now in Jerusalem the final decision was made. With a broken heart he could only

¹ John xi 46-50.

contemplate the doom. He retired to Ephraim ; thence he made a farewell tour of the country he had loved and for which he had laboured ; on the day of Palms he rode again into the city, to vindicate the truth and face the end. During the days that followed, while on the surface he proved his power in the sight of his enemies as he had never proved it before, underneath there is felt, beyond possibility of escape, an unspeakable agony, as of a love and friendship offered, and rejected, and trampled underfoot. St John tells the story of the parting in his own characteristic way. While the other Evangelists are anxious to champion their Master before his enemies, John throughout it all keeps his eyes upon the Man of Sorrows. Before the last time he leaves the Temple he hears him cry aloud :

“ Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour.” ¹

It is an anticipation of Gethsemani. And as at Gethsemani, so here, he hears him as it were recover himself :

“ But for this cause I came unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.” ²

After which, with renewed courage, he is able to proceed :

“ Now is the judgement of the world : now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself. Now this he said, signifying what death he should die.” ³

2. *The Passion.*

When we come to the actual story of the Passion, what better can we do, for the purpose of this study, than just recall the facts as they occurred ? They speak for themselves, better than anyone can elaborate them ; by their own intrinsic evidence they prove their truth ; by their dead weight alone, for any who can and will endure it, they tell more forcibly than any added words can make them. Much in the Passion we cannot hope to understand ; the very description, the effort to realise what the description means, leaves us amazed, bewildered, almost stupefied. Much comes to us as through a mist ; we dimly catch the meaning, we scarcely dare to do more, though we see how much there is beyond which we do not reach. The more we make ourselves ponder—for the effort has to be made—the more we find there is to be discovered, even if we go no further than through the simple narrative as the Gospels give it to us. Book after book has been written, by student and by saint, each one, it may be, adding something more to our knowledge and understanding, and yet we are well aware that the mine is not and cannot be exhausted ; there will be fresh ore in it to the end.

¹ John xii 27.

² John xii 27, 28.

³ John xii 31-33.

For instance, what meaning are we to give to those opening words of St Matthew :

“He began to grow sorrowful (*λυπεῖσθαι*) and to be sad (*ἀδημονεῖν*)” ? ¹

Or to those of St Mark :

“He began to fear (*ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι*), and to be heavy (*ἀδημονεῖν*)” ? ²

Or to the words of both :

“My soul is sorrowful (*περιλυπὸς*) even unto death” ? ³

Whatever may be the full meaning (and that we shall never know), we have here before us Jesus Christ, a broken Man, broken as those who knew him had never seen him before, overwhelmed by grief—for what?—so that he would gladly die to be relieved of it; stunned with amazement and fear—at what?—so that he seems all but paralysed; driven to what we would call distraction—by what?—so that he appears no longer to know which way to turn.

Or what is the meaning, such that we can form any adequate conception of it, of that “chalice” and its contents of which Matthew, Mark, and Luke all speak, and which appeared to him, even to him whose love made suffering welcome, something too much to be endured? Or of that agony which made him pray the longer, and which needed that an angel should be sent to support him? ⁴ Or of that sweat of blood, which fear and alarm forced through the pores of his body, flowing in such abundance as to run down to the ground? ⁵ We look at all this and know that we are in touch with that which cannot be measured by any standards of our own; human as it is, human and therefore finite, yet it is suffering far beyond the power of any man to fathom, much less to experience in himself. Saints and mystics and theologians have given us various interpretations; they are all, perhaps, right, but none of them, not all of them together, have reached to the bottom of the ocean. That the Son of God should have “become sin”; that the Lamb without stain should have taken on himself all the sins of all the world; that, now, in some mysterious way, he should appear to stand “reputed with the wicked”—this was surely at the root of all the sorrow, of itself enough to make death welcome, a chalice whose contents the holiest might well petition that he might not be compelled to drink.

But the truth, as we have said, includes every explanation; it includes very much more; human nature grows weary, turns away from the scene and welcomes sleep beneath the olive tree. The sorrow is such that the Son of God must perforce endure it alone; no other human being is equal to it; as he stood alone in the past, much more now must he continue.

The agony is over; but it is only the preliminary to more.

¹ Matt. xxvi 37.

² Mark xiv 33.

³ Matt. xxvi 38; Mark xiv 34.

⁴ Luke xxii 43, 44.

⁵ Luke xxii 44.

“Jesus, knowing all that was to befall him”—St John once more is careful to remind us of this. He knew what was coming; at any moment he might have prevented it; he could have stricken those men down, he could have asked his Father, and he would have given him legions of angels; but he would not. Every step in the Passion was an act of deliberate acceptance; St John, and St Paul after him, can never let this single fact escape from their minds. “Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.” “He was offered because he himself willed it.”

Then follows the betrayal; by such a man, the most trusted of all his inner circle, to whom, moreover, he had given warnings in abundance; in such a way, the way of most intimate familiarity, abusing a privilege that few indeed could claim; to such people, who needed no traitor to put him in their hands, for had he not been among them every day? Under such circumstances that through all time that traitor and that crime have been taken as a byword for the basest deed that ever man could do to fellow-man.

“Hail, Rabbi; and he kissed him.”¹

“Friend, whereto art thou come?”²

“Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?”³

To the astonishment of his disciples the deed of treachery succeeded. On other like occasions Jesus had passed through the crowd, but this time men laid hands on him and he submitted. Was his power, then, gone? Was there no further hope? What could they do but run away?

“The hour cometh, and it is now come, that you shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone.”⁴

They bound him; they dragged him down the hill and up the other slope to the southern gate. They brought him to the court of the heartless Sadducee, Annas, who sat in solemn state with his priests, and his elders, and his scribes about him. What was there to be enacted could be nothing else than a thing of form; long since the sentence had been passed. And this, too, Jesus knew. He knew that he must be condemned, and must be condemned with all the forms of justice. Long since had these men decided on it; hatred unrelenting had sealed his fate, policy had invented the manner of it. Hitherto a mysterious something had kept him out of their grasp; now that something had suddenly deserted him; he was wholly at their mercy, and they could wreak on him what vengeance they would—vengeance for the way he had defied them from the first, vengeance for the rebukes he had bestowed upon them in their own Temple court, vengeance for the warnings he had given men against them, vengeance for the condemnation he had publicly pronounced, vengeance for all he had taught and they did not, vengeance for all he had done and they could not,

¹ Matt. xxvi 49.

² Luke xxii 48.

³ Matt. xxvi 50.

⁴ John xvi 32.

vengeance, above all, for what he had claimed to be, and by irrefutable argument had proved it.

But, of course, it must not appear to be vengeance ; what they would do must be done with all the forms of justice. It must be made manifest to all that they were right ; he must be put in the wrong ; and since not one of his deeds could be brought up against him, his words must be adduced, must be turned and twisted, and misquoted, and taken from their context, and so made to mean what they would have them mean. In the last resort this is always a safe method of conviction ; when nothing else will serve one can quote a victim's words, by a shadow of an accent alter their whole meaning, say that he said them, or that someone said that he said them, and then put upon them any interpretation one may please. "The devil can quote Scripture to his purpose." No man ever yet spoke anything but malice can turn it, if it pleases, to its own ends. It is a safe device ; it has the peculiar advantage that however cruel and unjust the inference may be, yet the fact cannot be denied ; having so much of truth about it, it is the cruellest of lies.

So, in the first instance, was Jesus Christ condemned : condemned out of his own mouth ; condemned by his own people ; condemned by those who knew that their evidence was hollow, their inference utterly untrue, their sentence a base travesty of justice. On that very account, that they might support themselves in their mockery, as men will, they were driven to submit him to the greater shame. True justice is always merciful ; consciousness of wrong is always cruel.

"And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him : Prophecy ! And the servants struck him with the palms of their hands." ¹

Nor is this all that he must endure "in the house of them that loved him" ; his prophecy concerning Simon Peter is yet to be fulfilled. It is done within his sight and hearing. Simon disowns him, declares that he does not know him, confirms the declaration with an oath—the one man who, if he would, might have said a word in his favour. He does this in such a place, on such an occasion, at the taunt of a mere servant girl ; after all that had been done for him, after all that he himself had promised, in spite of the repeated warnings he does it. He does it in spite of his love, for that Simon still loved his Master cannot be doubted ; on that account it was a deeper wound than had been the treachery of Judas. Jesus heard it ; heard it from the lips of Peter :

"And the Lord turning looked on Peter." ²

And that was all. But what had the denial meant to him ?

He is thrown into prison for the night, left to the mercy of his gaolers. If before his judges they could strike him in the face

¹ Mark xiv 65.

² Luke xxii 61.

and be countenanced, what might they not do now that they had him to themselves? And he let them do what they would.

Next day he must die; the Passover that was to follow would not allow these scrupulous men to wait longer. Once again, as before, the formalities of justice must be gone through. He must be handed over to the civil arm; Roman as well as Jew must be made partaker of this act of universal shame. So they fettered him again; they dragged him through the crowded streets, through the main thoroughfare of the city. What better proof than this could be given to the rabble of Jerusalem that the man they had begun to revere was an impostor? He who could not save himself, how could he be a saviour to others? The beggar said to have been healed in the north of the city, the man born blind cured in the south, who now would believe such old women's tales? And Jesus knew; knew what men would infer; knew the bitter anger and resentment that must rise up on every side against him; and he endured it all.

They reach the house of Pilate; he is handed over to the Procurator; his own Jews surrender him to Romans. He is pursued with accusations; what they are matters not at all; so long as it will influence the Gentile, anything will serve. He is malefactor, this has no pretence of evidence;¹ he destroys our nation;² he forbids men to give tribute to Caesar;³ he says he is Christ the King.⁴ Truly a jumble of charges; a jumble of falsehoods founded on the faintest semblance of truth; just the confusion of accusations, inconsistent, haphazard, yet leading steadily to their goal, which determination to destroy alone could have brought together, and which, because of their sweeping generalities, it would have been impossible to refute.

But for just the same reason the shrewd, unbelieving Roman knew their hollowness. "He knew that for envy they had betrayed him." But Jesus was a Galilæan, a despicable Galilæan; then to Galilee's ruler he should go for sentence. From Pilate he is dragged again through the streets to Herod; to Herod, the son of that Herod who had sought his life as an infant; Herod, the crowned king of sensuality, the murderer of John the Baptist, who could be quelled by a dancing girl's sneer; who in his moments of remorse had trembled at the thought of this Jesus, lest he might be his victim John risen from the dead; who at other times, when the passion for revelry was on him, had long wished to have him in his hands that he might see his miracles; who by this Man himself had openly been called "that fox." Before such a man Jesus stood; by such a man he suffered that he should be judged, with the laughing court around him of ribald men and women, to whom vice the most degrading was their open profession, their very life. Jesus stood before them, and he needed not have stood

¹ John xviii 30.

² Luke xxiii 21.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

there ; he endured the loathsome sight and let them laugh ; though once he had bidden Satan himself " Begone ! " these men he permitted to do their will.

Herod, that man of moods, was now in the mood when he was glad to have Jesus at his mercy. He would make this conjurer perform before him ; he would make him do his tricks to save his life. But it was of no avail. He spoke to him with civility ; he spoke to him with threats, but

" He answered him not a word." ¹

And since Jesus would not turn his court jester, Herod would make him his court fool.

" And Herod with his army set him at nought, and mocked him, putting on him a white garment, and sent him back to Pilate." ²

One reflection on this scene we must make. All this time, Herodias and her daughter, where were they ? The blood of the Baptist was still red upon their hands ; because of that crime they hated everyone, because of him they hated this Jesus ; they hated him the more because of the fear his name had roused in their lord and master. That they were present at this scene seems only too likely ; may we not be sure that their laughter, shrill, hard, loud, triumphant, hideous, provocative, was not the least of the agonies of shame that Jesus endured in Herod's hall ?

And " he answered not a word."

What follows in the story of the Passion is nothing but the sheerest brutality. The refinements of cruelty are over ; regard for even the external show of justice is gone ; when Pilate, for his own sake, and for the honour of the Roman eagle, would preserve an appearance of law and order, he must be howled down. Let man play with the trappings of justice long enough, and the day will come when he will throw them all aside, when injustice will become a boast and a glory. Let him play with falsehood, and one day he will take pride in his powers of deceit. He will take pride in his powers of deceiving even himself.

So was it on this occasion. Barabbas or Christ ? That Barabbas was guilty no man would venture to deny, that Jesus was guilty not a soul believed ; therefore let him be put to death, let Barabbas go free ! How shall he be put to death ? If he were a blasphemer, as some said, then he should be stoned ; but they had attempted that before, and had failed. This time they must not fail. He was in hands that seemed able to hold him ; therefore by those hands let him die. Let him be bled to death, drop by drop, hanging on a cross.

But his executioners demurred.

" You have presented unto me this man, as one that perverteth the people ; and behold I, having examined him before you, find no cause in this man, in those things wherein you accuse him. No,

¹ Luke xxiii 9.

² Luke xxiii 11.

nor Herod neither. For I sent you to him, and behold, nothing worthy of death is found done by him. I will chastise him therefore and release him." ¹

"I will chastise him therefore" ! The logic of the conclusion ! Step by step in this story of horror the gross injustice of every deed is manifest and acknowledged. When men persist in evil usually they will not think ; or if they will, they justify themselves in what they do. With the murderers of Jesus it was not so. Let the Evangelist tell what follows in his own few words. He is unwilling to dwell upon its details ; he will tell the simple fact and have done with it.

"Then the soldiers of the governor, taking Jesus into the hall, gathered together to him the whole band ; and stripping him they put a scarlet cloak about him. And plating a crown of thorns, they put it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying : Hail, King of the Jews ! And spitting upon him, they took the reed, and struck his head." ²

St Mark adds to this the one other detail :

"When he had scourged him." ³

It is confirmed by St John :

"Then therefore Pilate took Jesus and scourged him." ⁴

The scourging of Jesus was, as we have seen, part of his deliberate sentence ; the crowning and the mockery were a piece of wanton cruelty, at the hands of men whose profession trained them to be cruel, whose amusement was sought in the sight of cruel deeds, who found in one another an incentive to ever greater cruelty, in whom the sense of pity had long been dead, if it had ever lived in them at all.

Pontius Pilate could not but have known what was going on in the courtyard behind him. But he did not move. If the Victim died beneath the torture, let it be so ; in this way, at least, his problem would be solved. Slaves often perished by a like accident ; his own reputation would be saved ; and one life more or less, what would it matter ? But Jesus would not die beneath the lash ; then the condition to which he had been reduced might serve the Procurator's purpose. One so tormented, so tortured, so disfigured, that he could scarcely any more be called a man, would surely win the pity of the mob ; contempt for their Victim, if nothing else, would modify their hatred. One so beaten, a helpless mass of bleeding flesh, could no longer be called a danger to the people ; the very sight of him would be enough.

"Pilate therefore went forth again and saith to them : Behold, I bring him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in him. Jesus therefore came forth, bearing the crown of thorns

¹ Luke xxiii 14-16.

² Matt. xxvii 27-30.

³ Mark xv 15.

⁴ John xix 1.

and the purple garment. And he saith to them: "Behold the man!"¹

Rather: "Behold what once had been a man! Behold a worm and no man! Behold the Model of all Manhood!"

But even this device was of no avail. He had reckoned on hatred as he knew it, of man for fellow-man; he had not reckoned on hatred such as this, of man for the Son of God. At the sight of him they cried out the more; he must be crucified; so long as God made man walked among them on this earth, hatred would never be appeased.

"And their voices prevailed." He was clothed once more in his own clothing; for the third time that morning was this singular humiliation done to him, and with it, for the third time, the wounds upon his body were opened. It was to be done to him yet again before that day was over. They took him down the steps into the street; the heavy wood was put upon his shoulder; up and down the rugged streets he dragged it, with two "other" malefactors in his company, at the end identified with sinners no less than during his whole life, more now at the end than it had ever been before. He had come to save his people from their sins; he had been baptised among them; he had eaten and drunk with them; he had submitted to be called their friend; he had welcomed their love and had returned it; he had invited them to come to him; he had gone after them, at what cost to himself! He had forgiven them their sins; on their account he had endured obloquy; he had asked them to take his yoke upon them, to carry his cross, and had promised that it would be sweet, his burden would be light. Now in return he carried theirs, the whole weight upon him of all their misery, the shame and guilt flung at him like mud from the passers-by. He ascended their cross with them, was nailed hand and foot to it instead of them, that they in their turn might ascend and be nailed to his with him. "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." A fitting death-bed after such a life; yet also a fitting throne for the Man of Sorrows. "I, when I shall be lifted up, will draw all things to myself."²

§ V: THE MIND OF HIS DISCIPLES

I. *St Peter*

THE most casual student of the first Epistle of St Peter cannot but be struck by the prominent place which the sufferings of his Master have in the mind of the Prince of the Apostles. The Peter of the Epistles is a very different man from that Simon who, in the early days, in his ship on the Lake of Galilee, fell at the feet of Jesus and bade him depart from him, for that he was a sinful man; very different from him who, in the height of his enthusiasm, would

¹ John xix 4, 5.

² John xii 32.

rebuke his Master and say that suffering and death should never be his lot ; or from him again who, on Mount Thabor, found it good to be there and looked for nothing more. Now everything is changed. He no longer fears ; the Man of Sorrows has become an ideal, an inspiration, a support whom it will not be hard to follow even unto death ; Jesus Christ crucified means to him now more than Jesus Christ transfigured. When he sets out to guide his people, when he would encourage them in the midst of their hard days, this is the motive and the model he holds up constantly before them—the suffering of Jesus Christ, not in his Passion only, but throughout his life, and the manifest fruit it bore.

Thus, when speaking to his Jewish converts, he looks for the link between the old and the new, and he finds the only key to the prophecies of old in the sufferings of him who fulfilled them :

“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and diligently searched, who prophesied of the grace to come in you. Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in them did signify, when it foretold those sufferings that are in Christ and the glories that should follow.”¹

He looks from the past into the future, and finds man’s inspiration in him who has been rejected, precisely because he has been rejected :

“Rejected indeed by men, but chosen and made honourable by God.”²

He sets before them an ideal ; it is no other than Jesus Christ, not hanging on the cross, but bearing his cross from day to day :

“For this is thankworthy, if for conscience’ sake towards God a man endures sorrows, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, committing sin, and being buffeted for it, you endure ? But if doing well you suffer patiently, this is thankworthy before God. For unto this are you called : because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his footsteps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, did not revile : when he suffered, he threatened not : but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly. Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree ; that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice : by whose stripes you are healed.”³

Next, Peter would encourage his disciples to live up to that ideal ; and again his encouragement is only this, that so Jesus lived and so he died.

“Christ therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought : for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sins : that now he may live the rest of his time in the flesh, not after the desires of men, but according to the will of God.”⁴

Furthermore, he would offer them a reward. He does not forget

¹ 1 Pet. i 10, 11.

³ 1 Pet. ii 19-24.

² 1 Pet. ii 4.

⁴ 1 Pet. iv 1, 2.

that he himself once said: "Lord, we have left all and followed thee; what reward, therefore, shall we have?" But he has learnt much since then; and now his reward is the joy we shall have in having shared in the suffering of his Master, when at last his glory is revealed:

"Dearly beloved, think not strange the burning heat which is to try you: as if some new thing happened to you. But if you partake of the sufferings of Christ rejoice that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."¹

Last of all, he speaks of the witness to this as belonging to his special mission:

"Who am myself an ancient and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as also a partaker of that glory which is to be revealed in the time to come."²

2. *St Paul*

St Peter has put the Passion and sufferings of Jesus before his individual followers as their inspiration, their consolation, their model, their encouragement, in their daily lives; St Paul, as is his wont, looks at them more with the eyes of the universal Church. Already in his first Epistle he sees in the sufferings of the cross the bond of common fellowship for all:

"For you, brethren, are become followers of the churches of God which are in Judæa in Christ Jesus: for you also have suffered the same things from your own countrymen, even as they have from the Jews: who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and have persecuted us, and please not God, and are adversaries to all men."³

With the same thought in his mind, that suffering with Christ creates fellowship with one another, when later he has to blame the Galatians, his accusation is that they have failed to stand by the banner of the cross; for himself, to mark the contrast with them, he seeks for no other honour than that of having been loyal to it:

"O senseless Galatians, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth: before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been set forth crucified among you?"⁴

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, as it is written: Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree."⁵

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."⁶

In the Epistle to the Corinthians this attitude becomes much more emphatic. Not only, as before, is loyalty to Christ crucified his special glory, to him Christ crucified is everything. In that

¹ 1 Pet. iv 12, 13.

⁴ Gal. iii 1.

² 1 Pet. v 1.

⁵ Gal. iii 13.

³ 1 Thess. ii 14, 15.

⁶ Gal. vi 14.

consummation is summed up all the revelation that has come to man from God ; it is the whole content of all his own preaching ; anything else, by comparison, is of no value whatsoever ; mystery as this may appear to those who do not see, it is nevertheless the truth, and to understand it is the highest wisdom. Let us not forget that St Paul, here as in all his epistles, keeps within his vision this world as well as the next ; he is a statesman as well as a champion of the Gospel ; in combined passages such as these one sees the marvellous consistency of the Apostle's mind, holding to the same idea and principle in the midst of much that may appear wandering and disconnected.

“ For the word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness : but to them that are saved, that is to us, it is the power of God.” ¹

“ We preach Christ crucified : unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness : but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.” ²

“ I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ : and him crucified.” ³

“ We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, a wisdom which is hidden, which God ordained before the world, unto our glory : which none of the princes of this world knew. For if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory.” ⁴

So he writes, with an emphasis almost of defiance, laying down his foundations before he justifies himself in the eyes of his quarrelsome and not too loyal neophytes in Corinth. They have turned against him ; they have cut him to the quick ; let them not think that this in any way puts him and his doctrine in the wrong. It does nothing of the kind ; it does but prove that he is one with his Master.

But when the misunderstanding is over, and they have been reconciled, and peace has again been restored, then he writes in quite another strain. Not only now is the cross of Christ his glory ; that he had said while his Corinthians were still inflicting sorrow upon him. It is also the very cause and source of his joy ; and the greater has been his sorrow, so much the greater now is the joy he reaps. Let them not be troubled because of all they have done ; in it all he has the more contentment, because by it the lesson of the cross has been the more thoroughly learnt. And he will show them why ; though before God we are everyone sinners, yet in Jesus, and by the cross of Jesus, we are now all justified and free. In his life he became as one of us, shouldering our crosses, carrying our griefs ; thus he has made us one with him, our cause has become his cause, and in return he has bestowed on us all his own riches.

¹ 1 Cor. i 18.

² 1 Cor. i 23, 24.

³ 1 Cor. ii 2.

⁴ 1 Cor. ii 7, 8.

The lesson of the Apostle is characteristic ; in the midst of their repentance he makes his Corinthians rejoice, and that by reason of the very fault that they have committed ; it is the lesson of his perfect charity.

“ As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also by Christ doth our comfort abound.” ¹

“ Him, who knew no sin, he hath made sin for us : that we might be made the justice of God in him.” ²

“ You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich he became poor for your sakes : that through his poverty you might be rich.” ³

In the great dogmatic Epistle to the Romans the Apostle has yet another point of view. In Christ we are redeemed and freed from the bondage of the law. But, it occurs to him, men may ask, was it necessary, seeing Jesus Christ was God, that redemption should be won at such a cost ? Strictly necessary, he answers, no ; but when we take into account the love in the heart of him who paid the price, yes. Such a love would have no half measures ; it would give full measure and flowing over ; down in the depths as man was, it would pay the fullest price to lift him to the highest.

“ For why did Christ, when as yet we were weak according to the time, die for the ungodly ? For scarce for a just man will one die ; yet perhaps for a good man some one would dare to die. But God commendeth his charity to us : because when as yet we were sinners according to the time, Christ died for us.” ⁴

Since the price has been paid so lavishly, with so little desert on our part, then he asks himself how we are to benefit by it to the full. The answer to him is clear ; as by the cross we have received it, so in the cross we shall profit most by it. Likeness to Christ, in his life and in his death, gives us likeness in sonship and in glory.

“ If sons, heirs also ; heirs indeed of God, and coheirs with Christ : yet so, if we suffer with him, that with him we may also be glorified. For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.” ⁵

Thus he rises to the ever-memorable climax, the conquest that has come with the love of the Man of Sorrows :

“ Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword ? (As it is written : For thy sake we are put to death all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) But in all these things we overcome because of him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other

¹ 2 Cor. i 5.

² 2 Cor. v 21.

³ 2 Cor. viii 9.

⁴ Rom. v 6-9.

⁵ Rom. viii 17, 18.

creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." ¹

Such is the victory the Man of Sorrows has won. If, by his death, death itself has been conquered, so by his sorrow, sorrow has been turned into joy, failure has become triumph, wounds are an eternal glory.

In the Epistles of the Captivity, as might well be expected, yet a further aspect is put before us. The main work of St Paul has now been done; this "vessel of election," who was to "carry my name before the gentiles and kings and the children of Israel," and who was to be shown "how great things he must suffer for my sake," ² had faithfully carried out his task; now, as it were, in reward for his labour, lying bound in his Roman prison, he sees and is filled with the realisation of the mystical body of Christ. Of that body Jesus is the head, we human beings are the members; from him life flows down to us, likeness to him comes now to have a new significance. We live, no, not we, but he lives in us; and merely because his life is ours, we only wish to know how that life may best express itself, how he may best reproduce himself in us. Hence the new tone in which he speaks henceforward of the cross; he no longer urges with encouragement; it is enough that he should state the likeness and leave the matter there.

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as most dear children: and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness." ³

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church and delivered himself up for it." ⁴

This, in those times, was new doctrine indeed.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal to God: but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross." ⁵

"I, Paul . . . who now rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the church." ⁶

"And you, when you were dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he hath quickened together with him, forgiving you all offences: blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And he hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it on the cross." ⁷

¹ Rom. viii 35-39.

² Eph. v 1, 2.

³ Phil. ii 5-8.

⁴ Col. ii 13, 14.

⁵ Acts ix 15, 16.

⁶ Eph. v 25.

⁷ Col. i 24.

3. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*

The Epistle to the Hebrews must needs be taken apart ; in it, and most explicitly, the sufferings of Jesus are given their most significant place with regard to men. Those to whom it was addressed were indeed in great trouble. Persecution had broken over them ; there was nothing but failure and destruction everywhere ; they had reason to ask themselves what could be the meaning of it all. If Christ had come to save the world, to give it a new life, why this continuous failure, this living death ?

The Apostle knows what they are feeling and is full of sympathy. To comfort and strengthen them he plays throughout upon three themes ; that so Christ had suffered before them, and that therefore by suffering they were made like to him ; that through suffering he had conquered ; that the fact of his suffering and glory was their sufficient encouragement and joy. In the first place, by his Passion and death, the oneness of the Saviour with the saved is secured ; in the Passion, on this account, the Saviour and his work are made perfect.

“ We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour : that through the grace of God he might taste death for all. For it became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, who had brought many children unto glory, to perfect the author of their salvation, by his passion. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all one. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” ¹

Being thus made one with man, not only is he himself made the perfect Saviour, not only is he a perfect high priest, but he has become, through experience of sorrow of his own, a high priest and advocate merciful and faithful.

“ Wherefore, it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God, that he might be a propitiation for the sins of the people.” ²

On this account, we may live in the sure hope, not only that we are redeemed, but also that he who has redeemed us, having given us so much and at such a price, will continue to give us all that he can give.

“ Having therefore a great high priest that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God : let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities : but one tempted in all things as we are, without sin. Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace : that we may obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid.” ³

This high priesthood, as Jesus himself many times declared, was

¹ Heb. ii 9-11.

² Heb. ii 17, 18.

³ Heb. iv 14-16.

not his own assumption, but was the appointment of the Father. Of himself as man he stood among men ; of himself he suffered like other men ; of himself he prayed with men, taking their guilt upon himself though he would have none of his own ; in their midst he was the accepted high priest, and in the hearing of his prayers, in the merit of his sufferings, in the acceptance of his sacrifice, their prayers and sufferings and sacrifice were made acceptable.

“ Who in the days of his flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to him that was able to save him from death, was heard for his reverence. And whereas indeed he was the Son of God, he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. And being consummated, he became, to all that obey him, the cause of eternal salvation : called by God a high priest according to the order of Melchisedech.” ¹

Not only is he the high priest ; he is also the sacrifice. And in that he offered himself, of his own accord and with full knowledge, elected to suffer and to die, and in that now in heaven he continues to renew that offering, therefore there was and is no need that the sacrifice be made more than once.

“ For Jesus is not entered into the Holies made with hands, the patterns of the true : but into heaven itself, that he may appear now in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the Holies every year with the blood of others : for then he ought to have suffered often from the beginning of the world. But now once, at the end of the ages, he hath appeared for the destruction of sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgement, so also Christ was offered once to exhaust the sins of many.” ²

From the consideration of this sacrifice and all that it has entailed, deliberate, entire, more awful than man can conceive, rendered yet more unfathomable by reason of the person of him, the God-man, who has endured it, the writer concludes to the great heinousness of sin. Since Christ has done all this, how much greater now must the evil of sin be !

“ A man making void the law of Moses dieth without any mercy under two or three witnesses : how much more do you think he deserveth worse punishments, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God and hath esteemed the blood of the testament unclean, by which he was sanctified, and hath offered an affront to the Spirit of grace ? ” ³

Hence the author draws to his final glorious conclusion. Let Jesus be to us not only the high priest and sacrifice, but also the model. He who has endured so much, and has proved the value of endurance, he is a worthy example for us all. Nay more ; since he was of all the most beloved, then to be beloved is to be marked

¹ Heb. v 7-10.

² Heb. ix 24-28.

³ Heb. x 28, 29.

by suffering and sorrow. The lesson has been taught beyond a doubt ; we have but to take it to heart.

“ And therefore we also . . . laying aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us : looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who, having joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God. For think diligently upon him that endured such opposition from sinners against himself : that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds. For you have not yet resisted unto blood. And you have forgotten the consolation which speaketh to you, as unto children, saying : My son, neglect not the discipline of the Lord : neither be thou wearied whilst thou art rebuked by him. For whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth : and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”¹

And much more to this effect. As we read we recognise the source of that resistance unto death which then and ever after has formed the most glorious page of the Church's history. For them, indeed, teaching such as this was very living. The Epistle to the Hebrews is the charter of the martyrs ; and it is written with the blood of Jesus, the Man of Sorrows.

4. *St John*

Let us end as we began, with St John, the disciple whom the Man of Sorrows loved, and who, in the light of love and sorrow, read with greatest accuracy the heart of his Master. “ He ought to have suffered often from the beginning of the world.”² Can this sentence from the Epistle to the Hebrews be the source of that emblem which dominates St John's Apocalypse ? The Lamb of God—the Lamb that was slain—the Lamb that was slain from the days of Moses—the Lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world—the blood that “ is being shed ” for many unto the remission of sins ; we seem to see growing in his vision the glory of the Lamb whose light enlightens heaven.

“ And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it : and the Lamb is the lamp thereof.”³

In his Gospel we have heard John's repeated lamentation, that “ He came unto his own and his own received him not.” At the moment when the greatest dereliction was looming up he has recorded the assurance of the Master that “ sorrow shall be turned into joy ” ; now when we come to his final word it is one of triumph, and the triumph is that of “ the Lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world.”⁴

“ And I saw : and behold in the midst of the throne, and in the

¹ Heb. xii 1-6.

³ Apoc. xxi 23.

² Heb. ix 26.

⁴ Apoc. xiii 8.

midst of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the ancients, a Lamb standing, as it were slain." ¹

"And they sang a new canticle, saying: Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book and to open the seals thereof; because thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God, in thy blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." ²

"The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and benediction." ³

As are the triumph and glory of the Lamb, so is the triumph of those who follow him. The lesson has been taught and learnt; all things have been made new; as with him, so with them, with them because of him, the cross and all it stands for, suffering and sorrow and distress, have become an ideal, not a doom, to which mankind has learnt to rise. The curse of life has been conquered; men have found the way "to rejoice that they are accounted worthy to suffer something for his sake"; and in that rejoicing have wrested from death its victory, have deprived it of its sting.

"After this, I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands." ⁴

"And he said to me: These are they who have come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God: and they serve him day and night in his temple. And he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell over them. They shall no more hunger nor thirst: neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." ⁵

At the beginning we have heard John lamenting; here at the end we hear him rejoicing; we understand now the source of that courage which he inspires in his children, when in his Epistle he bids them lose all that they may gain all.

"Wonder not, brethren, if the world hate you." ⁶

"In this we have known the charity of God, because he hath laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." ⁷

Thus does John interpret the cross of Jesus Christ as the key to life, on earth and in heaven; the source of all that is noblest and best in man, the mark above every other of that very civilisation which man has been bold to call Christian. *In hoc signo vinces.* "In this sign shalt thou conquer."

¹ Apoc. v 6.

⁴ Apoc. vii 9.

¹ John iii 13.

² Apoc. v 9.

⁵ Apoc. vii 14-17.

⁷ 1 John iii 16.

³ Apoc. v 12.

Of a truth, then, the Man of Sorrows is also the Man of Joy ; he has fulfilled his prophecy in himself. He is, moreover, the Man of Victory. Without the cross of Christ what would this world be ; what would be the value of eternity ? With the life and death of Jesus Christ a new thing has come into the world, a new standard by which all things are judged. He has declared a new doctrine, and by his life has proved it : that suffering and sorrow are not the curse of man, but his privilege ; that he who would do the greatest things is he who can endure the greatest ; that only by suffering and sorrow can the evil of life be overcome ; that the life of trial is the life which, by its first and noblest instinct, human nature most reveres, because it is most like his own. He “ came not to destroy but to perfect ” ; nowhere more is it manifest than here. Human nature measures worth by suffering ; it esteems in proportion as it sees the brave endurance of sorrow ; and Jesus Christ has taken this truest trait in man, has purified and made it perfect, has identified it with himself, has given it back to man to be his abiding ideal in this world, has lifted it up with himself into heaven and there has enthroned it, “ the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world.” We understand the better now why, when he rose from the dead, he was careful to show that he retained in his hands and feet and side his precious wounds, carrying them with him as trophies to his place by the right hand of the Father, “ ever living to make intercession for us.”

✠ALBAN GOODIER.

XIV

CHRIST, PRIEST AND REDEEMER

§ I: INTRODUCTORY

THE Redemption is a fundamental doctrine of the Catholic Church, and references to it are to be found in many of the Councils and formularies of the Faith. In the Council of Trent, for instance, there is explicit mention of it in several decrees. That on original sin declares that Adam, having transgressed the command of God, forfeited the gift of holiness and justice which he had possessed, and the whole human race was involved in the same loss. Death came into the world as the consequence of sin, the death of the soul, and the evil plight of mankind was remedied by one means alone—namely, the merit of the one mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, who reconciled us to God in his Blood.

The decrees on Justification and the Sacrifice of the Mass make explicit the manner of this mediation. The God of mercies and of all consolation sent Jesus Christ his Son in the fulness of time that he might redeem both the Jews and the Gentiles. God gave Christ to be the propitiation for our sins and the sins of the whole world. It behoved that another priest according to the order of Melchisedech should arise, our Lord Jesus Christ. He offered himself up once on the altar of the cross to the Father, and by means of his death won for us an eternal redemption.

Two conclusions follow immediately from the reading of these passages. The first is that the doctrine of Christ as Priest and Redeemer cannot be isolated from the other doctrines of the Faith. They are all of a piece, and hence the doctrines to be exposed in the following pages presuppose what has already been treated in other essays in this volume, principally the essays on Original Sin, Grace, and the Incarnation. The second conclusion is that the doctrine of the redemption is independent of any theory of sacrifice based on history or philosophical analysis. The teaching of the Church on sacrifice and priesthood has for its basis the inspired word, especially the Epistle to the Hebrews. We know that Christ was a priest, that he offered himself as a propitiatory victim to the Father, and that the shedding of his blood was the salvation of the world.

Nevertheless, as St Paul himself compared the priesthood of Christ with other priesthoods, and illustrated his sacrifice by reference to other sacrifices, it is not superfluous for the theologian to begin with an analysis of the meaning of sacrifice in general and to use that analysis in his interpretation of the sacrifice of Calvary.

Not that the meaning of Calvary is dictated by any particular theory of sacrifice, but the method is better adapted to give a setting to the dogma and to show the harmony and logic of its implications. The chief objection to such a method is that the meaning of sacrifice is controverted, and it may be thought that a writer who adopts one view is doing so at the expense of another, and taking sides when it is his duty to be impartial. On the other hand, the reader must suffer if nothing is said about the nature of sacrifice in general. Hence, in the following pages, I have attempted to set down the general constituents of sacrifice without determining which is to be considered the principal in the Christian sacrifice. The conclusions do not lead on inevitably to any one particular theory of the sacrifice of the Mass ; that issue is not prejudged, and, to repeat, the redemptive character of the Lord's act is not derived from any theory but from the teaching of the Church, Scripture and Tradition.

§ II: SACRIFICE AND PRIESTHOOD

*Meaning of
sacrifice*

THE meaning and nature of sacrifice have been within recent years the objects of close study. Various theories and definitions have been proposed, some of which have had to be abandoned, either because they did not cover all the facts or because they rested on inadequate conceptions of God and man. The chief difficulty has been to find some common feature in all the multitudinous forms which sacrifice has taken. Sacrifice is essentially a religious act ; in fact, it is almost always the central act of a cult, and as religion is universal in time and place, the sacrificial rite has had as many vicissitudes as religion itself.

The simplest and quickest method to arrive at a definition is to argue from the importance of sacrifice in all religious worship. Religion is comprised in reverence and worship or adoration, and it would seem as if sacrifice were nothing more than the expression in a definite form of this emotion and inclination. Mankind always brings its wishes or emotions to completion in an outward act, in a straightforward or symbolical expression. Goodwill to friends is expressed in gifts. Joy in feasting, sorrow in beating of the breast or some similar action. Now in his relations with God man is filled with awe and he is aware to some extent of God's rights and claims. This experience expresses itself spontaneously in a special form of homage, and homage is made concrete in that again special form called sacrifice. Just, then, as we react in certain definite ways in the presence of fellow human beings, or of sorrow or injustice, so too all men confronted with God tend to behave in a definite manner ; they bow down and offer gifts in sacrifice. Were this the place, it would be interesting to try and show how strong an argument could be built inversely from the fact of sacrifice

to the existence of God. The relevant point for the moment is however this: that sacrifice is identical with the spontaneous act of homage paid by man to God; it is that homage expressed in the offering of a gift. Not that we are bound therefore to hold that this form of homage is a purely human device. It would appear that sacrifice is part of the original revelation. Besides the sacrifice being a natural expression of man's nature, it is also the revealed will of God.

Now the history of religions shows us that the primary conception of God, if never completely lost, can nevertheless be covered over with human fancies and human passions. The primitive and simple conception is almost lost in anthropomorphic mythologies; the pure idea, which needs high religious experience or philosophic abstractions to keep it integral, easily splits up into deities of one particular virtue or even vice, and is brought down and imaged in some sensible object or place. Correspondingly, the sacrifice takes on a local colour and expresses human feelings and ideas. There are many gods: some to be fed, some to be placated: they are kindly and ready to bless harvests or marriage or battle, or they are cruel and require human victims. So low, indeed, may the religious worship fall that it blends with superstition and magic. But beneath all the superstructure which human savagery and childishness have imposed on the religious act, there is to be discerned the basic tendency to pay homage to a supreme being. There are, moreover, other characteristics which are so common as to serve as a clue to the nature of sacrifice. In form, for instance, there is always the presentation or offering of a gift—and this is always the essential feature; this presentation is a public act, usually in the name of the community, and being public and social the act has a ritual, which grows increasingly solemn and sacred from interference; and lastly, there is the odd and often ignored fact that the gift or votive offering is prepared to be consumed as a meal, though the meal is not the essential part of the sacrifice. The motive which appears to underlie this preparation of a meal seems in the crudest ritual to be that the gods, like men, are pleased at being entertained; but it should be observed that in this motive a far higher conception is latent, which gradually becomes explicit. In most of the more debased motives we can in fact discover concealed the highest, and they may fitly be distinguished as petition, thanksgiving and propitiation, all attached to the impulse to pay homage.

We have, then, three main motives all based on homage expressing *Propitiation* themselves in the ceremonious offering of a gift, which, if its nature permits, is prepared as food. One word is necessary as to the motive of propitiation. Not all even of the Jewish sacrifices are propitiatory; nevertheless, the sense of guilt seems rarely to be altogether absent, and perhaps the imagery of a cruel God is nothing but a perversion of the anger which God is thought to feel towards sinners.

When the expiatory note is dominant, then commonly the offering is a victim, and some symbolic act, such as blood-letting or slaying, is part of the ritual. By custom and language the word sacrifice has come to be used as almost synonymous with slaying or mactation, but it should be noticed that in many sacrifices there is no such action present, or at least manifestly present.

*Union with
God*

In the higher stages of religion the cruder forms of sacrifice disappear, but the essential rite of homage remains; and in that motive all that is best in natural religions expands. The worshipper begins to see that his acts are symbolical of his own inward state, that the offering given to God represents the fact of his own dependence and his duty of obedience and dedication. The nature of God is better understood, and the end and ideal of man unfold themselves as both the service of God and simultaneously the enjoyment of God by union with him. That is, homage is not only a duty but also a method of approach; worship is directed to God and lifts the worshipper up; and God rewards the worshipper by friendship. And so now we can enlarge the idea of sacrifice by saying that it is an act of homage which furthers union with God, one's Maker and Last End; and the way that this is done is through the offering of a gift which symbolises interior oblation, and perhaps repentance as well. The gift is sanctified and made holy with God's holiness, since it passes into his possession, if it is accepted by God. His acceptance passes, so to speak, through the gift to the offerer, and the alliance or friendship is ratified by the eating, not by God, but by the worshipper, of what is holy with God's holiness. Sacrifice has thus shown itself as a mode of mediation between God and man.

Mediation

It is in this mediation that the function of the priest is properly seen. In the religions of many primitive peoples the priest is often a sorcerer and magician as well. But even these accretions serve to bring out the office of priesthood, for they suggest a human being who has superhuman powers and closer relations with the God; and the priest is a kind of mediator between his fellows and the Supreme Power. He is generally representative, a patriarch or head of a clan or a king, as in Polynesia and in parts of Asia and among the American Indians. He is a man specially chosen out by the Eskimos and Kafirs. He is always a guide and a mediator, the go-between, who can propitiate God or bring special favours on the worshippers. As usual the clearest example is to be seen in the Old Testament, where Moses acts as leader from on high to the Israelites and ascends to Mount Sinai and communes with God, and the priests of Aaron act as representatives of the people before God. The priest therefore is the representative of all, chosen out for his excellence to act as mediator between God and man. We have now all that is required to understand the priesthood and the sacrifice of Christ.

§III: CHRIST AS PRIEST OFFERING SACRIFICE

THE Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), embodying the words of St Paul *The doctrine outlined* to the Ephesians, "Christ hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness,"¹ declared: "For he offered himself up for us as an odour of sweetness to God the Father. Hence if any one say that the Divine Logos himself was not made an High Priest and Apostle, let him be anathema." The same declaration is to be found in the well-known passage from the twenty-second session of the Council of Trent, and it is abundantly confirmed by the witness of Scripture. The classical statement of the priesthood of Christ is to be found in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the sacrifices of the Old Law are compared with the sacrifice of Christ, the High Priest, and great emphasis is laid on the propitiatory nature of his sacrifice.

Now, as Christ is said to be the great High Priest, the pattern of all others, we should expect to find all the characteristics of sacrifice and priesthood previously described embodied in his office and act; and this expectation is fulfilled. He is the Elect, not of man only but of God; he is a King, a representative not of the Jews merely, but of all mankind, and he is the one Mediator.² Moreover, this act of sacrifice is accomplished in a ritual oblation of a gift, which is immolated and becomes the food of those who worship and accept Christ's sovereignty and gospel. The motive, lastly, is one of homage which contains in it reverence for God the Creator, expiation for sin, petition and, finally, love and thanksgiving which bring union and holiness. Two characteristics are, however, specially in evidence, and these two are excellently expressed in the one word Atonement. There is expiation for sin by the shedding of blood, and that blood is the seal of a new covenant in which man is in a special and supernatural way united through the Victim with God himself.

Such, then, is in outline the doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ *Types in the Old Testament* as Priest and Victim. We must now fill in the picture. According to Catholic teaching the Passion of Christ was the one great mediating sacrifice in which Christ was both High Priest and Victim. This dogma has been denied by non-Catholics who profess to see in the suffering of Christ nothing but an example of high moral worth, but the history of the Jews, the express statements in the New Testament, and the very nature of Christ's passion are overwhelmingly clear in their evidence. We have in the Old Testament the record of the sacrifices of Abel, Noah, Abraham, and Melchisedech, which point to a more perfect sacrifice of which they are the types. Type and prophecy are seen again in the story of the Exodus, when, we are told, a lamb was eaten with unleavened bread and blood

² 1 Tim. ii 5 and Heb. ix 15.

sprinkled on the lintels and side-posts and the Feast of the Passover instituted. In the twenty-fourth chapter we read in connection with the promulgation of the Law that Moses "took the blood (of sacrifice) and sprinkled it upon the people and said: This is the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." But the favourite type of the sacrifice and priest to come is, to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Melchisedech. He says that "no one takes the honourable office of High Priest upon himself, but only accepts it when called to it by God as Aaron was. So Christ also did not claim for himself the honour of being High Priest, but was appointed to it by him who said to him, My Son art thou: I have to-day begotten thee; as also in another passage he says, Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech." And he goes on a few versés afterwards to repeat, "For God himself calls him a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech," and gives in a later chapter a short account of the sacrifice of this Priest-King of Salem, and proves from the difference between his priesthood and the Aaronic priesthood the perfection of the new covenant instituted by him, of whom God said, "The Lord has sworn and will not recall his words, thou art a priest for ever." All the old sacrifices were inferior to the new unique sacrifice and but types of it. Christ it was who "once for all entered the holy place securing an eternal redemption, and he is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that, since a life has been given in atonement for the offences committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the eternal inheritance which has been promised to them." These inspired words state clearly the priesthood of Christ, and they are full of significance as unfolding to us the meaning of the Redemption.

*The
fulfilment*

The words of Christ himself are equally definite, though a treatment of them will be deferred till the sections on the Redemption; and his behaviour in the Passion is throughout one of Priest and Victim. On the eve of it, he said: "For them do I sanctify (or dedicate) myself";¹ he goes through a ceremonial rite which recalls the great sacrifices of the past; he blesses and offers a prayer of thanksgiving; he speaks of the shedding of his blood in a new covenant which ends the former covenant initiated by Moses in the sprinkling of the blood of sacrifice; and he gives the Apostles to understand that this is the true Pasch, and that he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He gives his life freely, but, if we follow the suggestive explanation of some theologians, he becomes sorrowful after he has surrendered himself as Victim. The mandate of God lies heavy upon him in the Garden, and he can no longer draw back. "He is offered because it is his own will," and "He is led as a sheep to the slaughter." The Jews take away his life by crucifying him and "the Lord laid on him

¹ John xvii 19.

the iniquity of us all." But by laying down his life for sin "He sees a long-lived seed,"¹ because God accepted the sacrifice and exalted him; and so he "swallowed down death that we might be made heirs of life everlasting."²

These texts from Isaias bear out exactly what has already been laid down as constituting the nature of sacrifice. There is a High Priest and a Victim, and that Victim is offered to God and through a bloody immolation. The sacrifice is visible and public; the priest is representative, "the King of the Jews," as his enemies called him with an irony they did not perceive; and, finally, the Victim is a propitiation, and a symbol—on him is laid our iniquity, who in the sequel is to be the food of a new life. In the Epistle to the Hebrews all these constituents are mentioned, and what is more, the relative importance of these constituents and their relation one to another can, without great difficulty, be deduced from the inspired account. "Every High Priest," we are told, "taken from among men, is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sin";³ and later on, the same definition is given: "Every High Priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices."⁴ The High Priest, therefore, is chosen out to be a representative, and the choice is made by God himself. "So Christ did not glorify himself that he might be made High Priest, but he that said unto him, My Son art thou. . . ."⁵ He was, moreover, "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners . . . who needed not daily to offer sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for the people's, for this he did once in offering himself."⁶ The manner of his sacrifice was therefore by oblation, the oblation of a gift which was himself, and this gift was also a sin-offering, "being once offered to exhaust the sins of many,"⁷ "by a merciful and faithful High Priest . . . that he might be a propitiation for the sins of the people."⁸ This offering, therefore, was sealed in death and in a ritual replacing that of the old covenant with its sprinkling of blood. In the ninth chapter the ritual connected with the Tabernacle is compared with that of Christ who "by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle . . . and by his own blood entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption." Moses sprinkled the blood, and similarly Christ through his blood, "by one oblation hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."⁹ Hence there is the consummation of the sacrifice in a new covenant, whereby "we have a confidence in the entering into the Holies by the blood of Christ, a new and living way which he hath dedicated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. . . ."¹⁰

The sacrifice of Christ, therefore, to sum up, contains an oblation of himself as a sin-offering. It is therefore a propitiatory

¹ Isa. liii 10.² 1 Pet. iii 22.³ v 1.⁴ viii 3.⁵ v 5.⁶ vii 26-27.⁷ ix 28.⁸ ii 17.⁹ x 14.¹⁰ x 19, 20.

sacrifice with the shedding of the blood of the victim. That blood cleanses the world, and because the sacrifice is acceptable to God a new covenant of friendship is struck in which the worshippers are sanctified. Such, in terms of sacrifice, is the account given by the inspired writer of the Atonement or Redemption. The final purpose of Christ's action, symbolised in his Priesthood and offering of himself as a Victim in obedience to a divine plan, must now be explained in the second part, the Redemptive character of the Passion and death of Christ.

There remain, however, several questions connected with the Sacrifice of Christ which have had to be put on one side till the truth and nature of that sacrifice had been established.

The first of these regards the origin and exercise of the priesthood of Christ. The majority of Catholic theologians hold that the ordination of Christ coincided with the union of the Word with flesh.

But this possession from the first moment of his life of the priesthood does not necessarily mean that Christ was offering sacrifice always and without interruption. There is one school of theologians which asserts this. For them the Sacrifice of Calvary is only the consummation, or seal, of a life which has been sacrificial throughout. The view may appear to provide a solution for many of the difficulties felt by theologians in explaining the Mass, and it has for its support certain texts from the Epistle to the Hebrews. But it has against it, in the opinion of many, that the meaning of sacrifice is stretched very far when we have to group together under one head the Passion and the marriage feast at Cana; and as the sacrificial act of the Redemption has been placed by dogmatic decisions of the Church principally, if not exclusively, in the death of our Lord upon the Cross, it is wise not to lay too much stress on the uniformity of all the actions of our Lord. The theologians of this school teach indeed a difference of degree between the importance of Calvary and the preceding acts of Christ the Redeemer, and furthermore they admit that the sacrifice is visible and ritually expressed on the Cross. Their view is therefore tenable, though to many it does not appear entirely satisfactory. Sacrifice is usually, they say, an outward sign of an invisible self-offering. Our Lord, it is suggested, being God as well as Man, had no need for this outward expression of his obedience and self-surrender to the Father's will. This, while true, does not, however, cover the purpose of Christ's sacrifice. He was the Son of Man and representative of men before God. It is doubtful, therefore, whether the nature of his sacrifice could have been exhibited without some outward acts which would declare that he was the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world and the High Priest of that world making oblation in its name to God.

For these, then, and other reasons most theologians distinguish

between the office of Christ as Priest and that readiness to offer himself as a victim in whatever way the Father should ordain, and the actual accomplishment of the redemption on the altar of the Cross. On the Cross the sacrifice which began on the eve of Good Friday was consummated.

One difficulty, however, rises out of this mediatorship. Christ *Priest and Victim* is both God and Man and he is Priest and Victim. How, it may be asked, can "these things be"?

The answer will be understood if we recall that Christ is God, that he is Man, and that he is the God-Man.¹ As God he is the recipient of Sacrifice, because it is the Trinity which is worshipped and propitiated in Sacrifice. Some theologians, indeed, regard the Father, the first Person, as the acceptor of the sacrifice of the Cross, and the words of Trent, Christ "offered himself unto God the Father," and certain texts in the New Testament seem to support the view. But generally the expression used at Trent is taken to be one of appropriation, a term explained in another essay, which means shortly that certain actions common to all three Persons are attributed by convenience and analogy to one Person above the others. The expression in this context is, however, still more simply explained by the fact that Christ is regarded there as the God-Man, "the one mediator of God and men, the Man Jesus Christ." However mysterious and above reason this conjunction of the natures in one Person must ever remain, it does allow for the possibility of God using manhood as a propitiatory gift, endowing it with his own personal merit, and so combining the representative and the pleasing and holy. If Christ had been the Word and no Man, then he could not have been a Mediator, for there would have been nothing between himself and the Father save a distinction of personality. If he had been but a Man, again mediation in the strict sense would have been impossible, because the gulf between sinful man and God would not have been bridged. The mysterious conjunction of two natures does, however, resolve the difficulty; and as long as the mediation is assigned to One who does not lose anything of the Godhead by being Man, nor anything of his Manhood by being God, we can understand how Christ though God can offer sacrifice to God.

The difficulty arising out of the identity of Priest and Victim in the redemptive sacrifice is still less serious because there is no obvious inconsistency in a priest becoming a victim of his own sacrifice. As our Lord had both roles and alone could discharge the debt as representative, it is fitting that he should be both offerer and offered. If, indeed, the office of the priest entailed the slaying of the Victim, then the difficulty would be serious indeed, but it

¹ Cf. St Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, x 20, where the solution followed in the text is given.

was the Jews who shed his blood : our Lord did not take his own life.

*Last Supper
and the
Passion*

There are two other points which demand explanation before we can pass on. The first is concerned with the relation of the Last Supper to the Passion. The subject belongs really to the essay on the Holy Eucharist, and so a brief statement must suffice here. Catholic theology is quite definite in holding that the description of the Last Supper is clearly sacrificial. The parallels with the Passover and the sacrifice of Melchisedech, quite apart from the direct evidence of the words and actions of Christ, suffice to prove this. But its precise relation to the Passion is a matter of dispute. All agree that we must look first of all to the Cross. There is the scene of the Redemption and all else must be subordinated to or fitted in with that. But while some regard the Last Supper as part of one enduring act of sacrifice which reached its consummation in the death on Calvary, others make the latter the one absolute sacrifice and relate the Last Supper to it as another but relative sacrifice. That is to say, our Lord, in view of the one redeeming act, instituted a rite which would be a memory of it and enable his followers to share in it by a mystic or real immolation accomplished in the words pronounced over the bread and wine. In that way Calvary would remain the one sacrifice, with the Last Supper and the Mass subordinated to it as a relative sacrifice. The unity of the sacrifice would thus be one of subordination or dependence.¹ Others, on the contrary, deny that the Last Supper can be divided from Calvary so as to make a sacrifice within one sacrifice. They maintain that the various elements of a true sacrifice are made apparent each in its own proper place, and the Last Supper and Calvary are one. The oblation of the victim is exhibited in the evening, a rite instituted to perpetuate the offering, and without a break the sacrifice goes on till it is manifested in the dying glory of Christ on the Cross. Both interpretations of tradition are allowable, and the Church has not decided in favour of either.

*Eternal
Priesthood
of Christ*

There is one other question which is so important as to merit a long explanation, and it concerns the eternal priesthood of Christ. Much is covered by this phrase. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of "the everlasting priesthood of Christ," whereby he is able "to save for ever them that come to God by him ; always living to make intercession for us. For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest . . . who needeth not daily . . . to offer sacrifices . . . for this he did once, in offering himself." ² St John, again, in the Apocalypse described Christ as a Lamb slain but living, as one clothed as a victim who makes men priests unto God. So clear is the testimony of Scripture as to the ever-continuing priesthood of Christ that it can be called a dogma of the

¹ Billot ; *De Sacramentis*, I, pp. 604-605 (Rome, 1924).

² vii 24-27.

Faith. But the precise manner in which Christ now and for ever exercises that priesthood is not so clear, and there are differences of view. We may put aside first of all the view of the Socinians who so exaggerate the doctrine of the heavenly sacrifice as to refuse to admit any earthly sacrifice at all on the part of Christ. Among Catholic theologians two tendencies have been marked. The Protestant emphasis on the heavenly sacrifice has led the majority of Catholics to emphasise the sacrificial character of the Mass, and to pass lightly over the doctrine of the eternal priesthood apart from that. This omission has had for effect that in many modern theological books the full meaning of the Resurrection and the Pauline doctrine of Christ's living intercession have been left to some extent undeveloped. Christ is pictured as still in the Garden of Gethsemani, as subject to grief and waiting on the acceptance of his Father; and no difference is made between the Risen Christ with his work consummated and Christ in the agony of its accomplishment. Under such a conception the significant doctrine of our Lady as the great suppliant of her Son in the Mystical Body of the Church, of which he is the Head, is missed. Some even minimise the priesthood of Christ so much as to suppose, like Lugo, that after the end of the Eucharistic sacrifice on earth, the priestly function of Christ will cease.

The other tendency is marked by a strong, and as some would think a too extreme, opposition to this. Our Lord in his risen life in Heaven continues to perform actively the functions of a priest. The manner in which Christ does this is explained variously. *The heavenly sacrifice* Thalhofer holds that our Lord is ever renewing that act of obedience which led to the Passion, and this interior submission is sufficient for a sacrifice because the wounds of that Passion continue to manifest the will of Christ. A number of French theologians go further, and the latest statement of their view can be found in the massive work of P. Lepin. Despite small differences, P. Condren, Cardinal de Bérulle, M. Olier and P. Lepin are at one in holding that Christ in Heaven continues for ever to make an external and visible offering of his sacred body, but whereas on Calvary that body was destroyed in death, in Heaven it is annihilated, so to speak, in the radiant devouring glory of the divine life. The two schools have this in common, that a sacrifice is being actively offered in Heaven; but whereas the German theologians deem an interior act of homage ever renewed to be sufficient, P. Lepin introduces a new external offering and a new form of immolation.

A third view lays great emphasis on the eternal priesthood of Christ, but denies that a new positive sacrificial act of Christ is required to ensure the continuation of that priesthood. According to this interpretation, our Lord was sacrificed on Calvary; "he died for our sins, and he rose again for our justification."¹ That

¹ Rom. iv 25.

is to say, the Victim was slain, and the Victim was accepted by God in the sign of the Resurrection. "For which reason God also hath exalted him and given him a name which is above all names."¹ Once accepted the Victim belongs entirely to God and remains sacrosanct—that is, invested with the holiness of an object which is a possession of God and pleasing to him. At the same time it continues as a pledge of the new covenant of friendship with God and man, a constant reminder, a kind of incorruptible relic or reliquary. But furthermore, as Christ was both priest and victim, his priesthood is not only ratified by the acceptance, but priesthood and victimhood are merged in one, so that the offering of the great sacrifice continues so to speak in the everlasting appeal of that Lamb slain but alive, dead but still speaking. There is no need for a new offering, no need for any new act, because the Priest is the Victim most pleasing to God, and the state of that Victim is one never-ending pontifical appeal. Therefore "being consummated he became to all that obey him the cause of eternal salvation, being called by God a High Priest according to the order of Melchisedech."²

To put this in another way, Christ the High Priest rising from the grave carried with him the spoils of victory, his own Body, and ascending into heaven presents himself as the sacrificial Mediator between God and man. As St Augustine reminds us: the Passion of Christ the Lord, the words of the Lord, the offering of the saving Victim, the holocaust acceptable to God, is the sacrifice of the evening. "That evening sacrifice he made in the Resurrection a morning gift." This adjective of the "morning" brings out the part of God the Father in accepting the sacrifice. Our Lord's offering was not for himself but for mankind, and as he was the representative priest, so he was the representative victim, expiating and propitiating. If then that sacrifice be accepted, the blessing will flow from and through him to all the world, and hence we may say that his priesthood or his mediating function will be confirmed in the acceptance and be his eternal title; he will be seen, as it were, lit up in the glory of the divine light, a priestly figure sure in his mediation. And as he is the Victim, that mediation is the gift of his own glorified body to those whom he has rescued from death. The two rôles, therefore, of active and passive priesthood harmonise in a wonderful unity. His priesthood continues but he need never exercise it again after the Resurrection, for the sacrifice has been successful, the Victim is given over to God, and as he, the priest, is the Victim, the sacrifice continues for ever in the everlasting presence at the right hand of the Father of a Victim, whose wounded glory embraces priesthood, propitiation and life to those who are redeemed through him.

To make this conception still more clear, we may compare the fulness of Christ the Redeemer with the fulness of the Godhead.

¹ Phil. ii 9.

² Heb. v 3-10.

As God is so rich in possessions that he cannot receive increase and is therefore stabilised in an immobility which is at the same time unruffled activity; and as that activity manifests itself in giving—for good squanders itself (*est diffusivum sui*) and of the fulness we have all received—so Christ now is fixed in the full glory of his priesthood and has no need to continue an active offering of himself or renew the one redemptive sacrifice. And so far from this unchanging state denoting loss, it spells fulness, and with fulness comes the gift of himself to mankind in the Holy Eucharist, and the communication of that priesthood to the race of men with all the redemptive blessings which attend such a giving.

This view has been developed at some length, because, whatever its intrinsic merits may be, it serves excellently to bring out the nature of the Redemption. Christ continues his priesthood in heaven, but without the need of any active offering or immolation of himself. His presence in heaven as the accepted and risen Victim is sufficient to constitute his eternal priesthood. “Jesus entered into the Heaven itself that he may appear now in the presence of God for us.”¹ “For his intercession consists in this that he perpetually exhibits himself before the eternal Father in the humanity which he had assumed for our salvation: and as long as he ceases not to offer himself, he opens the way for our reception into eternal life” (Gregory the Great). The Resurrection therefore and the Ascension are the final stages in the sacrificial act of Christ. The Preface of the Mass tells us that our Lord “by dying destroyed our death and won back life by his rising.” The end of the redemptive sacrifice was attained when God raised Christ from the grave. The death of Christ was indeed the cause of our salvation, but the fruit of the victory is seen in the glory which descends upon the victim in the Resurrection and in the translation of that victim in the Ascension to the place of honour at God’s right hand; and as the purpose of the sacrifice was the giving of divine life to man, the glory communicated to the representative is transmitted through him to all who worship in his name. Thus we are back at the essential constituents of sacrifice: offering, external manifestation, the passing of the victim from the worshipper’s into God’s possession, and the acceptance of that sacrifice by God and the return made. It now remains to work out this sacrifice of Christ in the theology of the Redemption.

§ IV: CHRIST THE REDEEMER

“FOR there is one God: and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself a redemption for all.”² In these words St Paul sums up the Catholic doctrine. The word *Mediation and Redemption* mediation may be used as synonymous with redemption, though

¹ Heb. ix 24.

² 1 Tim. ii 5.

the implications of the two words are distinct. By mediation is meant an action which serves to reunite or reconcile two alien or opposing objects or powers. The Mediator will belong to both. When, then, it is used of Christ it means that he, the God-Man, was able to reconcile men with God. How he did this is not expressed so well in the word as in the equivalent "redemption"; for mediation might suggest that Christ was a kind of intermediary in nature half-way between the divine and the human. Such a conception, which is to be found in certain philosophies and cults, is far from that of the Catholic Faith. And here the word redemption brings out the meaning; Christ who is fully divine as well as fully human, and therefore not an intermediary filling up a gap, can perform some action which will create a friendship between God and man. Hence by his nature he is the one Mediator, and by his action he wins atonement.

The action then which determines more exactly the mediatorship of Christ is the Redemption, and the Church has defined this at the Council of Trent: "If anyone say that this (original) sin of Adam is taken away by any other remedy than the merit of the one Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath reconciled us to God in his own blood . . . let him be anathema." These words, which recall the words of St Paul in the letter to the Colossians, "in him it hath well pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell: and through him to reconcile all things to himself, making peace through the blood of his cross,"¹ bring out three points. First, our Lord is the one Mediator; secondly, the cause of offence, namely original sin, is taken away; and lastly, it is taken away on the Cross. The conclusion, then, to be drawn is that whatever sacrifice be offered in the Christian dispensation, and whatever priesthood may exist, they are not independent of Christ's mediation, but rather tributaries of it; and again for a proper notion of the Redemption we must go to the Sacrifice of Calvary.

It will be well then always to keep in mind, in the study of the Redemption, its sacrificial character, and to elucidate the meaning of the Redemption by what has already been furnished by the analysis of sacrifice. Otherwise there is the danger of a one-sided statement or of the over-emphasis of some image or analogy. As we shall see, even the very word redemption has led to false problems and difficulties, and there is always the temptation present to reduce the mysterious and divine operations of God to terms which serve only if their relative inadequacy or analogical character be kept in mind.

As stated in the dogmatic utterance of the Council of Trent, the story of the Redemption begins with original sin, and ends with the Sacrifice of the Cross. The full account of original sin cannot

*Redemption
and
sacrifice*

*Reparation
and
restoration*

be given here.¹ Suffice it to say that for redemption, reparation for sin and a restoration into the supernatural life were both required. The two parts are conjoined in the sacrificial act of Christ, who "was delivered up for our sins and rose again for our justification";² "Blotting out the handwriting that was against us . . . And he hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross."³ The first stage in this divine plan is seen in the Incarnation. He took a human nature and so identified himself with the cause of mankind and was able to plead as its representative. As its representative the victim offered up was slain, and thus human nature was purged of its evil vicariously. The offering being of infinite worth was accepted by the Father and reconciliation made. Thus through the merits of Christ we are redeemed. Those whom Christ represented were privileged to share his honour and status of friendship with God and even to partake of the very life which he possessed. This is the restoration of the supernatural order in Christ.

Such is a bare outline of the interrelations between God and man in the Redemption, but there are many points which need elucidation. Theologians like to go back and ask why God chose this special way of redeeming man. The creation of man and the end of natural happiness do not raise any special problem; nor again does the generosity of God in willing to give man a greater happiness than that which his nature required. The extent of that generosity is indeed beyond the highest hope, and we know of it only through Revelation; man was to become like God so far as that is compatible with the continued existence of finite personality. He was to see God face to face, that is, see him as he is and be therefore an inmate, so to speak, of the intimate life of the Blessed Trinity. But now the plan of God was frustrated by the exercise of man's freedom (we need not enter here into the question of God's antecedent and consequent will). And it is here that Catholic theologians raise questions and attempt to answer them from what they know, by revelation, of God's ways. Was the Incarnation for instance always a project of the divine bounty, or was it chosen as a step towards redemption? Again, why was it that the Second Person, the Word, became Flesh, and was it in any sense necessary that he should suffer and die to win atonement?

What first can be laid down with absolute certainty is that God was in no way strictly obliged to redeem mankind. Throughout, the action of God in the Incarnation and Redemption is on the plane of the supernatural—that is, it is the manifestation of the free unmerited divine love. A free gift had been offered and refused at the beginning of man's history. Whether that gift would be restored depended entirely on God's mercy. The loss was man's own

Necessity of Redemption

¹ See Essay x.

² Rom. iv 25.

³ Col. ii 14.

fault, and the original sin and all other succeeding sins have their proper and fitting effects and punishments, and in the working out of the effects of sin God's justice is made manifest. Therefore the Redemption is a free act and not necessary. But then comes a second question: if God forgives, is the sacrificial act of Calvary—in other words, the Redemption, as we understand it—the sole means of forgiveness? The question has only to be put in this form for the answer to appear immediately. Forgiveness is a divine act and the act of one who is wronged. An injured person is free to forgive in the manner he likes, and God with his creatures can choose in his infinite freedom to lay down the conditions of forgiveness and to appoint the kind of satisfaction he requires. Therefore the Redemption of Christ is not the one possible mode of reconciliation. God might have sent forth a declaration of forgiveness through Moses from Sinai, or demanded some form of sacrifice, or again any one act of Christ would have been sufficient in a sense to repair the wrong. But while this is so, theologians add another clause. On the assumption that a proper proportion be observed between sin and satisfaction, guilt and atonement, they hold that only the infinite satisfaction and merit of Christ, the God-Man, are sufficient to atone for the infinite guilt contained in the sin of a creature against God. Therefore in the redemption of Christ alone can we find the full rigour of justice, as well as, we might add, the supreme act of love on the part of Christ, both as God in his becoming man, and as man giving himself in complete self-surrender to God.

But though necessity is excluded, the theologians are ready to admit the supreme fittingness of the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. It was fitting that it should be the Son of the Father, the Word, who should be the Son of Man, and that Christ even as God should be able to speak of his Father in Heaven and all that accompanies the tender revelation of the Godhead, and that by appropriation it should be the Father who raised him from the grave to cover him with glory. The Incarnation, besides, served to make manifest to man the visible image of the Invisible, and as man, owing to his composite nature, learns better by experience than by abstractions, such a revelation was just in accordance with his needs.

Scotists and Thomists

As to the relation between the Incarnation and Redemption and their priority in the intentions of God there has been a long dispute between two of the famous schools of theology, the Thomist and the Scotist. St Thomas had inclined to the view that the Word would not have been made flesh had man not sinned. In favour of the Thomist view it is argued that in Scripture the sin of our first parents is given as the motive of the Incarnation, and the mind of the Church is expressed in its cry of *felix culpa*, which merited so great a Redeemer. The Scotists, on the other hand,

and with them Suarez, maintain that there is no proportion between the sin and copious redemption of the Son of God. They can point, too, to the Pauline doctrine of Christ as the centre and final end of all creation, "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things." Clearly the question can never be decided with absolute certainty. The Scotist view is, perhaps, the more attractive, but it has to face the fact that in Paradise Adam and Eve enjoyed the supernatural life without any stated reference to the mediation of a God-Man. That does not, of course, exclude the possibility that, even so, creation would have been recapitulated in Christ.

§ V: THE MEANING OF THE REDEMPTION

So far the Redemption has been described in terms of sacrifice, and it has been suggested that the best way to approach what is called vicarious atonement is from the aspect of Christ as Priest and Victim. Now it remains to make clear what exactly Christ accomplished by the Redemption, and as the subject lends itself to many misconceptions, it is best to begin with what is certain. The Council of Trent asserts that "if any one say that this sin of Adam is taken away by any other remedy than the merit of the one Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath reconciled us to God in his own blood, being made unto us justice, sanctification, and redemption . . . let him be anathema." And again, "The causes of the justification are as follows: the final is the glory of God and Christ and life eternal: the efficient is God in his mercy, who freely washes away and makes holy: the meritorious is the beloved only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who when we were enemies, because of the exceeding charity wherewith he loved us, merited justification for us by the most Holy Passion on the wood of the cross, and made satisfaction for us to God the Father." Lastly a doctrine of the Reformers is explicitly condemned in these words: "If any one say that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of grace and charity which is diffused in their hearts by the Holy Ghost . . . let him be anathema."

In these passages there is a clear statement that the Redemption accomplishes something objective—that is, we cannot restrict it to the benefit of Christ's example, or even to a legal imputation of justice. Some real change is secured by our Lord's act; men are liberated from sin, and by the grace of God and the charity of the Holy Ghost are made one with Christ and God. Again the motive of love on God's side as dominating the whole transaction, is made manifest, when our Lord is said to merit justification and to make satisfaction; he does this not for himself but for others. Not that our Lord became in some mysterious way guilty of sin. He, the sinless one, endures the penalty attached to sin. No one can be

*Redemption
objective:
merit and
satisfaction*

guilty of sin save the sinner, but besides the guilt there is the punishment due to sin, and another may (under certain circumstances, to be stated later) take upon himself the punishment and make satisfaction on behalf of the guilty person. The degree of satisfaction required is measured by the guilt, and that guilt is measured partly by the character of the offence, partly by the character or dignity of the person offended. *Lèse-majesté* deserves a more severe punishment than an offence of a similar kind against one's neighbour. Hence as St Thomas says: "A sin committed against God partakes in a manner of infinity, through its relation to the infinite majesty of God; for an offence is the more serious, the greater the person offended."¹

In Holy Scripture the act of Christ as Redeemer is quite clearly set out by Isaias, and the actual word, redemption,² is found with the meaning of a deliverance gained by a kind of ransom.³ That the idea of a ransom is bound up with the use of the Greek word is clear and is confirmed by the alternative word "price,"⁴ and this ransom or price is always understood to be the blood of Christ shed for us. "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world,"⁵ and again, "For you were bought with a great price";⁶ "You were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . but with the precious blood of Christ . . ."⁷ But while this idea of redemption as signifying a ransom or price is essential to an understanding of the work of Christ, that work is so profound and rich in its connotation that we must beware of pressing any image too far. St Paul, for instance, multiplies images and aspects; the effect is to convince his readers of the super-eminent wisdom and charity of God, but the actual relation of part with part, of aspect with aspect, is not made at all easy.

The duty therefore of the Catholic theologian is to safeguard and make clear certain definite features of the Redemption and to try and control the statement of the doctrine by one or more dominant conceptions. At one period of Christianity, as we shall see, writers emphasised the aspect of ransom, at others those of satisfaction or substitution; while throughout the history of Christianity the love of God and of Christ in the Redemption was naturally prominent. Each one of these aspects was as an aspect true, but each could be exaggerated into a distortion. After the fifth century and until the Reformation there was less fear of error because a sufficiently clear conception of the supernatural governed all speculation, and with a proper understanding of that cardinal doctrine the objective nature of the Redemption is almost certain

¹ St Thomas, *S. Theol.* 3a, Q. 1, art. 2, ad 2.

² Lev. xix 20; Exod. xxi 30, etc.; Matt. xx 28; Mark x 25; etc., etc.

³ λυτροῦν, λύτρωσις, ἀπολυτροῦν, ἀπολύτρωσις.

⁴ τίμη.

⁵ John i 29.

⁶ 1 Cor. vi 20.

⁷ 1 Pet. i 18.

to be safeguarded.¹ But with the Reformation a different conception of grace and justification came in, and the tendency outside the Church since then has gradually grown to leave out the aspects of ransom and satisfaction and to concentrate alone on the love and example shown by Christ. The old ideas are put aside as crude and unworthy of God. A ransom, so it is thought, which justifies without any reference to the ethical factor, is too like magic to recommend itself. For many non-Catholics the value of Calvary consists in this, that Christ has shown the perfect example of self-sacrifice, and we are invited by the spectacle of one giving his life for others to go and do likewise in the spirit of Christ. A variant on this view is that Christ reveals the love of the Father, who is always willing to forgive and to have us as his children. Whereas the old view of sacrifice made God into a tyrant demanding satisfaction, or at best into a harsh judge who requires a payment of the last farthing: on this interpretation we have a new revelation of the goodwill and mercy of God.

The fatally weak point in this explanation is its omission of the objective character of the Redemption; for, as non-Catholics as well as Catholics admit, St Paul cannot be interpreted as meaning only a redemption through love and an example of self-sacrifice. Nevertheless it is right in emphasising the motive of love, because the aspect of ransom or substitution is not by itself complete. But to remove those elements and give an alternative such as has been described is a very human expedient, betraying the characteristic failure of religions outside the Catholic Faith to appreciate the supernatural. The Catholic solution relies on the principle that God is giving man something which is so much above his worth and powers that, though it may demand man's co-operation, it is to some extent independent of him. And just as holiness to a Catholic does not mean just a private devotion to Christ with the fruit of increased moral perfection, but a being lifted up by grace into a union with the Holy Trinity in Christ, so in the Redemption the transaction provides for this possibility and means a free gift of God to the race of forgiveness and grace through its one mediator and representative Jesus Christ.

This then is the first act to be recognised about the Redemption, that it is a supernatural event above private loves and aspirations, however much it may include them. Next, as a supernatural event premeditated and brought about by divine wisdom, we may expect it to be so complete and rich in significance as to contain in an epitome what we more easily think of piecemeal or under various aspects. We may be forced to use analogies which, though inadequate, may represent truthfully what happened. There are degrees, certainly, in the value of such analogies, and there may be one

¹ Abelard is an exception, and his theory is very like that of many modern writers.

standpoint which is superior to the others. Now in the history of the dogma of the Redemption we do find these analogies and aspects, and they each and all serve to bring out its meaning. It will be well, so as to miss as little as possible of the richness of the doctrine, to give a short account of them and the explanation they afford.

*Various
aspects of
Redemption:
ransom*

They can be classified into the aspect of Ransom, the aspect of Substitution, and that of Satisfaction. Worthy of mention, however, though it falls outside this classification, is the tendency, especially noteworthy among the Alexandrine Fathers, to speak of the Incarnation as the source of man's deification. There is an obvious connection between the two, and if the end of the Redemption be prominent in the mind, the intermediate stage between the assumption of human nature by God and the elevation of human nature to a share in the Godhead may for one cause or another be omitted. This does not mean that the doctrine of the Cross is made void; for their apologetic purposes it was sufficient to enlarge upon the text that the Word was made flesh and that from his fulness we have all received.

The analogy of ransom or price rests upon Scripture. As mentioned above, the Greek word connotes deliverance or salvation, and there is a frequent use of it in this sense in the Old Testament. In St Paul it was a favourite image, and undoubtedly he has in mind the traditional Messianic force of the word. "You were bought with a great price"; "Christ has ransomed us from the malediction of the law"; "God sent his Son . . . to ransom them who were under the law"; "Christ was given as a ransom for us." Throughout his writing the price is always the blood of Christ, but we are not told to whom the price is paid, and in fact the idea of compensation to another is absent. He speaks indeed of our being slaves to our sins and vices, and being delivered from all sin. The idea here is that we are in a state from which we cannot rescue ourselves, a state of enmity with God, into which we have put ourselves and one which is very unfortunate. Then legitimately the image may be pressed to this extent, that the blood of Christ pleads to God on our behalf and makes God propitious. In this sense we are ransomed. By sin God is offended, and the consequence is misery to self and, so far as it is possible, self-destruction. St Paul, when he cried out "who shall deliver me from the body of this death,"¹ expressed a truth which all men feel partly as an effect of the Fall and partly on account of their own sins, past or present. A Deliverer comes who frees us from ourselves and from the effect of sin in our human nature and reconciles us with God. He pays the price, and the consequences of sin are worked out in him as representative, as the supreme embodiment, of human nature. That is to say, the mystery of Christ's assumption of human nature

¹ Rom. vii 24.

and sacrifice is expressed in part, if not perfectly, in the image of ransom ; and hence that image is appropriate and just.

But once it is taken out of its context and pressed, it presents a distorted picture of the Redemption. The price is paid as a compensation to one whose captives men are, and the slave owner is taken to be the Devil. Some of the Fathers, Origen, St Basil, and St Jerome, at times adopt this mode of speaking. Our Lord pays the price to the Devil, or as it is sometimes put, Christ outwits the Devil by allowing him to prosecute his death. In another version the Devil is said to have gone beyond his due right by causing the death of the Innocent One, and for this outrage he received not payment but punishment. Such ideas seem very bizarre, but it is easy to see how rhetoric or misplaced attention to what appeared logical could produce the phantasy. The exaggeration does not mean that the Fathers who wrote in such a way missed the meaning of the Redemption, no more than occasional exaggerated statements nowadays about the devotion to the Sacred Heart imply a radical misconception of the doctrine contained in the devotion. A deep spiritual doctrine can be explained in terms of varying appropriateness, and it is always difficult to distinguish in such terms the relevant and the irrelevant, the strictly analogous and the merely metaphorical. In the Middle Ages, for instance, Christ was spoken of as a King, and the title is significant and true, but feudal conceptions could easily be stretched too far, and a false logic would then lead to an image of Christ more repellent than attractive.

Nevertheless, sin is a captivity and some explanation can be offered of the phrase, the rights of the Devil. Our Lord speaks of the Prince of this World and of his power, and if we take a number of texts of Scripture at their face value, then there does seem to be an ascription of certain powers to Lucifer. There is a problem here, the solution of which falls outside the scope of this essay, because some explanation is needed of why the Devil should be the arch-enemy of mankind and permitted to trouble mankind to such an extent. It may be that, like other angels, Lucifer had from his creation some one destiny and function (it is of the very nature of an angel to have one mission or function, according to St Thomas), and that function may have been bound up with the lot of mankind. The loss of God's friendship would then still leave him his natural function but perverted. How far such an explanation would allow of his having rights in a very loose sense of that term, we must leave here undetermined.¹

A similar mingling of the true and the incomplete is seen in the *Substitution* aspect of Substitution or Vicarious Punishment. In this view the idea of ransom passes into that of Christ as our substitute. His precious blood is our price and more than our price, because the

¹ See Essay x, *The Fall of Man*, pp. 353-355.

shedding of it represents what we deserved. His death is in place of our death, his suffering in place of our punishment. Now undoubtedly there is a truth contained in such statements, because the language with a slight change is the traditional Catholic language, and we all use it when we wish to speak of the Sacrifice of the Cross. But again it is not the full truth. If instead of using "in the place of," the holders of the view had written "on behalf of," their version would have served well. The Latin language with its preposition "pro," and the English use of "for," tend to confuse what St Paul kept quite distinct. The death of Christ for him is "*for our sake*," "*on our behalf*,"¹ and not "in our stead"; and if his words do imply some kind of substitution, it is a substitution based on an intimate union of Christ with us, and not on a mere exchange.

This meaning and the implications of St Paul's view will be developed later. It is mentioned here to bring out the resemblance between it and the representation of it, which is also partly a misrepresentation, under the form of an exchange or substitution of the innocent for the guilty. Those who support this latter theory do so on the ground that expiatory sacrifice generally takes the form of the offering of a victim in place of the guilty persons. They regard the ritual of such sacrifice as marking this transposition. An innocent victim is chosen, the priest lays his hands upon it in token of the substitution, then its blood is shed, and the blood signifies the life of the offerers which is then made over to God. Evidence to support this explanation is sought in the Jewish sacrifice, and the scapegoat is regarded as the best illustration.

This interpretation of expiatory sacrifice needs to be supplemented by other aspects. Taken independently it may hold good of certain primitive sacrifices where religious worship is debased by the intrusion of magic. But it does not do justice to all the features of Jewish sacrifice, and it is worth noting that in the example of the scapegoat which best suits the view there is no slaying or shedding of the blood of the victim. When then this aspect is converted into a rigid theory of our Lord's sacrifice, great caution is needed. Its exponents suggest that our Lord, like the scapegoat, suffers in place of man and endures all the penalties which, if he had not taken the place of man, man would have suffered. Now, as was said, there is a truth imbedded in the theory, and many outside the Church are under the impression that the theory without qualification contains the whole Christian and Catholic doctrine of the Redemption. Hence many minds have been turned away scandalised. Not without some justification they regard the conception of God contained in the view as indefensible. We have no longer the "Our Father" of Christ but a pagan God who maltreats the innocent because his lust for punishment must be sated.

¹ ὑπέρ not ἀντί.

And even if the justice of God, as it is claimed, demand the punishment either of the guilty or the guiltless, there is far too great an insistence on that justice as distinct from the divine mercy. This quality of mercy is everywhere present in the Christian theology, and the Christian God is no Rhadamanthus who ruthlessly condemns the innocent to suffer in place of the guilty. It should be added that the theory does not work out, because the death of Christ ought, if it is a substitute for the death of man, to procure a release for all mankind from the penalty of death.

The aspect of substitution, therefore, if pressed, cannot be maintained as a complete explanation of the Redemption. Undoubtedly there are traces of it at least as a theory among certain of the Fathers, but almost always the theory is an exaggeration of what is straightforward and accurate. As was said above, the theory needs only a small but important emendation to be wholly right, and it is because the meaning of our Lord's sacrifice was never lost in the tradition of the Church that the somewhat ambiguous statement of it in terms of vicarious suffering has always been intelligible and, when properly understood, accurate.

The immaturity of both the above theories led to a more *Satisfaction* sophisticated explanation when theology first began to be scholastic. This explanation is what is called the theory or aspect of Satisfaction, and its author was St Anselm. As might be expected, St Anselm avoids the crudities inherent in the preceding views, and starts with the premiss that sin is an offence against God. Now since sin against God is an infinite wrong, and since the honour of God must needs be vindicated, only Christ the God-Man could repair this wrong, appease the justice of God, and save mankind from the fate in which sin involved them. Hence the Redemption of Christ is morally necessary, and Christ by his willing acceptance of Calvary makes abundant reparation, manifests the justice of God, and obtains propitiation and redemption for all mankind.

There are several points to be noticed in this view. First, the factor of our Lord's willing obedience and self-oblation come into prominence, so that there is no question of a mere balance of punishment and satisfaction; and with this addition part of the harshness in former views disappears. Secondly, the emphasis laid on God's justice is certainly part of the doctrine of St Paul. Man must learn the nature of God and the nature of sin also, and these lessons are taught best by the exercise of full justice where sin has been committed. Thirdly, the substitution and satisfaction *motifs* are modified by the resetting of Christ's action in a large plan. Man must perish or be saved by a God-Man—Christ is the God-Man, he makes infinite satisfaction voluntarily, and his merit is appropriated by mankind.

The faultiness of the view lies in this, that it is still too rigid, too coloured by legal ideas. God is not bound to enforce an infinite

satisfaction. If that is given by Christ, there must be some special motive attending his voluntary act. Again it is not clear why and how Christ, who is innocent, offers satisfaction for the guilty and transfers the merit which is his to those to whom it does not belong. Once again, therefore, we have a truth recognisable, indeed, in the form in which it is expressed, but nevertheless imperfectly expressed and therefore open to serious misinterpretation.

*Synthesis
through
(a) charity*

The worst exaggerations of the theory of substitution are to be found in Protestant writings and were the cause of that reaction which has taken the form of denying any objective factor in the Redemption. The Redemption is the appeal of love and nothing more. Such a formula is far too narrow for Catholic tradition and, as was said, is irreconcilable with the clear teaching of St Paul. The Redemption is for him a supernatural transaction which involves a change of status. But this objective fact does not exclude love, and so it is perfectly legitimate to try and co-ordinate all the various aspects under the *motif* of charity, so long as the supernatural character of the Redemption is kept intact. St Paul indeed always falls back in the last resort on the agency of love when he wishes to enter more deeply into the mystery of the Redemption. Isaias had already told the Jews that God loves with an eternal love, and St Paul in his letter to the Romans develops this same thought. When we were ungodly, Christ died for us. Whereas scarcely will one die even for a just man, yet when we were as yet sinners God showed his charity towards us.¹ But there are certain laws which must accompany such an unmerited gift as the supernatural life. That gift makes us children of God and as such it is essential that we should be docile and make a return of filial love. We must recognise the generosity of God who makes himself our Father, since that predestination is "to the praise of the glory of his grace."

The prelude then to the drama of the Redemption lies in the refusal of man's first representative to give God obedience and filial love. This refusal has certain consequences which are worked out by St Paul, especially in the Epistle to the Romans, and these consequences can be viewed conveniently from man's side and from God's side. Since mankind has been blind to the superabounding charity of God and, instead of making a return of filial love, preferred the natural, we might expect a providence which educated man to recognise and appreciate the supernatural as a *gift*. This providence takes two forms: the majority of men are made to learn humility or at any rate the bankruptcy of the natural by being left to a degree to their own devices. This is the story of the Gentiles. They are not favoured like the Jews. The nemesis of the first refusal works itself out in their history; they learn by bitter experience how evil a thing it is to have relied on themselves

¹ Rom. v 6-9.

instead of God ; and in the darkness they yearn for a great light. " Because that, when they knew God, they have not glorified him as God or given thanks : but became vain in their thoughts. And their foolish heart was darkened. For, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." ¹ But the bitter experience has for its effect that the Magi look for the King of the Jews, and the Gentiles are more ready for the good news than the chosen people.

The Gentiles learn then by a law of consequences the value of God's gift as a gift, and any incitement to pride and self-sufficiency has been removed by the loss of integrity which brought a realisation of weakness of mind and will. One race however, the Jews, is selected in order to show the way back to God ; it is educated gradually by the revelation of a moral code of natural law and by a religion which is only partially supernatural. The religion enforces obedience to God. " The Lord saith. . . " Repentance and sorrow with strict punishments to leave no room for misapprehension are part too of the education, and lastly the worship is embodied in a sacrifice, which shatters the illusion of self-sufficiency. The act of oblation symbolises homage and the surrender of ourself to God. It is the preamble to that gift which will be the sign of true filial love, the offering of Calvary.

On man's side then the consequences of the rejection of the supernatural are seen, as the ninth to the eleventh chapters of the Epistle to the Romans explain, in the experience of loneliness and the folly of self-satisfaction, and secondly in the long and necessarily severe training of the race which is chosen to prepare the way back to the supernatural. Throughout, the plan is governed by love, and God uses the rod of punishment to drive in a lesson which was essential for appreciation of the duties and privileges of supernatural love.

On God's side love, as it was said, is the prevailing motive. As all-holy his rejection of sin is automatic and necessary. The Old Testament speaks of him too as angry, and St Paul uses the same language. What is all-holy cannot be unaffected by sin, and God would not be seen God by us were not his attitude towards evil described under the term " anger." Nevertheless St Paul generally uses the future tense when he describes God as angry in the strict sense, and at other times he is thinking more of the anger of a parent who corrects in order to educate, or he is setting forth the natural law and consequence of sin as falling under the disapproval of the Author of nature. For St Paul it is always the charity or the wisdom of God which comes to the fore in the long run. God's love educates and gives the initiative to a return from man's side. Even before the Incarnation the hope of the supernatural is restored because a title to sonship is given which some day will bring those

¹ Rom. i 21 and 22.

who have faith to the enjoyment of eternal life in Christ. But what God will not do is to give back the inheritance before the lesson is learnt. For that reason the law cannot give life ; it is but a pedagogue, and all have to experience the absence of the supernatural, "that no flesh may glory before God."

The full measure of God's love however is not made clear till the coming of Christ. "For God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son : that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." First, Christ gave the finishing touches to that long education which was so necessary. He proves first of all the truth of God's friendship, and his attitude to the Father is the sublime pattern of what filial friendship should be, the friendship which man had refused. His food is to do the will of his Father ; he does not snatch at an equality of honour with God. He is therefore the exact opposite of all that self-sufficiency which had stood in the way of the original divine design.

But he is not only the supreme example and the last and most perfect teacher sent from on high to make smooth the way back. He is himself the Way and the Life. He is a man and he is the first man who is able to give true filial love to the Father—that is, to adopt the attitude which is requisite for a gift to be given which will be appreciated as a gift. So striking indeed is this spirit of loyalty and love to the Father that it stirs up the hatred of the Jews. They, face to face with Christ, display the same vice which had brought about the loss of the supernatural life. They cannot accept a life which tells them that their self-sufficiency is wasted, and that all they have and are must come not from themselves but from the grace of God. The consequence is what the writer of Wisdom had foretold : "He is grievous unto us, even to behold : for his life is not like other men's, and his ways are very different. . . . Let us see then if his words be true, and let us prove what shall happen to him : and we shall know what the end shall be."

But this is not the whole story, and to complete it we must return to the partial aspects of the Redemption and to the motives of sacrifice. To make clear, however, what is necessarily difficult, the main points so far established must be repeated. God's action throughout is governed by love. He offers at the beginning of history a gift which far transcends the due of human nature. One condition is necessarily attached to it. Man must recognise the gift as a gift : God's love, that is, must be met by an attitude which is filial, selfless, trusting, full of hope and charity. Man refused the gift and preferred to be self-centred. The gift then is taken away, but the subsequent history of God's dealings with mankind shows God at work to remove the spirit of self-sufficiency, in order to give back the gift in the plenitude of Christ. The coming of Christ is the second great manifestation of God's charity. He completes the education ; as God he shows the divine love for man ;

as man he offers God that filial spirit, which is required for the supernatural gift, and is the model which others therefore must copy. St Thomas, when he treats of the question whether the Incarnation was necessary for the redemption of the human race, gives a series of exquisite quotations which illustrate the purpose and love of Christ: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son . . ." (John iii). "What else is the cause of the Lord's coming than to show God's love for us. . . . If we have been slow to love, at least let us hasten to love in return" (St Augustine). "Man's pride, which is the greatest stumbling-block to our clinging to God, can be convinced and cured by humility so great" (St Augustine). "Learn, O Christian, thy worth, and being made a partner of the Divine nature, refuse to return by evil deeds to your former worthlessness" (St Leo).

In these and many other passages St Thomas either in his own (b) *Solidar-* words or by quotation, lays emphasis on the motive of love, when ^{ity} he speaks of the Incarnation. But when he is resolving the question of the Redemption he makes the motive more determinate by introducing a further idea. This idea is the representative character of Christ or what may be termed the principle of solidarity. Now the theories already discussed fall short of the whole truth, but they one and all rely on the truth of Scripture that Christ died for us, he is our ransom, he is our substitute, he offers vicarious satisfaction. St Thomas subsumes all these theories in one profound conception, and in this conception he is faithful to St Paul. In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians St Paul writes: "The love of Christ presseth us: seeing that, if one died for the sake of all, then all were dead. And Christ died for all: that they also live may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again."¹ The meaning is that Christ is our representative and that there is such a close unity between his actions and those of humanity, that humanity is associated with him in his death and shares the triumph of his resurrection. Christ is the new Head of humanity, and so intimate and organic is his union with men that in some mysterious way, known best to love, his actions are our actions. As the Epistle goes on to show: "The Christ, that knew no sin, he made sin for us: that we might be made the justice of God in him." That is, our Lord is the representative of humanity, the second Adam undoing the work of the first Adam. His death and resurrection are our death and resurrection, our purification and new life. We are incorporated in him, and because of this solidarity, his sacrifice is our sacrifice, and the fruits of that sacrifice our fruits. "He was delivered up for our sins and rose again for our justification."² "Being justified freely by his grace,

¹ In the Greek here and in the other texts quoted, I follow the interpretation of Prat, *La théologie de St Paul*, vol. ii, pp. 241 ff.

² Rom. iv 25.

through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to the showing of his justice, for the remission of former sins.”¹ Many similar passages might also be quoted; in fact all the sayings of St Paul about the Resurrection, about the mystical Body and incorporation, about our being a new creature in Christ and living with his life, are nothing but expansions of the same doctrine. It is admirably summarised in the second chapter of Ephesians. “But God (who is rich in mercy) for his exceeding charity wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ” (*convivificavit nos in Christo*).²

St Thomas quotes this text, and in the questions which treat of the Redemption time and again he returns to the motive of the love of God and the principle of solidarity. Elsewhere he brings to the fore the view that the example of the filial and perfect love of Christ proves God’s love for mankind, and is the ideal which mankind had refused. Christ is the tutor. The Passion of Christ is the most suitable method of the Redemption because “by it man learns how much God loves man; and by it he is incited to that return of love in which the perfection of our human salvation consists. . . .

“Secondly, because by it he gave us an example of obedience, humility, constancy, justice and the other virtues displayed in the Passion. . . . Thirdly, because Christ by his Passion not only freed man from sin but merited for him justifying grace and the glory of beatitude, as will be explained later.”³ In the later explanation we find first that “Christ out of his love and obedience in suffering offered to God something greater than the repayment demanded for the whole offence of the human race”;⁴ and he goes on a little later: “As the head and members are as it were one mystical person, so the satisfaction of Christ belongs to all the faithful as to his members.”⁵ And in another place “grace was given to Christ, not only as to a single person but in as much as he is the Head of the Church.”⁶ And again: “The satisfaction of Christ has its effect in us in so far as we are incorporated in him, as members with the head.”⁷ The whole doctrine is admirably summed up in the forty-ninth question. “I reply that the passion of Christ is the proper cause of the remission of sins in a threefold way: first as an incitation to charity because, as the Apostle says in Romans v, God commendeth his charity to us . . .; but by charity we gain pardon for sins . . .: secondly the passion of Christ causes the remission of sins by mode of redemption: for as he is our head, by his passion, which he bore out of love and obedience,

¹ Rom. iii 24.

² *S. Theol.*, III, Q. xlvi, art. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, ad 1.

⁷ *S. Theol.*, Q. xlix, art. 3, ad 3.

² Eph. ii 4.

⁴ *S. Theol.*, Q. xlvi, art. 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, art. 1.

he freed us as his members from sin, as it were by the price of his Passion. . . ." ¹

No less clearly is the same doctrine embodied in St Thomas's view of merit. Merit is almost the favourite word of the Church in its Councils and decisions when treating of our salvation through Christ. When then St Thomas puts to himself the question whether Christ's Passion brought about our salvation by way of merit, he answers as follows: "As stated above, grace was bestowed on Christ, not only as an individual, but inasmuch as he is the Head of the Church, so that it might overflow into his members; and therefore Christ's works are referred to himself and to his members in the same way as the works of any other man in a state of grace are referred to himself. But it is evident that whosoever suffers for justice' sake, provided that he be in a state of grace, merits his salvation thereby. . . . Consequently Christ by his Passion merited salvation, not only for himself, but likewise for all his members." ² That is to say Christ did not die instead of us or in our place, but on our behalf, because he was mystically one with us. His merit is our merit, "in the same way as the works of any other man are referred to himself."

The doctrine therefore of St Thomas is the fulfilment of the other theories and the replica of that of St Paul. Ransom, substitution, vicarious atonement are nothing but images of the mystery of incorporation; the dominant motive of the Redemption is love, and it is love which is the efficient cause. We are far therefore from any mechanical or semi-magical theory, but we are far also from any mere subjective redemption. St Thomas lays stress on Christ as an example. He is the pattern of filial obedience, but this behaviour of Christ embodies the supernatural attitude and passes into an act which wins for us an inheritance once lost. He wins for us this redemption by the love shown in the Passion. He is not just a substitute, but One wholly man though also wholly God. As representative man he shares with those who possess human nature, just as he dies as their representative. The charity of his death is, however, supernatural: it has a divine quality, and as St Thomas says, it far outweighs the offensiveness of man's sin. Hence the reward is proportionate, and the reward passes from the representative to those represented, from the Head to the members. The principle of solidarity, therefore, explains how one can die and merit for another, and it contains all that was true in the other theories without their inconveniences.

There still remain two points which need further elucidation. Does this theory answer completely what is demanded in Scripture by the term "satisfaction," and secondly why is the Redemption accomplished precisely by the passion and blood of Christ? The

¹ *S. Theol.*, Q. xlix, art. 1.

² *Ibid.*, Q. xlvi, art. 1.

first question St. Thomas answers by saying that "Christ satisfied not indeed by giving money or anything of that kind, but by giving what was the greatest of all, himself, to wit, for us, and so the Passion of Christ is called our redemption."¹ And in a later passage, he says: "So great a good was the willing suffering of Christ, that on account of this good being found in human nature, God was appeased for all the offence of the human race, so far as those are concerned who are conjoined to Christ the sufferer in the manner declared before."

But this does not explain why Christ suffered such grievous pain and gave his life on Calvary. Other reasons must be sought and they are readily forthcoming. It might be said that the Passion was just a consequence of all that had gone before, in the sense which the passage already quoted from the book of Wisdom indicates. But really there are many reasons on account of which it behoved Christ to suffer. It marks, as St John said, the perfection of love. "A greater love than this no man hath. . . ." Our Lord could not have shown in a better way the extreme to which his love both for the Father and for mankind was prepared to go, and no one can say that God has stinted his love or been reckless of his creation when he contemplates the figure of the God-Man on Calvary. The reward, too, is proportionate to the charity poured out—*copiosa redemptio*. And the risen life of Christ which his members share has all the glory of the sacrifice to make it rich with blessings. Moreover, there is this fact which could not have been realised without the unforgettable scene of Christ in agony and forsaken even by the Father. Sin is a hateful thing, an offence against the holiness of God with consequences which are inevitable and eternal. The real meaning of sin can only be brought home fully to the superficial intelligence of men by a picture of the natural consequence of it worked out in One of themselves. The charity of God would remain dark without this glimpse of his justice.

Throughout this account the attentive reader will have noticed how concordant the doctrine of Incorporation is with what was said in previous sections about sacrifice. To make everything clear, then, it will be well to recapitulate the Redemption in terms of our Lord's sacrifice and priesthood.

*Redemption
and sacrifice*

Sacrifice is the natural and spontaneous reaction of man in his relation with God. He expresses his dependence and desire for communion with his Maker and Final End by an act which exhibits homage, the offering of the best he has, and by an eating of the oblations. The object offered passes from being profane into something sacred, something belonging to God, if accepted by him, and in a special manner associated with him. This fundamental notion of sacrifice takes usually a special form when the worshippers

¹ *S. Theol.*, Q. xlvi, art. 4 ; Q. xlix, art. 4.

are conscious of sin and wish to make expiation. Here repentance has to precede union, and the repentance is seen in the treatment of the offering. It is made to suffer, its blood is shed, and the blood symbolises the expiation and wins atonement. It must be observed that the propitiatory element does not oust that of union. The latter is always present, and as culture grows the symbolism of the ritual becomes more and more pronounced. The external act is the symbol of love and self-surrender. That is why the definition of St Augustine, quoted by St Thomas, is an accurate as well as ideal statement. "A true sacrifice is every work which is done that we be made one with God in a holy society, being referred that is to that attainment of the good, in which we can most truly be happy."

The part of the priest in the sacrifice is to be the representative of the whole people. He acts in its name. The victim offered is generally something which can serve for a repast. The higher its worth the greater the sacrifice, and the victim should be something very closely associated with the lives of the offerers. The repast at the end is the consummation of the sacrifice already offered and admits man into the society of God.

Now after the Fall mankind not only lost the supernatural life, but lost it by sin. Hence a pleasing sacrifice would have to be propitiatory—that is, inclusive of two elements, expiation and reunion. It must further be made by one who represented human nature as such and gave to God a love which would be filial and supernatural. This double work Christ accomplished. He was the representative of mankind, the Word made flesh, and this communion with the children of men enabled him to offer in their name, to suffer on their behalf, to merit for them and share his reward with them. But he was also by nature a mediator, because, human though he was, he could offer God a supernatural love willingly: "Christ offered himself in his Passion for us: and this fact that he voluntarily endured the Passion was most pleasing to God, since it proceeded from the highest love: hence it is clear that the Passion of Christ was a true sacrifice."¹ Love therefore is the motive of the sacrifice, and decides the issue between God and man, and because the Priest and Victim were one, were the identical God-Man and representative of human nature, human nature dies to the old Adam in the blood poured out and is restored in the new Adam, the risen Victim. Thus the sacrifice is propitiatory, the offering is the most precious conceivable, and the love the highest because the offerer offers himself even to the giving of his life. "He hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness."² "But now in Christ Jesus, you who some time were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace

¹ *S. Theol.*, III, Q. xlviii, art. 3.

² *Eph.* v 2.

who hath made both one, breaking down the middle wall of partition, the enmities, in his flesh." The acceptance of this sacrifice is seen in the Resurrection. The blood with which we were redeemed becomes the food of the worshippers, the all-holy food which incorporates us into the life of Christ and so into a supernatural union with God.

The restoration therefore of humanity by God is achieved through the sacrifice of the Redemption. God becomes incarnate—represents human nature as priest and victim, offers to God willingly a sacrifice of supreme love, goes down to a death which is mystically ours, propitiates God for sin, and restores us to communion with the life of God by giving us to eat of the victim of the sacrifice, his own risen and glorified body and blood.

There is a well-known problem connected with the obedience of our Lord about which I have said nothing above. The quotations given both from St Paul and St Thomas suffice to show that the obedience and love of Christ gave to Calvary its overflowing redemptive power. The emphasis which our Lord laid on his willingness to obey has, however, led certain theologians to the belief that God had laid a strict command on our Lord to die on the Cross. The inconveniences of this view are obvious. It is difficult to reconcile with the equally emphatic declaration of our Lord that he gave his life freely, and it suggests, at least at first sight, a harsh doctrine of God, as it seems to make Christ not a victim of love but a hostage demanded and penalised. The only legitimate solution must come in the admission both of obedience and freedom, because the New Testament makes it clear that both virtues were exercised by Christ. But, this granted, there are still several different solutions possible. For a reasoned discussion of these it would be necessary to bring in and discuss several complex doctrines concerning predestination and foreknowledge and their influx on the action of Christ. Suffice it here to say that God did not doom Christ to a grievous death. But any of the following alternatives are permissible. Christ the Son of God in concert with the Father out of his great love for mankind assumes the rôle of Saviour, and that in a way which shall manifest God's wisdom, justice and charity. Throughout his life he shows filial obedience to the will of his Father and most lovingly embraces the Cross. Or, in the foreknowledge of God, it is seen that if Christ were to offer to God that filial attitude, which Adam had rejected, and so be both a pattern of obedience to man and a child after God's own heart, then he would be rejected by the Jews. Our Lord accepts the consequences and by his blood makes the redemption still more plentiful. This view, if elaborated, fits in well with what has been said above; and the comparison which St Thomas cites from St Paul is confirmatory: "As by the disobedience of one man the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one man were the many justified."

*Note on the
freedom of
Christ and
his obedience*

It must be added that further on in the same article St Thomas seems inclined to interpret strictly the precept which Christ received from God to die. A third view, which differs slightly from the second but in many ways is only a further determination of it, may be stated as follows: There are two kinds of laws, positive laws of God and natural precepts. Christ received no positive command, but as man he was subject to the natural laws, which prescribed the duty of suffering for truth and justice. Christ had to be obedient to the law of death and all that might be involved in it. But furthermore Christ before the Passion offered himself as a Victim to the Father. After that offering there was no room for choice. He was dedicated to God, belonging to him as one without any will of his own. This latter point, as can be seen, fits in admirably with the sacrificial character of the atonement.

The three views mentioned do not exhaust the possible solutions; other theories can be found in any of the larger textbooks of theology.

§ VI: THE EFFECTS OF THE REDEMPTION

CATHOLIC theologians, in order to bring out the perfection of Christ's atonement, describe it as adequate, rigorous and super-abundant. By adequate is meant that the sacrifice of Calvary is sufficient of itself by its own intrinsic merit to counterbalance the evil of sin. The infinite dignity of Christ as the God-Man gave to his actions an infinite value, and when we add to that natural dignity the love and obedience shown in the sacrifice of the Passion, the truth of the assertion seems sufficiently obvious. It was a great price, a mighty ransom, no less than "the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb unspotted and undefiled."¹

Rigorous when used of the Redemption means that Christ gave satisfaction even in terms of the most rigorous justice. The conception is legal, and theologians have some difficulty in working it out in all its details, but almost all are agreed that the debt of sin is more than fully paid by the Blood of Calvary, and it is paid by One who has identified himself with mankind and acts and suffers as its representative by virtue of the principle of solidarity.

Lastly the merit of the Redemption was superabundant. St Paul writes that "where sin abounded grace did more abound,"² and the proof is evident in that the dignity of the person of Christ gave an infinite worth to even the least of his actions.

As our Lord was the representative of mankind, it is clear that he died for all. Through Adam's sin death came into the world, and the second Adam repaired the evil by a death in which we all mystically share. This does not mean, however, that without further

¹ 1 Pet. i 19.

² Rom. v 20.

ado all are destined for heaven. Though the Redemption is objective there is nothing mechanical about it. The change of status required for man to pass from his natural state disordered by sin into one of sonship with God was beyond his power, and therefore the redemptive act of Christ is to that extent independent of human meriting. But in the very redemptive act Christ acted as Head of the human race, and gave back love to God freely. Therefore the will to share as a member with the Head, to belong to him freely is needed for the Redemption to be efficacious, and the closer one is united to that Head the more does one participate in that Redemption. Our Lord died for all: "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."¹ "Who gave himself a redemption for all,"² but belief in him is necessary. "And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me."³ Therefore against the view of certain heretics the Church has defined at the Council of Trent that "God hath proposed Christ as a propitiator, through faith in his Blood, for our sins: and not for our sins only, but also for those of the whole world," and nevertheless it has also been the constant teaching of the Church that it is possible to refuse the mediation of Christ, or depart from unity with and in him, and so forfeit one's salvation.⁴

*Redemption
and the
Resurrection*

The aspect of sacrifice brings out this fact prominently. The essential element of sacrifice is the offering, and in the sacrifice of Calvary the offering is the Victim of Calvary. We have been saved by the death of Christ, but we are bound, if that Redemption is to have any meaning for us, to join in the oblation, offering ourselves in union with the representative High Priest and Victim in order that we may enjoy the fruit of the sacrifice. The fruit of the sacrifice is the supernatural life centralised in Christ, the risen Victim, given back to us as the food of life. This being so, it is not difficult to see the place of the Resurrection in the Redemption. Too often it has been neglected. Certainly it is the decisive evidence for the Christian faith, and, as St Paul cries out, unless Christ be risen our faith is vain. It is also true, as St Thomas says, that it is an emblem of hope, and Christ our Lord is the example of the new life to us. But the profound meaning of the Resurrection is by no means exhausted by such reasons. Sacrifice, we know, does not reach its full complement without the acceptance of God and the sign of that acceptance in the meal. Not that the meal is the sacrifice, for the essence consists, as already said, in the oblation. That oblation in the redemptive sacrifice is expressed completely and finally in the death of Christ. Moreover, as Christ was innocent

¹ 1 John ii 2.

² 1 Tim. ii 6.

³ John xvii 20. Belief must be interpreted in the Catholic sense. The actual manner of incorporation is shown in other Essays in this volume, on the Sacraments and the Mystical Body.

and God as well as man, this sacrifice could not but be pleasing to the Father. The acceptance therefore is the complement of it and not intrinsic to it. But when all this is said the actual mode of acceptance remains profoundly significant for two reasons. The first is that Christ received a new honour impossible otherwise; he became a victim risen from the dead—a victim who is the everlasting medium between God and the worshippers. And secondly, as the sacrifice was offered for mankind, the Resurrection signifies the risen state of those who will to be incorporated in him. Now, as stated in an earlier section, there are two sides to the Redemption—the rescue from sin and the exaltation of man into the supernatural order. Sin is washed away by the blood of Christ on Calvary, and symbolically the old life dies with Christ. At the Resurrection when our Lord rises in freshness of life we rise symbolically with him, and walk with him in newness of life. The Redemption takes effect, and the Holy Spirit is sent. In the Resurrection therefore, taken as inseparable from Calvary, and considered best under the light of the risen Victim, all the effects of Redemption are contained—Baptism, Faith, the Holy Eucharist, and the Church, the mystical Body of Christ.

All these features of Catholic life are treated in another place, and it is sufficient here to have shown their connection with the Sacrifice of Calvary. All the dogmas indeed of the Catholic faith fit together into a marvellous whole—so marvellous indeed that their union is a proof in itself of the divine origin of the Christian religion. But it should be observed that, so far as the Redemption is concerned, the easiest and most fruitful way of approaching it is through the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ.

In conclusion, therefore, we can return to the majestic language *Summary* of the Epistle to the Hebrews: “But Christ, being come an high priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hand, that is, not of this creation: neither by the blood of goats or of calves, but by his own blood, entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and of oxen . . . sanctify such as are defiled, to the cleansing of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who by the Holy Ghost offered himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? And therefore he is the Mediator of the new testament: that by means of his death for the redemption of those transgressions which were under the former testament, they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”¹

Sacrifice then is both the will of God as known by revelation, and the spontaneous expression of man's mind and will towards God. The creature is bound to adore, and without compulsion

¹ ix 11 ff.

he declares his utter dependence on his Maker by the ritual offering of gifts. As he comes to a deeper knowledge of himself and a better understanding of the nature of God, he realises that his gestures and acts have symbolised not only the homage of a servant, but the longing for holiness—the longing, that is, for union with his final end. In the very realisation of this, however, he is conscious of the infinite distance between the divine holiness and his own frail humanity and of the further defilement of that humanity by sin. Vainly then he tries to cross the intervening space by sacrifices which symbolise the detestation of sin in the ritual of blood-letting. The symbol is there, but not the reality. The sacrifice indeed is the natural language of mankind, and the symbol expresses the language of the psalmist: "Wash me, Lord, yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." And if Divine Providence had only been concerned with forgiveness and a moral righteousness, such a sacrifice might have sufficed despite the disproportion between the offence and the reparation. But God in his superabundant charity had more far-reaching designs: he sent his only-begotten Son to be the Sacrificer and the Sacrifice. All the cries of humanity now pass into one voice, and a new High Priest is beseeching God with many pleas; all the symbols of sacrifice are subsumed in one Victim, who is the symbol of man's sin but a real human victim of flesh and blood. Hence it is that the descendants of Adam, who carried always with them the memory and stain of his disobedience, are slain mystically in the representative but real Victim on Calvary. The blood of Christ is the redemption of the world. But now the fruits of sacrifice are seen and the charity of God made manifest. Christ is the High Priest of good things to come. Though in all things save sin most like to man, though clothed in the form of a servant, he was also God, and as the God-Man his sacrifice was most pleasing to the Father. His act was most propitious; it was motived by supreme love and obedience, and the reward was consequently proportionate and divine. Christ the representative becomes the new Adam, and whereas the children of Adam suffered through him, so now the children born of Christ gain through him. They walk in a newness of life, in the company of One who, being God as well as man, gives to them a share in his Godhead, and their sacrifice becomes one of thanksgiving, the propitious offering of the one eternal Victim, and a communion with his Flesh and Blood.

M. C. D'ARCY, S.J.

XV

MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

§ I: MARY, VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD

CARDINAL NEWMAN has reminded us in a famous sermon that "the Glories of Mary are for the sake of her Son." So it is that when we come to consider the revealed truths which our religion teaches us concerning our Lady we realise that they are what is known as *secondary* in the counsels of God. This is in no way to disparage their interest and importance; it is merely to state the obvious fact that from whatever angle we may look at the Blessed Virgin she is never really the centre of the picture. The artist may depict her alone, but she is not alone—whenever we turn our eyes to her, inevitably we think of him whose Mother she is. She points men to her Son, before whom she kneels in adoration as her Lord and Saviour. No more than any other creature can she be blessed for her own sake independently of him. Her blessedness is the direct consequence of her nearness to him, who alone is Blessed in himself from endless ages. Her whole life—in a unique sense her very existence—can only be rightly viewed in relation to Another, since she was created for this one purpose, to be the human Mother of God made man. Pre-eminently of her it is true that "her life is hidden with Christ in God."

*Our Lady's
Divine
Maternity*

This is the meaning of Blessed Grignon de Montfort when he tells us that our Lady is *The Relation to God*. Mary is the link which "refers" (or brings) God to man, and joins man (above all the Christian man) to God. When the Holy Spirit overshadowed her she became the point of contact between the human and the divine. To reach her heart heaven bent down to earth and in her Motherhood earth was raised to heaven.

The primary truths of religion concern God in himself, in his Unity of Being and Trinity of Persons—God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. They refer to his infinite perfections (known as the divine attributes); to the work of creation, redemption and sanctification of men; to the Incarnation of the everlasting Word, his death upon the Cross, his Resurrection and Ascension, his session at the right hand of the Father; to the life-giving, co-equal, co-eternal Spirit, who, on the day of Pentecost, came to dwell with the Church of Christ, guiding her into all truth according to the promises of God.

The central and primary truth of Christianity (that is, of belief not only in God the Father, but also in Jesus Christ our Lord)

is the fact that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."¹ This is the mystery or secret, "hidden from ages and generations,"² until it was "manifested" on earth when, first the shepherds and then the kings, first the simple and then the learned—wise men from the gorgeous East, but also wise men from the open fields—adored in a stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes, the Lord of all. "They found the child," as Christians without number, in every age, have found him since, "with Mary his Mother."³ And so it has come to pass that all the truths of our faith (secondary though they are) concerning the incomparable dignity and privileges of our Lady are the great safeguards and witnesses to the primary truths of the Gospel, which, in their setting, shine with a light and splendour such as could hardly encompass the bare statement of transcendental facts, were it to stand alone without any comment or concrete illustration. For example, it is easy to say: God is the Supreme Being, self-existing, Creator of all things in heaven and on earth. Easy even to say: Christ is God, without exciting much interest or opposition. Certainly in our day and generation there would be nothing sensational in any such statements; they have been made continuously in England for more than thirteen hundred years. But say: Mary is the Mother of God, and people are startled and quick to set to work questioning in their minds. They face realities. They think.

I once heard Cardinal Manning state that John Bright told him that he had heard this sentence, "Mary is the Mother of God," repeated in the course of a sermon preached in Rome, and that for twenty years afterwards he was turning over these six short words in his mind almost every day, and often during the night, asking himself what exactly the preacher could have meant by them. They were unfamiliar to him and grated harshly on his ear—indeed, excepting among Catholics, they had hardly been spoken in our midst for four hundred years. Yet they are nothing more than the affirmation of the elementary, primary Christian truth, that Jesus Christ is God, and that Mary is his Mother. Yes, the proposition, Mary is the Mother of God, is the safeguard and witness of that other proposition upon which all our religion depends: Jesus, Mary's Son, is God.

"Because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner hath been partaker of the same."⁴ By his merciful act of taking flesh and blood God came into immediate contact with his Mother. He became her Son. She is "Mary, the Mother of Jesus," Mary, "of whom was born Jesus." To believe this is the very touchstone and criterion of the Christian Faith. "Nowhere doth he take hold of the angels; but of the seed of

¹ John i 14.

² Matt. ii 11; Luke ii 16.

³ Col. i 26.

⁴ Heb. ii 14.

Abraham he taketh hold.”¹ “Of the seed of Abraham,” that is, of Mary. She is the Mother of Emmanuel, God with us—not the Mother of his body merely, nor most certainly the Mother of his human soul, but *his* Mother—in the same way that our mothers are not the mothers merely of our bodies, and most certainly not the mothers of our souls, but *our* mothers. Even so, is Mary *his* Mother—and he is God—God made man for us men and for our salvation. It is obvious that she who was born in the course of the world’s history in the same manner as all other women have been born, is not the Mother of the Godhead which is from eternity, but neither is she the Mother only of the manhood. Her Son is a divine Person. She is the Mother of Jesus, of the Eternal, of him who, living from all eternity, in the fulness of time was born of her at Bethlehem in the human nature which he had deigned to unite inseparably to himself. Simply, she is the Mother of God.

Saints and Doctors of the Church in East and West have vied with one another in proclaiming Mary’s praises—we can read the beautiful and touching tribute of their devotion in a long line of witnesses to the tradition of Christendom concerning the wonder and excellence of Mary’s Motherhood, from the time of Ephrem the Syrian in dim antiquity, to Alphonsus Liguori living almost in our own days ; but no poet, no theologian, no Christian mystic has ever uttered words that may approach in sublimity the simple words of the holy Gospel—“Mary, the Mother of Jesus.” The creature has given birth to her Creator. This is the foundation of all her privileges, this is the one outstanding fact in the world’s long history. We date from before Christ or from after Christ, that is, before or after Mary bore her Lord as his Mother. Here is the very centre and heart of our religion. It is the fruitful summary of the Faith.

For a full statement of the Catholic doctrine concerning the one Person and the two natures (divine and human) of Christ, I must refer my readers to Essay XI in this volume. Suffice it here to recall that the one Person of Christ is divine, the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, who, God from all eternity, assumed a human nature, body and soul, at a definite moment of time, when the Holy Spirit overshadowed the Virgin of Nazareth. This union of two natures in the one divine Person of Christ is called the hypostatic (or personal) union. It is the mystery of the Incarnation of God ; it is also the mystery of the divine Motherhood of Mary.

This most sacred article of Christian belief was enshrined in the document known as the Apostles’ Creed, which by the common consent of the learned was in its origin the baptismal profession of faith required of catechumens in the Roman Church from the days of the Apostles Peter and Paul. “I believe in God the Father . . . and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by

¹ Heb. ii 16.

the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." It was "the Lord of glory" who was crucified under Pontius Pilate.¹

We know that St John in his extreme old age wrote his Gospel, and especially its opening passage, to confute those who already were making a division between the everlasting Word of God and Jesus Christ the Son of Mary. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was made nothing that was made. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."²

The Word became Mary's Son, and the Word was God.

Let us listen to St John once more :

"That which was heard from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life . . . ; that we declare unto you."³ Again, "Try the spirits if they be of God. . . . Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that dissolveth Jesus is not of God."⁴ Our Lord Jesus Christ is God, and he is come in the flesh, born of Mary of Nazareth. As St Paul writes, he was "made of a woman."⁵

With this teaching impressed upon the hearts and minds of the faithful, having been handed down from the beginning by the Apostles of Jesus Christ, both in their writings and by word of mouth, we can imagine the consternation and even horror with which men listened to the teaching, first of Paul of Samosata and subsequently in the fifth century of his disciple Nestorius, Bishop of the great See of Byzantium, preaching in his cathedral church, that our Lady was not rightly called Mother of God, but only Mother of Christ, who was only a human person, with whom the Word united himself as to an organ or temple of the Divinity. This was in effect to divide or "dissolve" Christ, for on this hypothesis there were two Christs, the divine Christ who was not the Son of Mary, and the human Christ who was. It contradicted the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, as interpreted by all antiquity. The title "Theotokos" (literally God-bearing, in Latin *Deipara*, or *Dei Genitrix*, that is, Mother of God) had been given explicitly to our Lady by practically all the great Fathers who had preceded the denials of Nestorius; by, amongst others, Origen, Methodius, Athanasius, Basil, Epiphanius, great and illustrious names. It was "in possession." This teaching of Christian antiquity was expressed by St Sophronius of Jerusalem when he wrote: "God became incarnate, not by uniting to himself flesh already formed and a pre-existing soul, for the flesh and the [human] soul of Christ were brought into existence at the very moment when the Person of the Son of God received them into his Unity. His flesh was not flesh before it became the Flesh of the

¹ 1 Cor. ii 8.

² John i 1-14.

³ 1 John i 1-3.

⁴ 1 John iv 1-3.

⁵ Gal. iv 4.

Word; from the moment when it was animated by a reasonable soul, it was the body and soul [that is to say, a perfect human nature] belonging to the Word, who is God, since it did not receive its existence in itself but in him." ¹ Julian the Apostate bore striking testimony to this teaching of the Church when he wrote as a reproach that Christians were accustomed to call a creature—Mary of Nazareth—the Mother of God.

This is the Catholic faith in the Incarnation, that God became man, the Son of Mary.

Directly the Pope had been informed by St Cyril of Alexandria of the false doctrine of Nestorius, he condemned it by his supreme authority. Not content with this he summoned a General Council (the third œcumenical) to meet at Ephesus. This Council deposed Nestorius and solemnly defined the truth that the title "Theotokos" should be given to our Lady, since, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, she had conceived and given birth to God when he assumed human nature in her virginal womb.²

The decree of Ephesus was confirmed by Pope Sixtus III, the successor of St Celestine, the Pope who had first condemned Nestorius and summoned the Council. Thus was the divine Motherhood of Mary, the safeguard of the belief in the unity of the Person of God made man, upon which the whole superstructure of our religion depends, asserted for all time by the supreme authority of the Apostolic See and of the assembled bishops of Catholic Christendom.

We read that there were no bounds to the enthusiasm in Ephesus when the decision of the Council was made known proclaiming the integrity of the ancient faith. St Cyril tells us that the people had waited impatiently all day long the result of the deliberations of the assembled bishops. When all was over and Nestorius had been deposed from his see, Cyril writes: "When we came out of the Church we were led back to our lodgings by the light of torches, for it was already night. Women walked before us carrying censers smoking with incense. The joy seemed almost delirious. Everywhere bonfires were alight. Thus did our Lord show his almighty power to those who would have robbed him of his glory."³

Our Lord glories in being the Son of Mary. This is the title he gives to himself, "The Son of Man."

Not only is our Blessed Lady the Mother of God. She is the *Her perpetual virginity* Virgin Mother of God. This union of virginity with motherhood is the crown of Mary's dignity. On this mystery the great St Bernard

¹ Letter read and approved in the Third Council of Constantinople (680-681).

² Though at first Nestorius had refused the title of Theotokos to our Lady, in the end he admitted that it might be tolerated, but in his own heretical sense "because the temple which was inseparable from the Word was born of her," not because she is the Mother of the Word, that is of God.

³ P.G. lxxvii 137.

in his sermons on the glories of the Virgin Mother, full of the love of Mary gives utterance to his wonder and admiration.

We read in the Holy Scriptures that there is a song that only virgins shall sing in their heavenly home. They, we are told, "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, for they were purchased from amongst men, the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb."¹ On this St Bernard writes: "No one will doubt that this song shall be sung by her who is the Queen of Virgins, and that in this singing she will take the lead. But it seems to me that, besides this song in which all the virgins join with their Queen, there is another more sweet and more sublime with which she alone shall gladden the City of God. No one else, even amongst the virgins, shall be found worthy to utter the melodious modulations of this second song. This is a right which belongs to her alone, who alone amongst virgins rejoices in being a mother, and in being the Mother of God. But she does not glory in herself, rather only in him to whom she has given birth. She glories in the Lord who has made himself her Son, and who, having prepared a singular glory for his Mother in Heaven, willed also to endow her on earth with a singular grace whereby, in an ineffable manner, she might conceive and bring forth without prejudice to her virginity. For the only nativity worthy of God was that which made him Son of the Virgin, as the only motherhood worthy of the Virgin, was that which made her Mother of God."² And again: "'The Angel Gabriel,' says the Evangelist, 'was sent to a Virgin'; that is, to one who was a virgin in body, a virgin in mind, a virgin who had sealed her virginity by vow; such a virgin as the Apostle describes, 'holy in body and in spirit'—to a virgin not newly discovered to be such, nor discovered by chance, but chosen from eternity, foreknown and prepared by the Most High for himself, guarded by angels, shown to us by the Patriarchs under types and figures, canonised from afar by the prophets."³

All Catholics will feel the truth of this great Saint's words, that, if God were to be born as a Child upon the earth, no manner of birth would have beseemed him save that which made him Son of a mother who was also a virgin.

St Proclus, a Patriarch of Constantinople and disciple of St John Chrysostom, writes: "Unless his Mother had remained a virgin her offspring would have been only a man, and the mystery of the birth would have disappeared. But if after her childbearing Mary remained a virgin, how shall he not be God and the mystery be unutterable?"⁴ In the same spirit St Thomas Aquinas says: "In order that the body of Christ might be shown to be a real body, he was born of a woman; but in order that his Godhead might be made clear he was born of a virgin."⁵

¹ Apoc. xiv 4.

² *Super "Missus est," Hom. ii 1.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Oratio in laudibus S Mariæ.* This discourse was placed as a preamble to the Acts of the Council of Ephesus.

⁵ *S. Theol., III, Q. xxviii, art. 2.*

In this matter we have not been left merely to our own sense of the fitness of things. The testimony of the Holy Scriptures is express. It is also detailed. The wonderful first chapter of St Luke's Gospel was devoted by the evangelist to "a narration of the things which have been accomplished amongst us"—that is amongst the early disciples of Christ. He tells us that already they had been "instructed" by those who were eye-witnesses of these events. In order that they might be further assured of the "verity" of all they had been taught, St Luke "diligently attained to all things from the beginning,"¹ and wrote his Gospel.

It is clear that the Evangelist could only have received knowledge of the events which happened "at the beginning," directly or indirectly from Mary herself. To whomever she may subsequently have revealed them, it is certain that, in the very nature of things, she was the only earthly witness of their actual occurrence. Ultimately and apart from the teaching of the Catholic Church which on other grounds we know to be based on divine revelation, we receive the narrative on the word of the Mother of Christ.

There was a Virgin.

She was saluted by the Angel Gabriel sent by God to Nazareth where that Virgin dwelt.

To her he was the first on earth to say "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women."

She was "troubled" at his "saying" and thought within herself what his salutation should mean, for she was a Virgin.

"Though all Jewish women," writes Newman, "in each successive age had been hoping to be the Mother of the Christ, so that marriage was honourable among them, childlessness a reproach, Mary alone had put aside the desire and the thought of so great a dignity; she who was to bear the Christ gave no welcome to the great announcement that she was to bear him, and why did she act thus towards it? Because she had been inspired, the first of woman-kind, to dedicate her virginity to God, and she did not welcome a privilege which seemed to involve a forfeiture of her vow. How shall this be, she asked, seeing that I am to live separate from man?"²

"And the Angel said: Fear not, Mary . . . the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and therefore the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called [a Hebraism for shall be] the Son of God."³

Behold the great mystery of the Virginal Motherhood set forth in the noble words of the holy Gospel, convincing in their simplicity, as they proclaim with majesty the supernatural history of the origin of our religion. In the beginning they inspired triumphant faith, the faith of the Martyrs and the Saints, as also of the little ones of

¹ Luke i 1-4.

² *The Glories of Mary for the Sake of her Son*, p. 352.

³ Luke i 26-35.

Christ, who all rested with amplest security on the word of God. Such faith they will continue to inspire in Christian men and women until the end of time.

There never has been, and never will be, any other Virgin Mother, but one only. It is a unique wonder. In Mary alone we believe that motherhood was joined to virginity, and that virginity was fruitful. Blessed above all the children of men was the fruit of her virginal Motherhood. Those who believe in the Incarnation of God will expect, rather than shrink from, subordinate mysteries surrounding the great mystery of all mysteries that God became Man. Moreover, to those who believe in God behind nature it will hardly seem incredible that the Creator should, when he determined to live a human life, act independently of the "laws" or processes that he made for all others. To Mary in her childbearing it could be said with truth as to Esther of old, "This law was not made for thee." St Ambrose teaches us that in the Holy Mass the consecration of the Body of Christ is effected by no mere human benediction, but by the words of our Lord. "He spake the word and they were made: He commanded and they were created." The Lord himself declared: "This is my Body," and his words effect what they proclaim. Surely that which is true of the "making" of the Body and Blood of Christ upon the altar is true also of their first "making" within the Virgin Mother's womb. It was accomplished by the direct word of God, the Creator of all things. We rest in his power and wisdom and no other explanation is required. As Abbot Vonier writes: "In Mary's Motherhood, God's action is supremely exclusive, absolutely unconditioned by the created law of life."¹

It has been the firm and constant belief of the Catholic Church from the beginning that our Blessed Lady remained a spotless Virgin to the end. *Virgo ante partum, in partu et post partum*: A Virgin before her childbearing, during and after that childbearing. In the special Preface provided by the Church for the Blessed Virgin's Feasts we read the words: *quae virginitatis gloria permanente lumen aeternum mundo effudit*. "The glory of her virginity still abiding with her, she shed upon the world the everlasting Light." As light passes through the crystal leaving it uninjured, so did the Light of the World, who is from eternity, shine upon his creation when he visited the earth; nor did his Virgin Mother suffer harm or pain in her childbearing, when Emmanuel passed from the resting-place he had chosen awhile for his habitation before he bestowed his visible presence amongst his own. Mary was his way to earth from heaven, when he came to us, "skipping over the hills, leaping over the mountains."

The Fathers of the Church remind their readers that of this mysterious passage of the body of our Lord at his birth there are analogies in the Holy Scriptures. Thus St Jerome writes: "Christ

¹ *The Divine Motherhood*, p. 11.

is a virgin. His Mother, too, was ever-virgin. She is Mother and Virgin. In like manner Jesus came [to his Apostles after his Resurrection] when the doors were closed. So also in his sepulchre, which was new and hewn out of hardest rock, none had been placed after him, and none was placed before him." ¹

We are reminded of the prophecy of Ezechiel: "And he brought me back to the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary, which looked towards the East; and it was shut, and the Lord said to me: This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it, because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, and it shall be shut." ²

In this manner was fulfilled the other prophecy, familiar to us all: "Behold a virgin shall be with child and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted means God with us." ³

It is difficult for us in the present day to imagine the horror and indignation which in the fifth century of our era was evoked by the news that certain heretics, Helvidius and Jovinian by name, had set themselves against the universal tradition of Christianity, which had been handed down from the beginning, and dared to assert that our Blessed Lady had other children after the birth of her Divine Son.

They based their heresy on certain passages of the Gospel and were answered at once conclusively by St Jerome, so that no more was heard of any doubt as to our Lady's virginity until the time of the Reformation.

Helvidius and Jovinian appealed to the passage in St Matthew's Gospel "until she brought forth her first-born son." ⁴ This usage of the word "until" for "before" denoting what had actually happened without any reference to what would, or would not, happen afterwards, was common amongst the Hebrews. Thus we read (Gen. viii 6 and 7) that Noah sent a raven out of the ark which did not return "until the waters were dried up on the earth," that is, did not return at all. Again, when it is said of our Lord that he should sit at God's Right Hand "until his enemies be made his footstool" are we to understand that it was only until then? Many similar examples can be given, if necessary. St Jerome asks derisively, if anyone were to say that Helvidius did no penance until he died, would it follow that he did penance after his death? With regard to the word "first-born" it is certain that whatever may be the case in our current English, its use amongst the Jews in no way implied that other children were born afterwards. We read even of the eternal generation of the Son: "When he bringeth his first-begotten into the world, he saith, 'Let all the angels of God adore

¹ *Apologia ad Pammach. pro lib. advers. Jovinian (in fine).*

² Ezechiel xlv 1-3.

³ Isaias vii 14; cf. Matt. i 1-23.

⁴ Matt. i 1-25.

him.'” The words “first-born” and “first-Begotten,” at least in the language of the Scriptures, involve no reference to any subsequent birth. They testify simply to what they affirm—that the son to whom they refer was the first-born; whether he was the only son, or was not, can in no way be gathered from the expression itself.

A further difficulty has arisen from the words “the brethren” and “the brothers and sisters” of our Lord. But it disappears immediately so soon as we learn that these phrases are applied in scriptural usage to all near, and even to distant, relations. Really this “difficulty” is of the same nature as that of an Englishman who might insist that the French word “*parents*” can only mean *parents* in our English sense of the word, in the teeth of information given him by a Frenchman that in his language it often means kinsfolk.

Quite independently of the teaching of the faith, it can be shown that these brothers and sisters of our Lord were the sons and daughters of Alpheus, or Cleopas, and of Mary, our Lady’s sister.¹ It is clear from the Gospels that there existed not only a near kinship between our Lord and his “brethren,” but also that they lived in close companionship. Indeed, it seems probable that after the death of St Joseph the Blessed Virgin made her home with her sister, so that living together they constituted but one family, much as we so often see in Italy to-day several generations living under one roof-tree.

We may recall with pleasure the words of the learned Origen: “Would that it might happen to me that I should be called a fool by the unbelieving because I have believed such things as these. The event has shown that I have not given credit to foolishness, but to wisdom. For unless the birth of the Saviour had been heavenly, unless it possessed something divine and surpassing the common things of humanity, his doctrine would never have penetrated throughout the world.”²

When we reflect upon the position bestowed by God upon our Lady in the central mystery of the Incarnation, we may cease to wonder at the solemnity of the warning of the Fathers assembled at the Council of Ephesus: “Should any man not acknowledge that Mary is Mother of God, let him know that he is cut off from the Godhead, for without a doubt by his own act he is cut off from the knowledge of God revealed in Jesus Christ, Son of Mary the Virgin”—and “this is Eternal Life, to know thee the one true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

¹ See the large edition of Cruden’s *Concordance* under “Brethren” and “Sisters.” Also the article in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* on “Brethren of the Lord,” proving that they were not, as was once thought possible, the children of St Joseph by a previous marriage. In Italy, even now, cousins are called “brothers.” A friend has told me that an Italian once said to him: “I saw my brother this morning,” and when he replied that he thought he had no brothers, the answer came: “Oh yes, but I mean my brother-cousin.”

² *Homil. vii in Lucam.*

If we turn our thoughts away from the consideration of the Christian doctrine about our Lady to the effect which that doctrine has had when realised in practice by the Christian people, we shall recognise how true devotion to Christ is inseparable from true devotion to Mary.

Terrible must be the fate of all who attempt to separate those whom God has bound together—the Mother and her Son ; on the other hand all who honour Mary as best they may will make their own the witness of St Alphonsus : “ The more we honour Mary, the more we shall honour God,” who, when he came to free us all, did not disdain the lowliness of the Virgin’s womb.

§ II: MARY, THE MOTHER OF THE SAVIOUR

THE Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God. She is the Mother of *The Second* him whom before his birth she was commanded to call JESUS,¹ *Eve* since, as it was said to Joseph her spouse, he should save his people from their sins.² She is the Mother of Christ the King ; she is the Mother of the Good Shepherd, the Saviour, the Redeemer ; as such she was most closely united with him (so far as creature may be) in his redemptive work.

Such has always been the belief of the Church. The mystery of the Redemption is the analogue of the mystery of the Fall. The Wisdom of God coming to our rescue has provided an appropriate remedy, as a divine corrective, for the human folly which led to our undoing. “ Where sin abounded, there doth grace much more abound.” At each point of contact, or rather of contrast, there is the visible imprint of the Hand of God. A man led to our loss of the sanctifying grace of God ; a Man gave us back the gift. Death reigned in the race of Adam ; through one born of Adam’s race true Life was restored to men. Death was the punishment decreed for our first father’s sin ; when the Redeemer died, death was found to be the one efficacious remedy for our loss. Then at last it could be said :

O Death, where is thy sting ?
O Grave, where is thy victory ?

The tree in the Garden was the occasion of our loss ; our healing is to be found in the Tree on Calvary. In the divine Food given through all the ages by him who once hung upon that Tree, which is the source of immortality, we may find the antidote for the poison which lurked in the forbidden fruit of old.

Catholics are familiar with the liturgical Preface of the Passion :

“ Thou didst place the salvation of the human race on the Tree, that whence death first arose, thence life should spring, and that he, who in Eden had gained his victory by the wood, by the wood should be overcome.”

¹ Luke i 21.

² Matt. i 21.

This, then, being the principle of what we may call compensation in the divine work of the Redemption of the human race, we shall not be surprised to find that, as a woman played so large a part in our fall, so, by the side of our Redeemer, there will be another Woman co-operating in our restoration. As there is a second Adam, so is there a second Eve. As both sexes yielded to the tempter, so both sexes shall have their part to play in the fulfilment of the merciful designs of God. "I will put enmities between thee and the Woman, between thy seed and her seed" is the first of recorded prophecies.

In a well-known passage¹ St Paul teaches that "Adam is a figure of him who was to come. . . . For if by one man's offence death reigned through one, much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift, and of justice, shall reign in life through one, Jesus Christ."

This doctrine—that our Lord came to undo the work of Adam, and to open the gates of heaven which had been closed to his posterity as a consequence of his sin, thus becoming Adam's antitype by way of contrast—is a favourite theme with St Paul.² The corresponding doctrine that the Blessed Virgin is the antitype of Eve, and that therefore she is rightly called the second Eve in the same sense that her divine Son is rightly called the second Adam, is not indeed stated expressly in Holy Scripture (though it is implied by the primeval prophecy in Genesis); but, none the less, the teaching of earliest Christian antiquity proves that it belonged to the Apostolic Faith and was handed down by the Apostles to the Church.

On this subject Cardinal Newman³ has set out with magisterial authority the witness of very early Fathers of the Church. We find the truth that Mary was appointed by God to counteract the work of Eve taught before the end of the second century by St Justin in the East; by Tertullian in the West; and by St Irenaeus, who, having been brought up in Asia Minor in the school of St John, watered the Church in Gaul with his doctrine and his blood, and therefore belongs both to East and West.

For example, Justin wrote:

"We know that the Son of God, through means of the Virgin, became Man, so that the disobedience due to the serpent might have its undoing after the same fashion that it had its beginning, for, whilst Eve, still a virgin and undefiled, through acceptance of the word that came from the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death, Mary the Virgin, possessed of faith and joy, when the Angel brought her the glad tidings, answered: 'Be it done unto me according to thy word.'"⁴

And Tertullian:

"It was whilst Eve was still a virgin that the word crept in which produced death. Unto a Virgin in corresponding manner must be introduced the Word of God who built up life, so that by the same sex whence had come

¹ Rom. v 14-17.

² In his answer to Dr. Pusey's *Eirenicon*.

³ Cf. I Cor. xv 44-49.

⁴ *Tryph.* 100.

our ruin might come also our recovery. Eve had believed the serpent, Mary believed Gabriel. The fault which the one committed by believing [the evil angel] the other by believing [the good angel] blotted out." ¹

And Irenaeus :

"As Eve was seduced by an angel's word to shun God after having transgressed his Word, so Mary, also by an Angel's word, had the good tidings given her so that after obeying his Word she might bear God within her. . . . And as the human race was bound to death through a virgin, so through a Virgin it is saved ; the poise of the balance is restored, and for a virgin's disobedience a remedy is found by the obedience of a Virgin, and Mary the Virgin consoles and rescues the virgin Eve." ²

And again :

"As Eve had become the cause of death, so has Mary become the cause of salvation to herself and the whole human race." ³

The importance of this teaching will be understood when it is remembered that St John died not more than thirty years before the conversion of St Justin and the birth of Tertullian ; whilst St Irenaeus was the disciple of St Polycarp, who was taught the faith by the Apostle himself. Nor was there at any period a moment's hesitation on this subject. From the third century onwards it was taught in every part of the Catholic world without contradiction, and by the greatest of the Doctors of the Church, that, in the economy of our Redemption, Mary was appointed by God to undo the work of Eve.

Thus, St John Chrysostom, preaching on the Feast of Easter, dwells on the antithesis between Eve and Mary, to which I have already directed the attention of my readers. "Let us all rejoice to-day at the triumph of the Lord. He has turned against Satan the arms with which he once overcame. You ask me how : I will tell you. A virgin, a tree, and death represented our defeat : these three have all become for us principles of victory. In the place of Eve we have Mary ; in place of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the wood of the Cross ; in place of the death of Adam, the death of the Saviour." ⁴

I will allow myself before leaving this subject a short reference to the testimony of St Jerome. Jerome may be said to represent the whole Christian world, excepting perhaps Africa. He was the intimate friend of Pope Damasus at Rome, the disciple of Gregory Nazianzen at Constantinople and of the celebrated Didymus at Alexandria. Born in Dalmatia, at different periods of his career he lived in Italy, Gaul, Palestine and Syria. Now, in one of his letters he writes as though enunciating a proverb, known to all : "Death by Eve, life by Mary." ⁵ Whilst St Jerome was writing this in Europe, the great St Augustine in Africa expressed the same truth in all but identical words : "It is a great mystery that as it was

¹ *De Carne Christi*, 17.

² *Ibid.* i 33.

⁴ *Hom. in S. Pascha.*

⁵ *Haer.* v 19.

Ep. xxii 21.

through a woman that death befell us, so through a woman it was that life was born to us—perdition by Eve, salvation by Mary.”¹ This truth belongs, if anything belongs, to the earliest and universal tradition. Our Lady is the second Eve in the same sense that Christ is the second Adam, joined to him in the blessing of our reparation even as the first Eve had been joined to the first Adam in the calamity of our Fall.

Here we have a principle of our religion from which, when we reflect upon it carefully, we shall see that certain conclusions of great interest and importance will occur to the mind. For example, we are prepared (apart from all other considerations) to learn that the Mother of God, through the foreseen merits of her Son and Saviour, was preserved in the first moment of her existence from original sin (which otherwise would have overtaken her as one of Adam’s descendants) and that she was even then dowered with the supernatural grace of God. This revealed truth we speak of as the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

*The
Immaculate
Conception*

I would refer my readers to the essay² in this volume which deals with the Fall of man, for a full statement of the Catholic doctrine of original sin; it will be sufficient to say here, that it is of the essence of that doctrine that God raised our first parents to a state above nature, bestowing upon them his sanctifying grace as a free gift to which, by nature, they had no claim. Through the sin of Adam (in which Eve bore her share) this gift was lost for all Adam’s children save only for her, who alone was chosen by God to undo our first mother’s evil work. Grace was bestowed not only upon Eve in the very opening of her life, but also upon Mary, that she, too, might at the first instant of her existence be found on the side of God as Satan’s foe. The enmity between Mary and the tempter is no new story. Already when Gabriel hailed her she was *gratia plena*, full of grace. Divine grace was hers without stint and came to her with life itself. Thus was she fittingly prepared for the virginal childbearing through which was crushed the serpent’s head.³ The Virgin Mother of God is the Immaculate Mother of the Saviour of the world.

This truth, contained implicitly⁴ in the universal Tradition of the Church, and necessarily involved in the teaching of the Fathers concerning Mary the second Eve and her entire sinlessness and purity, was solemnly defined by Pope Pius IX on December 8, 1854. With joy, therefore, we hail the Mother of God “without spot or stain or any such thing” from the first moment of her existence, until she was gathered to her eternal rest in the unveiled presence of her Lord. For the Church teaches us⁵ that the Mother of God

¹ *De Symbol. ad Catech.*

² Essay x.

³ Cf. 1 Tim. ii 15.

⁴ In Essay i (*Faith and Revealed Truth*), pp. 33 ff., it is shown that a truth may be contained implicitly in revelation, and at a later date be explicitly defined.

⁵ In the Council of Trent.

was free, through the Grace of Christ, not only from original sin, but also from the slightest actual sin. "The Blessed Virgin," writes St Thomas, "was chosen by Heaven to be the Mother of God; but she would not have been a Mother fitting for God, had she ever sinned. Therefore we must simply confess that the Blessed Virgin never committed any kind of sin whatsoever."¹ Our Lady's office as the New Eve (*mutans Evae nomen*, Eva changed to Ave) is not the only mystery of our religion which involves her sinless conception and her fulness of grace—even more is it the direct consequence of her Divine Motherhood. She is the Holy Mother of God.

Mary's peerless sanctity, her freedom not only from original sin but also from actual sin, is the inevitable condition of her nearness to the Person of our Lord, who is the source of all supernatural holiness that has ever been possessed by any creature. In his uncreated nature he alone is essential goodness—the All-Holy God, and of him in his humanity we are told that he was separate from sinners²—"holy, innocent, undefiled, elevated above the heavens, separate from sinners."

This last phrase should cause us to think carefully. Our Lord, after becoming man, in a real and true sense was far from being separate from sinners. It was an accusation brought against him with vehemence that he was the sinners' friend—an accusation which he was careful not to repel. With public sinners he sat at meat and welcomed them to his side and to his feet. If we call to mind his relations with the Magdalen, with the Thief on the Cross, with Peter after his fall, with countless broken-hearted men and women crushed by an intolerable weight of sin, we shall see that far from separating himself from their company he drew them always closer and closer to himself. "Come unto me *all* ye that are burdened and heavy laden." Yet it still remains true that he whose footstool is the heavens, when he visited our earth in the human nature which he assumed, remained "separate" from all that was displeasing to God. It could not be otherwise. No man might accuse him of sin, for sin could not come nigh unto him who is the Lord our God. When, then, we remember that he deigned to derive his human life from the life of his Mother, we shall share at once the feeling of St Augustine, who, when writing of the universality of sinfulness in all the descendants of Adam, "with the exception of the holy Virgin Mary," refused to entertain the question of sin where she was concerned, "since she merited to conceive and bring forth him whom all allow to have no sin," for to her was granted grace, greater than that conferred upon all others, "that she might vanquish sin in every respect."³

¹ *S. Theol.*, III, Q. xxvii, art. 4.

² Heb. vii 26.

³ *De Nat. et Grat. contra Pelag.* xii.

The Son of Mary was without sin in virtue of the hypostatic union of his humanity with the Person of the Word ; Mary was sinless, but through the grace which God bestowed upon her in abundant measure, that she might be fitted—so far as creature could be fitted—to provide the blood, drawn from her own body, with which her Son would redeem Adam's race from the guilt and punishment of sin. His Mother was too close to him for sin to touch her. Our Lord held forth his hand and by his merits preserved the chosen creature, whom by her Motherhood he had united so closely to himself, from the slightest spot of sin which could displease him, or even for a brief moment disfigure her soul in his most holy sight. And on this account Mary his Mother rejoiced beyond measure in God her Saviour. She was redeemed in the highest way—the way of prevention—from the shipwreck that involved all the other children of Adam, all our race, in dire catastrophe. As St Francis de Sales writes :

“ God bestowed upon his glorious Mother the blessedness of the two states of human nature ; for she possessed the innocence which the first Adam lost, but also enjoyed after the most excellent manner the Redemption which the second Adam obtained for men.”¹

Tota pulchra es Maria et macula non est in te. “ Thou art all beautiful, Mary, and in thee is no stain.” The Mother of God is a creature like ourselves, and like all other creatures she depends absolutely upon her Creator ; but she, alone of all creatures, is without sin, for in all creation she stands alone as having, by the power of the Holy Ghost, communicated her flesh and blood to him, who when he became incarnate upon the earth still remained “ separate from sinners ” and elevated above all the heavens.

Let me repeat it : by physical nearness and the nearness of his human sympathy and compassion he would indeed draw near to sinners without shrinking. During the days of his public ministry, and as he hung upon his Cross, he was no more separate from the Magdalen than from the Immaculate. On Calvary, by their side, was John the beloved, and other holy women too ; the Good Thief also was close to him in the agony of his passing. He was the Lord of all—of Mary Immaculate and of John the beloved ; of the Magdalen, of the Thief, and of the rest hard by—and of all he was the Saviour. But one was near to him in a sense that no other might ever be, for in all that goodly company one only called him Son. Once more it should be said : the sinlessness of Mary was bestowed upon her for the sake, supremely, of her All-Holy Child. Her sinlessness is part of the reverence due to God.

*Her
co-operation
in the work
of redemption*

Our Blessed Lady was united with the second Adam, her Son, both as his Mother and as the second Eve, after a fashion and to a degree impossible for any other creature. She stands alone, in a position apart, in her relation to the Redeemer and to his work of Redemption.

¹ *Treatise on the Love of God*, Bk. II, 6.

It is of the first importance that we should always bear in mind that our Lady gave free consent to the part she was called upon to play in the mystery of the Incarnation. At first she hesitated, not being certain as to the will of God in her regard. Heaven waited, as Gabriel hung upon her words, for her submission. "Be it done unto me according to thy word" was the direct response to the encouragement: "Fear not, Mary, it is as God would have it be. The Holy One to be born of thee shall be the Son of God." Our Lady's *Fiat*, when it came, was operative in its direct effect. In deep humility the Queen of Heaven bowed her head, as she spoke her word, and when she spoke, the Lord of all was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. From that tremendous moment the association of the Holy Virgin with the Incarnate Saviour and with the purposes of his coming was so close that we can never hope to grasp its full significance. It still persisted when the Lord of all gave up his human soul into his Eternal Father's hands, sin and Satan were overcome, and the world redeemed. Beneath the Cross of Calvary the Mother of God was still the handmaid of the Lord; still she surrendered herself in complete submission. She stood by the Redeemer's side uniting her will to his: one with him, even as of old our first mother had stood by the side of Adam beneath the shadow of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the opening chapter of the fateful story of our race.

There is only one Redeemer, one Lord and Saviour of us all. That is the very alphabet of the Christian religion. On the other hand, every Christian is called upon, as St Paul writes, to be "a fellow-worker with Christ." We are urged to co-operate with Christ not only that by good works we may make our own salvation sure,¹ but also in order that thus we may "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ for his body which is the Church."² Nothing can be "wanting" in these sufferings themselves, for each of them is of infinite worth; and yet something is "wanting," since our Lord has left us something to do which he looks for (however infinitesimally small when compared with what he has done), in order that through his merits, which alone give supernatural merit to anything we can do, we may both work out our own salvation, and also aid all those for whom he died. In union with him and by his grace we are permitted to share in his work "for his body, which is the Church." Again, St Paul ventured to write of himself that "he became all things to all men, that he might save all."

Every Christian, therefore, may in this sense co-operate with Christ in the work of the Redemption; but our Lady does so in a far higher, closer, deeper sense than any other of the members of his body, in virtue of that intimate union with him and with his redeeming work, of which I have already written. The co-operation

¹ 2 Peter i 10.

² Col. i 24.

of the Mother with the Redeemer who was her Son differs not only in degree, but also in kind, from that of any other saint. For her consent alone he waited when he sent Gabriel to her presence. She alone is his Mother ; she alone, as the second Eve, stood beneath the Cross.

The words of St Bernard are well known : “ One man and one woman have wrought us exceeding harm ; nevertheless, thanks be to God, through one Man and one Woman all things are restored . . . and indeed Christ would have sufficed. Surely all our sufficiency is of him ; but it would not have been good for us that Man should be alone. Rather was it fitting that both sexes should take part in our Reparation, for neither sex had been guiltless in our Fall.”¹

“ In the Christian religion,” writes Cardinal Billot,² “ Mary is absolutely inseparable from Christ both before and after the Incarnation. Before the Incarnation in the hope and expectation of mankind, after the Incarnation in the worship and love of the Church. For, indeed, in the primeval prophecy we were shown not only Christ, but also the Woman whose child he is ; so that I seem to see in the vision granted to our first parents a type of the Christian religion as it was one day to be, as we now see it, in the image of the Virgin holding her Son in her arms upon our altars throughout the world.”

Eve sinned before Adam, Mary was born before Christ. Mary gave Christ to us to redeem us from our sins. A religion that separates Mary from Jesus—the Woman from her Seed—is neither the religion of the promises and prophecies as we read of it in the Old Testament, nor the religion of their fulfilment as we see it in the New. The Fathers of the Church assure us that our Lady conceived Christ in her heart by faith before she conceived him actually in her womb. The Holy Virgin was even more closely united to her Son by grace than by nature in order to fit her, so far as might be possible in a creature, for her sublime office. Her dignity as Mother of God, her intimate union with the Saviour of the world in his work of Redemption, should be regarded together. For her dignity and for her office she was prepared both spiritually and physically, in her soul and in her body. Fr. Gallwey writes : “ Our Lord loves his Blessed Mother more because of her high graces than on account of the natural tie—but both are his own creation.”³

In the New Testament we are shown the picture of Mary saluted by the angel, Mary in obedience unparalleled on earth, Mary in her deep humility, Mary giving utterance to her *Fiat*—“ Be it done unto me according to thy word ”—Mary overshadowed by the Spirit of

¹ *Sermo de Duodecim praerogativis B.V.M.*, i, 2.

² *De Verbo Incarnato*, p. 401 (Rome, 1912).

³ *Memoirs of Fr. Gallwey, S.J.*, p. 92.

God, Mary the chosen vessel of election, Mary the Mother of the Word, and then—after her years of union with her Son in the holy house of Nazareth—Mary beneath the Cross, the head of Satan crushed, man delivered. The Fathers of the Church supply the commentary when they teach us how the Mother of God undid the work of Eve.

If we will absorb this scriptural and patristic teaching we can hardly fail to realise in some small measure the wonder of our Lady's office and function as the Mother of the Saviour of mankind, and of our Lady's share in the reparation of the evil work of our first parents. One is our Saviour. He alone redeemed us, yet he deigned to associate his Mother with his work of Redemption. Mary is the cause of our salvation, even as Eve was the cause of our ruin. This is the teaching of all antiquity.¹

Such thoughts as these should be of much service to us when *Her* *intercession* we turn our minds to the consideration of the Blessed Virgin's intercession with God on our behalf. We can all co-operate with our most holy Redeemer, yet Mary's co-operation stands alone; similarly we can all pray one for another through Christ our Lord, yet Mary's mediation and the efficacy of Mary's prayer is something by itself, unlike that of any other creature. In both cases the fundamental reason is the same—of all creatures she alone is not only the servant, but also the Mother of God. All our Lady's privileges rest ultimately on this great fact. If we consider the Catholic doctrine, we shall find that it can be set out in a few simple propositions:

1. All supernatural graces, like all gifts to man in the natural order, come from God alone as their fountain-head.

2. All supernatural graces are conferred through Jesus Christ. We pray "through our Lord Jesus Christ" and through him only. He is the only Mediator of Justice between God and man; for he alone is both God and man. Through him alone the wall of partition created by sin between the heavenly Father and his earthly children was broken down. He is the only Saviour of mankind. Yet—

3. All members of his mystical Body can mediate with the Mediator, and through the Mediator can mediate with the Father; this is called intercessory prayer. To this mediation St Paul constantly exhorts those to whom he addressed his letters; and to this mediation St James attaches the greatest importance, urging Christians to "pray for one another that you may be saved."²

4. This mediation of Christians, one for another, is not to terminate with our earthly life, but is to continue after death. We are taught to believe in the Communion of Saints in heaven as on earth.

¹ Thus St Ephrem (*Op. Syr.*, tom. ii, p. 327): "Those two innocent, those two simple ones, had been equal the one to the other; but afterwards, one became the cause of our death, the other of our life."

² James v 16.

The Saints of the Old Testament, Moses, David, Elias ; the Saints of the New Testament, Mary the Mother of our Lord, St. Mary Magdalen the Penitent, the disciple whom Jesus loved with a special love, the disciple to whom Jesus gave the keys, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, still intercede for us who are left struggling *in via* (in the "estate of the way"), not yet, as they, *in patria*—in our true country which is above.

5. Amongst the prayers of all the Saints our Lady's intercession has a special place apart, as the direct consequence of her special relation to the Lord of all, who is also her Son, to whom she was so closely joined in his earthly life and work, especially at Nazareth, at Bethlehem, and on the hill of Calvary.

But, further than this, it is commonly believed amongst the faithful that *all* graces obtained for us by the Death and Passion of our Most Holy Redeemer are bestowed after the prayer of Mary. This pious opinion has been taught expressly by St Bernard, by St Robert Bellarmine, St Bernardine of Siena, St Alphonsus Liguori and other Saints ; in our own days it has received approval in the Encyclicals of one Pope after another, and quite recently has been encouraged by the fact that a Mass and Office have been granted to several religious Orders and to all the dioceses of the kingdom of Belgium in honour of the Blessed Virgin as "Mediatrice of all graces."

It is, then, believed that our Lady prays not only for some or for many of the graces we receive, but for all. Apart from the weight of authority which encourages us to believe that this is the case, it would seem to follow from our Lady's co-operation in the acquisition of grace, since it is difficult to separate the distribution of graces from their acquisition. Mary certainly co-operated by her consent to the Will of God in the divine action which *acquired all* graces, for all graces have been acquired solely by the Incarnation and Passion of her Son, in which, as we have seen, she bore her special part, even as Eve had shared in Adam's sin. Can we then be surprised at the belief of so many great Saints, as well as of the faithful generally, that she also bears her special part, by her prevailing prayer, in the *distribution* of all the graces obtained by her Son ?

To this matter we can apply the most true words of Fr. Marin-Sola, O.P. :

"The faith and filial piety of the Christian people has been the best and most powerful auxiliary of speculative logic with regard to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, as it has been and always will be in regard to all the dogmas that do not concern the intelligence exclusively, but also the heart of man." ¹

Our hearts tell us that we owe all to Mary who gave us Jesus Christ, nor do our hearts deceive us.

¹ *L'Evolution Homogène du Dogme Catholique*, p. 331.

We read in the holy Gospel that Mary brought Jesus to the house of her cousin Elizabeth :

“ And she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and she cried out with a loud voice and said, ‘ Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed.’ ”²

From the constant Catholic tradition we know that when the babe leaped for joy when Mary spoke, at that moment, through the merits of Christ his Saviour, he was cleansed from the stain of original sin and sanctified whilst yet within his mother’s womb. The birthday of the Baptist alone amongst the Saints is celebrated by the Church. In his case, clearly, it was through the mediation of Mary, when she spoke her words of salutation and Elizabeth rejoiced at her coming, that God gave the grace of Christ to the child unborn. This was the first of the graces won for men by the foreseen merits of the Redeemer of which we find express record in the Gospels. We receive it on the word of one who, we are told, was “ filled with the Holy Ghost,” in order that in every ensuing age men might read and ponder, and marvel as they read. It was the norm and example of graces innumerable that should be bestowed upon the children of Adam, from the day when Mary entered the house of Zachary and Elizabeth, to the end of time.

Who shall dare to separate those whom God has joined together, the Mother and the Son? We love to linger on the hallowed words : “ Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.” He is the Saviour ; she is the Saviour’s Mother. Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should pray for me?—Her prayer is all-powerful with her Lord, for he will refuse her nothing, who deigned to be called and to be her Son.

§ III: MARY, THE MOTHER OF CHRISTIANS

MARY, Mother of God, Mother of the Saviour, is also the Mother *Spiritual* of men and especially the Mother of Christians ; she is the Mother *motherhood* of all those for whose sake God became man, for whose redemption our Saviour died. God has given her to be not only the Mother of Jesus, but our Mother too, the Mother of every human creature who may read this essay, the Mother of the poor sinner who writes it. Needless to say she is not God’s Mother and ours in the same sense. She is the Mother of God physically, since she gave God his human life ; she is our Mother not physically, but none

² Luke i 40-45.

the less really, after a supernatural manner. This spiritual motherhood of Mary it will be the object of this section to elucidate, but I should like for a moment to pause and observe that the idea of motherhood in itself involves the idea of secondary causes. Nothing can be more certain than the fact that God ordinarily governs, sustains and aids his creatures not by his own direct action, but through the action of his creatures one upon another. This is true both in the natural order and in the order of grace.

If we glance first at the order of nature we shall find that Almighty God gave us our being by an act of his will, and maintains us in existence by his power ; yet in a true sense it may be said that our life was bestowed upon us by our mother at our birth. Of course *all* depends upon God. This is taken for granted and does not need to be continually repeated. Throughout life we rely upon our parents and schoolmasters and friends for the food, education, and sympathy which alone make life tolerable or even possible.

Manifold and diversified are the human relationships which are necessary to us as we pass our days upon earth. We travel from God to God, but from the beginning to the end, from the day when we were brought into the world to the day when we are placed in our coffin by human hands, we depend, absolutely, upon the good offices of our fellow-men.

We need not, then, be in any way surprised to find the same principle of secondary causes at work in the supernatural scheme which has been set up by the Divine Wisdom for our redemption and for the sanctification of our souls. To God's dealings with mankind through our holy religion, there is always to be found a parallel in that everyday natural way of living with which we have all of us, by long habit and usage, grown familiar. For example, as we need bread to sustain the life of the body, so do we need the Bread that cometh down from heaven to sustain the life of the soul—both should be our daily food ; or again, from time to time our body needs medicine as a remedy for its ills, so the Church provides supernatural medicine for the healing of the souls of her children. I need not give further illustrations, though numbers occur to the mind, but will say at once that to those who are familiar with the workings of the Providence of God, as he satisfies the necessities of both soul and body, it will be no surprise to find that, as the Almighty has given men an earthly mother to care for them in the days of their weakness, so has he given his children a heavenly Mother to watch over them in their journey through life with a mother's love and a mother's tenderness. Our true Mother is Mary, our Lady, the same Mother whom he gave to his Son, who became a child for love of men and deigned to need a mother's love.

This Catholic doctrine of the twofold Motherhood of Mary—Mother of men as well as Mother of God—depends upon many principles, to some of which I will draw the attention of my readers.

To our earthly mother we owe our earthly life. So in the supernatural order our Lady is the Mother to whom we owe the life of the soul. This life—the life of grace—depends exclusively upon him who *is* Life, and from whom all life flows. “For the life was manifested,” writes St John, “and we declare unto you the life eternal, which was with the Father and hath appeared to us.”¹

“The life was manifested” when our Lord Jesus Christ was born of Mary the Virgin. Full of grace, full of love for God and man, the Blessed Virgin, as his earthly Mother, bestowed upon the everlasting Word of God his earthly life, bearing bodily him whom she had conceived by the Holy Ghost; at the same moment, as our spiritual Mother, she bestowed upon us “the life eternal, which was with the Father and hath appeared to us.” When, with the same great love still burning in her heart, she stood on Calvary’s Hill, once more she gave life to man in giving her consent to the Passion and Death of her Divine Son; for the life of our souls is due directly not only to the Incarnation, but also to the Redemption, and in each our Blessed Lady had her allotted part to play.

St Augustine writes: “Mary, alone, doing the will of God is the Mother of Christ bodily; spiritually she is both sister and mother, and that woman alone,² not only spiritually, but also bodily, is mother and virgin. Surely she is not spiritually the Mother of our Head. Rather of him, the Saviour, she is spiritually born, for she is among those who have believed in him, among those who are rightly called ‘the children of the bridegroom.’ But in very truth she *is* spiritually the Mother of the members of our Head—that is of us—because *by her charity she co-operated in bringing about the birth in the Church of the faithful who are the members of that Head*; whilst bodily she is the Mother of the Head himself.”³

*Mary and
the Mystical
Body*

In these words the greatest of the Doctors of the Church reminds us of the emphatic teaching of the New Testament that by Baptism we are incorporated with Christ, becoming one with him. He is the Head, we are the members of his Body which is the Church.

“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” said our Lord from heaven, for Saul of Tarsus was persecuting his Church on earth. The persecutor became the Apostle of the Gentiles, and showed that he had learned his lesson well, when writing to the first Christians he taught them that their very bodies were the members of Christ.⁴ No one can rightly separate Christ for one moment from those who are united to him by a mystical but most close and real union. Our Lady, then, who is the Mother of the Head of the Body, is also the Mother of each member of the Body. Not only the natural but also

¹ 1 John i 2.

² *Illa una femina*. The word *illa* (“that famous”) marks her out from all other women and strengthens greatly the word *una*.

³ S Aug. *De sancta virginitate*, cap. vi, 6.

⁴ 1 Cor. vi 15.

the mystical Body of Christ was the fruit of Mary's virginal motherhood. Before the birth of any one of us we belonged to our Lord as belonging to his Body. The Mother of God carried us together with her Divine Son when she visited Elizabeth and dwelt in the Holy Land. In a true sense the whole Church of God was enclosed, along with its Head, in the virginal womb of his Blessed Mother.

*The words of
Christ on the
Cross*

Catholic theologians teach that when our Lord gave utterance to the Seven Words from the Cross, he spoke not merely for the needs of the moment, but also officially as Redeemer of the world. He intended that these last words of his should be recorded in the Gospels, thus providing for the needs of all time that was to come. When he prayed for those who were directly responsible for his death—indeed, for them he prayed in the first place—he prayed also for all men and women who should crucify him anew by wilful sin and thus put him to open shame. When he pardoned the penitent thief, he declared his readiness to pardon all those in every age who, like the Good Thief, should confess their sins, own him as their Lord and seek forgiveness from his Sacred Heart. He prayed and made excuses for *all* sinners, when he prayed for some; he declared his readiness to forgive *all* penitents, when he forgave one; in like manner when he said to one disciple, "Behold thy Mother," he spoke to all. "When Jesus, therefore, had seen his Mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his Mother: 'Woman, behold thy son.' After that he saith to the disciple: 'Behold thy Mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own."¹ Our Blessed Lady stands at the foot of the Cross, not merely as the Mother of her dying son, but as the Mother of the Redeemer of mankind. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear and heed his Redeemer's word.

*Adoptive
sonship*

Perhaps the most striking proof of the reality of Mary's spiritual motherhood will occur to us after we have considered with some care the Christian doctrine of our adoptive sonship. In a certain sense it may be said that the Creator is the Father of all his creatures, irrational as well as rational, since to him they owe their being; but we use the word "father" in a very wide sense when we say that God is the Father of the cattle or of the birds and reptiles. In a higher sense he is the Father of all his *rational* creatures, the Father of all men and women. But this does not approach to the sense in which Christians use the word when they speak of that Fatherhood of God which belongs to them as to the brothers and sisters of Christ.

¹ John xix 26-27. There are Catholic writers who see in the word Woman, as used by our Lord to his Blessed Mother, both here and previously at Cana, a reference to the fact that our Lady is *the* Woman of Prophecy, *the* Woman who is, in a higher sense than was our first mother, the Mother of all the Living. But our Lord used the same word when addressing St Mary Magdalen, as it had previously been used by the Angels of the Resurrection (John xx 13, 15). It seems to have been the usual mode of address in Palestine at the time.

When St John wrote, "As many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God: to them that believe in his name, who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,"¹ he referred to a fatherhood and a birth and a sonship, other than those which belong purely to nature. They who were already sons of God, both as the work of his hands and as having been made as men and women after his image and likeness, received a new "power" that they might be made his sons in virtue of a new sonship, after a new birth. Already born into the kingdom of this world "of the will of the flesh, of the will of man," they should be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, through the action of God's Spirit.

A birth and consequent sonship above the gifts of nature were to be granted to those who had already been born of a birth, and thereby received a sonship, that did not pass the limits of that which concerns only this passing life. The gifts of grace were to be granted as an additional endowment to those who already possessed the gifts of nature. We find this truth insisted upon with much earnestness in the New Testament. For example, we are told that "we are not only called, but really are the sons of God";² that "we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father";³ and our Lord himself teaches his disciples when they pray to say boldly: "Our Father." If we ask ourselves how dare we thus speak—we poor sinful men—there is but one answer. Our Lord was not ashamed to call us his brethren. What he calls us, that we surely are—but if his brethren, then the sons of God by adoption. So by the gift bestowed upon us when we receive new life in the mystery of Baptism (as we had received our first life in the mystery of birth from our earthly mother), we are made the brethren of the Son of God, and his Father is our Father. But as his Father becomes our Father, so also does his Mother become our mother. From the first moment when, for our sake, he became "partaker of flesh and blood,"⁴ he became in time the Son of Mary as truly as from all eternity he was the Son of God. If his Father is our Father, then his Mother is our mother.

God, therefore, has given us his Mother to be our mother, and to care for us with a mother's love. The statement that our Lady is our mother is not merely a poetic expression—something which is a figure of speech. It is a strict truth, belonging to the spiritual order—to that order which is far more real, because more lasting than anything can be which will pass like a dream of the night. The Motherhood of Mary has its roots in time, but its promises are for eternity.

We read in the life of St Stanislaus Kostka that he would constantly repeat, with wonderful happiness, "*Mater Dei, mater mei*—

¹ John i 12-13.

³ Gal. iv 6.

² I John iii i.

⁴ Heb. ii 14.

*Mary's
maternal
functions*

God's Mother is my mother"—and we can, each of us, say the same. Can anything be more consoling? Mary is *God's Mother*. To his Mother God will refuse nothing. Mary is *our mother*, so she will refuse nothing to her children, when they kneel at her feet and beg her to show to them a mother's love, to extend to them a mother's care. There is something extraordinarily tender and trustful in the devotion of Catholics to their Blessed Mother; to which it is impossible to find a parallel. Our Lord we love supremely as our God and Saviour; his Mother we love, for his sake, because she *is* his Mother so near to him, because she loved him so dearly and watched over him so faithfully at Bethlehem, in Egypt and at Nazareth; we love her also because she is our mother too. If our Lord had appeared on earth, as he might have done, without a human mother to be his, he could not have been quite the same to us as he is when we read of him, as he actually did come, with his Mother by his side when he drew his first human breath at Bethlehem, and by his side when he died on Calvary. And as she was faithful to him unto the end, so we know that she will be faithful to us, who are also her children—the children of her tears.

Theologians are accustomed to point out that when God calls any creature to any office, he will give to that creature all the graces which are needed for the worthy discharge of the duties pertaining to that office. Thus, St Joseph was called to be foster-father of Christ, and we know that God gave him all he needed for this sublime dignity. But Mary was called actually to be Christ's true Mother; her immaculate heart was, therefore, in such wise fashioned by her Creator—made so gentle and unutterably sympathetic and true, in the highest sense so womanly—in order that God made Man might receive all the wealth of affection which a mother could give to her child. This was one chief purpose and end of her creation. By one creature at least our Lord was loved with a perfect human love—and Mary loved him not only with the love of a creature for her God, but also with the love of a mother for her son. Nor should we ever allow ourselves to forget that our Lady loves us with the same loving heart with which she loves the Son to whom she gave birth at Bethlehem. Leaving out of consideration the love of God for men—with which, of course, we cannot compare any human love—next to the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus there can be nothing so pure, nothing so deep, nothing so wonderful as the love of Mary for her children. Our Lady is not only *speculum justitiæ*, the mirror of God's sanctity; she is also *speculum amoris*, the mirror—the earthly reflection—of God's love. He has endowed his Mother with a love that is above the love bestowed upon all other creatures; and this because of her nearness to him who is the source of all pure love, who himself is Love essential.

Our Lady, then, will care for her children in the same manner that of old she cared for her Divine Son. When he needed her care

she saved him from Herod who would slay him ; she will save us from Satan. She gave him the food he needed in the days of his mortality ; she will plead for us that we may receive the Food of immortality. She will help us to find him, should we unhappily lose him by our sins, as once after weary search she found him, in the Temple at Jerusalem. If we allow her, she will rule our lives, as for eighteen years he allowed her to rule his life, when to her he was "subject" in the holy house of Nazareth. As she was with him when he died, so will she watch over our deathbed and answer the supplications we have raised to her heavenly throne, never doubting her goodness, during all the days of our life ; she will pray for us not only now, but, above all, in the dread hour when we die.

But while Mary shows herself to be our mother above all in caring for us in our spiritual warfare, yet we can also turn to her with confidence in the needs that concern our life here below. Not only did she bring Jesus to the house of Elizabeth, when he would work that great work of grace, and sanctify the unborn Baptist ; but also "the beginning of miracles" was worked by her Son at Cana of Galilee, when, at her prayer, water was changed into wine by divine power at the marriage feast. It was her sweet voice to which Christ listened then, as it is to her sweet voice to which he listens now at such a holy sanctuary as Lourdes, or, indeed, the wide world over, when, at his Mother's pleading, he gives his gifts to men.

They who see God face to face, see all things in him ; for no longer do they see as in a glass darkly, but in the light of the Eternal. This is true of all the Saints ; above all is it true of our Lady, to whom all her children turn in every trial, in every emergency, whether of soul or body, knowing that never in any age has she failed those who seek her aid, for she is the mother of us all. St Anselm of Canterbury gave expression to the mind of the Church and the feeling of Catholics when he wrote : "O Mary, if thou art silent, none will pray, none will aid ; when thou dost pray, all will pray, all will aid. Oh ! Queen most good to men, a thousand times a hundred thousand mortals cry to thee, and all are saved. I, too, will cry to thee, and shall I not receive thy help ?" ¹

I have said that our Lady's Motherhood of men, especially of Christians, seems to depend chiefly upon four great principles. (1) Mary gave us the life of the soul when she gave us Jesus Christ ; (2) she is the Mother of the members of his Body as well as of the Head ; (3) she was given to us by our Lord Jesus from the Cross in the person of the disciple whom he loved with a special love ; (4) she is the Mother of him who is our Brother, and therefore is our Mother also, even as his Father is our Father too.

¹ *Te tacente, O Maria, nullus orabit, nullus juvabit ; te orante, omnes orabunt, omnes juvabunt. Millies centena millia hominum ad te clamant, Regina piissima, et omnes salvantur ; et ego clamabo ad te et non auxiliabor ?*
—Migne, P.L., tom. clix, col. 943.

But once in the Sacred Scriptures our Lady is pointed out to us in her own person as the Mother of Christians. The disciple to whose care Christ had entrusted his Blessed Mother for what should yet remain of her earthly life, tells us that he beheld a mysterious vision. Mary had passed to her great reward, when he saw the long story of the Church unrolled as in a wondrous panorama. It was to be a story of bitter, enduring conflict. "And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. . . . And there was seen another sign in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns; and on his heads seven diadems. . . . And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered . . . that he might devour her Son. And she brought forth a man-child, who was to rule all nations with an iron rod. . . . And there was a great battle in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels. . . . And the dragon was *angry* against the woman, and went to make war with *the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*"¹

In this manner, throughout all the ages, the primeval prophecy was to be fulfilled: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed."²

We read that the dragon of the vision is "that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan"; and we know who is the Woman, clothed with the Sun of Justice—Christ our Lord—and below her the moon—this passing world—and on her head a crown of twelve

¹ Apoc. xii 1-17.

It is well known that it is often difficult in Holy Scripture to discover whether the *direct* reference (particularly in Old Testament types) is to the Mother, or to the Church, or Christ. We are taught by writers of great authority that our Lady and the Church are merged in the Sacred Writings into a mystic unity; for example, already in the second century St Clement of Alexandria writes: "One only Mother Virgin. Dear it is to me to call her the Church." He was speaking in the first place of the Blessed Virgin (*Paed.* i 6). And St Augustine: "His Mother is the whole Church, because through the grace of God everywhere she gives birth to the faithful of Christ" (*De Sancta Virg.* vi). It is also certain that our Lady represents and personifies the Church, as for example in her obedience: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word"; and in her prayer as at Cana: "They have no wine"; and in her submission to Christ: "Whatsoever he shall say to you, that do ye"; and in her faithfulness to our Lord to the end. Therefore, we shall not be surprised if we find that some of the few writers of antiquity who have written on this Vision in the Apocalypse refer it *in the first place* to our Lady, and others to the Church. In any case, even though the direct reference be to the Church there can be no doubt that it is to the Church under the figure of the Blessed Mother of God, who is represented to us as the Mother, not only of the Man-Child who was to rule the nations with a rod of iron, but also of "the rest of her seed," who are expressly pointed out as Christians "having the testimony of Jesus Christ."

² Gen. iii 15.

stars ; for is she not the Queen of the Apostles, who are her crown ? We thank God that we are " the rest of her seed," her children too. If we endeavour to keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, she who is the Queen of Heaven will fight on our behalf, with Michael and his angels by her side ; for ours is the promise of God which endureth for ever. The Woman and her seed through all the ages, and until time shall be no more, will crush the serpent's head.

Our Blessed Lady is the heavenly Mother under whose banner her children shall triumph over Satan and over sin.

*Monstra te esse matrem.
Sumat per te preces,
Qui pro nobis natus
Tulit esse tuus.*

§ IV: MARY AND HER DIVINE SON

FROM all eternity Mary of Nazareth was chosen by God to be the Virgin Mother of the Word made Man, to co-operate in the work of the Redemption, and to care for her children in the land of their exile with a heavenly Mother's love ; but she too had once, like all other children of Adam, dwelt upon the earth, and thus was made ready for her rich reward.

It remains, then, for us to consider what we may gather as to our Lady's earthly life, passed by her for the most part in company with her Divine Son. Here we are treading on very holy ground indeed—nothing can be more mysterious than the relations of the Incarnate God with his Blessed Mother, as he led her soul step by step to heights of sanctity far above our mortal ken, through sorrows unimaginable—from earth to heaven that she might, when life was past, be crowned by his hand Queen of Angels and of men.

Any Catholic who attempts to deal with this theme must feel something of what St Bernard felt when he wrote : " There is nothing which gives greater joy to my heart, yet there is nothing which inspires me with more fear than to treat of the glory of the Virgin Mother." ¹

Still, though we take off our shoes with awe, as we approach to contemplate the Virgin Mother's life on earth, reverently to do so should bring us nearer to her in veneration and love—so we may attempt the task, remembering always that we are thinking of one who, although a creature like ourselves, nevertheless always remains the predestined Mother of God.

The Old Testament is full of types of our Blessed Lady. Eve, Sara, Rebecca, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Ruth, Abigail, Judith, Esther—all prefigure, under one aspect or another, the Mother of the Saviour. Her virginal maternity was foreshadowed by the yet

¹ *Serm. iv de Assumptione.*

untilled soil in Eden, by the Burning Bush and Gideon's fleece, by the Ark of the Covenant and the Eastern Gate of the Temple, and, so the Fathers of the Church assure us, by many another mysterious episode in the time of God's preparation for the coming of his Son.

I have no space in which to dwell on these figures of our Lady, nor on the prophecies which linked her name with that of her Son, who was to redeem Israel from captivity. We must come to the time of the fulfilment, when types and shadows should have reached their accomplishment in the perfection of that which they prefigured.

*The
Annunciation*

We find Mary first in the New Testament, as "a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the House of David," when the Angel saluted her at Nazareth: "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women."

Catholic tradition tells us that for this salutation and for this coming of the Lord, and for this high blessedness, our Lady had been prepared by her Presentation as a child in the Temple, where she had passed her early life in prayer and meditation on the ancient Scriptures, and especially dwelling on the prophecies concerning the Messiah whose advent was then eagerly expected by the Jews. Already the time marked out by Daniel had arrived. Israel was waiting full of expectation. . . .

And now the Holy Virgin knew that he had come and that he was hers—wonder of wonders, he was her Son. Soon she was to see his face amidst the straw at Bethlehem, to worship him with every fibre of her being, to love him with every beating of her heart, with a love far, far beyond the love of the Cherubim and the Seraphim. She loved him with the love of the creature for her Creator and of the Mother for the fruit of her womb. This twofold relation between Jesus and Mary was to persist to the end of her life and to endure for eternity. Unless we bear it steadily in mind nothing is intelligible in the sacred narrative. We are as far away from any understanding of the mystery of Mary if we forget that she is both servant and Mother of her Lord, as we should be from any understanding of the mystery of Jesus were we to forget that he is both God and Man.

*The
Visitation*

I have already written something of the marvel of the Visitation when our Lady bore her Child over the hills to visit Elizabeth.¹ Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and Mary, who was even then the living shrine of the Godhead, burst into song of a beauty unimaginal. Her soul magnified her Lord who had done such things for her, and her spirit rejoiced in God her Saviour. The Queen of Prophets was not afraid to declare aloud that all generations should call her Blessed, reaching forward through the long ages in dim futurity, for God had put down the mighty from their seat and had exalted the lowly and the meek. When we listen to the *Magnificat*, we feel it is one of the most unimpeachable of all prophecies,

¹ P. 533.

the most sublime of all thanksgivings, and the most thrilling of all poems. Mary's soul was full of joy and of holy exultation when thus she magnified the Lord before her child was born; after he had come to her, she was to bear him in her arms as she listened first to the *Nunc Dimittis* of the aged Simeon, and then to the solemn warning, "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."¹

Our Blessed Lady's mind was not only steeped in the ancient Scriptures—she knew that the Messiah was to be the Man of Sorrows *The sorrows to come*—it was also specially illuminated by God. Already she knew full well that his Mother must in large measure share her Son's appointed lot; but now the seal was, as it were, impressed upon that knowledge, as Simeon's threnody fell, like a death knell, upon her ears. In very truth a sword should pierce her inmost soul, that out of the hearts of countless millions the thoughts of the broken-hearted should be revealed. In the dim future, through the long ages inspired by Christian faith, Mary's children, stricken with grief otherwise intolerable, were to kneel before the image of the desolate Virgin, and there find comfort for their bleeding hearts. But before this could come to pass, her own life had to be lived through, her own heart pierced by the sword of agony, that thus it might be duly fashioned and made ready as the home of the hopeless and the refuge of the sinner who repents.

The glad Mother of the Lord was also to be the Mother of Sorrows—she was to be the Mother of the Crucified. Deep as the sea is thy desolation, O Virgin Daughter of Sion, and who shall be compared with thee, either in thy joys that are incomparable, or in thy grief which is beyond all measure?

Nor could the delay be long before the sword pierced our Lady's heart. It was but a brief period after the Blessed Virgin had shown *Flight into Egypt* her Child proudly to the homely shepherds and to the wondering Wise Men from the distant East, that she² "heard the voice in Rama, lamenting and great mourning; Rachel bewailing her children and refusing to be comforted because they are not." For the first time in the world's history women were weeping, their children dying, because tyrants feared and hated the Name of Christ, and Mary's heart was broken. She herself had to fly into the foreign land of Egypt, far from friends and home, because her first duty was at all costs to safeguard the life of her Son, who had been entrusted to her care. When at last Herod was dead and his threats a thing of the past, the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, went back to Palestine.

Our Lord was but twelve years of age; "when he remained in *Jesus lost in Jerusalem* Jerusalem and his parents knew it not . . . and it came to pass that after three days they found him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions . . .

¹ Luke ii 35.² Matt. ii 18.

and his Mother said to him : Son, why hast thou done so to us ? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said to them : How is it that you sought me ? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business ?" ¹ As we read we recognise that he is the Divine Child. No young boy, who was merely a boy like other boys, could rightly thus act and speak.

The relations of our Divine Lord with his Blessed Mother, as they are recorded in the gospels, would be utterly unintelligible, were he nothing more than a great Jewish teacher, and she only the mother of that teacher. The key to that which otherwise would be so perplexing may be found in the fact that he is not only Man, but also that his Mother's soul was during her earthly life being moulded by his hand for her eternal destiny as Queen in his kingdom. It is the realisation of this supreme reality—as to who Jesus is and who Mary—which opens out to our gaze, as we ponder on the gospel narrative, a vista of transcendent loveliness and awe-inspiring majesty. In the dealings of our Blessed Lord with his Mother no merely human measure can be applied, for here the divine and the human meet in sublime conjunction. Two things we know : Inscrutable are his ways and unfathomable is his love for the chosen creature of his predilection whom, in all-wise but unsuspected ways, he drew to a degree of nearness and of union with himself that could be reached by no other. There can be only one Lord Jesus Christ, and only one Mother of God. They stand apart from all the world beside. God will deal with Mary as with no other, for she will understand as can no other.

"And his Mother kept all these words in her heart." ²

If the story of the loss and finding of our Lord in the Temple is deeply charged with mystery, more mysterious far are the words that tell us what followed : "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth and was subject to them." ³ *He* was the Lord God Incarnate, *they* were his Mother and his foster-father, the work of his hands. Amongst other purposes of his coming, Christ came to be our example—from the age of twelve to the age of thirty no other example is given us by him excepting that of his "subjection" in the holy house of Nazareth. During that long reach of years Mary and Joseph were catching from his lips the secrets of the Kingdom which he set up in their hearts, as they learned with ever increasing simplicity and perfection to do the will of God, his Father.

Great sorrows—the sorrow of Simeon's prophecy, of the Flight into Egypt, of the Loss in the Temple—came to our Lady before the eighteen years she passed at tranquil Nazareth ; during the sojourn there, so far as we know, all was peace, excepting that St Joseph died who was so dear to her, and the shadow of the Cross hung over her through the day and through the night. She knew what had

¹ Luke ii 41-49.

² Luke ii 51.

³ *Ibid.*

to come. And at last the hour struck. That which had been foreshadowed during the three days in the Temple had to be fulfilled during the last three years of our Saviour's life. They had to be spent away from the society of his Blessed Mother. Now he was to be, during the period that immediately preceded the Passion, in a special sense about his Father's business—teaching all those who would listen to his word, training his chosen disciples for their future apostolate, laying the foundation of his Church, giving hearing to the deaf and sight to the blind, making the lame to walk, raising the dead to life, and speaking words sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, that should linger in the world, haunting the hearts of men, to the end of time—above all by undying parable and actions of heavenly kindness teaching his Father's love, for he and the Father are One. And all the time Mary, his Mother, could not be by the side of her Son. She remained in isolation with his brethren, some of whom at least believed not in him—and once again her tender heart was wellnigh broken and Simeon's sword pierced her soul.

Looking back, as we do, through nearly two thousand years of Christian history and tradition, it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to form any adequate idea of the circumstances which surrounded our Lord's public ministry. We know that he was God: none of those who were drawn to him when he began to teach had the slightest idea of any such thing—to them it would have seemed sheer madness and blasphemy of the worst kind—a sin especially hateful to the Jews. The minds of his disciples had to be attuned most carefully—first to the idea that he was the Messiah, and then . . . upwards to the very heights. We see the first great step: "Whom do *men* say that I am? . . . Whom do *you* say that I am? . . . Blessed art *thou*, Simon, son of John, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee." ¹ And then in all its dread completeness: "So long have I been with thee and hast thou not known me, Philip? He that seeth me seeth the Father also." ² And the tremendous assertion: "Before Abraham was made I am." ³

It is very remarkable that through all this necessarily elaborate process our Lord, from time to time, speaks almost provocatively, as though to stimulate thought in the Church in the generations yet unborn, when his Godhead should have been recognised to the full. He wished also to rivet to attention the minds of his disciples, and, indeed, of all who were listening to him, by introducing the element of surprise into his speech. Such sayings of Christ which will at once occur to the mind are: "The Father is greater than I." ⁴ "Why dost thou call me good? None is good but God alone." ⁵ "Weep not for me"; ⁶ and there are many others of a like character. The Saints and mystics of the Catholic Church have mused unceasingly upon the mysterious words which fell from the lips of Christ. From

¹ Matt. xvi 17.

⁴ John xiv 28.

² John xiv 9.

⁵ Luke xviii 19.

³ John viii 58.

⁶ Luke xxiii 28.

them they have drawn consolation, wisdom, strength, as the bee draws honey from the flower. They have furnished matter for the profoundest reflections of Doctors of the Church, and have been one of the chief means by which Christ's servants have been drawn to the heights of contemplation and union of the soul with God. It should hardly be necessary to say that, when rightly understood, they are all fully consistent with the true doctrine of the Eternal Godhead of the Word made Man ; but historically they furnished ammunition for the Arian heresy. This our Lord disregarded. It was merely incidental and could not be allowed to interfere with the high purposes which ever directed his earthly life. If men should misunderstand, let them see to it. They would be solely responsible, for they would run counter to the warnings and to the teaching of his Church. In this manner they would only make shipwreck of the faith. Christ spoke for all time, for the ears of the faithful in every age ; he spoke also for the sake of those who were listening to him at the moment. He would not go beyond *their* knowledge, since to have done so at the time would have served no useful purpose.

*Apparent
repudiation*

We find the same remarkable set of facts with reference to our Blessed Lady. Her privileges are clear and conspicuous in the Gospel, standing out in bold relief, so that it is hard to miss them. The story of the Annunciation and of the first visit to Elizabeth need no comment to bring out their full significance. But, just as the Arian has found, in the very Gospels which proclaim the Divinity of our Lord, materials on which to ground his denials, so have others found certain incidents which they use against the Church in consequence of the honour which she pays to the Blessed Mother of our Lord. For example, when our Lord had once been speaking to the crowds, a certain woman lifting up her voice said to him : ¹ "Blessed is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck. But he said : Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

On this there are several things to be observed. We must bear in mind that in his public speech our Blessed Lord was always intent upon inculcating a practical lesson. Of this we have here a striking instance. As we have already pointed out, the great Saints have insisted that our Lady is even more blessed through doing the Will of God, in which all may imitate her, than in her Divine Childbearing—a grace bestowed upon her by God in which she must of necessity stand alone.

Also, it is certain that, according to the established custom of Orientals, the woman who spoke to our Lord lifted up her voice in *his* honour, not in the honour of his Mother ; for in the East, if they wish to praise a man they will praise his ancestors, if they desire to dishonour a man they will curse his forebears to many a

¹ Luke xi 27.

generation—so that if our Lord is deprecating honour paid to any, it is that shown to himself rather than that offered to his kinsfolk, however near they might be to him. Again, there can be no doubt that his Mother had been proclaimed blessed among women both by Gabriel sent from God's Throne to Nazareth, and by Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost in the house of Zachary, whilst the Baptist exulted yet unborn. Any argument or inference which would tend to lessen the force of this, and of our Lady's own testimony that all generations should call her blessed obviously proves too much and falls to the ground slain by its own weight. And yet, as a matter of fact, this saying of our Lord has created a difficulty, hard to dispel, in the minds of some people who have seen in it, however unreasonably, a disparagement of the honour shown to the Blessed Virgin by Catholics.

To take a second instance. Christ was once told by the multitude that his Mother and brethren were seeking for him. At the time he was away from them all, about his Father's business, and asked, "Who is my mother and my brethren?" He then answered his question himself, looking upon those whom he had been teaching: "Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."¹

Surely a spiritual lesson of enormous value for all time. I have already reminded my readers that St Augustine, commenting on these words of Christ, says that our Lady, in doing the will of God, became not only Mother, but sister to her Son, and Christians in every age can learn from these words to be mother and brother and sister to their Lord. Yet, I think our Lady's heart ached when she heard the manner in which she, who was his Mother in the strict sense of the word, apparently was passed over. Can we not find a faint reflection here of the anguish of her Divine Son, when, in apparent abandonment, he cried aloud to his Father in bitter agony before he died? Not only on Mount Calvary, it was hers to share, so far as creature might, in the sufferings of Christ. The Passion of our Lord found its echo in the compassion of his Holy Mother. In truth the sorrows of Mary, the sorrows of her trans-pierced heart, were necessary not only that many thoughts should be revealed of sorrowing men and women, but also for her own perfect sanctification. Her soul had to be made perfect in the furnace of trial and tribulation. As in all things else, so pre-eminently in this must she resemble our Lord, that he was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. Of all the redeemed his Mother must be nearest to his Cross, not only on Calvary, but also in every hour of her earthly pilgrimage.

But that pilgrimage, both for Jesus and for Mary, at length was over. And now that our Lord is glorified in his Kingdom, every tear that his Mother shed on earth shall be wiped away by his pierced

¹ Mark iii 31-35.

hand, and changed into a jewel in the crown upon her peerless brow. Mary must die, for this is the lot of mortals. "It is appointed unto man to die, and after death the judgement"; and as Jesus died, so will his Mother die, for in all things, so far as may be, shall her lot be like to his; moreover, since all her children must pass one day through the gate of death, so bitter to human nature, so their Mother will go before them, treading the same path. But in her passing hence there will be for her no bitterness, death will lead her straight to God. She had waited, obedient to the will of God who would have her remain while on earth, the Apostles' Queen. But now the chains which held her captive at length were broken and her sinless soul winged its flight to be with her Son for ever. And Mary's judgement: "Well done, good and faithful servant." Were these words for which all Christ's servants wait expectant ever spoken as when they were addressed to her, who alone was crowned in heaven as the Mother of her Lord?

*The
Assumption*

The bodies of the holy Apostles, of the Martyrs who shed their blood for Christ, of men and women famed for their sanctity, were to be carefully preserved and venerated in the Church from the first beginnings of Christianity. Of the Mother of God no relics should remain upon the earth. Mary was taken up, body and soul, to the unveiled presence of her Son. She was the mystic Ark of the Covenant which God had sanctified. The body of the Virgin Most Holy from which the Holy Spirit had formed the body of Christ should not be permitted to see corruption. Behold the Queen in her beauty by the side of her Son, as already the Psalmist saw her in prophetic vision, in a vesture of gold wrought about with divers colours. She is the eldest daughter of the Father, and the beloved Mother of the Son, and the chosen Spouse of the Everlasting Spirit.

We, too, have to die and to meet Christ in judgement. We trust to be greeted with forgiveness and love as we enter into his Kingdom. He will not reject us, whose arms were extended wide for us upon the Cross of pain. "Who is he that shall condemn? Christ Jesus who died for us?"¹

But if, notwithstanding all, our hearts fail within us at the thought of our sins and miseries, we will entreat our dear Mother, who is also the Mother of our Judge, to be to us *Felix caeli porta*, the gate of a happy eternity, that when all is passing and death is near, she may turn her eyes of mercy towards us, and show unto us at length the ever-blessed Fruit of her womb, Jesus, teaching us to trust him absolutely and to the full. So may it be for us all—we beseech thee, O loving, O kind, O sweet Virgin Mary.

O. R. VASSALL-PHILLIPS, C.S.S.R.

¹ Rom. viii 34.

XVI

SANCTIFYING GRACE

§ I: THE STATE OF GRACE

IN one of the most beautiful of the Psalms the royal singer gives expression to the wonder which filled his mind when he looked out upon the glories of God's visible creation. "O Lord our Lord: how admirable is thy name in the whole earth! For thy magnificence is elevated above the heavens. . . . I will behold thy heavens, the works of thy fingers: the moon and the stars which thou hast founded." And then he marvels that a God of such magnificence and power should have any care for feeble man. "What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little less than the angels: thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast set him over the works of thy hands. . . . O Lord our Lord: how admirable is thy name in all the earth!"¹

*Sanctifying
grace a
positive
reality*

With still greater reason can we proclaim the glory and the magnificence and the condescension of the Lord our God when we consider, in the light of Catholic theology, the wonders of a soul which God has beautified by the gift of sanctifying grace. "All the glory of the king's daughter is within,"² and it is in a soul which is in the state of grace rather than in the starry heavens or in the wonders of the human mind that we are to find the masterpiece of God's handicraft in this world of ours. The sanctifying grace with which the souls of God's servants are endowed is far grander, far more glorious than anything which we can behold in the heavens above us or on the earth at our feet. This is a truth which we have often heard—so often, perhaps, that it has become a commonplace which we accept without appreciating its significance. But the more we study it the more we shall marvel, until we can make our own the words with which the Blessed Virgin expressed her realisation of the favour which had been granted her: "he that is mighty hath done great things to me: and holy is his name."³

The state of grace is not merely the absence of mortal sin, as many people seem to imagine. They look upon the soul as being in itself a very beautiful thing—a spirit, glorious in its various natural qualities, and far grander than any material object; mortal sin can defile it and make it hideous; but if there is no such sin it remains resplendent in all the glory of its spiritual nature and is thus (so it is thought) in the state of grace.

¹ Ps. viii.

² Ps. xlv 14.

³ Luke i 49.

Such a view of the matter, however, falls far short of the truth. The state of grace is thus made to be a mere negative thing—namely, the absence of the defiling element of mortal sin. But the fact which we have to remember is that grace¹ is a positive reality superadded to the glorious natural endowments of the soul. These endowments are not left in all their natural beauty; they receive an additional glory which surpasses what they are in themselves far more than they themselves surpass the glories of the world around us; and it is the possession of this additional glory, rather than the mere absence of mortal sin, which constitutes the state of grace.

The Catholic doctrine on this point is in direct opposition to the strange theories of Protestantism. Faced by his failure to control his violent and sensuous character, Luther evolved a theory which is a combination of pessimism and easy optimism. Through the fall of Adam, he maintained, our nature has become essentially evil and must ever remain evil; it is a mass of corruption, and even the redeeming blood of our Saviour does not cleanse or heal it; and he pressed his theory so far as to draw the conclusion that all our actions are sinful, not excluding those which we look upon as virtuous. Here we have the pessimism of the system: but now comes its easy optimism. For Luther taught that if only we will have complete confidence that the merits of Christ are actually applied to us, our sins are ignored, as it were, by God; our souls remain indeed hideous in themselves, but God covers them over with the merits of Christ so that these are looked upon by him as being ours; our sins are not “imputed” to us, but the merits of Christ are.

This is the famous doctrine of Justification by Faith. For the Lutheran, then, justification does not mean (as it means for a Catholic) an inner change by which the soul becomes a sacred thing, but a mere external non-imputation of sins; and faith means, not an assent to truths divinely revealed, but a personal persuasion that the merits of Christ have been applied to us. This faith, in the Lutheran system, is the only thing which counts: good works are of no avail—indeed, they are impossible, since all our actions are made evil by the evil source from which they spring. A further conclusion from Luther’s principles is that there can be no such thing as Merit, a point with which we shall deal later on.

In what follows there will be frequent reference to the Protestant theory of justification. This is inevitable, for, although our chief concern is with the positive statement of Catholic truth, the official statement of this truth by the Council of Trent was drawn up with direct reference to the errors of the sixteenth century.

¹ In the course of this essay whenever we use the term “grace” we shall understand by it “sanctifying grace” as opposed to “actual grace.” Sanctifying grace, as we shall explain, is a permanent quality in the soul; actual grace, of course, is a passing help given by God for the performance of some act. See Essay xvii of this work.

In the first place, then, the Council lays it down that we become just before God not through a non-imputation of sin but by an interior renovation which blots out sin. This is effected by sanctifying grace, which is explained as a reality poured forth upon us and inhering in us.

Beyond any doubt, this is the teaching of Scripture and of the great leaders of Christian thought from the beginning. Within the compass of a small essay like the present it is not possible to give an adequate exposition of scriptural texts, still less to set out the teaching of Christian writers through the ages, but there readily come to the mind a number of expressions used in the Scriptures which show most clearly that the state of grace involves a real interior change in the soul. Consider such expressions as "born again," "regeneration," "renovation," "new creature." Here, surely, we have the idea of an inner change and not of a mere non-imputation of sin. Similarly when St Paul speaks of the "new man" who is "created in justice and holiness of truth,"¹ he is alluding to a marvellous change which is produced in us. Very striking, too, is the parallel which he draws between the results of Adam's sin and the restoration which has been accomplished by Christ. "As by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many shall be made just."² But the disobedience of Adam certainly brought about a real change in the souls of men, as Luther must be the first to admit: therefore Christ produces an inner change when through his grace many are made just.

The early teachers of Christian truth proclaimed the same doctrine in many striking ways. Thus in explaining the effects of Baptism they frequently compared the water of the font to a mother: as the mother forms and fashions her child, so does the baptismal water form and fashion a new creature for God. Or as God in the work of creation produced living things out of the waters, so does he bring the soul to a new life in the waters of baptism. So insistent on this inner change are the early writers, and such a high ideal did they form of it, that they did not hesitate to say that we are deified; in fact they took this to be an admitted principle amongst Christians, for they made it a basis of argument against those who denied the divinity of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost, they argued, deifies us: therefore he is God, since none but God can deify the soul.

It would be easy to quote many striking and beautiful passages from the writings of the Fathers of the Church extolling the glory of the soul which Christ has washed in his blood. All this is directly contrary to the awful teaching of Protestantism which would make the soul even of the just man a sinful thing, essentially corrupt and loathsome. There can, then, be no doubt about what is the correct view of the matter: sanctifying grace is a real quality, of surpassing

¹ Eph. iv 24.

² Rom. v 19.

beauty, infused by God into the soul and making that soul worthy of the Creator who fashioned it and the Redeemer who won it from the thralldom of sin.¹

*Grace
wholly
supernatural*

This, then, must be our first point: grace is a positive reality superadded to the soul. But what is the nature of this positive reality? Here we are faced by the inability of the human mind to grasp the magnificence of the glorious truth. We may use metaphors and comparisons; we may liken grace to the brightness of white-hot steel or to the brilliance of a diamond that sparkles in the light; but all such modes of speaking fall far short of the truth. They fail in various ways, but principally in one most important point which is necessary for a right understanding of what grace is. In all such figures of speech we compare sanctifying grace with something which is natural to the object to which it belongs; thus the brilliance of the diamond is natural to the diamond and is in the same order of being. But sanctifying grace is not natural to the soul; it belongs to a higher order of things. It is a supernatural quality which no created cause could possibly produce. It belongs to a new and an altogether higher world. This is an aspect of the matter which calls for careful consideration, and we beg the reader's attention to what follows. The explanation shall be given with as little technicality as possible.

As the very form of the word indicates, the supernatural is something which is above, or higher than, that which is natural. But what are we to understand by the term "natural"? In ordinary usage it has various meanings, but in Catholic philosophy and theology it has a very precise meaning which must be rigorously adhered to. The natural, then, is something which belongs to the very essence or nature of a thing (as the power of reasoning belongs to man), or flows from its nature (as the skill of a workman flows from his nature), or is necessary or suitable for the existence and development of a thing (as air is necessary for man). Thus "natural" is not to be contrasted with "artificial," and if we are to keep to the strict meaning of the words we ought not to say, for example, that it is not natural for a diamond to sparkle since in its original (or, as we say, in its natural) condition it is a dull stone. In the technical sense of the term it is quite natural for a diamond to sparkle since this follows from its very nature.

Of course what is natural for one thing may be above the nature of another thing. Thus it is natural for a man to reason, but not for a dog; natural for wood to float in water, but not for a bar of iron.

In the light of these explanations it will be seen that the supernatural is something which is above, or higher than, what belongs

¹ Here no criticism is made of the Lutheran theory of Faith, but the point will be dealt with later on when we consider faith in Christ as the fundamental element in preparation for justification.

“naturally” to things; if this something is above that which belongs naturally to any creature, it is said to be “absolutely” supernatural; if it is above that which belongs naturally to some creatures but not to all, it is “relatively” supernatural. Thus, angelic knowledge in a man would be relatively, not absolutely, supernatural; but for a man to enjoy the Beatific Vision of God, face to face, is absolutely supernatural, since to see God by direct and immediate vision is above the natural order of all created beings, angelic as well as human.

To the reader who desires no more than to have unfolded before him something of the glories of sanctifying grace these explanations may appear wearisome: but they are necessary not only for the avoiding of positive error but also for the gaining of a clearer and grander idea of what this wonderful gift is. Another point must be explained before we pass on—a point of great importance. A distinction has to be made between that which is supernatural considered in itself (*supernaturale in se*), and that which is supernatural because of the way in which it has been brought about (*supernaturale quoad modum*). Thus the restoration of a dead man to life is clearly supernatural: is it supernatural in itself or only supernatural in the manner of its production? The answer is that it is supernatural not in the first way but in the second: for the thing produced (namely, life) is not in itself supernatural, though it has been produced in a supernatural way. And the same is to be said of all miracles. On the other hand, whatever belongs to God himself, or involves some sharing of what is proper to God, is supernatural in itself, transcending the order not only of what creatures do but also of what they are.

The application of all this to the question of sanctifying grace will be seen more and more as we proceed, but for the present we simply assert the magnificent truth that grace is not only a positive reality in the soul, not only a reality which no created being could produce, but a reality which in itself is higher than the whole order of created things (even angelic) and is truly divine. This brings us at once to a wonderful phrase of St Peter, who says that we are made “partakers of the divine nature.”¹ Catholic theology has ever clung to the belief that here we have no mere figure of speech but the declaration of a definite fact. We really are made to be partakers of the divine nature. It is not merely that our spiritual faculties of intellect and will establish a special likeness to God in our souls; that is true enough, but over and above this natural likeness to God a wholly supernatural quality is given to us which makes us to be of the same nature as God. In this connection we may recall the principle used by early writers in arguing the divinity of the Holy Ghost: the Holy Ghost deifies us; in other words makes

Grace makes us share God's nature and life

¹ 2 Pet. i 4.

us partakers of the divine nature. St Augustine puts the matter thus : " He descended that we might ascend, and whilst retaining his own divine nature he partook of our human nature, that we, whilst keeping our own nature, might become partakers of his." St Thomas Aquinas, echoing the constant teaching of the past, declares in a passage which the Church uses for the feast of Corpus Christi : " the only-begotten Son of God, wishing to make us partakers of his own divinity, took upon himself our human nature that having become man he might make men to be gods." And we know how the Church has enshrined this wonderful truth in one of the most beautiful of the prayers at Mass. " O God, who in creating human nature, didst marvellously ennoble it, and hast still more marvellously renewed it, grant that by the mystery of this water and wine *we may be made partakers of his Godhead*, who vouchsafed to become partaker of our humanity, Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord."

God, then, has deigned to touch us with his finger, and in touching us has transformed us into something like himself. We shall never understand in our present life in what this partaking of the Godhead consists : how could we understand it, seeing that the nature of the Godhead is itself above our understanding ? We can, indeed, speak of it as the divine Light which shines in our souls, or as the divine Beauty which is bestowed upon us ; or we may use illustrations such as that of St Thomas Aquinas, who says that we share the very nature of God as metal in the fire shares the nature of the fire. Such ways of speaking and such illustrations are all helpful, and the Christian soul, seeking to get some faint idea of the glory of sanctifying grace, will dwell upon them with joy. But a higher and truer way of viewing the matter is to think of grace as a communication to us of the divine Life itself. For God is a living being, not a lifeless thing like the shining metal or the glistening jewel, and they who share his nature must necessarily share his very life. A wonderful thought, truly, and one which leads us far in our search for a less inadequate idea of what grace is. Let us dwell upon it for a moment.

We are familiar with the grades of life in the world around us. There is the life of the plant which separates it by an immense ocean of reality from all non-living things ; there is the life of the animal with those wonderful powers of sensation and instinct which the plant does not possess ; and there is the life of a rational being whose intellect and will raise him far above the brutes. Higher, indeed, than man there are the angels, but their life does not differ in order from the rational life of man ; it is more perfect in many ways and is not bound up with the animal life which is part of man's nature ; but it is a life of intellect and will. But there is yet a higher life, the incomprehensible, unutterable life of God, who, as the Scripture says, dwells in light inaccessible. This life of God is the fountain whence all life flows and, could we understand it, is the

explanation of how and why there are three Persons in him. To share this life is clearly the grandest thing that can be imagined. It would seem, indeed, to be impossible; and impossible it certainly would be if we were limited to the natural order of things. Nothing in the world of created things could have brought it about and no human mind could have guessed it. Yet in this life God has made us share—a greater work than when he called the world out of nothingness.

In the next section something more will be said about the nature of this partaking of the divine life, and we shall then see how it is a preparation for the Beatific Vision, and the basis of our claim to be in very truth the sons of God.

There are also other wonderful aspects of the state of grace which remain to be explained, but already we can see something of the grandeur of the Catholic doctrine, which asserts for man, even in the days of his earthly pilgrimage, a glory which raises him up to the Godhead and makes him most beautiful in the sight of the angels.

And so we make our own the words of David, "What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little less than the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honour. . . . O Lord our Lord: how admirable is thy name in all the earth."¹

§ II: SONS AND HEIRS

In this second section we are to consider two special aspects of the *Divine Sonship* life of grace which God bestows upon us; the first is the sonship which comes with sanctifying grace, and the second is the fact that, in a fuller sense than at first sight would seem possible, we are made heirs of God and have already within us the beginnings of eternal glory.

St John bids us see "what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God."² In his infinite condescension God has made us his children. We know how sometimes a poor child is adopted, taken into a home, made one of the family, treated as a son or daughter, and even given a right to inherit all that belongs to those who have thus bestowed their love. God has done this for us—and much more. Through the fall of our first parents we were cut off from

¹ Sanctifying Grace is regarded by theologians as a "Habit." The term may be misleading, for by a habit we usually understand a customary mode of acting, and this does not seem to fit in with the idea of Sanctifying Grace. But habits may be either "operative" (which dispose one towards a particular way of acting) or "entitative" (which give a particular disposition to the thing itself, like beauty). Sanctifying Grace is an "entitative" Habit. For an explanation of "Habits," see Essay xviii, *The Supernatural Virtues*, pp. 622 seq.

² 1 John iii 1.

him and came into existence bearing the dread heritage of original sin. But God ever wanted to bring us back, and to re-establish between himself and us the sweet relationship of father and child. For that purpose the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became man and gave us "power to be made the sons of God."¹ Both St John and St Paul exult in proclaiming this act of divine condescension. "Dearly beloved," the first writes, with all the earnestness of the disciple of love, "we are now the sons of God: and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is. And everyone that hath this hope in him sanctifieth himself."² To cherish the belief that we are really and truly the sons of God, and to cling to the hope that as sons we shall one day be allowed to gaze on the beauty and majesty of our heavenly Father, is to sanctify ourselves. St John himself has written few more consoling words than these. And St Paul announces the same great truth in sonorous terms that ring through the ages: there is no mistaking their emphasis. At the beginning of that wonderful little epistle to the Ephesians, in which he expounds so beautifully the mystery of Jesus, he cries out: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ: as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity. Who hath *predestinated us unto the adoption of children* through Jesus Christ unto himself: according to the purpose of his will: unto the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he hath graced us in his beloved Son." Nothing, surely, could be finer than this assertion of God's condescension in making us his sons through Jesus. And to the Galatians, who were being led astray by the errors of Jewish formalism which crushed all loving sense of sonship, he writes to remind them that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent his Son . . . that he might redeem them who were under the law: that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying: Abba, Father."³ This same idea of the liberty which belongs to us as sons dwelling, as it were, in our father's house, is expressed also in the epistle to the Romans. "You have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear: but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, Father. For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God."⁴

In the light of such luminous teaching it is clear that it is in a very special sense that we are the children of God. St Paul, more particularly, assigns to us a sort of legal position in the house of God, in virtue of which we have both the freedom and the rights of sons: for, as he goes on to say at the end of the passage just quoted: "And

¹ John i 12.

² I John iii 2-3.

³ Gal. iv 4-6.

⁴ Rom. viii 15, 16.

if sons, heirs also ; heirs indeed of God and joint heirs with Christ.”¹ We fail to do justice to a great and fundamental truth if we think of our sonship in terms of some vague favour which God has shown to us in virtue of which the term son could be used metaphorically. We must at least assign to our sonship the meaning which adoption had under the ancient Roman law. Amongst the Romans an adopted son lost his legal position in the family to which he belonged by blood, and became legally a member of the family into which he had been adopted, acquiring all the dignities and rights which would have been his if he had been a son by blood. In such a sense at least we must be the sons of God. But the truth carries us further than that. Our sonship raises us much higher, for God does for us what no Roman could do for the child whom he had adopted : He makes us, in a very true and wonderful way, children “by blood.” To appreciate this fact we have only to apply what has already been explained about the nature of Grace.

Sanctifying grace, as we have seen, is a positive reality infused *Actual kinship* into the soul by which we are made to share the divine life. At once we see the difference between our sonship and the sonship of those who are sons only by legal adoption. This legal adoption may be an act of wonderful love and condescension, and it may bring untold blessings with it ; but the adopted son remains of foreign blood, with the physical characteristics which he inherited from his real parents. It is their blood that flows in his veins, their features that are copied in his face and form. But with the sons of God all is different. By sanctifying grace the very life of God is imparted unto them ; they are grafted on to him, as it were ; nay, they have been “born again,” as our Saviour teaches us ; they are a “new creature” ; they have been “born of God”—“born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible.”²

This is what God has done for us when he gave us the gift of sanctifying grace, so that we may well repeat, with that deeper gratitude which comes with greater knowledge, the words of St John which have been already quoted : “Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and *should be* the sons of God.”

“And if sons, heirs also : heirs indeed of God and joint heirs *Heirs* with Christ.” The Church ends that magnificent profession of faith which we call the Nicene Creed with the words : “And I expect the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come.” The Christian looks forward to heaven as his *home*, not simply as a place of happiness which he may reach if he is fortunate. Incorporated in Christ who reigns in glory, ■ true son of God, made already a sharer in the life of God, he may look upon eternal happiness as the completion of God’s loving plan for him ; and so in a calm spirit of hope and love he awaits the day of the Lord, not as ■ day of wrath

¹ Rom. viii 17.

² 1 Pet. i 23.

and vengeance but as a day of home-coming. He must for a time fight the good fight and keep the faith and accept the sufferings which may be laid upon him, for he knows the truth of the words which St Paul added to his declaration of our heirship with Christ : " Yet so, if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him " ; but his whole attitude is essentially one of gladness and hope " in Christ Jesus our Lord."

*Grace and
Glory*

It is well that we should stress the fact—and rejoice in it—that grace makes us truly sons and heirs, and that consequently we can look upon heaven as truly our home. But there is something more than the fact that grace gives us a right to an eternal inheritance. Grace is already the beginning of glory ; the second grows out of the first, much as the blossom grows out of the seed. How this is, the following explanations will show.

The catechism teaches us that the glory and happiness of heaven is " to see, love and enjoy God for ever " ; to behold him who is all Beauty and Truth, to love him who is all Goodness, to enjoy him who is the Supreme Good ; in a word, to possess the Beatific Vision. No created intellect can form an adequate idea of the Beatific Vision until this be actually experienced, yet theologians—guided by such hints as are given in Sacred Scripture and making use of forms of reasoning which faith has enlightened—have sought to set out the fundamental elements of the joy of the Saints. They call attention to the fact that in the Scriptures the Beatific Vision is represented as " seeing " God. Our Blessed Saviour himself told us that the pure of heart " shall see God," and that the angels in heaven " always see the face of my Father who is in heaven." ¹ There is the well-known saying of St Paul : " We see now through a glass in a dark manner ; but then face to face." ² And in St John's first epistle there is the very striking passage which has been quoted already : " Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God ; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear we shall be like to him : because we shall see him as he is." Here, as will be noticed, St John makes our future likeness to God rest upon our seeing him as he is. This doctrine of a direct vision of God in heaven has been solemnly defined by the Church and is thus a matter of faith.

Filled with the glory of the direct vision of God, the soul necessarily is drawn to him in a transport of love. It sees him in all his overpowering goodness ; it recognises that only in him can happiness be found, and that in him is *all* happiness : and the will is drawn to him in an act of love that nothing can change. It is a matter of dispute amongst theologians as to whether the vision of God or the love of God is the essential element in the happiness of the blessed in heaven, but we need not go into the question : in any case, both belong to the happiness of heaven, and the love which the soul has

¹ Matt. xviii 10.

² 1 Cor. xiii 12.

for God depends upon the knowledge which it has of him. Hence, whatever view we hold about the essential element of happiness in heaven we must recognise that the direct vision of God is the foundation of the rest. Now, this vision of God is wholly supernatural. No created intellect can know God as he is by its natural powers—and this applies to angels as well as to men. Consequently, if the soul is raised so much above its natural condition as to have a face-to-face vision of the infinite God, some change must be wrought in it, elevating it to an order of things that is absolutely supernatural. The change is brought about by what theologians have aptly called the “light of glory.”

This brings us to the point which we set out to explain, viz. the way in which grace is already the beginning of glory, as the seed is the beginning of the blossom. For grace is the beginning of that “light of glory” whereby the blessed in heaven see God; it is something which grows into the “light of glory,” and for that reason it has been called the “seed of glory”—an expression which enshrines a great truth, and recalls the words of St John, who says: “Whosoever is born of God committeth not sin: for his seed abideth in him.”¹

The intrinsic connection between grace and glory is not the least of the marvels of sanctifying grace. As Bishop Hedley beautifully expresses it in his *Retreat*: “We are given to possess on earth a gift of light and life which is substantially the same as the light which shall flood us in the heavens! For ‘the grace of God is life everlasting.’² The apostle is saying that the result of sinfulness is death, and liberation from sinfulness is holiness; it is this holiness which he calls the ‘charisma,’ or grace of God; and of this ‘charisma’ he says, that it *is* life everlasting. One would have expected him to say that its ‘result’ was life everlasting. This would evidently be quite true. But St Paul’s vivid expression is more true; for grace not merely deserves the vision of God, but (the veil being rent in two by bodily dissolution) takes, or has, that vision, as the eye takes in the morning when sleep departs.”³

We have just seen that the Beatific Vision consists in the face-to-face vision of God as he is in himself, and that this vision of God is accompanied by unutterable love and joy; we have also explained that sanctifying grace is the beginning of this state of glory. But to see God as he is in himself and to love this infinite good, is the very essence of the divine life itself. God alone can fully comprehend all his own infinite excellence, and the first and most fundamental aspect of the inner life of God is precisely this, that he gazes into the depths of his infinity: indeed, it would seem that the existence of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is the result (so to speak) of this act of divine understanding. In a way quite impossible for us to grasp, it is in knowing and comprehending

¹ 1 John iii 9.² Rom. vi 23.³ P. 55.

himself that God the Father begets the Son. And out of this knowledge which God has of himself there arises a mutual love of Father and Son : and this mutual love is the Holy Ghost. Hence the remark which was made in the first section, that if we could understand the divine life we should understand how and why there are three Persons in God : for this trinity of Persons is the result of the inner life of God, much as the existence of ideas in our intellect and of pictures of individual things in our imagination is the result of our life of thought and sensation. From this it follows that when the blessed in heaven are raised to the Beatific Vision they are given a real participation in the divine life itself ; and it follows also that since sanctifying grace is the " seed of glory," it is likewise, in its own measure, a sharing in the very life of God. This sharing of the divine life will reach its fulness in the Beatific Vision, but even during our present life it grows and increases, as supernatural knowledge and love of God grow stronger. " I am come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly." ¹ Finally, the intrinsic connection which we have shown to exist between grace and glory throws into clearer light the wholly supernatural character of grace itself. For the Beatific Vision, as we have seen, is wholly supernatural ; neither men nor angels could possess it by any powers of their own. But if the Beatific Vision is supernatural, grace which is its " seed " must be supernatural also.

§ III : TEMPLES OF GOD

God in the soul

It is a cherished part of Catholic faith that God dwells in an especial way in a soul which is in a state of grace.

This is the definite teaching of Christ himself. " If any one love me, he will keep my word. And my Father will love him : and we will come to him and will make our abode with him." ² Elsewhere in the New Testament this indwelling of God is attributed in an especial way to the Holy Ghost. As is well known, St Paul insists upon the fact that the very bodies of Christ's true followers are the temples of the Holy Spirit. " Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God ? " ³ Hence he draws the conclusion that these bodies which enshrine the Spirit of God are sacred things and must not be defiled by sins of the flesh. As he had said already in the same epistle : " Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ? But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which you are." ⁴ Here he is but echoing the teaching of his Master who said to his disciples on the last night of his life on earth : " I tell you the truth : it is expedient for you that I go. For

¹ John x 10.

³ 1 Cor. vi 19.

² John xiv 23.

⁴ 1 Cor. iii 16-17.

if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you : but if I go, I will send him to you." ¹

It is this great truth of the dwelling of God in the souls of his friends that we must here consider, so that we may learn more about the wonders of the state of grace.

Of course it is true to say that God is everywhere, even in the *Natural presence* soul of the sinner : but what concerns us here is the special way in which he is present in the soul of the just man. How is God present naturally, in everything that exists ? He is present in everything, first of all as the one who holds every single being in existence. Not only has he brought all things into existence but he also keeps them in existence by the direct exercise of his infinite power, without which they would fall back into nothingness. Just as light is dependent upon some source of light and would disappear if its source disappeared, so the very "existing" of things is dependent upon him who is the source of all existence. But God is also present in things as the cause of their every movement. He is the First Mover and the source of every movement, just as he is the source of all "existing." Hence it is true to say of every single being outside God that in him it lives and moves and has its being.

This, be it noticed, is in the natural order of things. Nothing could be, nothing could move, without this presence of God : thus by an absolute necessity, if things exist at all God must be in them. And the truth of this essential nearness of God is one of profound importance.

But there is another kind of nearness of God, based upon a totally *Super-natural presence* different action which God may exercise in the human soul. Besides the acts of supporting his creatures in being and of operating in all their actions, God deals in a totally different way with the soul that is in the state of grace. He impresses upon it that special likeness to himself of which we have already spoken ; he infuses into it a new and a higher life which is a sharing of his own and the beginning of the life of the blessed ; he implants virtues within it and acts upon it in all sorts of loving ways ; and thus he penetrates it in an absolutely supernatural manner. That he should hold us in being and should co-operate with us in all our ordinary actions is part of the natural order of things ; but this is part of a supernatural order to which we have no right whatever. And this supernatural action within us clearly establishes a special kind of presence in our souls : he was present before, but now he holds us closer to himself and establishes a new, vital union with us. God's natural presence in the soul has often been likened to the way in which water fills a sponge ; let us imagine, however, that the water possessed the power of producing at will various magnificent changes in the sponge, vitalising every particle of it, and permeating it with its own reality in such a way that it received powers of sensation.

¹ John xvi 7.

We should then say that the water had entered into the sponge in a new way. So it is with God and the soul that he adorns with sanctifying grace. He revitalises it, makes it sensitive to the touch of heavenly influences and bestows upon it something of his own beauty: and thus he makes his "abode" there.

But there is another side to this question of God's presence in the soul. How does the soul respond to the God who has deigned to come so nigh? In virtue of the powers which grace has brought to it, the soul has gained a knowledge and love of God which could not have come to it otherwise. It knows him—though darkly, in the twilight of faith—as the supreme good; it sets him above all creatures; it loves him with the ardour of supernatural charity; and it rejoices in the possession of him. This is a new bond of union. When a natural object is thought about, longed for, loved, we say that it is enshrined in the heart: we have made it present to us, though in its actual reality it be far away. But in the case of a soul in grace the God who is thought about, loved, rejoiced in, is already actually present: and by its own action the soul clasps him and will not let him go. "I found him whom my soul loveth. I held him: and I will not let him go."¹ Thus there is a closeness more intimate than could be imagined if faith did not make it known to us: a closeness based upon the natural, physical presence of God within us, made immeasurably greater by God's most loving supernatural action upon us, and crowned by the final touch of sacred intimacy when the soul clings to him as its Lord and God.

Thus does the God of heaven dwell in human souls. He dwells there as in a temple: for his sovereign rights as God are there recognised, he is adored and praised, petition is made to him; and there he dispenses his favours. He dwells there also as a guest in a home where he is ever welcome: all that the home can produce is prepared to do him honour. And he dwells there as Friend. Between God and the soul there is mutual love—not the feeble sentiment which sometimes passes for love amongst men, but a love that is strong and true. Each, we may say, seeks the good of the other—God enriching the soul with wonderful gifts and protecting it by his loving Providence, the soul devoting itself and all its powers to God. And though God remains invisible as long as this life lasts, faith enables the soul to realise his presence and to rejoice therein. There is a striking passage in *The Interior Castle* in which St Teresa expresses this realisation of God in a very vivid manner. "It is as if, when we were with other people in a well-lighted room, some one were to darken it by closing the shutters; we should feel certain that the others were still there, though we were unable to see them."²

Such is the wonderful privilege of the soul that is in the state of grace. We may rightly say that it already stands in the ante-

¹ Canticle of Canticles iii 4.

² *Seventh Mansion*, chap. i 12.

chamber of heaven and is separated only by the thinnest of veils from the face of God. That veil is being worn thinner and thinner as the supernatural life of the soul increases, and when it altogether disappears the presence of God will take on a new and higher form. God will then penetrate the soul more intimately still: he will be known not by images and comparisons, not in the obscurity of faith, but directly, as he is in himself, in the full brilliancy of the Light of Glory. But already the splendour of his face is breaking upon us, and the sound of that final approach is in our ears.

It may indeed be said that this presence of God in the soul is not recognised by us, or at least that it is not recognised by many of those who are in the state of grace. This is true, and one is inclined to echo the words of our Saviour: "if thou didst know the gift of God."¹ Though God is present he is not directly perceived. He is to be known by faith, and faith in such matters presupposes instruction in the truth. It is often want of knowledge which holds back the Christian soul from a sense of God's presence which would fill it with joy and lead it on, with giant strides, towards true perfection of life. Or perhaps it is that one knows theoretically the doctrine of God's indwelling but has never made it one's own through the distractions and earthly interests of a life which, though free from serious sin, is still held down by constant tepidity. Such a life is indeed to be pitied—and to be feared: is it difficult to understand the language of the Lord who dwells in a tepid soul? "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth."²

In this short exposition of the doctrine of the indwelling of God in the soul, we have thought of the presence of God as such—God who is three in one, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But this indwelling is commonly attributed to the Holy Ghost, as was seen in the texts which were quoted at the beginning of the section. The reasons for this "appropriation," as it is called, are set out both in the essay on the Blessed Trinity and in that on the Holy Ghost; here we need say no more than that the indwelling of God in the soul is pre-eminently an act of love, and since the Holy Spirit proceeds from Father and Son as their mutual Love it is becoming that the divine indwelling and all the operations of grace should be attributed to him, just as the works of creation are attributed to the Father.

§ IV: THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

WE have seen how intimate are the relations between God and the soul that is in the state of grace; and now we must see how intimate are the relations between that soul and Jesus Christ our Lord. For it is through Christ in his sacred humanity that we receive all the

¹ John iv 10.

² Apocalypse iii 15-16.

treasures of grace, and this in a deeper and fuller sense than many of us realise. Hence the present section: "Through Jesus Christ."

As we know, Jesus himself declared that he came into this world to restore supernatural life to fallen man. "I am come that they may have life and have it more abundantly,"¹ and the evangelist who records these words tells us that "as many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God."² "He that hath the Son hath life," proclaims the same Apostle, and "he that hath not the Son hath not life."³ St Peter likewise tells us in terms that are stamped with his intense conviction of our dependence on Christ: "There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved."⁴

*Christ
merits and
produces
grace*

How, then, does Christ procure for us that life which he came to give? In the first place, by meriting it for us. By the whole of his life on earth, and especially by his Passion and death, Christ merited that the supernatural life which we had lost in Adam should be restored to us. "And being consummated, he became to all that obey him the cause of eternal salvation."⁵ More than that, he actually produces grace in the soul by his action upon us. Just as he healed bodies by the touch of his hand or by the word of his mouth so also does he heal souls and bring back to them the life of grace. But in a deeper sense than this Christ is the cause of grace within us, and unless we have grasped this deeper sense our understanding of grace—nay, of Christianity itself—is incomplete. We refer to the important truth that the supernatural life of the soul comes to us through actual union with, or incorporation in, Christ. It is not by mere external action upon us, like the action of a seal upon the wax in which it leaves the impression of itself, or like the action of steam upon the engine which it sets in motion, that Christ produces grace in us. Rather is it like the action of a living organism that draws particles of matter into union with itself and thus makes them live. This is the very way in which Jesus himself expressed what happens. We all know his wonderful figure of the Vine and its branches. "Abide in me: and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing."⁶ Hence the extraordinary significance of Holy Communion, the external union of the Body and Blood of Christ with our own frail humanity being both a symbol and a cause of the inner union which is aimed at. "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood you shall not have life in you. . . . He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him."⁷

¹ John x 10.

⁴ Acts iv 12.

⁶ John xv 4-5.

² John i 12.

⁵ Heb. v 9.

⁷ John vi 54-57.

³ 1 John v 12.

This union with Christ is especially dear to St Paul, who made *Incorporation in him* it one of his guiding thoughts. "You are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption."¹ According to the great Apostle of the Gentiles, all who are redeemed are incorporated in Christ and live by his life, so that he actually becomes to them "wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption." This is no mere metaphor; in the eyes of St Paul it is a tremendous but simple truth, upon which he insists time after time, which he uses in all sorts of connections and upon which he builds much of his preaching. Thus it is not merely "through" Christ that redemption and grace come to us, but "in" him—as he says many times. "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, you shall appear with him in glory." ■ "God (who is rich in mercy) . . . hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved), and hath raised us up together and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places through Christ Jesus."³ That he might show in the ages to come the abundant riches of his grace, in his bounty towards us in Christ Jesus."⁴ Hence he bids us "put on the Lord Jesus Christ,"⁵ and tells us that "'in Christ' we are a new creature."⁶ All this leads him to that triumphant exclamation: "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me"⁷—an exclamation which was echoed by the great St Augustine in the words: "Let us break forth into thanksgiving, we are become not only Christians, but Christ."⁸

The question now arises, how is this incorporation in Christ *Function of faith in Christ* and sanctification of the soul brought about? We answer, primarily and fundamentally by true faith in him. He is the one source of grace for fallen man; we depend entirely on the grace which he won for us by his Passion and death; but this grace comes only to those who believe in him.⁹ It is to those who "receive" him and "believe in his name" that he gives the "power to be made the sons of God." Thus before Christ can sanctify us and make us

¹ 1 Cor. i 30.

² Col. iii 3-4.

³ In the original Greek, and also in the Latin, this is "in Christ Jesus." Abbot Vonier remarks: "The phrase 'in Christ' occurs nearly eighty times in St. Paul's epistles; frequently it is translated into 'by,' 'through,' 'for the sake of' Christ. Yet such alterations ought not to deprive us of the wealth of mystical meaning contained in the original phrase 'in Christ.'" *The Personality of Christ*, p. 108.

⁴ Eph. ii 4-7.

⁵ Rom. xiii 14.

⁶ 2 Cor. v 17.

⁷ Gal. ii 20.

⁸ The implications of this doctrine are more fully developed in Essay xix, *The Mystical Body of Christ*.

⁹ The case of Infant Baptism is an exception, for the child is incorporated into Christ without any actual faith on its own part. This is an exception which God in his goodness has deigned to make. The special consideration of this case does not belong to the present place, but it may be remarked that according to the traditional teaching the faith of the Church takes the place of the faith of the child.

sons of God, we must "receive" him and believe in his name. And St Paul tells us that the just man lives by faith,¹ and that we are "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." ■ As a modern writer has well expressed it, faith is "a kind of psychic link between the soul and Christ"²—a bond without which there can be no "incorporation" and no transmission of supernatural life.

Luther's
error

At first sight it might seem as if this insistence on the function of faith were akin to the Protestant theory of Justification by Faith. But Catholic doctrine is very different. Luther held that faith alone brought Justification, to the exclusion of all good works. "Good works," in fact, were impossible, according to his theory of the essential corruption of our nature. And the very faith which he so extolled was not so much an intellectual assent to the divinity of Christ and to the doctrine of the Redemption, as a personal persuasion that our sins are "covered over" and no longer imputed to us.

The stress which Luther placed on the fundamental importance of recognising Christ as our redeemer must not blind us to the essentially vicious character of his theory, which leads logically and inevitably to disregard of the laws of right conduct. We must not treat our Saviour as a cloak to cover up our own transgressions. He is indeed our hope, our life, of whose fulness we have all received. But it is not by the Lutheran "faith" that his grace comes to us. The process of Justification is much more complex, as we now proceed to show.

True
preparation
for justifica-
tion

The first element in the great work of Justification is the grace of God—actual grace. No man can have faith in Christ, no man can even have a genuine desire to possess it, unless the grace of God first draw him.⁴ It is for man to accept this grace or to reject it. If he accepts it and listens to the voice of God speaking to him, he is led on to make a true act of faith; that is, he is enabled by God to believe what has been divinely revealed, and more particularly the doctrines of the Redemption and of the forgiveness of sins. With this belief in his heart he is moved to hope in God and to love him, and to turn his heart away from sin. Thus, under the influence of actual grace, a soul is prepared for Justification. Hence it is not a matter of faith alone, but of faith which leads to hope and love and genuine sorrow: yet faith is the foundation of the whole process, or, as the Council of Trent puts it, "the beginning, the foundation, and the root of all Justification."⁵

¹ Rom. i 17.

² Gal. iii 26.

³ Vonier: *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist*, p. 6.

⁴ Our dependence in this respect on God's help is explained in the Essay *Actual Grace* in the present volume, section iv, to which the reader is referred for several important points which have a bearing upon the present question.

⁵ Session vi, chap. viii. The whole process of preparation for Justification was carefully explained by the Council: the account in the text is a brief summary of what may be read at much greater length in this famous 6th Session.

All is now ready for actual incorporation in Christ, which will bring grace and life to the soul. It is part of his gracious purpose that this should be accomplished by means of the sacrament of Baptism, which is essentially the sacrament of a new birth in Christ Jesus. It is thus that a man "puts on" Christ. "As many of you as have been baptised in Christ have put on Christ," says St Paul; ¹ or, as he expresses it elsewhere, taking his idea from the ancient ceremony of Baptism when the neophyte was plunged under the baptismal water: "Know you not that all we who are baptised in Christ Jesus are baptised in his death? For we are buried together with him by baptism into death: that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life." ² But Baptism itself presupposes the living faith in Christ of which we have spoken. "He that *believeth* and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned." ³ And sometimes, as we know, the soul is justified before the waters of Baptism have flowed over it; for faith can inspire a love and a sorrow for sin so intense that Christ does not wait for the divinely appointed sacrament of initiation but draws the soul to himself and makes it one with him.

*Sacraments
and faith
in Christ*

We are speaking here of the case of one who has lived in infidelity and without Baptism and in mature years first turns to God. But faith is equally necessary for him who has lost the grace which once he had and turns again to God. Just as for the first there is Baptism, for the second there is Penance: but neither is of any avail without faith. Indeed, faith is necessary for every sacrament, whether it restores a man to the friendship of God or increases the grace which he already possessed; for as St Thomas says, "the sacraments are certain signs which profess the faith by which a man is justified." ⁴ Of course they are more than signs of faith; they are signs of the inner grace which is produced in the soul, and of this grace which they signify they are at the same time the instrumental causes; but it is well to insist that without faith they will not achieve their effect. ⁵

§ V: SUPERNATURAL ACTIVITIES

IN the course of the preceding pages much emphasis has been laid upon the fact that sanctifying grace is a form of supernatural life. But all life is essentially a power of internal action, of self-movement, such as the processes of growing, feeling, thinking, willing; and every different grade of life has its own special forms of activity. It is therefore natural for us to ask the question: What special forms of activity belong to the life of grace?

*Sanctifying
grace and
supernatural
action*

¹ Gal. iii 27.

² Rom. vi 3-4.

³ Mark xvi 16.

⁴ *S. Theol.*, III, Q. 61, a. 4.

⁵ The reader is referred to Abbot Marmion's beautiful book, *Christ the Life of the Soul*, for the development of points which have been briefly touched upon in the present section.

It is well to keep before our minds the truth that sanctifying grace of its very nature leads to the ineffable activity of the Beatific Vision. The life of grace is at present incomplete; it is like the life of an embryo which does not yet show the marvels which will be revealed in the fully developed organism. It is the "seed" of a more wonderful life than has yet appeared. The full activity, then, which is proper to sanctifying grace is the activity involved in that intuitive vision of God, and that overwhelming love of him, which constitute the happiness of the blessed in heaven. But the life of grace has already its own special form of activity: What can we say about it?

The first thing to be said about it is not easy to understand unless one is used to theological and philosophical forms of thought: but it is of fundamental importance in the present connection. To put it in a sentence, as a result of sanctifying grace actions which would have remained "natural" become intrinsically "supernatural." Here, again, we have these ideas "natural" and "supernatural," and in a somewhat different connection. We have had occasion to speak of sanctifying grace as a supernatural quality, and of the Beatific Vision as something proper to God and therefore absolutely supernatural, and in these cases it is not difficult, in the light of the explanations which have been given, to understand what is meant. But perhaps it is less easy to understand what is meant when we speak of an action becoming supernatural. Let us put the matter as follows. At the present moment the light of the sun is streaming into the room where these lines are written, through panes of ordinary clear glass; what would be the effect if richly coloured glass were to be substituted for the ordinary glass? The light itself would be affected and would be tinged with various colours. In a similar sort of way, when actions proceed from a soul that is enriched with sanctifying grace they receive (or may receive) a new quality because of the source from which they come. Or, just as water which comes from a peaty soil carries with it the characteristics of peat, so do the actions which proceed from grace carry in themselves the characteristics of grace itself. We cannot submit a human action to any process of examination like a chemical analysis, but if we could we should discover a new element in the activities of grace just as the chemist discovers a new element in peaty water. And that new element is "supernatural": it belongs to the order of divine things.

When we say, then, that grace gives us the power of performing supernatural actions we do not mean that we receive the power of producing supernatural effects, like changing water into wine or the substance of bread into the body of Christ; nor do we mean that we become capable of doing such things as reading the future or seeing the thoughts of our fellow-men; but we mean that we become capable of performing actions which are not in any sense miraculous but are intrinsically elevated so as to become in themselves of a higher order and value.

Behind this somewhat difficult line of thought there lies a very glorious reality. Not only is the soul made beautiful by the grace which is given to it; not only does it become a temple and a home in which God deigns to dwell; but it receives a power of performing actions which, apart from the reward which is promised them, are more wonderful in themselves than the noblest natural efforts of the greatest genius whom the world has ever known. As breezes that blow from a land of spices are laden with perfumes, so are the supernatural actions which come from a soul in grace laden with the perfume of God himself. Nor is this surprising, for they are the actions not of man as he is in himself, but of man as he is incorporated in Christ and engrafted on the Vine whose life flows through his veins.

In the natural order of things a man acts through his various *Infused* faculties; he thinks and reasons by his intellect, chooses by his will, *virtues* sees by his sight, and so on. In the supernatural order of which we have been speaking something of the same holds good. We have said that together with sanctifying grace man receives power to perform supernatural actions. Now, according to the common explanation of the theologians, this power of performing supernatural actions is exercised through certain quasi-faculties which always accompany grace. Grace itself is a new nature—a “new creature”—and just as my ordinary nature has natural faculties which flow from it and through which I perform my natural actions, so this new nature has corresponding “faculties” by which it performs its natural acts.¹ These “faculties” are known as *Infused Virtues* and they differ in various important respects from ordinary virtues—so much so, indeed, that there is a danger of confusion in the use of the term virtue as applied to them. In the first place they are not acquired as the result of repeated efforts and for this reason they are called “infused”—that is, produced directly in the soul by God. In the second place they do not (at least directly and immediately) give us a facility and readiness in acting: what they do is to give us a power of performing actions which are supernatural in character.²

¹ One uses the word “faculties,” or “quasi-faculties,” though strictly speaking they are rather special qualities superadded to the ordinary faculties in virtue of which these are “supernaturalised” and become capable of performing supernatural actions.

² There is a difference of opinion amongst theologians as to whether *Infused Virtues* give a facility in action or not. The matter is discussed in technical works on theology; but in any case a point to insist upon is that their direct effect is to make us capable of performing acts which are intrinsically supernatural and therefore quite different in character from actions performed through a natural virtue. One important result of this is that such supernatural acts have a true value towards eternal life, as we shall see when we deal with the question of merit. But the question of the *Supernatural Virtues* is dealt with in a special essay (xviii) of this work: they are spoken of here only in so far as they enter into the working of sanctifying grace in the soul.

First amongst the Infused Virtues are the three Theological Virtues by which the soul raises itself to God in supernatural Faith, supernatural Hope, supernatural Charity. That these three virtues are infused into our souls, together with sanctifying grace, is the explicit teaching of the Church: but it is the common teaching of theologians that the other virtues—Moral Virtues as they are called—are also infused by God. Thus endowed, the sons of God are enabled to live a life on earth which is glorious in the sight of their Father who is in heaven. They must struggle, indeed, against many enemies both within and without them; the practice of virtue remains difficult, and there may be many setbacks; as it was with labour and toil and in the sweat of his face that Adam was set to labour, so too, is it with much strain and tribulation that they must work out their salvation; but they are the sons of God, and besides the new nature which has been given to them they possess these wonderful springs of supernatural activity.

Yet it is not sufficient that God should have given to his children this new nature and these supernatural powers of action. If these are to do all that this new life involves they have need of constant assistance. Supernatural life requires not only sanctifying grace and the Infused Virtues but also the constant assistance of actual grace—of supernatural assistance given us for the performance of special actions. This actual grace is a complement of sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace is the essential thing; it is this which gives us supernatural life; but we are so weak that we cannot keep that life or do all the things which it involves unless from time to time, as circumstances require it, God comes to our assistance and gives us present help.¹ Consequently when we enumerate the great things which God has done for us in order that we may become his sons and live as heirs of heaven, we may put it thus: first he draws the soul by actual grace and thus prepares it for Justification; then he breathes into it the breath of supernatural life by means of sanctifying grace; at the same time he places in it those powers of supernatural life which we call the Infused Virtues; and subsequently, instead of leaving the soul to struggle on with the means already at its disposal, he assists it in all sorts of ways by further actual graces.

But this is not the whole story of the provisions which God has made, in the ordinary dispositions of his grace, for the supernatural life of the soul. Besides sanctifying grace and actual grace and the Infused Virtues there are also what are known as the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, seven in number. These seven Gifts are mentioned by the prophet Isaias who speaks of them as endowments of the future Messias. "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of forti-

¹ The necessity under which we labour of being thus helped by God is explained in Essay xvii, *Actual Grace*.

tude, the spirit of knowledge and of piety : and he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord.”¹ There can be no doubt that God produces in the soul of the just man supernatural realities corresponding to the seven great names here used by the prophet, and the Church teaches us to pray that the Holy Ghost may give us this seven-fold gift ; but there is some obscurity about the way in which they are to be explained, not only in regard to each considered by itself but also in regard to their general character. What is a “ gift of the Holy Ghost ” ? What does it do for us ? Does it differ from the Virtues ? The answer which theologians commonly give to these questions (following St Thomas Aquinas) runs thus. The gifts of the Holy Ghost are special dispositions produced by God in the soul in virtue of which we become sensitive to the touch of actual grace. Just as some people are peculiarly sensitive to various impressions in the natural order—of sight, sound, touch, etc.—so are the children of God made sensitive to the influences which their Father exercises upon them and by which he would lead them on in the way of sanctification. A little thought will show that these dispositions produced in the soul are of very great importance in the spiritual life. By means of them the soul is brought more directly under the hand of God, responds instinctively to the touch of his grace and may be led on to the heights of sanctity.

Space does not allow that we should explain in detail the special nature of each of the seven gifts, but a few words about one or two of them may help to explain their general character and their importance in the life of grace. Let us take the first of them, the gift of Wisdom. In virtue of this gift the soul is disposed to recognise in God the infinitely good, the infinitely lovable. It does this not as the result of a cold process of reasoning, but instinctively as though by actual contact with God. It has been prepared by God to see him as the sovereign good and the moment he reveals himself it recognises him for what he is, and cleaves to him. And this is done with all the ardour of a loving son. Charity, the queen of the virtues, is thus perfected, for its operations receive a keenness and a promptness which otherwise they would not possess, and the soul is led on by rapid strides if only it does not put obstacles in the way of grace. Similarly the gift of knowledge gives to the soul a readiness in the perception of the true value of earthly things. Here again it is not a matter of cold reasoning : it is rather a sort of instinct by which the soul almost intuitively recognises that creatures are of no real value save in so far as they minister to eternal interest. Who does not see the supreme importance of such gifts in the supernatural life of the soul ?

Each gift might well be studied by itself in order that its vast, practical importance may be recognised and appreciated. We can truly apply to them those words of St Paul : “ Whosoever are led

¹ Isa. xi 2-3.

by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”¹ Assuredly the sons of God are led on by the Spirit of God: and the more they surrender themselves to this divine influence, the more they will approach that state of perfection to which they are called and that state of union with God which is the prelude to the end of sanctifying grace, the Beatific Vision.²

§ VI: GROWTH IN GRACE

Growth possible

WE are now in a better position to realise how wonderful is the supernatural “organism” which God has fashioned in the souls of his children. First there is sanctifying grace itself which affects the very substance of the soul, making it a new creature, giving it a new life. Then there are the Infused Virtues which affect the faculties of the soul and give them the power of performing supernatural actions. Further, by the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, God gives to our faculties, already elevated by the Infused Virtues, that special sensitiveness which makes them respond more readily to his touch. And on the soul thus prepared he is ever acting by Actual Grace, as a musician might play upon an instrument of unwonted charm.

To this loving action of God it is our task to respond, so that the life of grace may grow more and more within us “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ.”³ It is this growth in grace which we must now briefly study.

Grace itself is a free gift of God who gives it in the measure which seems good to him. “To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the giving of Christ.”⁴ To one man there are given five talents, to another two, whilst another receives only one; but all must trade with what they have and labour to increase their store. How is this increase to be brought about?

Caused by God

We may say at once that the increase of grace is the work both of God and of ourselves, but in very different ways. First, it is the work of God. In some cases he gives this increase in answer to prayer. The Church teaches us to pray for such an increase, and for this purpose puts beautiful prayers upon our lips. Take as an example the well-known Collect for the Mass of the 13th Sunday after Pentecost: “Almighty and eternal God, give unto us an in-

¹ Rom. viii 14.

² A further study of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost would show the important part they play in Divine Contemplation and the Mystical Life. Indeed the whole theology of sanctifying grace bears upon the question of true Mysticism: but the connection between the one and the other cannot be worked out here. Much important matter can be found in three works by three modern French Dominicans: *De l’Habitation du Saint-Esprit dans les Ames Justes* (Froget), *La Contemplation Mystique* (Joret), and *Perfection Chrétienne et Contemplation* (2 vols.), by Garrigou-Lagrange. Another very beautiful work on somewhat different lines is *La Grâce et la Gloire* (2 vols.), by Père Terrien, S.J. See also below, pp. 657-8.

³ Eph. iv 13.

⁴ Eph. iv 7.

crease of faith, hope, and charity." Here we look to God to increase the supernatural life of our souls as an act of his goodness. But perhaps we may say that the normal and most efficacious way in which God provides for an increase of the supernatural life of our souls is by the sacraments. The sacraments are not merely touching ceremonies, beautiful in their prayers, their old associations, their symbolism, but they are actually causes of grace. God uses them as his instruments for the production, or the increase, of supernatural life, and they are meant to play an important part in our spiritual history. This part is dealt with in a special essay of this work¹ and its importance cannot easily be exaggerated. We cannot deal here with the way in which the sacraments cause or increase grace in our souls, but we would remind the reader of two things. First, that the grace caused in us by the valid reception of a sacrament is due not to our own efforts in the receiving of the sacrament, but to the sacrament itself. Of course we have certain things to do before the sacrament can produce its effect, but the effect is due not to these things which we do but to the sacrament. This is expressed by theologians technically by saying that the grace of the sacraments is produced *ex opere operato* and not *ex opere operantis*.

The second thing to which we would call attention is the truth that in the use of the sacraments it is God who is the ultimate cause of grace; the outward rite is but an instrument which he uses for the production of this effect. Hence it is quite a mistake to suppose (as Protestants do) that the sacrament comes between the soul and God, and lessens our dependence upon him. Still less is it true that we look upon the sacraments as having a sort of magical power. Of themselves they are merely signs; they produce grace only as used by God from whom the grace flows as from its source, and they are not independent of our dispositions.

Leaving this part of our subject with these brief remarks, we pass on to consider how our own actions can produce an increase of grace in the soul. Of course this cannot be by our own unaided efforts; if we can do anything in this respect it is only in response to, and with the help of, the grace which God gives us. It is a fundamental principle of Catholic theology that we can do nothing of ourselves towards our salvation;² and this is true of the growth in grace which we are here considering. But we can correspond with grace; and by corresponding with grace we can increase the supernatural life which we already possess. This is evident from the teaching of the New Testament. We have already heard St Paul speaking of the development of the life of grace within us "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ," and it is clear that this development is at least in part dependent upon our own personal efforts. A few verses further on he exhorts his readers:

¹ Essay xxi, *The Sacramental System*.

² See Essay xvii, *Actual Grace*, § iii.

“that henceforth we be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine . . . but doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in him who is the head, even Christ.”¹ And St Peter says: “Wherefore, laying aside all malice and all guile and dissimulations and envies and all detractions, as new-born babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation.”² But this is surely an exhortation to use our own efforts so that we may deepen within ourselves the supernatural life of grace. Hence in his second epistle he writes: “Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”³

Here we have another difference between the Protestant theory of Justification and the true doctrine of the New Testament. In the Protestant theory, it will be remembered, Justification is a mere external non-imputation of sin, and this does not admit of growth; our sins are either imputed to us or they are not. The passages which we have quoted are meaningless unless there be, as the Church teaches, a supernatural life in which we go from virtue to virtue, are renewed from day to day and thus become more and more justified.⁴

The fact being admitted that we can grow in grace as the result of our own efforts (as contrasted with the growth which comes from God in answer to prayer or through the use of the sacraments), the question arises: How do our efforts bring about this increase? We answer that it is by *meriting* an increase of grace that we are able to develop our supernatural life. Our own efforts do not actually produce the increase, but God grants it as a reward. And together with the increase of sanctifying grace there is a corresponding increase in the Infused Virtues and the Gifts of the Holy Ghost—all as a result of merit. Hence there are important differences between the growth of natural life and the development of supernatural life. To a certain extent natural life may be said to grow of itself: there is a natural development and gradual unfolding of powers, given a fit environment. Besides this, the very actions of a living thing may be said to quicken and develop its life in so far as they perfect its natural powers by producing in them promptness, ease and accuracy in their operations. But in the supernatural life it is different. Grace does not grow of itself; neither do the supernatural activities of the soul produce, or increase, the grace within it; God alone gives grace and God alone increases it; but, as we have said, the increase can be merited, and it is in this sense that, with the help of God, our own actions can bring about the growth of the life of grace.⁵

¹ Eph. iv 14-15.

² 1 Pet. ii 1-2.

³ 2 Pet. iii 18.

⁴ See *Trent*, Session VI, chap. x.

⁵ We have here assumed that there is such a thing as Merit in the eyes of God—a fact which was denied by the Reformers. The general question of Merit will be discussed in the next section. Our present purpose is to explain that increase of grace may be merited by us but is not directly produced by us.

It might be objected that supernatural virtues, and with them the whole supernatural life, are directly increased by our very efforts, for it is a matter of experience that a good man who possesses the infused moral virtues is able to increase them by the practice of virtue. Take, for example, an earnest person who for the love of God sets himself the task of acquiring greater patience ; day by day he puts a guard over himself, and checks the various movements of impatience which arise within him, and gradually acquires a habit of self-control. During all this time he is exercising the supernatural virtue of patience, and consequently it would seem that by his own efforts he is developing this virtue just as a non-religious man might develop a natural habit of patience.

This objection is worth considering for it introduces an interesting point in connection with the life of grace. In the case supposed we must notice the distinction between two quite different things. These two things are, facility in practising patience and the increase of the infused, supernatural virtue of patience. By repeated acts a man increases what we may call his natural power of restraining himself ; this increase follows the ordinary psychological laws according to which habits are developed ; but the increase of the supernatural virtue (and of grace itself) is another matter altogether. As we have already tried to explain, the infused, supernatural virtues are not so much new powers of action as qualities superadded to our natural powers of action which supernaturalise these and make them capable of performing acts which are supernatural in character. The development of facility in operation (apart from some extraordinary grace of God) must be the result of effort on our part ; the growth of grace and of the infused virtues is produced not by ourselves but by God, though it can be merited by us.

Here we are touching upon points which are dealt with in the Essay on *The Supernatural Virtues*, to which the reader is referred ; it was necessary, however, to say something about the matter in this discussion of Sanctifying Grace.

The Christian soul, then, has it within his power to increase the treasure of grace which has been committed to him. He can pray for it, he can approach the sacraments with the knowledge that these are divinely appointed means of advancing in grace, he can exercise himself in good works. And thus his soul will become more and more God-like, and the glory of the Beatific Vision (to which the whole of the supernatural order is directed) will be intensified. For there is a proportion between Grace and Glory ; the greater the first, the greater the second. But that brings us to the question of Merit, which we shall discuss in the following section.¹

¹ Whilst grace can be increased within us, it is never diminished (although, of course, it can be lost altogether). This statement probably runs counter to the idea which many Catholics form of the effects of venial sin ; they look upon venial sin as weakening the supernatural life of the soul and

§ VII: GRACE AND MERIT

Possibility
of merit

It is a treasured belief of the Catholic Church that the soul which is in the state of grace can merit eternal reward. This was denied by the Reformers who urged two objections against the Catholic doctrine of Merit. First, they said, if we merit in the eyes of God we are making God our debtor, which cannot be; and secondly, they urged that to claim merit for our own actions is to take away from the sovereign merits of Christ who alone has merited for us the rewards of eternal life. We have now to show that the doctrine of Merit is clearly contained in Sacred Scripture and that the objections which we have mentioned are based upon a misunderstanding and are without any force.

The justification of the assertion that man can merit eternal reward stands out very clearly in the pages of the New Testament. St Paul certainly believed that he had merited when he wrote the well-known words: "I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord the just judge will render to me in that day: and not only to me but to them also that love his coming."¹ Notice the words "crown of justice" and "just judge" which express so forcibly the idea of a recompense which has been merited and is due in justice. And those who suffer for Christ are encouraged by him with the thought of the reward which will be theirs. "Be glad and rejoice," he says, "for your reward is very great in heaven."² Very striking, too, is the glimpse which our Saviour gives us of the great reckoning which will take place at the last day. Some souls are damned. Why? Because their bad lives have deserved it. Others are admitted to glory. Why? Because their good lives have merited it. Just as evil action deserves its punishment so does virtuous action deserve its reward: such is the only conclusion which can be drawn from our Saviour's words.

But does not this doctrine of Merit mean that God is made our debtor? And is not this quite impossible? The answer to this argument of the Protestants is easy. I may have a right to recompense from another either because I have done him a service which has put him under an obligation to me, or because he had previously promised me this recompense if I did certain things. Now it is

diminishing the amount of sanctifying grace which we possess. But there is no such diminution: if there were, long continuance in a course of venial sin could extinguish grace altogether: and this is not the case. Yet venial sins certainly imperil the life of the soul. If a man becomes habituated to venial sins he loses his sense of the sanctity of God, his self-control is weakened, self-love gets the upper hand and sooner or later a big temptation will overthrow him. Besides, a man who is careless in regard to venial sins is less likely to receive great helps from God.

It is true that God *could*, if he wished, diminish the grace in a soul, just as he can increase it. But it is certain that he never does.

¹ 2 Tim. iv 7-8.

² Matt. v 12.

quite true that I cannot claim a return from God on the first of these grounds, since that would indeed be to make him my debtor ; but does the objection hold if my claim is based upon a promise which he has made ? Clearly it does not. In this case God has shown himself a most bountiful Lord in promising me a reward. Apart from his promise I could have no right to a return for what I have done. This would be true even if the reward were something in the natural order of things, such as health or wealth ; still more true is it when the reward is supernatural : the Beatific Vision. But, given his promise, I have a right to the reward if I do what was required of me : God owes it not so much to me as to himself.

In this connection it is worth noticing that eternal life is both a reward and a gift. It is a gift, since we owe it to the bountiful love of God who freely chose to set it as the end of our action, and freely gives us the means of attaining it ; it is at the same time a reward, because in his wisdom God has made the possession of it dependent upon our own action.

Similarly there is no force in the second objection that the doctrine of merit takes away from the sovereign merits of Christ. For we owe it entirely to the merits of Christ that we are able to merit for ourselves. He has won for us the power of meriting ; without him we could never do anything which would merit in the sight of God. This is more wonderful than if eternal life were in no way dependent upon our own actions.

In the light of what has been said it is evident that a promise *Conditions for merit* (or something equivalent to a promise) on the part of God is an essential condition for real merit in his sight. But there are other conditions which it is important that we should notice. First of all no man can really merit before God unless he be in the state of grace. It is only as part of the living vine that we can bear fruit, according to Christ's own saying : " As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me." ¹ And St Paul tells us that " if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries and all knowledge . . . and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." ² In other words, unless I am in the friendship of Christ by divine love, which is inseparable from sanctifying grace, I cannot merit in the slightest way, even though I seem to perform acts of heroic virtue. Hence a man is indeed sowing the sands if he remains in a state of sin and yet fancies that by performing good actions he can merit before God.

It is not surprising that sanctifying grace should be a condition for all real merit before God. Without it, we are cut off from God and in a state of enmity with him, whether we have fallen from grace or have never become his children by Baptism : how then can we

¹ John xv 4.

² 1 Cor. xiii 2-3.

expect anything from him in return for our actions? Still more, how can we merit to share his life in heaven? But with sanctifying grace, we are his sons, sharers of his nature; and it is not difficult to see how becoming it is, and how much in harmony with God's loving plan, that to such sons there should be given a promise of reward for the good actions which they perform.

Another condition for merit is that the act should be done for God. This is a point concerning which there has been considerable discussion amongst theologians who differ at least in the way in which they express themselves. Our statement of this condition does not mean (as the reader may be pardoned for thinking it means) that before an act can be meritorious it must be done with the express intention of doing it for God. In fact it would seem certain that all morally good acts which are performed by a soul in the state of grace are meritorious in the sight of God, even though he is not thought of in any way when they are done. Such a soul has chosen God as its supreme good to whom all other things are subordinated; hence until that choice is retracted all its actions are governed by the principle "God first"—in other words, by the principle of Divine Charity. Consequently we can say that every morally good action which we perform comes under this great principle and is meritorious in the sight of God. It is "done for God" in so far as it is part of a mode of life in which all is directed to God.

This may seem to be too comfortable a doctrine, since it makes the sphere of supernatural merit extremely wide and very easy of access; but it rests on sound theological principles, and is generally admitted by theologians. And in this connection we must remember another principle which is widely admitted, viz. that all actions which we freely perform are either definitely good or definitely bad; there is no such thing in practice as a free act which is neither good nor bad. Considered in itself, and apart from its circumstances, an act may be "indifferent," as all admit; but it would seem that in the circumstances in which it is performed an act must be either good or bad. If we follow this opinion, which has the authority of St Thomas Aquinas and many great thinkers, we must say that the possibility of merit for the children of God is indeed wide. As long as no warping element of self-love or other similar fault enters into their actions, they will merit all the day long, even though they do not consciously refer all their actions to God. Nevertheless the merit of their actions will be greater in proportion to the way in which love of God becomes more and more a directive principle in all they do, so that the more frequently and fervently they refer their actions to God the greater will be their merit.

Besides these conditions for supernatural merit there are certain others which need not detain us, as they are more or less obvious. Thus, the act must be free and it must be performed during the course of life, since there is no merit after death. The conditions

which we have explained are the important ones and others which might be mentioned are reducible to them.

But is eternal life the only thing which we can merit from God? *What we can merit*
 No, there are other things which we can merit. In the preceding section we saw that the just man can merit an increase of grace—a truth which is taught explicitly by the Council of Trent. But whilst it is reasonably certain that we merit eternally by all good actions, it is not so certain that every good action merits an increase of grace. Many theologians hold that in order that we should merit an increase of grace our actions must reach a certain degree of fervour corresponding to the degree of grace which we already possess. Thus, according to this view, if our present degree of grace and of the Infused Virtues which accompany it is equivalent to 5, and the fervour of our action is equivalent to 3, we shall indeed win a title to eternal reward corresponding to the value of our action, but we shall not obtain a present increase of grace and the Infused Virtues. Whatever may be thought about this, it is certain, and a matter of Catholic faith, that increase of grace can be merited.

Since sanctifying grace is necessary for merit it will be realised that there are many important things which no man can merit. Thus the first actual grace which a man requires to lead him to faith in God is quite outside the sphere of merit; it is God's pure gift, and no amount of natural virtue can establish a title to it. Similarly the first infusion of sanctifying grace cannot be merited. Nor can the man who has fallen away from God really merit his restoration to grace, or even the actual graces which he needs in order to recover the life which he has lost. We may, indeed, pray whilst we are in the state of grace that if we should ever be so unfortunate as to lose the friendship of God there may be given to us the grace of repentance. But God is in no way bound to hear this prayer.

Final Perseverance, too, is a thing which cannot be merited in the strict sense of the word. This great gift is bound up with the problem of Predestination and is dealt with in the essay on *Actual Grace* (pp. 599-600).

Can we merit graces and blessings for others? Strictly speaking, *Merit "de condigno" and merit "de congruo"*
 we cannot. Only our Saviour, who was constituted the head of the human race in all matters that pertain to eternal life, could truly merit for others. The rest of men can pray for others, and they can even make satisfaction for the sins of others, but they cannot merit for them. To merit is entirely a personal affair. But there is a title to reward which is lower than that of merit in the strict sense, yet is of real value. It is what theologians call merit "de congruo" (merit of congruity), as contrasted with that strict merit of which we have been speaking, and to which they give the name merit "de condigno" (merit of desert). This merit of congruity is based not upon a title in justice, but upon a certain fitness, or what we may call a reasonable expectation that in view of what we have done a

return will be made. Thus if I have shown great kindness to another, and he in turn has an opportunity of doing me some service, I shall feel it to be only natural that he should do the service. There is no question of justice ; it is a matter of what we may call "decency"—of merit "de congruo." Now, as between ourselves and God there are several things which cannot be merited in the strict sense of the word, yet they come under the head of this merit "de congruo." Hence, although the man who has not yet been justified cannot strictly merit justification, nevertheless by responding to the actual graces which are given to him he can merit it "de congruo" ; and in a similar way the sinner by his response to actual grace can merit further grace "de congruo." And this applies to meriting for others. Though we cannot merit for them in the strict sense of the word, we can merit for them "de congruo" whatever we can merit for ourselves. Hence in our efforts to obtain favours for others we must go on in patience and in trust, relying upon God to do what is best for his own glory. We cast our bread upon the running waters, trusting that God will use it for those whose welfare we have at heart.¹

§ VIII: LOSS AND REGAIN

Loss of grace
■ *possibility*

It was a peculiarity of the teaching of Calvin that he held it to be impossible for a man who had once been justified to fall away. Luther did not go quite so far as this, but he taught that justification can be lost only by the sin of infidelity ; in other words, by the loss of that faith which, according to his system, justifies a man.

The teaching of the Catholic Church is that sanctifying grace is lost by every mortal sin. That grace is a thing which can be lost is clear enough. Our Saviour warned us of the danger in which we stand when he said : " Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation." ² St Paul gives the warning : " He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall." ³ In the same epistle the great Apostle of the Gentiles expresses the fear which he felt : " I chastise my body and bring it into subjection : lest perhaps when I have preached to others I myself should become a castaway." ⁴ Scripture and Tradition are unanimous on this point of the possibility of losing the grace which we have once acquired.

Grace and
■ *mortal sin*

A little thought will show the essential opposition which exists between sanctifying grace and mortal sin. They are contraries which necessarily exclude each other. On the one hand, he who is

¹ The conditions for merit "de congruo" are, of course, different from the conditions for merit "de condigno." They are that the act must be morally good, it must be free, and it must be supernatural. Hence (in regard to the last condition), if a man be not in a state of grace his actions, to be meritorious "de congruo," must proceed from an impulse of actual grace. This is one reason why the first grace which a man receives cannot be merited even "de congruo."

² Matt. xxvi 41.

³ 1 Cor. x 12.

⁴ 1 Cor. ix 27.

in the state of grace is the son of God, a sharer in his nature, an heir to heaven, incorporated in Christ; on the other hand, he who sins mortally deliberately turns himself away from God and seeks his good in something which is opposed to him, so that God is rejected, his enemy enthroned. It is clearly impossible, therefore, that a man should be at one and the same time in the state of grace and in the state of mortal sin. It is for this very reason that such sin is called "mortal," because it deprives the soul of its supernatural life just as a mortal wound deprives the body of its natural life. There is no such opposition, however, between sanctifying grace and venial sin, for the adequate reason that in the case of venial sin a man does not set before himself some other end than God. There is indeed something inordinate in his action, but he does not directly turn away from God and prefer some other thing to him.

Had God wished, he could have ordained that grace once lost *Restoration of grace* was lost for ever, as he did in the case of the fallen angels. But in his compassion he has made it possible for us to recover grace after it has been lost. There is no sin, and no combination of sins, for which he refuses forgiveness. Yet it is well that we should remember that of himself the sinner is in a helpless condition. He is dead, as far as the spiritual life of the soul is concerned, and can do nothing towards his own spiritual resurrection.

The first thing which is necessary, then, is the assistance of Actual Grace,¹ which God never withholds completely from the sinner. If his sorrow is perfect, grace is restored to him even before he approaches the consoling sacrament of Penance; if it remains mere Attrition, the absolution of Christ's minister is required, or some other sacrament which, under the special circumstances of the case, carries with it forgiveness. But these points are explained more fully in other essays in this work and do not call for special treatment here.² It is more to our present purpose to call attention to two points which arise more directly in connection with our discussion of sanctifying grace, namely: How much grace is restored to us? And what happens to the store of merit which we had acquired before our fall and lost by our sin?

To these questions theologians do not give a uniform answer. St Thomas Aquinas held that the amount of sanctifying grace which a sinner receives when he obtains forgiveness is proportionate to the dispositions in which he returns to God; hence grace after forgiveness may be greater than it was before, it may be less, it may be equal.³ Other theologians maintain that after repentance and forgiveness the amount of sanctifying grace is always greater than it was before, because the whole of that which was lost is restored and an increase of grace is obtained through the sacrament which has been received and the various acts of the penitent which have merited

¹ See Essay xvii, *Actual Grace*, pp. 604-605.

² See Essay xxvi, *Sin and Repentance*. ³ *S. Theol.*, III, Q. lxxxix, a. 2.

grace. Whichever of these opinions be true (and one ought to be slow in setting aside the opinion of St Thomas) it is evidently a matter of extreme importance that the sinner should return to God with all the ardour of his soul ; then he may hope that in the infinite mercy of God all the grace which he had lost has been restored to him and he may begin again with renewed energy, hope, and gratitude.

The question of the recovery of merit is closely akin. That merit is restored to us when we return to God after a fall, is the teaching of the Church : but it is explained in different ways by theologians. As in the case of the restoration of sanctifying grace, some make it proportionate to the dispositions of the penitent sinner : but others hold that the full measure of lost merit is always restored, with an addition due to present repentance. The point is one concerning which a Catholic is free to hold either opinion. In any case the goodness of God is apparent. Like the father of the Prodigal Son, he is ever ready to receive his erring child and restore him to the inheritance which he had lost.

EPILOGUE

HOPE AND FEAR

THERE can be no doubt that the Catholic teaching on sanctifying grace does much to encourage within us the spirit of hope. He that is mighty has done great things for us. He has made us his children, he has raised us up to a share in his nature, he has set the Beatific Vision as the end towards which we must aspire, and he has given us most wonderful endowments to enable us to reach that end. Well, then, may we hope. Yet in our hope there ought ever to be an element of salutary fear. Why ?

First of all because we cannot indulge in that strange security which the Reformers declared to be the one condition for justification. It was part of their system that in order to be justified we must have the unwavering certainty of faith that we *are* justified. This was condemned by the Council of Trent, which lays it down that " just as no pious man ought to entertain a doubt about the mercy of God, the merits of Christ and the efficacy of the sacraments ; so everyone can have uncertainty and fear concerning the possession of grace, when he considers himself and his own infirmity and want of good dispositions ; since no one can know with the certainty of faith, which admits of no error, that he has obtained the grace of God."

We cannot, then, have the certainty of faith that we are in grace ; but we can have an assurance which is sufficient for all practical purposes. Concerning the precise degree of this assurance there has been considerable discussion amongst theologians, but at any rate we can say without hesitation that a man can have a degree of certainty which excludes all real and prudent doubt. And indeed we are often

expected to have such a certainty, as when we receive Holy Communion ; at such times we must be able to tell ourselves that we really and truly are in God's grace. To open the door to doubt upon our state of grace when our conscience can discover no serious sin would be to enter upon a life of anguish and stress of mind which God most certainly does not intend. If we are faced by the thought of past sins we must mourn for them and renew our heartfelt sorrow, but we must at the same time put our trust in the goodness of God and in the efficacy of the sacrament of Penance. A condition of morbid fear is altogether foreign to the spirit of Christ.

There is greater ground for fear in regard to the future. I may have reasonable certainty that I am in the grace of God, but do I know that I shall die in that grace ? I do not. Far from the mind of a Catholic must be the thought of those who look upon themselves as most certainly amongst the number of the elect, for the Church teaches that apart from a special revelation it is impossible to know which souls God has predestined. When we consider the weakness of our nature and the strength of the enemies of our soul we may well fear lest we fall from grace. Hence our Saviour teaches us to pray that we be saved from temptation. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." "Be sober and watch," says St Peter, "because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist ye, strong in faith." ¹ Truly it is with fear and trembling that we must work out our salvation, as St Paul tells us. ² Nothing which we can do can really merit this "great gift" of final perseverance. We must pray for it, we must hope for it, but we cannot be certain that we shall obtain it.

Yet hope must surely temper the fear which the thought of our uncertainty creates ; not the hope of one who is conscious of his own strength, but the hope of one who, knowing his own infirmity, looks up to God in childlike trust. He has been so good to us ; he has made such wonderful provision for us ; so, whilst we fear our own weakness we are confident of his strength and his love. It is in this spirit that we listen to the words of St Paul which the Church puts before us when she celebrates the mystery of Christ's coming on Christmas night. "The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works. These things speak and exhort." ³

E. TOWERS.

¹ 1 Pet. v 8.

² Phil. ii 12.

³ Tit. ii 11-15.

XVII

ACTUAL GRACE

§ I: INTRODUCTORY NOTIONS

*Our
dependence
on God*

It is of fundamental importance for the right ordering of our lives that we should realise our spiritual weakness. In many of the ordinary affairs of life a spirit of self-reliance is essential for success, and men often lag behind in the keen struggle of this busy world because they have not sufficient confidence in themselves. But in spiritual matters the truth is just the other way ; it is the self-confident man that fails and the man who distrusts himself that succeeds. When the Catechism told us that " we can do no good work of ourselves towards our salvation " it was expressing a profound truth with literal exactness, not uttering a pious exaggeration. And if we do not recognise this fact we are in danger of spiritual ruin. He that thinks himself to stand must take heed lest he fall.

In speaking thus of our personal insufficiency we are not thinking merely of our natural dependence, as creatures, upon the sustaining hand of God. Every creature depends upon God, not only for its continued existence, but also for every exercise of its natural powers of action. We cannot lift a finger unless God, who is the First Cause and the First Mover, acts with us. But it is not this which we are here considering. Over and above God's concurrence with our ordinary actions there is need of his special assistance in the working out of our salvation, in such wise that if he did not give us this assistance we should most certainly perish. In a word, we need actual grace, which for the moment we will define as ■ supernatural help given by God for the special purpose of enabling us to perform some particular act which tends towards our salvation.

Our need of actual grace is far greater than even Catholics are at first inclined to believe ; in fact, if there is any matter of faith in which it is easy to fall unconsciously into views which are in themselves heretical, that matter is our dependence upon the supernatural assistance of God. We give ourselves credit for more than we can do by our own unaided powers.

False ideas

It was in the early part of the fifth century that the Church was first compelled to face the whole question of the necessity of grace. The controversy arose out of the teaching of a British monk named Pelagius who appeared in Italy in the first years of that century and soon attracted a good deal of notice. St Augustine, who was to be his chief opponent, speaks of him with respect, and he seems to have been an austere and zealous man, a practical director of souls rather

than a deep theologian. He had no patience with people who distrusted themselves and for ever cried to God for help in a spirit of helplessness; he considered all this a mark of indolence and of unwillingness to make a vigorous and persevering effort for oneself. Bestir yourself, he said in effect; harden the will; learn self-discipline; watch your evil tendencies; you are "master of your fate, captain of your soul"; if you fall it is your own fault and you have only yourself to blame.

All this sounded very well, but there were some who raised objections. Surely, they said, Pelagius is ignoring the Fall of man, and the sad consequences involved in it for all the human race; our nature is wounded and both the Scriptures and the Fathers rightly stress the need under which we labour of the help of God. Reasoning such as this Pelagius and his followers unhesitatingly swept aside. Adam's sin, they declared, did not harm us except by the bad example which it set; our nature is not fundamentally evil, and man can keep from sin by the unaided power of his will; grace comes in to make things easier for us, not to deliver us from impossibilities. They were willing to concede that in order that we may do all that God requires of us we need the external help of revelation, which makes known to us many of his commands; but, given this knowledge through revelation, we can accomplish our task, and save our souls, by ourselves.

These issues were too serious to be ignored, and for a considerable time the western world resounded with the echoes of the controversy. And, as in other vicissitudes of his Church, God had a champion at hand in the person of the great St Augustine of Hippo who has been justly called the Doctor of Grace. From the first he saw the far-reaching consequences of these theories of the British monk and forthwith he set himself to meet the danger. The struggle was long drawn out and lasted beyond the lifetime of the saint, but it was he who dealt Pelagianism its death-blow.

It will be seen that the issues raised by Pelagius were of far-reaching and very practical importance. They involved such questions as the nature of the Fall, Original Sin, and the Redemption; our dependence upon Christ; the efficacy of the Sacraments; the power of the human will. Indeed, this question of the necessity of grace is one which shows in a very striking way how a number of different dogmas which at first sight might seem to have little relation one with another are in reality mutually dependent; and how a wonderful harmony runs through all God's dealings with men as seen in the revelation which he has given to his Church. This harmony of doctrine with doctrine is in itself no insignificant argument for the divine authorship of that body of doctrine of which the Catholic Church is the custodian.

In some of the pages which follow it will be our business to *Two sources of weakness* set out in some detail the more important ways in which we need

the divine assistance, but before proceeding to this more detailed study it will be helpful if we glance for a moment at two sources of our weakness. If we bear these two sources in mind we shall find it more easy to realise how great is our dependence on the supernatural assistance of God.

First, then, there is the fact that we possess a fallen nature. When God created our first parents he gave them what is known as the gift of integrity. In virtue of this gift the animal part of man was subjected to the spiritual. All his actions were ruled by reason, and the lower passions did not rebel; perfect harmony prevailed. But this gift was lost by the sin of Adam, and lost not only for Adam himself, but also for us. Henceforth a constant strife was to go on in the heart of every man, the lower rising up in opposition to the higher, the carnal against the spiritual. St Paul has spoken of this strife in a passage which has become famous even amongst non-believers. "I know that there dwelleth not in me, that is to say, in my flesh, that which is good. For to will is present with me; but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do. Now if I do that which I will not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I have a will to do good, evil is present with me. For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man: but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord."¹

Here we have one important source of our weakness. It would be possible, indeed, to exaggerate the difficulty and to look upon human nature as essentially and hopelessly corrupt. That was what Luther did when he taught that our nature has become so corrupt, so odious in the sight of God, that all our acts are sinful, tainted in their source. But, whilst avoiding extreme views such as this, we are forced to realise that in the loss of the gift of integrity there is a source of immense difficulty, from which we can be delivered only through "the grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord".

The second source of our weakness is not so obvious as this rebellion of the lower part of man against the higher, but it is of even greater importance for a true understanding of our proper condition. To put it in somewhat technical terms, which we shall at once proceed to explain, all our natural efforts are inadequate because God has

¹ Rom. vii 18-25. In the Westminster Version, edited by Fr. Lattey, S.J., the last sentence is rendered: "Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Authorised as well as the Revised Version has: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The Douai Version used in the text follows the Latin of the Vulgate, which would seem to be based on an inferior Greek text. The sense is ultimately the same, and the Douai Version has been retained both here and elsewhere.

ordained that we should aim at the possession of a supernatural object, and should live in a supernatural order of things. Since the object to be attained and the order of things in which we are to live are supernatural, it follows necessarily that our natural efforts are insufficient; by the very nature of the case we need supernatural help. To explain.

In a verse which gloriously expresses the wonders of our Christian calling, St John says: "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know, that, when he shall appear, we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is."¹ Here two great truths are put before us, viz. that we are destined for the Beatific Vision and that we who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ are already the sons of God. "As many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name."² But the beatific vision is something to which no creature, human or angelic, can attain by its own unaided power. God lives in light inaccessible. The object, then, which is set before us is absolutely beyond our grasp, as far as our natural powers are concerned; no effort of our own, no matter how intense or how prolonged, could bring us within the possibility of reaching it. God, however, has freely chosen so to raise our nature above itself that we shall see him as he is. And that is not all: not only has he chosen to raise us up to the Beatific Vision, but already in this mortal life he has so elevated our nature that "we are now the sons of God"; sons of God, not in some metaphorical sense, not merely in so far as every creature may be called the son of God because it is his handiwork, but sons of God through a change which he has wrought in us whereby we are made to share his very nature. St Peter dares to say that "he hath given us most great and precious promises: that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature."³

It is of the greatest importance that we should realise this higher life to which the Christian is raised and the wholly supernatural character of that Beatific Vision to which we are called. Such a realisation is wonderfully ennobling. But what is of more direct interest for us here is the light which it throws on the question of our dependence on God. Obviously a creature who is made a partaker of the divine nature and a son of God, and who is striving to attain the glory of the Beatific Vision, must be absolutely dependent upon God. We could more easily live our natural life without air than this supernatural life without God's grace.

In the light of these general principles it will be evident that we need the help of God both to save us from falling into sin and also to enable us to ascend to the performance of the actions which belong to our new life as sons of God. Our weak nature has to be healed,

¹ I John iii 2.

² John i 12.

³ 2 Pet. i 4. For a fuller explanation of this see above, Essay xvi, pp.

our lowly nature uplifted. Hence what theologians call medicinal or healing grace (*gratia medicinalis*, or *sanans*) and elevating grace (*gratia elevans*), the one to save us from our sinful tendencies, the other to lift us up to a life with God. The elevation of our nature to the divine sonship is actually accomplished by that wonderful reality which we call Habitual, or Sanctifying, Grace ; that is to say, by a real quality infused into the soul and making it Godlike—a quality which is of a permanent character, to be destroyed only by sin. With sanctifying, or habitual, grace we are not here directly concerned—the object of our study being not the permanent supernatural gifts of God to the soul, but the passing helps by which he comes to our assistance in the performance of various actions. It is to these passing helps that we give the name Actual Grace.

A reference has just been made to the grace which heals and the grace which elevates, and this distinction helps to explain the work of grace in the soul ; but it may be well to point out that these are not necessarily two distinct things. A grace which heals may at the same time elevate our faculties to the supernatural order of action. In all probability this is generally the case, and thus “healing” and “elevating” are but two effects of one and the same grace. The distinction has been mentioned here because it helps to bring out the general ideas which we are explaining on the necessity of grace.

In technical works of theology various divisions of actual grace are given which lie outside the very limited scope of the present little essay ; but there is one division the explanation of which will help towards a fuller understanding of our subject. Theologians distinguish between external and internal graces. External graces are gifts of God which are outside ourselves, such as the message of the Gospel, the example of Christ and the saints, the external circumstances of our lives ; internal graces are influences exercised by God within us, such as impulses towards good and lights on eternal truths. Of course, these two kinds of grace are often connected, the external grace being the medium, or the occasion, for the giving of the internal ; but they are obviously different in kind, and the distinction is important. In what follows we shall retain the name Actual Grace for interior grace, so that when we assert the necessity of actual grace, we mean to deny the sufficiency of merely external grace.

*Definition of
Actual Grace*

After these various explanations we can amplify the definition of actual grace which was given earlier on. We said that actual grace is a supernatural help given by God for the special purpose of enabling us to perform some particular action which tends towards our salvation ; we may now say, more fully, that it is a supernatural gift, internal to us and of a passing nature, whereby God helps us to avoid sin, or enables us to perform actions which tend towards eternal life.

And now we pass to the consideration of the necessity of actual

grace. In this matter human reason alone is an insufficient guide ; we must rely on the revelation which God in his mercy has made to us, and on the infallible teaching of the Church. When the Catholic doctrine on the necessity of grace has been set before us we may be inclined to feel that the position is one of despair, so great is our weakness seen to be ; but further thought will lead us to a very different conclusion. It will make us see the grandeur of that wonderful scheme of Redemption whereby Christ our Lord came to our assistance, and of that equally wonderful scheme of a Church which, with its Sacraments and other means of grace, was to be an ark of salvation to us ; so that we can rejoice in that very weakness of ours which has called forth such an exhibition of loving kindness on the part of God. The thought of our weakness would indeed be terrifying if there were no strong hand to hold us ; but when we know that the arm of God is about us, fear gives place to confidence and love. “ He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven. He shall say to the Lord : Thou art my protector, and my refuge : my God, in him will I trust.” ¹

§ II: THE NECESSITY OF GRACE FOR THE AVOIDING OF SIN

CAN a man keep from sin without the special help of God ? As we have seen, the Pelagians declared that he can ; it is simply a matter of the right use of our free will, they maintained, and to deny that we can keep from sin without grace is nothing less than a denial that we are free. Yet the Church teaches just the opposite and warns us that if we are to keep from sin, we must rely on the grace of God, without whose aid we shall most certainly fall. It is this teaching which we are to explain in the present section.

Inability to observe the Natural Law

First of all, we will consider the following question : If a man lives apart from God, and receives no grace from him, can he keep the whole of the natural law ? Notice that we are limiting our question to the *natural law*—in other words, to that moral law which every normal man recognises by the light of his reason and the dictates of his conscience ; we leave out of account altogether that positive law which God has given to us through revelation. Further, our question has reference to the *whole* of the natural law. We are not suggesting that any of the dictates of the natural law, taken singly, are beyond the power of unaided nature ; that would clearly be untrue, for we have plenty of evidence of men without faith in God who avoid such offences against the natural law as drunkenness and dishonesty. No, we are referring to the whole of the natural law. Moreover, we are not going to maintain that the natural law cannot be observed for at any rate a short time ; we are thinking now of

¹ Ps. xc 1-2.

the possibility of a long-continued period in which the whole of the moral law is observed, and we deny the possibility of such a thing. A man may, indeed, go on for some time—how long we do not pretend to say—without serious fault, but he cannot succeed indefinitely; sooner or later there will be a serious fall in regard to one or other of the obligations which the natural law lays upon us all, of which we are all conscious.

If we were to examine this question simply from what our own reason and experience tell us of life, we might not be justified in making the bold statement that there is absolutely no one who can keep the whole of the moral law without the help of God. The sight of so much evil, even amongst men who believe in God and profess some form of religion, might make us pause, and an analysis of the tendencies of the human heart might make us feel that sooner or later, in one way or another, by sin of the spirit if not by sin of the flesh, men will fail to observe perfectly the dictates of the moral law; but would this justify us in saying universally that without divine grace no man can avoid evil? Probably not; and therefore it is not on appeal to reason, but on the authority of God's revealed word, that Catholic theology bases its assertion of man's moral incapacity. And the passage on which we chiefly rely has already been quoted. It occurs in the seventh chapter of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and requires very careful reading.

In the first chapter of this epistle St Paul paints in vivid colours the moral degradation into which the pagan world had fallen, and in the seventh chapter he speaks of the wretched condition even of the man who has the advantage of the Jewish Law. That law, he asserts, was an occasion of sin; for by forbidding things, it created a desire for them: "sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence";¹ but it did not give any internal help to compensate. Hence the Jew living under the law finds it impossible to keep altogether from sin. "The good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do."² There is only one means of escape; and that is, the grace of God.³

Such is the thought of St Paul; and the only conclusion which we can draw from it is that without the help of God which comes to us through Christ it is impossible to keep from sin. "The law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath delivered me from the law of sin and of death."⁴

¹ Rom. vii 8.

² Rom. vii 19.

³ Rom. vii 25.

⁴ Rom. viii 2. For a fuller exposition of the teaching of St Paul in this important and very difficult passage, the reader is referred to a Catholic commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (*e.g.* Cornely in Latin, Lagrange in French, Callan in English), or to the careful discussion of the matter in Prat, *The Theology of St Paul*, vol. i, p. 224 *seq.* It is generally admitted that where St Paul speaks in the first person he is not directly alluding to himself; it would seem that he is speaking in the character of a Jew living under the Jewish law. Towards the end of his life St Augustine preferred

On the strength of this teaching of St Paul, and supported by the authority of earlier Christian writers who in various ways insisted upon man's natural weakness, the champions of Catholic orthodoxy against the teaching of Pelagius strenuously maintained the necessity of help from God if a man is to keep from sin, and, although the Church has never defined the matter in so many words, there can be no doubt that this is the only true doctrine, and that it would be a grievous error for anyone to deny it. Yet it is open to some serious objections which the Pelagians were quick to seize upon. If we cannot keep the moral law without the help of God, how (it may be asked) can we logically maintain that man is free? Surely, if man *must* sin, he has no freedom in the matter. And if he is not free, but impelled by necessity to evil action, how can he be said to commit sin—since sin implies freedom to abstain from wrong? Pelagius himself put the difficulty in the form of a neat dilemma. "Is sin a thing which can be avoided, or a thing which cannot be avoided? If it cannot be avoided, it is no sin; and if it can be avoided, man can be without it."

To meet this objection theologians introduce an important distinction between a *physical* impossibility and a *moral* impossibility. ^{Moral, not physical, impossibility} There is a physical impossibility when the means which are physically necessary for the doing of a thing are absent: thus, it is physically impossible for a blind man to see, and for a fish to walk. Now, it will be at once evident that when a man labours under a physical impossibility, he is not free to act or not to act. A blind man is not free to see or not just as he wishes; he is under a physical necessity not to see. Consequently, if we were to say that it is physically impossible for a man to keep from sin without the help of God, we should at the same time be denying his liberty, and there would be no escape from the dilemma of Pelagius. But the matter is very different if the impossibility of which there is question is a moral, not a physical, impossibility; for in the case of a moral impossibility the means which are physically necessary for doing a thing are indeed present, but the difficulty in the way of using those means is so great that failure is ultimately inevitable. Take the case of a man who is firing at a target. If he has not a rifle with sufficient range to reach the target it is clearly a physical impossibility for him to hit his mark. But suppose that the target is within his range: can he go on indefinitely hitting the centre every time he fires, in all conditions of wind and weather? We should have no hesitation in saying that this is so difficult as to be morally impossible. Each

to think that, at least in the later verses, St Paul was speaking in the person of a Christian regenerated by Baptism, but still under the influence of concupiscence. If this interpretation be followed we get a still clearer proof of the necessity of grace. Lagrange, followed by Callan, understands St Paul to be speaking of man in the state of innocence. In any case, we get the same conclusion—namely, that without the grace of God man is so much under the dominion of concupiscence that he inevitably falls into sin.

time he takes up the rifle it is possible for him to succeed, but we are sure that sooner or later he will fail.

Apply this to the question of the perfect fulfilment of the moral law. In every single vicissitude of life it may be physically possible for a man to observe that right order of conduct which the moral law requires, so that in each case as it arises he is free in his action ; and yet (we assert) he is sure ultimately to make a mistake. In other words, it is a moral impossibility for him to observe the whole of the natural law. He may do many things which are morally good ; he may show great moral courage in resisting various attacks of evil ; but sooner or later he will fall, not through want of freedom, not through anything which makes it impossible to continue any longer in the course of right action, but through instability.

It is to be noted that the moral impossibility of which we speak has reference, not to any one particular act considered by itself, but to a continuance of action. Thus we are not saying that a time comes when a man is faced by a difficulty which he cannot overcome ; we are simply saying that as a matter of fact a time will certainly come when a mistake will be made. When that time comes the man will have the power of succeeding—otherwise he would not be free—but he will fail to use that power.

In what has preceded we have been thinking of man as he is apart from the grace of God, and our conclusion is altogether opposed to the possibility of what we may call natural goodness. Non-religious ethical training must, in consequence, be pronounced a sad delusion ; it may, indeed, serve to teach some forms of self-restraint, and it may also contribute to develop some of the nobler qualities which lie deep in the human heart ; but it cannot arm a man against all his enemies and give him the strength he needs in every conflict. And here we have one of the dangers of purely secular systems of education. Not by such means will humanity be made sound : we have need of Christ and his grace.

*Position of
the sinner*

It is worthy of special notice that St Paul clearly requires more than actual grace in order that a man may be preserved from sin ; he requires incorporation in Christ—in other words, sanctifying grace. It is “ the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus ”, which “ hath delivered me from the law of sin and of death.”¹ Actual grace, indeed, is required in order that we may be upheld and strengthened in the hour of conflict, but we are given to understand that this help will not be given unceasingly except to those who “ put on ” Christ ; they who reject him cannot expect that the graces which belong to the sons of God will be extended to them. And this leads us to stress the important point that the man who has fallen from grace and lives in sin will most certainly fall into further sin. There is no such thing as committing one grave sin and then standing still : a man must either come back to God or come still more under the

¹ Rom. viii 2.

dominion of evil. If it is only by incorporation in Christ that I escape from that "law in my members fighting against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members,"¹ then when I reject Christ by mortal sin I pass once more under "the law of sin." A little thought will show how this must be so. When a man sins he sets up for himself other gods. He makes his own will the end which he chooses, in contempt of God. In this state of glorified self-will—although it is not true, as Luther would have it, that all his acts are sinful—he is unable to resist the many evil influences which assail him. His efforts are doomed to failure because his will is wrong; the compass by which he directs his life is at fault, and other sins will follow. The only way in which he can recover his power of successful resistance to the forces of evil is by turning once more to God; he must set his will right and become again a living member of that Body of Christ outside of which there is no true life.

But—and here we see once more how terrible is the position of the sinner and how great is our dependence on God—he cannot return to God without divine grace. True, there is something in man which gives him a natural disgust with grosser forms of sin, and even the most abandoned may not be altogether free from occasional desires to escape from some of the more degrading vices; but this is far removed from such a sorrow for sin as will win back the friendship of God. Perfect charity, which blots out sin even before reception of the sacrament of Penance, is clearly beyond the unaided powers of the sinner, as will be seen more clearly in the next section; and even attrition, which would be sufficient to obtain forgiveness in the tribunal of Penance, is impossible without grace. The second Council of Orange, held in 529, made all this clear when it condemned those who maintained that God awaits the movement of repentance in the heart of the sinner, and that the desire to be free from sin is our own work, and not the work of the Holy Spirit. Any movement of disgust with sin and of desire for a better life which a man may experience without the grace of God is a vain, superficial thing, of no true spiritual value; and true attrition, as the Council of Trent teaches,² is a gift of God, an impulse of the Holy Spirit. As the Fathers of the Council of Orange remind us in this very connection: "It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish according to his good will."³

There remains another question to be discussed in regard to the *Avoidance* necessity of grace for the avoiding of sin—namely, the question of *of venial sin* avoiding not merely mortal sin, but also venial sin. Of course, it is obvious that since the man who is an enemy of God cannot avoid even mortal sin he is still less capable of avoiding venial sin; and therefore it is only in regard to the sons of God that the present

¹ Rom. vii 23.

² Session XIV, chap. iv.

³ Phil. ii 13.

question can arise. What, then, shall we say of the power of the sons of God to live a life so perfect that venial sin never enters in ?

The answer of Catholic theology is clear ; freedom from venial sin requires something quite extraordinary, which we have not the right to expect. There are several texts of Scripture which tell us that in point of fact—and from this we can argue in regard to the question of possibility—practically no man escapes altogether from venial sin. St John tells us that “ if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us ” ;¹ and in the epistle of St James we read that “ in many things we all offend.”² Everybody knows the text which says that “ the just man falls seven times a day,” but it would seem certain that this refers not to moral falls, but to various difficulties and tribulations. But even apart from this particular passage Scripture gives us to understand that the just man certainly does fall into various faults, and consequently our Saviour himself teaches us to pray that God will “ forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.” Even the saints are expected to make this petition.

The Pelagians tried to explain away the force of the argument from the Lord's Prayer by saying that in using the expression “ Forgive us our trespasses ” God's servants were simply speaking in terms of humility, or in the name of the general mass of the people ; but this interpretation was formally rejected and refuted at the Council of Milevis, held in 416, when a number of other passages³ were quoted as indicating the presence of sin in all men.

All this, it is true, has reference to the mere fact that even good men do actually fail to escape venial sin ; it does not refer directly to the impossibility of escaping. But the Church has not hesitated to condemn those who asserted the existence of the power of avoiding venial sins without a very special assistance from God. In a famous decree of the Council of Trent⁴ they are condemned who hold that the man who has once been justified can avoid all sins, even venial sins, throughout his whole life, without a special privilege of God, such as the Church believes to have been granted to the Blessed Virgin.

It must be noticed, however, that what we have said about the impossibility of avoiding all venial sin refers to semi-deliberate sin : as for fully deliberate sin, it is possible to avoid it with the ordinary graces of God. There is clearly a great difference between the two classes—between the venial sin which we commit with our eyes open and the sin which we commit through sudden impulse or incomplete advertence. It is difficult, indeed, to avoid the former altogether, but not impossible ; but to avoid the second is quite another matter. We believe, as the Council of Trent says, that the Blessed Virgin

¹ 1 John i 8.

² James iii 2.

³ Ps. cxlii 2 ; Eccles. vii 21 ; and Dan. ix 5, 15, 20.

⁴ Session VI, canon xxiii.

was free even from these semi-deliberate venial sins, and the reason for this wonderful sinlessness is to be found in her prerogative of Immaculate Conception which included freedom from the stings of concupiscence. Whether any other saint has been similarly free from venial sin, we do not know ; there may be reason for thinking that such freedom was granted to St John the Baptist, who was miraculously sanctified before his birth, and to St Joseph, at least from the time of his espousals to the Blessed Virgin ; but the spirit of the Church is opposed to what one may call a tendency towards pious exaggeration. As the Council of Milevis explained, even the saints say in all truth "Forgive us our trespasses."

In the face of the truths laid down in this section we may well pray that God may ever stretch out his hand to help us ; and in the words which the Church puts upon the lips of her ministers in the office of Prime at the beginning of each day we may cry aloud : "Lord God Almighty, who hast brought us to the beginning of this day, defend us throughout its course by thy power, that we may not this day fall into any sin, but that our words and thoughts and deeds may be directed to the fulfilment of what is right in thy sight." Thus only shall we escape "the arrow that flieth in the day."¹

§ III: THE NECESSITY OF GRACE FOR GAINING ETERNAL LIFE

In the preceding section we have shown how wrong it is to suppose *Salutary action* that man is capable of avoiding sin without the help of God. As we have seen, our fallen nature is so weak that we have need of a *gratia sanans*—that is, a grace which will heal our moral infirmities. It is one thing, however, to avoid grievous sin, and another to obtain eternal life ; and in the present section we are to consider how far man is capable, by his own powers, of reaching the glorious end which God has set him.

We have just said that there is a difference between avoiding grievous sin and winning eternal life. Of course these two are connected in the actual order of things, but there is not an essential and intrinsic connection between the first and the second. If God had not raised man to the supernatural order and set the Beatific Vision as the end to which he was to aspire, man might have lived a life which was free from moral fault without thereby gaining "eternal life." Now, this question of our power of gaining eternal life presents some special features which it is necessary for us to touch upon.

Once more we are concerned with a question which was raised by the Pelagians. They maintained that heaven can be won by our own efforts ; our salvation, in the full sense of the word as including the glory of the blessed, is in our own hands. This raised the whole

¹ Ps. xc 6.

question of what theologians call "salutary acts." The term is of such importance in the theology of grace that the reader must allow us to use it, technical though it be ; but of course the use of such ■ technical expression makes it necessary that we should carefully explain its meaning. A salutary act, then, is one which positively serves towards the attaining of eternal life. Notice the word "positively." There are actions which serve "negatively" towards the attaining of eternal life in so far as they remove distant obstacles to salvation. Thus if a man who has no religious belief makes natural efforts to live a decent moral life, he is removing certain obstacles of vice which might stand in the way of his coming to a recognition of the truth : such efforts on his part would serve only in a negative way towards his eternal salvation. But a salutary act is one which *positively* leads to eternal life ; there is an intrinsic connection between the two. This being understood, we can state the problem raised by the Pelagians thus : Can a man perform salutary actions without the grace of God ? The Catechism gives us the answer : "We can do no good work of ourselves towards our salvation ; we need the help of God's grace." It is this answer which we must now explain and justify.

*Grace
necessary*

Although the Scriptures do not use the term "salutary acts," few things are more clear from the pages of Holy Writ than that we can do nothing of ourselves towards our salvation. Listen to the words of Christ himself. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine ; you the branches : he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit : for without me you can do nothing."¹

This wonderful utterance is a perfect example of that combination of childlike simplicity and depth of meaning which is so striking a feature of the teaching of Christ. The simple peasant as he looked out over the growing plants and trees could catch the lesson which the Saviour would have him learn ; yet neither mystic nor theologian will ever be able in this life to exhaust the riches of this great truth of our dependence upon Christ. Obviously Christ is not speaking here of the way in which every man depends upon God for his existence and his natural movement. Even though a man rejects the claims of the Saviour and cuts himself off from spiritual union with him, he will still live and move in the natural order. Christ is speaking of supernatural life ; of life which is of value in the eyes of God ; of life on earth which will lead to life in heaven : and of such life he says that it cannot exist without union with him. "Without me you can do nothing." As St Augustine says in a passage which has become famous : "He does not say 'for without me you can do little' ; but 'you can do nothing.' Whether, then, it be little or

¹ John xv 4-5.

much, without him it cannot be done, without whom nothing can be done."

And this same fundamental truth is taught over and over again by St Paul. To him there had been given "this grace, to preach amongst the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all men, that they may see what is the dispensation of the mystery which hath been hidden from eternity in God."¹ These unsearchable riches he explains in many ways, returning time after time to that bold figure of Christ as the head of a mystical body made up of all who believe in him. We cannot form a really holy and salutary thought by our own power. "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God."² We cannot will aright, we cannot act aright, without God. "With fear and trembling work out your salvation. For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will."³ And the reason for this inability of ours to act, or speak, or think in a way which will be pleasing to God, the Apostle explains in more than one place. In the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans he explains how we are all spiritually dead through the sin of Adam and are brought back to life by Christ. "For if by the offence of one, many died; much more the grace of God, and the gift, by the grace of one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."⁴ Elsewhere he speaks of all men as "children of wrath,"⁵ and says that we were all "concluded under sin."⁶

Thus the teaching of Christ and of his great Apostle is perfectly clear. Apart from Christ, we are spiritually dead, and no natural action of ours can have any real value unto eternal life. It is only the grace of God, which comes to us through our Saviour, which gives value to our actions and "hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved), and hath raised us up together and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Christ Jesus. . . . For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man may glory. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works, which God hath prepared that we should walk in them."⁷

Our conclusion, then, is obvious: without the grace of God salutary acts are impossible. Is this impossibility a physical or a moral impossibility?⁸ Catholic theologians, bringing to the analysis of dogma an understanding that is enlightened by faith, reply that it is a physical impossibility; there is no question of a mere difficulty in performing a salutary act, we are physically incapable of such a thing. The reason is both profound and interesting. A salutary act,

¹ Eph. iii 8-9.

² 2 Cor. iii 5.

³ Phil. ii 12-13.

⁴ Rom. v 15.

⁵ Eph. ii 3.

⁶ Gal. iii 22.

⁷ Eph. ii 5-10.

⁸ For this distinction see above, p. 591.

as we have explained, is one that positively tends towards the attaining of eternal life. But eternal life consists in the Beatific Vision, and this is altogether beyond the natural capacity of any creature, requiring a special elevation and illumination of the mind. Consequently, if there is to be an intrinsic connection between the Beatific Vision and the acts which positively tend to it, these acts must themselves be elevated above their natural condition. It is a contradiction to suppose an intrinsic connection and proportion between a merely natural act and a supernatural object to which that act intrinsically tends. Hence the conclusion is drawn that our salutary acts must proceed not from our unaided natural faculty, but from the faculty as elevated above its natural condition by a supernatural gift bestowed upon it by God. Without this elevation of the faculty the act could not be performed in such a way as to tend positively towards eternal life. This is not to say that we are physically incapable of performing an act which to all outward appearances will appear just the same as a salutary act; thus a man who has no grace at all may give an alms to a beggar, just as one who is aided by grace may do; but the former could not perform the act in such a way that it would be "salutary."

*Sanctifying
grace not
always
sufficient*

But apart from the theological reasoning which has just been set out, it is clear from the doctrine of Scripture (which the Church has authoritatively expounded on more than one occasion) that we can do no good work of ourselves towards our eternal salvation; we need the help of God's grace. The thoughtful reader may here raise the question: Do we need actual grace as well as sanctifying grace that our actions may be salutary? Is not union with Christ by sanctifying grace sufficient? Before we can give a satisfactory answer to these questions we must distinguish between the acts which a man performs in direct preparation for Justification—that is, for the passing from a state of mortal sin to a state of grace—and the acts which he performs when already in a state of grace. The acts which precede Justification, and directly prepare for it, present a special problem which will be examined in the next section, when it will be shown that actual grace is required for them. Here we will only remind the reader that of ourselves we can do *nothing* towards our eternal salvation; therefore we cannot of ourselves prepare ourselves for Justification, which would most certainly be to do something. These preparatory acts, then, clearly require actual grace, since by hypothesis the man who performs them does not possess sanctifying grace. But what about the salutary acts which follow Justification? Do we require actual grace for every one of them? May we not look on man as now possessing a new nature—sanctifying grace—which has the effect of making his actions supernatural and salutary without there being need of anything further in the way of actual grace? Perhaps we may put the matter less technically thus. Here is a man who has become a partaker of the divine nature by

sanctifying grace ; can he, without any further present help from God, perform actions which are "salutary" ?

Theologians are not unanimous in the answer which they give, but the great majority reply that even the just man requires actual grace for every single salutary act which he performs. If this common opinion be accepted—and it rests on weighty arguments—we may well stand astonished at the thought of our utter helplessness in regard to the performing of actions which are of supernatural value. Not one single salutary act unless God moves me to it by a special intervention of his power and love ! And even if we do not accept this common opinion we are obliged to admit that actual grace is at least a frequent, ever-recurring necessity. In the spiritual life we cannot stand still. If we would hold what we have we must stretch out our efforts towards higher virtue, and it is certain that for this work of advancement we need a special grace of God ; the possession of sanctifying grace and the infused virtues which accompany it will not suffice. Moreover, the law which God has laid upon his children requires of them much more than the natural law requires, and sometimes the burden of its enactments is indeed heavy ; and unless God gave us present strength to do what he bids us do, we should certainly fail. Thus it is evident that if actual grace be not necessary for the performing of every single salutary act, it is something which we constantly need.

But there is still more to be said about the necessity of actual grace in our supernatural life, and what now follows leads us to the important question of Final Perseverance. In the preceding section it was explained that although sanctifying grace makes us sons of God it does not take away the weakness of our nature. We are still subject to concupiscence. True, as sons of God we can be sure that our heavenly Father will stretch out his hand to help us in our needs, but if he did not do so we should certainly fall into sin, sooner or later. At the second Council of Orange it was laid down that even in the case of God's holy ones his assistance is to be implored in order that they may persevere in their good works ; and the Council of Trent condemned those who held that a man who has been justified can remain in that state of holiness without the special help of God. And this uncertainty of the position of the just man is taught us repeatedly in sacred Scripture. Our Saviour taught all men, saints as well as sinners, to pray that they may be saved from temptation : "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." "Be sober and watch," says St Peter,¹ "because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist ye, strong in faith." Similarly St Paul bids the Philippians work out their salvation with fear and trembling,² and to the Ephesians he writes in words of solemn warning. "Brethren, be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of his power.

*Special
question of
perseverance*

¹ 1 Pet. v 8.

² Phil. ii 12.

Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood ; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places." ¹

Be it noted that these warnings were uttered for the instruction of the faithful Christians of apostolic times, who, we may be sure, were living, for the most part, holy and fervent lives. Yet even men such as these were to understand that for continuance in good they required the assistance of God, and they were to live in holy fear lest the enemies of their souls should overcome them. But there is something else to be noticed. It is one thing to have the power of performing an action, and quite another thing to do it. Now, in order that we should continue to live a good life it is necessary not only that we should receive from God a grace sufficient to enable us to resist evil, but also that we should use that power. Consequently for continuance in good we must obtain from God not merely graces which are in themselves sufficient, but also graces which we will use. And it is obviously a special favour of God that he should give us just the ones which we will use. Well, then, may the Council of Trent say that we cannot persevere *sine speciali auxilio Dei*, without the *special* help of God—a help which is something more than the mere power to persevere.²

Now Final Perseverance involves all this and something more. Apart from the exceptional cases of those who have been baptised, but never reach the use of reason, and of those who are reconciled to God just before death, Final Perseverance involves two elements : firstly, a continuance in grace, and secondly, death whilst in the state of grace. The first of these, as we have seen, is dependent upon the special help of God ; the second is a special favour of divine Providence. Neither of these elements is in our power : not the first, as is evident from all that has been said ; not the second, for we cannot arrange that the hour of death shall come at a time when we are in the grace of God. Hence the Council of Trent rightly calls Final Perseverance a "great gift"—*magnum donum*. It is a gift, because it depends upon his goodwill and in no way upon our own action ; and it is indeed a great gift because it secures for us the possession of the highest good—God himself, in the Beatific Vision.

Lastly, Final Perseverance is so much the gift of God that the Council of Trent further teaches us that, apart from some special revelation, we can never be sure of it "with absolute and infallible certainty." We must ever go on "in fear and trembling," putting

¹ Eph. vi 10-12.

² Here we have the well-known distinction between *gratia sufficiens* (sufficient grace) and *gratia efficax* (efficacious grace). The first is a grace which gives the power to do a thing, but is not made use of ; the second is one which will infallibly be made use of. Something will be said later on about the explanation of *gratia efficax*.

our trust in God and committing ourselves to his hands. "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." Thus the Church teaches us to pray, that God may give us his graces in life and may bring us to a holy death, "being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus."¹

§ IV: ACTUAL GRACE A FREE GIFT OF GOD

IN the present section we have to show that Grace is a free gift of God ; we have no natural right to it, we cannot merit it by our natural powers, and we cannot even of ourselves utter a prayer for it which will be of any real value towards obtaining it. We are absolutely dependent on God's goodwill. These are important points in the Catholic doctrine of Grace, and they are so much opposed to our natural ideas that they require careful attention.

The assertion that we are dependent upon God's free choice for the obtaining of grace is really contained in the general assertion that we can do no good work of ourselves towards our salvation. If we could command grace, as it were, by our own efforts, we should certainly be doing something towards our salvation. We might say, therefore, that there is now no need to prove that grace is entirely a free gift ; yet because of the importance of the point we must make it a matter for special consideration. But first we must guard against a possible misunderstanding. We are not denying that grace can ever be merited. We are only saying that it can never be merited by any natural action of our own. If God gives us grace, by using that grace we can merit further grace ; but in this case the act by which we merit is not simply our own act : it is one which is performed through the grace of God : it is supernatural, not natural. But since the first grace by which we begin to merit further graces is a gratuitous gift of God, the whole series which follows from it is itself gratuitous : ultimately it depends upon God's free gift of the first grace.

We said not only that we cannot of ourselves merit grace, but also that no merely natural petition can be of value towards obtaining grace. By this we mean that in the petitions which we may make to God by our own power—making humble profession of our misery and asking God to help us—there is nothing which he considers of any force ; nothing which, to use human language, would persuade or move him to grant what is asked. This is certainly true in the present order of Providence, for we can show that God has declared his unwillingness to accept such prayers ; whether or not it would be true in every possible order of Divine Providence is not so clear. Into the theoretical question of the absolute impossibility of natural petitions having value with God, we need not enter. Let us content ourselves with the facts of the present order.

¹ Phil. i 6.

*The teaching
of the
Church*

It is not difficult to show that the gratuitous character of grace is a general truth which the Church explicitly teaches. In an important passage which deals with the way in which a man prepares himself for Justification, the Council of Trent touches upon the point as follows: "The beginning of Justification in adults is to be derived from the antecedent grace of God through Christ Jesus, that is from his calling of them, by which they are called without any merits of their own."¹ This directly excludes the idea of any merit by which the first grace leading a man to Justification is won. The second Council of Orange, which was concerned in quite an especial way with these questions of grace, is, if possible, still more explicit. It is not, the Council says, because of any merits which precede grace that a reward is given to good works which we may perform; but the very performing of these good works is the result of a grace to which we have no right.² Further, the Council declares that if a man says that the grace of God can be given in answer to human prayer, and not that it is grace itself which makes us invoke him, he contradicts the prophet Isaias or the Apostle saying the same thing, "I was found by them that did not seek me; I appeared openly to them that asked not after me."³ And, again, the same Council tells us that God does not give his grace to those who without grace ask for it, but he gives grace that they may make their petitions. From all this we see that the Church definitely lays down the points with which we began this section.

*The teaching
of Scripture*

But let us turn to the Scriptural authority for this teaching. It is remarkably clear, and expressed in terms of great vigour. St Paul's Epistle to the Romans is full of this theme. Neither the Jewish converts by the fulfilment of their law, nor the Pagan converts by fidelity to the natural law, have merited to be called to the true faith. The third chapter of this epistle deals in an especial way with this thought, and repeatedly both here and in subsequent passages the Apostle insists on the fact that grace is God's free gift. "If by grace," he says, "it is not now by works: otherwise grace is no more grace."⁴ (Here we are reminded that the very word which we use—grace, *gratia*, *χάρις*—signifies something which is freely given.) "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."⁵ "He hath mercy on whom he will; and whom he will, he hardeneth."⁶ Very definitely in the Epistle to the Ephesians, he says: "By grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man may glory."⁷ Other passages in the same sense we have already seen—we cannot think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves;⁸ we have nothing which we have not received, and we

¹ Session VI, chap. v.

² Rom. x 20; Isa. lxxv 1.

³ Rom. ix 16.

⁷ Eph. ii 8-9; cf. 2 Tim. i 9.

² Canon xviii.

⁴ Rom. xi 6.

⁶ Rom. ix 18.

⁸ 2 Cor. iii 5.

must not glory as if we had not received it ¹—in a word, “it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will.” ² And in all this St Paul is but teaching the doctrine of Christ who said: “No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him.” ³

Are we, then, incapable of doing a single thing which will help in any positive way towards winning the favour of God and his grace? Is man thrown on the ocean of life bereft of every means of salvation, and even of every means of struggling towards help? Yes; he is utterly helpless, completely in the hands of God, to whose mercy he owes whatever strength may come to him. We may, indeed, distinguish with theologians between negative preparation and positive preparation, allowing the possibility of the first, but not of the second; but the distinction, though helpful in some ways, may serve only to obscure the truth in the minds of the ordinary reader. ⁴ The plain fact is, we are helpless; dead, as it were; we cannot move towards grace.

In the course of the dispute with Pelagius it was found that there were many good men ⁵ who readily rejected the main ideas of the system, but considered that statements such as those which have just been set down went too far. After all, they said, whilst it is true that man cannot perform a salutary act by his own power, and cannot offer indefinite resistance to the forces of evil, he surely can desire God's help; he can knock at the door of God's mercy as a humble suppliant; he can hope and pray for that help, without which he knows that he cannot be saved. Does not God himself bid us turn to him and he will turn to us? “Turn ye to me, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will turn to you.” ⁶ And are there not the examples of the Centurion, of Zachaeus, of the Good Thief, who by their humble prayers and their holy desires merited to be accepted by the Saviour? Do we not read in the book of Proverbs ⁷ that “it is the part of man to prepare the soul?” And does not Christ himself say: “Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened?” ⁸

There can be no doubt that at first sight this way of putting the matter is not without force, and we know that for a time even such a stout champion of the necessity of grace as St Augustine was misled.

¹ 1 Cor. iv 7.

² Phil. ii 13.

³ John vi 44.

⁴ Positive preparation for the production of an effect in a thing is the production in that thing of a definite disposition towards, or aptitude for receiving, the effect in question; negative preparation is the mere removal of obstacles which may stand in the way of the production of the effect—or, even more remotely, the refraining from creating obstacles. In this last sense, some writers speak of negative preparation for grace in so far as a man may for a time refrain from sin, and thus not oppose grace.

⁵ Called Semipelagians. ⁶ Zach. i 3. ⁷ Prov. xvi 1. ⁸ Matt. vii 7, 8.

But a fuller examination of the language of Scripture shows the inadequacy of the argument. St. Augustine soon came to realise that the texts and examples just quoted must be understood in the light of those other texts in which our absolute helplessness is so strongly and so repeatedly emphasised. When we look at the matter in this light we see that these very prayers, desires, etc., are themselves the result of God's grace working in us, as the second Council of Orange, quoted earlier in this section, explained. The Centurion, Zachaeus, and the Good Thief did indeed seek God and were accepted; but they sought him because he first gave them the grace to do so. Christ does in truth counsel us to ask, to seek, to knock: but first the grace to do these things must be given to us: Christ's exhortation is that we should use this grace. "It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish."¹

The fact is that there are two classes of sayings in the Scriptures bearing upon this point. In one class we are told explicitly that we have nothing which we have not received, and that without God we can do nothing. In the other class, the necessity of grace being supposed, we are urged to make use of the graces given to us, and are told that if we do so we shall receive further graces. The two sets of texts are quite in harmony. The contrast between them is thus expressed by the Council of Trent. "When it is said *Turn ye to me and I will turn to you* we are reminded that we are free; when we reply *Convert us, O Lord, to thee and we shall be converted*,² we confess that we are prevented by the grace of God"—i.e., we confess that the grace of God goes before our action and enables us to produce it.

There is an obvious and important connection between what we have here explained and the problem of conversion. Whether it be a case of trying to bring a non-believer to the recognition of the truth of the Catholic Church, or of moving a sinner to repentance, nothing can be accomplished without the interior grace of God. We may put before the unbeliever, in the most cogent way possible, the various arguments by which the truth is established, but this by itself will be of no avail. How far such a man is able by the unaided light of reason to grasp the force of all the arguments which establish the motives of credibility, we need not here discuss—though we would remind the reader that it is a defined truth of the Church that man can prove many of the fundamental truths, such as the existence of God and the freedom of the will, by the natural light of reason; but it is certain that his heart will never be moved, and he will never give the assent of faith to the truths which are set before him, if the grace of God does not touch him. "No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him."³ Of course, the careful exposition of Catholic truth is an external grace of which God often makes use as a channel through which, as it were, the

¹ Phil. ii 13.² Lam. v 21.³ John vi 44.

interior grace is poured into the soul of the unbeliever, and one man may be a better channel than another ; moreover, one man may be more zealous in winning interior graces from God for the souls of those to whom he appeals ; but in the end it is God, and God alone, who gives the increase. "Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth ; but God that giveth the increase." ¹ And the same is true of the sinner who has fallen from grace. A new start has to be made. He has cut himself off from God, is living in enmity with him, and cannot do anything which is meritorious in his sight ; and so a new order of grace has to be established. A free gift of God must be the beginning of this new order. Even the greatest saint pleading with a sinner can do nothing unless God first touch the heart.

These points of Catholic doctrine may at first sight seem to be hard sayings. Can it be true that we are so helpless as this ? And is not the effect of such doctrines likely to be an attitude of despair, or of hopeless fatalism ? Doubtless there are some people who will ask such questions in a spirit of pessimism. But he who has caught the spirit of Christianity will look upon all this in a very different light. The thought of his own helplessness will throw him back more and more on the realisation of the love of God, and he will derive not merely calmness and strength, but also true joy and confidence from this his firm belief, which nothing can shake, that the God upon whom he depends is one in whom he can trust. What do we need in order that we may have absolute trust ? We must have assurance on three points : that he on whom we depend is wise enough to know what is best for us ; that he is good enough to wish what is really for our interests ; and that he is powerful enough to obtain everything which he desires. But all these things the Christian knows of his God. Hence he is not alarmed at the thought of his helplessness. Rather does he glory in it, in the spirit of the great St Paul when he cried out, "Gladly will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may dwell in me." ²

But here arises a question which is of vital importance. Can we be certain that we all receive from God sufficient grace for our salvation ? This is the question which we will discuss in the following section.

§ V: SUFFICIENT ACTUAL GRACE FOR ALL

THE question which we raised at the end of the last section is certainly a momentous one. We have seen how great is our dependence upon God's grace, and how necessarily that grace is itself dependent upon his good pleasure ; what security have we, then, that the power of working out our salvation has been placed within our hands ?

¹ 1 Cor. iii 7.

² 2 Cor. xii 9.

Is it, perchance, the case that God has not willed to give us sufficient grace to enable us to save our souls ?

A Catholic, at any rate, ought to take courage. He knows that by God's infinite mercy his soul has been washed in the waters of Baptism and that, through membership of the Church which is the Mystical Body of Christ, abundant graces are bestowed upon him. And if he reads the Scriptures he finds a number of passages which are full of encouragement and hope. He remembers, for example, the words of Christ : " This is the will of the Father who sent me : that of all that he hath given me, I should lose nothing ; but should raise it up again in the last day." ¹ Or he dwells on the beautiful chapter which opens St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, in which the Apostle speaks so gloriously of the Christian vocation : " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ : as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity. Who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto himself : according to the purpose of his will : unto the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he hath graced us in his beloved Son. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace." ² Elsewhere the same Apostle speaks almost as though salvation were already secure for those who have been called to the Church : " We know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as, according to his purpose, are called to be saints." ³ For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son ; that he might be the firstborn amongst many brethren. And whom he predestinated, them he also called. And whom he called, them he also justified. And whom he justified, them he also glorified." ⁴ There is no doubt in the mind of St Paul concerning the riches of grace given to all the faithful.

Hope, then, is a duty which rests upon us all. " We hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of the faithful." ⁵ True, we do not know for certain that we shall persevere until the end ; but we *do* know that God loves his own, and we are " confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in us, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus." ⁶ St Peter adds his reassurance to that of St Paul : " The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, will himself perfect you, and confirm you, and establish you." ⁷ And if the thought of future difficulty and temptation suggests a fear that perhaps we shall not have sufficient grace given to us

¹ John vi 39.

² Eph. i 3-7.

³ More exactly, " to such as are called according to his purpose."

⁴ Rom. viii 28-30.

⁵ 1 Tim. iv 10.

⁶ Phil. i 6.

⁷ 1 Pet. v 10.

in the hour of conflict, we can console ourselves with the assurance of St Paul : " God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able : but will make also with temptation issue that you may be able to bear it." ¹

But if it be true that all those who are living members of Christ's Mystical Body are abundantly endowed with grace, doubts may arise especially in regard to two classes of men ; firstly, in regard to those who have fallen from grace by sin and been cast forth from the wedding feast, and secondly, in regard to those vast multitudes who live in unbelief, far away, it may be, from the reach of any Christian preacher. The questions naturally arise : Is the sinner ever without sufficient grace to repent ? Has the infidel sufficient grace to save his soul ?

In regard to the sinner, although a few theologians have held that *Sinners* God sometimes gives no further graces because the mind is so blinded and the heart so hardened by sin that further grace would only add to the sinner's guilt, it is certain that sufficient grace for repentance is never withheld. " If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow : and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool." ² " I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." ³ And even to those who continue to reject his claims upon them the Almighty declares that he still pleads with them : " I have spread forth my hands all the day to an unbelieving people, who walk in a way that is not good after their own thoughts." ⁴ Christ tells us explicitly that he came " not to call the just, but sinners to penance," ⁵ and the story of his life is the history of a good Shepherd whose principal care is for the lost sheep ; of a merciful, forgiving Father whose arms are open to welcome back the prodigal. It is just because the man who continues in sin is ever resisting the Holy Spirit, that his position is so terrible ; hence the vigour of St Paul's language against the obstinate sinner. " Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and patience, and long-suffering ? Knowest thou not, that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance ? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath." ⁶

Even to the worst of sinners, then, God gives sufficient grace to enable them to repent. If not at every moment, at least from time to time and when circumstances most require it, he offers them his help. Perhaps the help is given for the resisting of some temptation, and if it is used God gives another grace ; thus, by one grace after another, the sinner will be led back to God if only he corresponds. In truth the Lord " dealeth patiently . . . not willing that any should perish but that all should return to penance." ⁷

¹ 1 Cor. x 13.

² Isa. i 18.

³ Ezech. xxxiii 11.

⁴ Isa. lxxv 2.

⁵ Luke v 32.

⁶ Rom. ii 4-5.

⁷ 2 Pet. iii 9.

Against what has just been said it may be objected that sometimes the Scriptures represent God as hardening the heart of the sinner and thus making it impossible for him to do penance ; and also that some sins are spoken of as being beyond the possibility of forgiveness ; thus, " he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them " ; ¹ and, " It is impossible for those who were once illuminated, have tasted also the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, have moreover tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and are fallen away : to be renewed again to penance." ²

*No sin
unpardonable*

Space does not allow a detailed explanation of these and other texts of a like nature, but some general principles may be indicated in a few words. In the first place, God never positively hardens a heart ; such a way of acting would be contrary to what we know of his attitude towards the sinner ; but sometimes he withdraws from a sinner the more striking and more abundant graces which he gives to those who are his faithful children. Or we may say that he allows the sinner to harden his own heart. Thus in Exodus ³ we read that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, but it had already been stated that Pharaoh had " hardened his own heart." ⁴ In the second place, there is no such thing as an unforgivable sin ; this is clear from the positive teaching of Scripture in regard to God's willingness to forgive, though our sins be as scarlet. Each text which appears to assert the contrary can be explained. Thus, the Fathers have explained the passage from Heb. vi 4-6 in various ways. Many have understood it to refer to the impossibility of renewing the special cleansing of Baptism ; others, with perhaps greater probability, have understood it to mean that if a man has received special graces from God and then has rejected the faith which he has received, it is morally impossible for him to repent ; not because the necessary grace is denied him, but because he has wilfully sinned against the light in such a way that his whole spiritual outlook is perverted. Under such circumstances it would require a sort of spiritual miracle to save him. But whatever we may say about any particular interpretation, it is quite certain that the Church rejects the idea that any sin is unpardonable.

*Non-
believers*

We must now turn to the special problem of the infidel who has never had the truths of Christianity explained to him : who has never heard of Christ and his Church ; who knows nothing of the channels of grace : how can such a man be said to receive sufficient grace to save his soul ? The problem behind this question is all the greater when we remember that no merely natural virtue will win eternal life ; nothing short of divine faith, and the supernatural action which proceeds from it, will suffice. The problem, it must be ack-

¹ John xii 40, quoting from Isa. vi 9-10.

² Exod. ix 12.

³ Heb. vi 4-6.

⁴ Exod. viii 15.

nnowledged, is certainly a serious one ; what is the answer which Catholic theology gives ?

That sufficient grace really is given even to the man who never comes within the reach of the influence of Christianity, there can be no doubt. There are various texts of Scripture in which we are clearly taught that God sincerely wills the salvation of all men ; and how could he will their salvation if he did not give them sufficient grace to enable them to save their souls ? Of these texts we will consider just one, which is quite decisive. Writing to his disciple, St Timothy, St Paul says : " I desire first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men : for kings, and for all that are in high stations : that we may lead a quiet and a peaceable life in all piety and chastity. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, *who will have all men to be saved*, and to come to the knowledge *of the truth*. For there is one God, and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus : *who gave himself a redemption for all.*"¹ St Paul is here speaking of men who belonged to the pagan world—kings and all that are in high stations—and with direct reference to them he tells us that God will have all men to be saved, and that Christ gave himself a redemption for all. Thus we are forced to conclude that God gives grace to all men, even to pagans. To explain just how God's grace reaches those who live in the pagan world may be a difficult matter, but we can rest assured that in one way or another it does reach them ; an explanation, however, may be suggested as follows.

Even amongst the pagans there is at least a vague sense both of the existence of a supreme being and of the moral law of right and wrong. Now there are various ways in which God can help a pagan to live according to the dictates of his conscience, and if the help thus given is used in the way intended by God, further helps will be given. Thus a pagan will grow in a desire to keep the moral law and in a spirit of reverence for the supreme being whose existence he recognises both by the light of reason and through the traditions around him. When a man has been led thus far by God, may we not suppose that his mind will be further illumined so that he becomes capable of making a real act of faith in God as the supreme being on whom he depends, before whom he is answerable for his actions, and from whom he may look for reward or punishment ? The difficulty is that there is need of an act of real faith, by which what is believed is accepted on the authority of God ; and it is not easy to see how our pagan can know that God has revealed certain things to him. But we must remember that all peoples seem to have kept some sort of tradition of a revelation made to man in the early history of our race, and surely it is possible for God to lead a pagan to a belief that certain elementary truths must have thus come from above ; with the help of a further grace he can then make a real act of faith,

¹ 1 Tim. ii 1-6.

and finally pass on (still aided by grace) to an act of love of God. Thus he can reach the state of grace and be saved. But however we explain the process we must accept the fact that salvation is really possible for all. As St Thomas Aquinas says: "It belongs to Divine Providence to provide each man with what is necessary for salvation, as long as the man himself does not raise obstacles. For if a man who had been brought up amongst the beasts of the forest were to follow the lead of natural reason in seeking good and avoiding evil, we ought to consider it certain that God would either make known to him by interior inspiration the truths which must necessarily be believed,¹ or send someone to preach the faith to him as he sent Peter to Cornelius."²

In what has just been said we have taken the extreme case of a man who hears nothing of the Christian message; other cases can be explained in the light of the principles laid down. All men outside the Church, whether they be Protestants, or Jews, or Mohammedans, or Pagans, receive sufficient means of salvation, and will not be condemned except through their own fault. But obviously men do not all receive the same amount of grace; to all is given sufficient, but some receive more, others less; and this inequality in the distribution of graces is one of the great mysteries which confront us. Ultimately it raises the whole question of Predestination—a question about which it may be well to say a few words in the present connection. The reader, however, is warned that the treatment must necessarily be brief. Some further explanations will be added in an appendix.

*The problem
of Pre-
destination*

Predestination is a fact: but what exactly are we to understand by the word? Let us first see what it does not mean. In the sixteenth century Calvin put forward a false view of Predestination which has become famous. He taught that from all eternity God definitely and explicitly chose some men for eternal life, and just as definitely and explicitly other men for eternal damnation, his own glory being the end he sought in either case. Nothing that man is going to do affects in any way that terrible decree by which heaven is chosen for some, hell for others. As a necessary consequence we must say that God does not will the salvation of all men; he wills the salvation only of the elect, and the rest he positively wills to force into hell. Such, stated in a few words, is the Calvinist theory of Predestination. It is easy to see its fundamental error—namely, its denial that God really wills the salvation of any but the elect. As we have already clearly shown, God wills the salvation of all and gives to all sufficient grace to enable them to save their souls; and if some men are lost this is due to their own rejection of grace

¹ It is probable that a man such as we are considering would not be required to believe explicitly more than that God "is, and is a rewarder of them that seek him" (Heb. xi 6).

² *De Veritate*, Q. xiv, a. 11 ad 1.

and not to God's choice of their damnation. This is a fundamental truth which must be safeguarded in every theory of Predestination which a Catholic may hold. In other words, we may not say that there is a positive Reprobation of any man antecedent to his sin ; it is only because of his sin that God wills his condemnation ; he has had sufficient grace, he has rejected it, and therefore God condemns him.

Having thus guarded ourselves against a false theory of Predestination, let us try to get at a true one. St Thomas Aquinas says that Predestination is a plan existing in the mind of God according to which some men are to be saved ; and that Reprobation is the allowing of some to be lost. Contrasting the two he remarks that Predestination includes the will to grant grace and eternal glory, whilst Reprobation includes the will to permit a man to fall into fault and to punish him for that fault.¹ Hence neither Predestination nor Reprobation is merely a matter of God's foreknowledge of what is going to happen ; each involves an element of will ; in the case of the predestined God's will being to grant them first certain graces which will lead them to eternal life, and then eternal life itself as a reward ; in the case of those who are not predestined his will being to permit them to fall into sin and then to punish them for it. The chief problem, of course, is with regard to those who are to be lost. If he had wished to do so, God could have arranged the circumstances of their lives in such a way that they would have been saved ; but he has chosen to put them in the present circumstances of life in which he knows that they will be damned. Yet their damnation is their own fault, for they all receive sufficient grace to enable them to save their souls and they wilfully reject that grace.

Predestination, then, may be defined as an arrangement of things chosen by God in which he knows that some men will most certainly be saved and others most certainly damned, the salvation of the elect being directly desired, the damnation of the lost not directly desired but permitted. This is indeed a great mystery ; but whilst we tremble at the thought of the dread issues which lie within it we must ever cling fast to the fundamental truths that God truly desires the salvation of us all, that he gives each of us the means of salvation, and that damnation can come to us only through our own fault. The simple soul that clings to these beliefs is assuredly nearer to the mind of God than the man who vexes his soul with subtle problems of Predestination. For the rest, the whole spirit of Christianity as we find it set forth in the New Testament is one of quiet hope in God "through Jesus Christ our Lord." The restless mind may raise the questions : "Am I amongst the predestined ? And if I am not, what is the use of any effort on my part ?" Better would it be to meditate on words such as these of St John, who knew so well the Heart of Christ. "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God ;

¹ *S. Theol.*, I, Q. 23, a. 1, 2, 3.

and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear we shall be like to him : because we shall see him as he is. *And every one that hath this hope in him, sanctifieth himself.*" ¹

§ VI: THE NATURE AND SOURCE OF ACTUAL GRACE

*Movements
of the mind
and will*

AT the end of the preceding discussions the reader may well be pardoned if he asks for a little more information about the precise nature of this Actual Grace of which we have been speaking. We defined it at the beginning as "a supernatural gift, internal to us and of a passing nature, whereby God helps us to avoid sin or enables us to perform actions which tend towards eternal life"; but we may be asked: What sort of help is it? or, What exactly does God do to us when he gives us this help?

The answer to this last question is that when God gives us actual graces he acts upon our intellect or upon our will (or upon both) in such a way that we receive new light on things, and new desires of good; or, as theologians express it, he produces in us Illuminations of the Intellect and Inspirations of the Will. To use the language of St Paul, he enlightens the eyes of our heart, that we may know what the hope is of his calling, and what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints; ² "for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God." ³ Hence our Saviour can say: "Everyone that hath heard of the Father, and hath learned, cometh to me." ⁴ In these texts we are told that he enlightens the mind; in others we read how he moves the heart: "I have run the way of thy commandments when thou didst enlarge my heart." ⁵ "No man," says our Saviour, "can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him"; ⁶ and how does he draw him except by moving his heart?

*Immediate
and mediate
impulses*

These illuminations of the mind and inspirations of the will are often produced by God directly, without the medium of any creature. In all kinds of circumstances—in hours of solitude, in the midst of anxious cares, even in moments of dissipation or of wrongdoing—he touches us with his loving hand, and the great eternal truths shine out in our minds, or our hearts suddenly feel the attraction of the things of God. Thus it is that sometimes hearts are changed without apparent cause: the reason is, as Longfellow puts it in a poem in which he likens God's action to the rains which have fallen far away in the mountains and have filled the half-dried torrents, because "God at their fountains far off has been raining." It is of this immediate action of God upon the understanding and the will that the author of the *Imitation* speaks when he says: "Let not Moses, nor any of the prophets speak to me; but speak thou rather,

¹ 1 John iii 2-3.

² Eph. i 18.

³ 2 Cor. iv 6.

⁴ John vi 45.

⁵ Ps. cxviii 32.

⁶ John vi 44.

O Lord God, who art the inspirer and enlightener of all the prophets : for thou alone without them canst perfectly instruct me ; but they without thee will avail me nothing." At other times God makes use of various external circumstances to produce the like effects ; through the voice of another, or through the thousand and one vicissitudes of life—pain, sorrow, separation, loss, death—he speaks to the human heart and mind. But though Paul may plant and Apollo may water, it is God who gives the increase.¹ And sometimes he does not disdain to make use of our emotional and sensitive faculties in order that he may reach the inner sanctuary of thought and will. He who made the human heart knows best how to touch it, reaching from end to end mightily, and disposing all things sweetly.

Here, indeed, an interesting field of thought opens itself out before us—the consideration of the various ways in which God may illumine our minds and stir our desires ; but we cannot now explore it further. Suffice it to have indicated in this general way the manner in which God comes to our assistance to keep us from evil and to lead us to good. Yet there is another point, closely connected with what we have been saying, to which attention may well be called, however briefly. It is this : the soul of the man who is in a state of grace is made specially sensitive to these impulses of God of which we have been speaking. Effects are produced in such a man which would not be produced in another—just as effects are produced by light on photographic paper which would not be produced on ordinary paper. This is a fact for which we cannot be sufficiently grateful. It brings God nearer to us, as it were, making his beneficent influences over us more potent, more effective ; and in virtue of it we can hope that, if we are faithful to him, we shall be led on from virtue to virtue. It is the function of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost thus to prepare our souls for the touch of the Most High, and the study of these gifts would be a most useful complement to what we are here indicating so briefly about the nature of God's action upon the soul through Actual Grace. But whether we study Actual Grace itself or those Gifts of the Holy Ghost which make us more responsive to its action within us, we shall ever find how truly we may say with the Psalmist : " The Lord ruleth me : and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture. He hath brought me up on the water of refreshment : he hath converted my soul." ²

The illuminations of the mind and the inspirations of the will of

¹ 1 Cor. iii 6.

² Ps. xxii 1-3. In the foregoing account of the nature of Actual Grace, the writer has prescinded altogether from a point discussed amongst theologians : viz., is Actual Grace the illumination of the mind, and the inspiration of the will, or is it rather an impression produced upon the soul from which follow the illumination of the mind and the inspiration of the will ? To the ordinary reader the point may seem a mere subtlety ; it has its importance, but the discussion of it is outside our limited scope.

which we have spoken are not deliberate acts ; they are produced in us apart altogether from any control which we can exercise over them. But it is a point of Catholic doctrine that the salutary act which results from actual grace is itself perfectly free. The Reformers represented man as a mere automaton, and some who claimed to expound Catholic doctrine spoke of our being under the influence of an invincible impulse which took away all real freedom ; but such ideas are altogether foreign to the Catholic doctrine of grace and free will. God influences us ; he creates desires in us ; he moves us to action : , but he lays no necessity upon us in the performing of the acts by which we work out our salvation.

*All actual
grace from
Christ*

There can be no need to insist upon the fact that all actual grace is the work of God ; no one but the Almighty—no saint, not even the Blessed Virgin—can produce it in our souls. But perhaps there really is need to insist upon this other fact that all grace—actual and habitual—comes to us from Jesus Christ our Lord, of whose fulness we have all received.¹ In the vision of the Apocalypse we read how the four-and-twenty ancients sang a new canticle in praise of the Lamb, “because thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God, in thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests.” The Lamb is Christ, and not only has he redeemed us, but he gives us every grace which we ever receive. It was this Lamb of God who said : “Without me you can do nothing” ;² and it was of him that St Paul declared : “In all things you are made rich in him . . . so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace.”³ This is a fundamental truth of Christianity, and it is of immense importance that we should realise it. In very truth Christ in his sacred Humanity is not merely an intercessor for us before the throne of God, “always living to make intercession for us” ;⁴ he has not merely merited for us all the grace which we receive ; but he actually produces that grace in us. In the days of his life on earth he performed marvels with a touch of his hand or with a word of his mouth ; thus did he give sight to the blind, cleanse the lepers, heal the deaf and dumb, and free Mary Magdalen from her sins ; and now in a similar way he produces grace in our souls.

*Union with
Christ*

This great truth is part of the wonderful lesson which Christ gave us when he proclaimed himself to be the Vine from whom we receive our life. “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the Vine ; you the branches : he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit : for without me you can do nothing.”⁵ Consider the nature of the dependence here set before us. First of all, it is only by our union with Christ that we have any spiritual life : apart from him we are dead. But the Vine does more than give life ;

¹ John i 16.

⁴ Heb. vii 25.

² John xv 5.

⁵ John xv 4-5.

³ I Cor. i 5, 7.

it fosters and sustains the life of its branches by a constant influence which it exercises upon them. And this most assuredly is what Christ does for all the branches which are spiritually united with him. The spiritual sap of life is constantly flowing from him to them. Or, to use the figure of speech by which St Paul expresses the same truth, Christ is the head of a body of which we are the members, and just as the head exercises a constant control of the members by elaborate systems of nerves which carry its messages to every part of the body, so does Christ constantly act upon us. These two figures—the one used by our Saviour himself, the other a favourite of the Apostle who so gloriously expounded the mystery of Christ—are no mere figures of speech; they express a profound truth in graphic terms. The Council of Trent puts the matter in these more sober terms. “Christ Jesus constantly pours forth his grace (*virtutem*) upon those who have been justified as the head exercises its influence on the members and the vine upon the branches; and this grace ever precedes, and accompanies, and follows their good actions.”¹

Thus, through Christ Jesus our Lord, are all things restored. It is a wonderful scheme of things—so wonderful that in the very marvels of it we may well recognise that its fashioner is God, and not mere human ingenuity. Let us consider it for a few moments. By the sin of Adam man fell from the supernatural condition of divine sonship in which our first parent had been created; all the wonderful endowments of grace which God had intended for him were lost, and he became an outcast on the face of the earth. But God loved him with an everlasting love, and prepared for him an opportunity of being restored to grace and to glory. The central figure in the scheme of restoration was the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ our Lord. It was through Jesus that all grace was to come; there was to be “no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved”;² “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace, which hath superabounded in us in all wisdom and prudence. That he might make known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in him, in the dispensation of the fulness of time, to re-establish all things in Christ.”³ And this restoration which he effects in the souls of men is indeed a glorious one. In the might of his power he draws men to himself by his immediate action upon them. He fills their souls with sanctifying grace—that wonderful supernatural quality which makes them partakers of his Deity. Together with sanctifying grace he gives them the infused virtues—Faith, Hope, and Charity, and those other virtues by which new powers of action are bestowed upon them. By the Gifts of the Holy Ghost he prepares them to respond to

¹ Session VI, chap. xvi.

² Acts iv 12.

³ Eph. i 7-10.

the impulses which he intends to give them ; and then he acts upon them by his actual grace, moving their minds and wills to the knowledge and the love of sacred things, and to the fulfilment of all justice. Thus, born again to the supernatural life which they had lost, and enriched with most precious endowments, they are carried along by the impulse of his grace towards that eternal destiny which he has prepared for them. They are in his hands—his own handiwork ; nay, they are part of that Mystical Body of which he is the head—of that Vine of which he is the life. He has kept his word : “ I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly.”¹ Having become like men by taking their nature, he makes them like himself by grace.

It is well that we should think of actual grace as part of this greater fact of life in Christ. To the man who is separated from Christ, actual grace is given in order that he may be brought into union with him ; to the man who is already united with Christ it is given in order that the union may be more complete, and that “ rooted and founded in charity you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth : to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled unto the fulness of God.”²

*Union with
the Church*

And for the perfecting of this great scheme Christ has given us the Holy Catholic Church, “ which is his body, and the fulness of him who is filled all in all.”³ By means of her sacraments, her various rites, her prayers, the kingdom of God—which is the kingdom of grace—is extended within us. It is through her that we receive the primary gift of sanctifying grace, but we receive actual grace as well, for we may rightly say that it is as members of the Church that Christ gives us his help. True, actual grace is given also to men who do not belong to the Church ; but it is given in order that they may be drawn to the Church, and be animated by its soul even if they never visibly belong to its body. In this respect we may see once more how well Christ’s own figure of the Vine corresponds with the facts of the supernatural life of souls ; for the vine draws into itself various extraneous substances which it builds up as parts of itself, and Christ by his grace draws men into union with himself that they may become part of his Mystical Body. Here, then, we who are members of the Church have every reason for humble thankfulness. Well may we thank him for the richness of that life which he has bestowed upon us ; well may we have confidence in the closeness of the influence exercised over us by him of whose fulness we have all received ; and well may we pray that we ourselves may be built up “ unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ,”⁴ and that those who know him not may be brought to him who is the way, the truth and the life.

¹ John x 10.

³ Eph. i 23.

² Eph. iii 17-19.

⁴ Eph. iv 13.

APPENDIX: SOME MATTERS OF CONTROVERSY
AMONGST CATHOLICS

It is well known that the problems of Actual Grace have raised some acute controversies amongst Catholic theologians. In the course of this little essay practically nothing has been said about these controversies, because it has seemed best to content oneself with a simple statement and explanation of the main points of Catholic doctrine on which all theologians are agreed. Nevertheless it would be unsatisfactory not to give to those readers who desire it some account of the principal points of debate; and therefore this Appendix is added.

I

EFFICACIOUS GRACE

The chief controversy bears upon the question of Efficacious Grace. By Efficacious Grace we understand a grace which is infallibly followed by the effect to which it tends; whilst Sufficient Grace—*Merely* Sufficient Grace, as it is sometimes called—is grace which is not followed by the effect to which it tends, although it carries with it the power of producing this effect. All are agreed that God gives graces which are infallibly connected with their effect, and the question arises: How are we to explain the infallibility of this connection?

One answer is that the infallibility of the connection is to be explained simply by the fact that God foresees that if this grace is given the recipient will most certainly use it. Looked at in themselves there is no intrinsic difference between an efficacious grace and a grace which is merely sufficient; the whole difference is in this, that one grace will be used and the other will be rejected, and God knows all this beforehand. God, it is explained, altogether apart from any act of his will by which he decrees what shall come to pass, sees from all eternity what free creatures would do in every possible set of circumstances; thus he sees that if the grace A is given to me I will use it, and that if the grace B is given to me I will not use it; then he chooses an order of things in which the grace A is given, and by that very fact he knows that I will actually make use of the grace.

This is known as the Molinist explanation, deriving its name from a great Spanish Jesuit of the sixteenth century, and it is the theory held by Jesuit theologians. It was put forward in opposition to another theory known as the Thomist theory which is the official teaching of theologians belonging to the Order of Preachers—*i.e.*, the Dominicans, who bear the name Thomist because they base their teaching on that of St Thomas.¹ Theologians who do not belong

¹ In the controversies between the rival schools there is often keen discussion about the real teaching of St Thomas, each side claiming the authority of that great Doctor.

to either of these great orders are divided on the point, some supporting one theory, some the other.

According to the Thomist school the infallibility of the connection between efficacious grace and its effect is due to something in the grace itself which infallibly brings about the result in question. Hence there is an intrinsic difference between Efficacious and Sufficient Grace. The explanation runs much as follows. Before any creature can pass from inaction to action it must be acted upon by the First Cause. Thus there must be what is called a physical pre-motion. But this physical pre-motion must fix, as it were, the particular action which follows; otherwise we should have a secondary cause, which is dependent upon the First Cause for its action, arranging for a particular action independently of the First Cause. Therefore this physical pre-motion is called a physical predetermination; it is a movement produced in the secondary cause, and its influence cannot be affected by the being which receives it. When this physical predetermination is applied to supernatural action we call it Actual Grace—Efficacious Grace.

The great difficulty urged against this theory is that it seems to destroy all freedom; for if I am so acted upon by God that I cannot alter the movement which he produces in me and one particular act must follow, how (ask the Molinists) can I remain free? The Thomists admit that there really is a difficulty, but reply by saying that God is capable not only of producing an act in me, but also of producing a free act; or, more technically, he can produce not only the act, but also the "mode" of the act. This, no doubt, is hard to understand, but they claim that it is necessitated by the very nature of things; they assert moreover that by thus attributing the determination of the free act to God we have a true explanation of that saying of the Apostle: "It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to his good will."¹

In their own turn the Thomists have serious objections to make against the Molinists, the principal being as follows. To leave to man the actual decision to correspond or not to correspond with a grace which is offered—to consent or not to consent—is equivalent to an admission that man can do something of himself towards his eternal salvation—which is Pelagianism. Moreover, the Molinist theory involves an impossible explanation of the divine knowledge; for the Molinist supposes that independently of his will God knows from all eternity what free agents would do in any possible circumstance. This is the so-called *Scientia Media*. But this knowledge, independent of the decrees of the divine will, the Thomist declares to be impossible—and the Molinist himself admits that it is a mystery. We can easily understand how God from the consideration of his own Being can see all things possible: but how can he see what would be done by free agents in all conceivable circumstances?

¹ Phil. ii 13.

In place of the physical predetermination of the Thomists some theologians have suggested what is known as moral determination. The suggestion is that God acts upon the will of man not physically, but morally—that is, by way of moral inducement or encouragement—this action being of such intrinsic force that consent infallibly follows. A special application of this theory was made by St Alphonsus, who postulated moral predetermination only in the case of very difficult actions.

II: PREDESTINATION

The problem of Predestination gives rise to another controversy. All theologians must agree on two points—that God has a real will for the salvation of mankind (in opposition to Calvin), and that our salvation is the result of God's grace (in opposition to Pelagianism). This being supposed, the Thomists, supported in this matter by a certain number of eminent Jesuit theologians such as Saint Robert Bellarmine and Suarez, explain Predestination as follows. Although God has a real will for the salvation of all men, he definitely chooses some for eternal life, and leaves the others out of his choice. Having chosen these particular souls for the glory of heaven, he prepares efficacious graces for them so that they will infallibly correspond with his impulses; for the others he prepares merely sufficient grace. Finally, reward or punishment is given according to the actions which have been performed. Of course the preparation of efficacious grace for the elect is explained differently by the Thomists and by those Jesuits who accept this general scheme of things. The former explain it by saying that God wills physically to predetermine the elect; the latter say that by means of the *Scientia Media* he knows which graces will be successful, and then decides to give just these. Some of the Jesuit writers speak of a certain internal suitability in the grace which is efficacious, but in reality what makes it to be efficacious is the foreseen consent which the recipient will give to it. Thus there are important differences between the Thomists and the Jesuit theologians to whom we refer, but they are at one in saying that God's choice of the elect is an act of pure benevolence on his part which has nothing whatever to do with their merits or demerits. For this reason their explanation is known as the theory of Predestination *ante praevisa merita* (Predestination antecedent to the prevision of merit), because it asserts that it is not on account of their foreseen merits that the predestined are chosen. Their choice is God's free act. The chief argument for the theory is found in Scripture where those who are predestined to the glory of heaven are often represented as "elect"—*e.g.*, "They shall show signs and wonders, to seduce (if it were possible) even the elect."¹ "They shall gather together his elect from the four winds," etc.²

¹ Mark xiii 22.

² Matt. xxiv 31.

Against this theory of Predestination antecedent to the prevision of merit an obvious but very serious objection is raised by the opposing school of theologians, who hold that Predestination is *post praevisa merita*—consequent on the prevision of merit. The objection is that Predestination antecedent to the prevision of merit necessarily involves ■ Reprobation antecedent to the prevision of fault ; and this would seem to be directly opposed to the doctrine defined by the Church, that God's will for the salvation of men is not limited to the predestined. In other words, the Thomist theory logically leads to Calvinism. To meet this difficulty the Thomist theologians and those who agree with them on the point at issue reply that in regard to the reprobation of the wicked there is not a positive antecedent desire for their damnation, but merely a permission or a negative reprobation in the sense that God does not choose them for eternal glory. The opposite school, however, is not satisfied, and retorts that the effect is the same whether the reprobation be called negative or positive ; and they want to know how God can be said to reprobate only negatively when he deliberately provides the elect with efficacious graces, and the non-elect with non-efficacious graces.

In dealing with the objection which we have just explained some of the supporters of Predestination antecedent to the prevision of merit seem to admit the impossibility of giving a solution that is altogether satisfactory, but they insist on their claim that Predestination antecedent to the prevision of merit is clearly taught in Scripture and must therefore be accepted, even if no direct solution of difficulties is forthcoming. But the other side reply that the texts which are quoted are not satisfactory, for they either refer only to God's free gift of grace (which all allow to be antecedent to the prevision of merit), or they do not imply a choice which is independent of merit—as in the case where some fish are chosen to be kept and the bad are cast away. “They chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth.”¹ Moreover, these same theologians urge, there are other texts in which eternal glory is spoken of as a prize, a reward ; and it would not really be prize or award if it had been chosen for men antecedent to the prevision of their merits. This would seem to be the more common opinion amongst Jesuit writers, and it has the support of St Francis de Sales.

III: THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH

In these discussions every Catholic is at liberty to take whichever side he prefers, provided that he is always ready to submit to any decision which the Church may make. At the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth the principal points at issue in regard to efficacious grace were formally considered by the

¹ Matt. xiii 48.

Holy See. Champions on each side were summoned to Rome for public debate, and the discussions went on through more than one pontificate. Ultimately it was decided to leave the two schools free to teach their own theories until such time as the Holy See might issue a definite ruling in favour of the one or the other : but each side was to refrain from denouncing the other as heretical. Consequently, although the Thomist may think that the Molinist theory logically involves a form of Pelagianism, he must not denounce Molinism as heretical ; and the Molinist must exercise a similar restraint in regard to Thomism, although he may not be able to see how it does not involve one of the chief errors of Calvin. Certainly neither side draws the conclusion which the other side says is logically involved in its premisses ; the Thomist does *not* deny freewill, nor does the Molinist deny our dependence upon God for all our salutary actions.

The history of the discussions on this question shows very clearly that Catholics are allowed great liberty of speculation when God himself has not settled a point for us by his revelation, and when the general welfare of the body of the faithful does not require that definite action should be taken. In the present case the freedom which has been allowed has certainly done no harm to the faith and practice of the faithful, and it has given occasion for some really marvellous displays of genius. But if ever circumstances should arise which make it imperative for the custody of Catholic truth that these issues should be decided by the authority of the Church, we can be sure that the Church will speak ; and if ever that day comes the world will see the wonderful spectacle of a great school of theology, with long and glorious traditions behind it, and the *esprit de corps* of a vast religious order to animate it, submitting in humble obedience to the word of Christ's Vicar on earth. Far from being a proof that Catholics do not possess that unity of belief which they claim as one of their glories, the whole attitude of the rival parties shows in reality how strong is the principle of unity amongst us ; for all are ready to submit if the Church calls upon them to do so.

E. TOWERS.

XVIII

THE SUPERNATURAL VIRTUES

§ I: ON HABITS

*The meaning
of Habit*

THIS essay is going to be all about habits. "Habit" is such a familiar term that one might have hoped to leave it at that; but unfortunately it is a term that in current language has lost its primary significance. If we are to understand our subject at all, we must set out at once the older philosophical meaning of the word. William James, in the delightful third chapter of his *Psychology*, a chapter full of good things and sage advice, has given us what he calls "the last word of our wisdom in the matter" of the genesis of habit. But all that his "last word" represents is a suggested picture of the underlying material development which corresponds to the growth of habit. The very error that has crept into the use of the word is this genetic idea, as though habit were essentially a growth by repetition. This confounds the common process of the evolution of the habit with the habit itself. I can say that a circle is a figure traced by the extremity B of a line AB which is revolving about the point A. But the circle need not have been made that way. I can say that a chicken is the result of an ordered evolution of a fecundated egg. But the chicken would have been just as completely a chicken if it had been immediately created by God. And a habit is completely a habit if it is a modification of human nature disposing that nature well or ill for its proper operations—whether the habit has been gradually developed by a series of acts or has appeared at once. Again, habit is sometimes confused with the notion of custom, as when we say: He has a habit of reading at meals. Now, though habits do commonly arise from repetition, and issue in repetition, they do not essentially involve either such a cause or such a result. There is no objection to the use of the word "habit" in the examples we have given; our quarrel is with the contraction of the word's meaning to such usage. The original notion is simpler and more comprehensive. If it were not, the supernatural virtues could not be called habits. But we cannot avoid so calling them without separating ourselves from the traditional theological description. Anyhow, it is much simpler to spend a little time in determining the true meaning, once for all, than to indulge in circumlocutions throughout our treatment.

A habit, then, is a modification, a permanent quality added to our nature, something that we can have or be without. It means a *setting* of our nature, a disposition of our nature which has an effect

on the operations of our nature. When we speak of our *nature* we are looking at ourselves, our being, as a source of activity. Every being has a natural tendency to work towards the end for which it was created. In human beings we call these tendencies "appetites." We have an appetite for food, for self-preservation, for reproduction, for knowledge, company, speech, and, most generally, for happiness. Foolishly or wisely, blindly or prudently, we are ever seeking the good. Every act we perform is the result of one of our appetites, our tendencies, and is an expression of our nature. We frequently have to pull ourselves together, to brace ourselves, to direct our scattered energies, before we undertake an act. This results in a momentary "set" of our nature, as a bar of soft iron is set by the stroke of a magnet. Now, if this "set" becomes permanent, stable, it is a habit. It saves us the initial trouble of self-direction or bracing. Our nature spontaneously tends to activity; the habit makes it tend, as if constrained, to some special activity, as the needle which, before, was indifferent, after magnetisation turns to the north. We say *as if* constrained; for it is still possible for free-will to assert itself and to prevail over the habit. A man learns to speak French. This gives him a new perfection, a new facility, a disposition bearing on one of the faculties of his nature, that of speech. It is a thing that can come or go without changing his nature essentially; it is an accident. He had the faculty of speech before; this accidental perfection promotes its activity in a particular way. It does not matter in the least how the man has become possessed of the habit: he may be a Frenchman, who has learned French as his mother-tongue; he may be an Englishman who (by a rare good fortune) has learned it at school; or he may have received the gift of tongues. The fact is that he can speak French, and *that* is the habit.

Now I have said—and it is very important—that habit is directed to the activity of a nature, but it need not be immediately directed thereto. The immediate disposition may be, not of the faculty, but of the essence underlying the faculty. I have a habit¹ of skating. That is a disposition of the faculty by which I can use my limbs and maintain my balance. But if I am to skate or to walk or to ride, I need a more fundamental habit; my body must be healthy. Health is a disposition of my very being; it disposes that being considered as a source of activities. Thus it fulfils the definition of habit. For a habit is a modification of the subject, of his nature or faculties, which has a bearing on the pursuit of his end. If, like this habit of health, its direct effect is on the nature itself, it is called an *entitative* habit; but if it immediately affects the faculties, it is called an *operative* habit. Sanctifying grace, as we shall remark later, is an entitative habit, whereas the virtues are operative habits.

¹ In absolute strictness habits can reside only in the soul, but it is common to use the word more largely for bodily dispositions.

Not every habit sets us in the right direction for the accomplishment of the true ends of our nature. Unfortunately we are much more prone to the formation of bad habits. We are constantly being warned to take care of our health, as if it were more natural for us to have bad health. Slovenly habits of speech, of dress, of deportment, are dispositions of our various faculties hampering them in the conduct of their activities for the ends of our nature, and, therefore, are bad habits.

A habit must be stable, a disposition so deeply ingrained that it is not easily movable. It is often said to be a second nature. "Habit second nature!" said the Duke of Wellington. "Habit is ten times nature." This emphasises the fact that it facilitates the works of the nature which it perfects, so that there is a pleasure in performing them, and a promptitude which results from the absence of lengthy deliberation. Our human faculties are capable of being used either for or against the true good of our nature. We have to make up our mind how they are to be used in a given instance; that means that we deliberate, we weigh the *pros* and *cons*. The faculty itself is ready for either line of action. The habit does something to relieve this state of indetermination, and if it is a good habit, it sets the faculty permanently towards the good.

Good habits

The good operative habit of which we have just spoken is called a virtue. But if we think for a moment we shall see that in using the word virtue we never get away from the idea that it has something to do with the will; it must appear in actual exercise. Ability to play a musical instrument or to paint is a good operative habit; but we should only grudgingly call it a virtue, unless it went further. A virtue of that kind is not in default even though it is not applied in execution. A good violinist would not cease to be a good violinist if he should choose to make the night hideous by playing badly; he is still a violinist as completely as before. But a temperate man falls from his virtue (he does not necessarily *lose* it) if he gets drunk. A boy who can do his sums has a virtue of reckoning. This does not ensure that he always will do them. He probably also possesses a virtue of carefulness. If he fails to do his sums correctly, we say he still can do them; he still has the first habit intact, but he has failed in the second, for carefulness is incompatible with a lack of care; and his master takes such means as he thinks fit to consolidate the habit. Here, then, we have the true virtue, and it is in the will. That is why you can justly punish a boy for carelessness, but not for mere ignorance.

Now if we remember that a virtue is a habit which is going to help us to attain the end of our nature, and if we further realise that human nature is meant to aim at God (who alone is the all-sufficient good), we see at once that we limit very considerably the number of habits that can properly be called virtues. If we misapprehend our good, follow a false trail, the "virtue" that aids us

is as false as the "good" we are pursuing. The dexterity of the pickpocket could never be called a virtue without qualification; it is certainly much less of a virtue than the dexterity of the surgeon. But even this is not a perfect virtue unless the surgeon is in union with God by charity; for, if he is not, his work will not take him any nearer to the one Good. He is pursuing some lower end, such as the alleviation of pain. This is not, of course, a bad end; it is good. But its goodness lacks "the one thing necessary." And in consequence the virtue remains imperfect. We shall have occasion to remark later that any virtue in order to be perfect must come under the influence of the one supreme virtue of love of God. "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."¹ The prudence of the miser, the boldness of the burglar, the generosity of the seducer, are all bad; they are false virtues; not because the men are in sin, but because the virtues are misdirected. The benevolence, marital fidelity, paternal discipline of a sinner are imperfect virtues, because though they are directed to a real good there is an abyss between them and the ultimate good.

It was necessary at the outset to show that the term "habit" does not necessarily connote repetition of acts, for the habits of infused virtue have no dependence on such repetition. But before we begin the discussion of the supernatural virtues proper, we must see how common natural habits do grow out of repetition, for the recognition of this fact has an important bearing on the spiritual life.

Consider the habit of decision. This is acquired by repeated acts of decision. The will acts sharply once. That act leaves on it an impression, in virtue of which it acts decisively the next time with a greater facility. The second act emphasises the impression. And thus a series of acts modifies the will, giving it a stable disposition to act decisively; and this is a habit. Now, the will, perfected by the habit, decides each case promptly as it arises, and takes a positive pleasure in the sense of decisiveness. Before, it was liable *either* to clench a matter sharply *or* to shilly-shally over it. Now, it behaves as if it were its nature to be prompt and decisive in its acts. "Habit is second nature." The will is not constrained to behave in this manner. That would mean the destruction of free-will. But it is most apt to do so. You can *bet* on it. In the same way a long series of acts of kindness will produce a kindly disposition, or acts of justice a just disposition. You can guess beforehand how a just man will deal with a case which calls for his judgement; not that you know precisely what he will do, for that depends on how he reads the circumstances of the case; but you do know that he will not do anything unjust. All these are good habits, and so they are virtues. But we are now considering them under the aspect of merely natural virtues.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii 3.

Once the habit is established, it grows stronger with every act which is of an equal or greater intensity. If a man is accustomed to rise "at six sharp" every morning, the habit will persevere, and the act will grow ever easier in execution. But if for a period he allows himself to hesitate, to execute the act with less decision, then by so much will his good habit be weakened. If he fail to get up at six, and that repeatedly, the habit will go. An occasional long sleep may be very good for health, but it is not at all good for habit. Or again, consider the habit of controlling one's thoughts. Suppose that one has learned by experience that a certain train of thought, innocent in its beginning, is apt to run on into sensuality. Prudence dictates that such beginnings should be checked. It may be that for a time the checking is easy. This is one of the devil's wiles.¹ Over and over again, we "resist the beginnings." But we are not really advancing in the good habit, for the acts are of less intensity than the habit itself. We are like schoolboys whose exercises are too easy. We are lulled into a state of security, in which we think that we can easily arrest the development of the initial thought. Then a really strong temptation may sweep down upon us. If we resist now, the habit will be established much more firmly. Here, of course, a new element would be introduced, that of grace; but we are abstracting from this at the moment.

Habits, then, increase by regular acts of an intensity equal to, or greater than, that of the habit itself. They diminish and die through contrary acts or by the cessation of the original acts. But the mere cessation of the acts does not destroy the habit directly. The direct cause of the destruction is found in those contrary debilitating influences which can be withstood only by the performance of the act. The influence of the acts is like the repair of the body by food. In the body there is a constant wear and tear which must be met by regular meals. Poisonous food will ravage and destroy the tissues; but the absence of food will also prove fatal because the constant catabolism is not made good.

§ II: SUPERNATURAL ACTIVITY

*The equip-
ment of the
supernatural
man*

THE foregoing discussion of natural habits and virtues was necessary in order that we might be able to appreciate the traditional technical language in which supernatural virtue is described. There is a parallel between nature and supernature of which we must take account, if we are to attain to any comprehension, however inadequate, of the supernatural virtues. Our comprehension will always be imperfect, for the terms we shall employ, whose proper significance we have been at some pains to determine, can be applied only analogously to the problems that are now before us. This means that while the terms fit the facts to some extent, they do not completely

¹ Cf. Scupoli's *Spiritual Combat*, chap. xiii.

cover the facts. They are true descriptions, but inadequate descriptions. After all, these are terms used by philosophers in their description and classification of natural experience, and grace and supernatural virtue are outside the field of that experience. It is like the true but inadequate description I might give of a picture in terms of colour tones, or of a piece of music in terms of light and shade.

Our present purpose is to describe the equipment of the supernatural man. When we attempt to analyse human activity, we see that it involves the recognition of these elements: human nature, consisting of body and soul in one composite individual; the faculties of the soul, intellect and will; the acquired dispositions of those faculties, the habits good and bad; and the operations which arise from these sources. Similarly, we shall now find a complex of endowments which raise a man above his own nature and bestow on this "new creature" new powers. The supernatural man has a new nature and new faculties. I have remarked already that "nature" is the name applied to an essence when the essence is regarded as the source of its activities. My human nature is the remote source of every merely human action that I perform. But each such action springs immediately from its appropriate faculty. My will and my understanding are the faculties of my soul; they are the immediate sources of every act of willing or of intelligence. Now, all the activities of my nature, if they are normal, tend to the perfection of my nature, to that end for which my nature is designed. But God, out of his infinite goodness and condescension, has proposed to me an end, a perfection, utterly beyond any capacity of my human nature to know, to pursue, or to attain. God could render such a design feasible only by uplifting my nature, recreating it as it were, and endowing it with powers which are in no sort of continuity with its original equipment.

It will make for clearness if we give at once a scheme of our supernatural endowment and show how it runs parallel with our natural equipment. The fundamental gift is sanctifying grace, which we receive at baptism. This is our "new nature," corresponding in the scheme to our human nature. As a nature, it demands new faculties, the immediate sources of supernatural activities, by which it is able to move towards its end; these are the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Finally, to the acquired natural virtues correspond the supernatural moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. Now grace and virtues are habits; and that statement calls for some explanation.

Grace is dealt with in another essay¹ but we must for a moment dwell upon it here, in order to show how the virtues flow from it. There is a mysterious and startling phrase of St Peter, which is the best introduction to this analysis: "By these [promises] you may

¹ Essay xvi: *Sanctifying Grace*.

be made partakers of the divine nature.”¹ Here we must insist on the word “nature.” If St Peter merely meant to say that we were participators of the divine essence, he would only be saying what is true of every one of God’s creatures. For every creature gets its being from God, and, in so far as it does, it participates his being; though here, again, we lose ourselves in the contemplation of God’s infinite being, and say so by declaring that the word “being” is applied to creatures only analogously. We can decide, then, that St Peter meant more than that. We participate in the divine *nature* inasmuch as God makes it possible for us to share in the divine activity. God’s activity is to contemplate, and rejoice in, his own divine essence. And it is precisely that contemplation and consequent joy which he has proposed to share with us. That is our heaven. But that activity itself, and every act which in this life tends towards it, is wholly beyond the scope of our nature and powers. So God puts into the soul sanctifying grace in order to dispose the soul for that vision and enjoyment which God possesses of his own nature. Too often grace is described as if it were merely an operative habit; a virtue by which a man could *work* towards his great end, or by which his desires could be turned in its direction. That is inadequate. The perfecting of man’s powers is the work, not of sanctifying grace, but of the virtues which accompany it; grace itself perfects the very essence of the soul, and so it is called an entitative habit,² just as the health which perfects our body is an entitative habit. It is a habit because it is an accident by which the soul is perfected, well disposed; it makes the soul like to God, giving it a share in that activity which is most characteristic of God. “By justifying men he makes them sons of God,” says St Augustine; “if we are made the sons of God, we are made Gods.”

But, as I have said, the word “habit” is used analogously here. Regarded as the source of our God-like activity, grace is more like a nature than a habit. Moreover, it is unlike a habit, in that the perfection which it bestows breaks away from human nature, soaring above it. Yet it is a habit; for it is an endowment of the soul, disposing it for that supreme end of human nature, God himself. So, while we remember that it is a habit, we range it in our scheme as the supernatural correlative of nature; and, as a nature, it demands new immediate principles of activity, just as our human nature, the ultimate source of human activity, demands immediate principles, like intellect and will, for each of its activities.

These new principles are the supernatural virtues. The very name suggests habits; but, again, “habit” is applied only analogously. The virtues are not like ordinary habits. In some ways they are more like faculties, intellect and will. The immediate source of an act of understanding or of reasoning is the intellect; so the immediate source of an act of supernatural belief is the virtue

*The
immediate
principles of
supernatural
activity*

¹ 2 Pet. i 4.

² Cf. p. 623.

of faith. That looks as if faith should be rather a supernatural faculty, and as a matter of fact, we correlate it with faculty in our scheme. But the act of belief is not completely accounted for by the virtue of faith. It springs from a more complex root. It has a human element as well as a divine. The act of believing is an act of our human intellect, supernaturalised by the virtue of faith. It is of the last importance that we should be clear about this. Grace does not do away with nature ; it perfects nature. The virtue of faith is a necessary complement of the intellect, if the intellect is to assent on the authority of God to a truth revealed by God. Again, when, by the virtue of charity I make an act of love of God, it is my own will that loves him, though that will is enabled to love him by the virtue of charity. Thus in each instance, the virtue is the perfection of a power, and from the beginning we have called the perfection of a power or faculty, a virtue, or good *habit*. A faculty cannot grow ; it can only be perfected by good habits. Now a virtue, as we shall show, can grow, as can the supernatural grace whose " faculties " the virtues are.

But there is one striking difference between the supernatural virtues and ordinary good habits, or natural virtues. It is a very significant difference, and one that secretly and in the background has been determining the course of our discussion. The supernatural virtues do not confer the same ease in operation as the natural virtues. Consider the case of a well-instructed Catholic, who knows what natural virtues are, and who knows further that the result of the sacrament of Penance is to restore sanctifying grace if it has been lost by mortal sin, and that with this grace there inevitably comes the whole series of supernatural virtues. Suppose that he has been given up to some vice such as drunkenness or impurity. That means that he has lost the virtue of temperance, and, indeed, most of the other virtues. Now he goes to confession, and he is determined to reform. He knows that he has once more the virtue of temperance in his soul. But a virtue is a good habit, and a good habit makes the good act easy and pleasant. So, full of good desires, he cheerfully faces the future, fully equipped, as he thinks, to meet the old temptations, and to win an easy victory over them. Alas ! the first real temptation that comes his way undeceives him. He finds that the shackles of his old sins are still upon him, though he knows that their guilt is forgiven. The vice is in his very flesh. In spite of his virtues, the path of holiness is steep and rugged ; the struggle is a fierce one, and he is very apt to fall. The truth is that these supernatural virtues do not give facility of action in the same way as do the natural good habits, and the reason is because they have not been developed in the same way. The virtue of temperance which is designed to enable him to be sober or pure does not seem to make the attainment of those ideals any easier.

And yet it does something to secure that attainment, in addition

to making the supernatural act possible. There are two ways in which a faculty may be helped to carry out its proper act : one is by making the faculty more eager for the act itself, the other by increasing the attractiveness of the object. You can see the difference in two boys faced with the task of learning a book of Euclid. One of them has the type of mind for which the study of geometry is a pleasure ; the other has no bent for the subject, but has a keen realisation of the necessity of getting it up for the sake of an examination. Or again, a young man at the university who has a natural gift for athletics is too lackadaisical to effect anything, while another who is slow, clumsy, and flabby, will spend long afternoons at the nets, or painful hours "tubbing" on the river, because his imagination is fired by the prospect of winning his colours or of rowing in his college boat.

Now supernatural virtue acts in the second way. It bestows a special inclination to the good which is the object of the virtue. It does not in the least make the practice of the virtue any easier in itself. We should not have expected God to give such ease as a grace, for man can acquire this for himself. Each act of the virtue is possible, and a frequent repetition of the acts will produce that facility which corresponds to the natural habit. The supernatural virtue does not even negatively promote the facility by the removal of old bad habits or by the control of the passions.

A supernatural virtue, then, is like a natural virtue in this, that it perfects a natural power. The two are unlike in the kind of perfection they bestow. The supernatural virtue uplifts the faculty, and so makes it possible for that hitherto incompetent faculty to produce an act of the supernatural order ; it also gives a special inclination towards the good object, which inclination is a real help in the pursuit of the good, although it does not immediately make the pursuit easier. The natural virtue presupposes the ability to produce an act of the human order, but makes the act easier.

To complete our sketch of man's supernatural equipment, we should observe here that the Gifts of the Holy Ghost are conferred with sanctifying grace. These, too, are habits. They bestow no new power or facility, but they dispose our faculties to be responsive to God's suggestions and invitations.

§ III: VIRTUES NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL

Origin of the supernatural virtues

THE supernatural virtues are commonly called the "infused virtues," and this name indicates their divine origin. It would be quite proper to attribute the name "infused virtue" to any virtue immediately given by God, even though it were possible to develop such a virtue by natural means. Thus we might call the virtue of health "infused" if it had been miraculously restored ; or the Apostles' gift of tongues might be so called, though men can learn

foreign languages by their own efforts. But the name is restricted to those virtues which could not be developed by any natural means, the virtues by which a man is disposed for an end surpassing the reach of human nature, for his last and perfect happiness. No repetition of acts will account for the origin of these habits. Always bearing in mind the halting nature of every comparison, and realising that any comparison of natural and supernatural must be peculiarly lame, we will try to emphasise this difference between natural and supernatural virtues by a commonplace similitude. A pearl-diver of the South Seas, by much practice, has become very expert and enduring. He can remain under water for a considerable time, and work there. But he could never undertake the work of a professional diver who has to investigate a wreck. For that a habit of quite a different kind is necessary. The diver must be clothed in a diving suit ¹ and helmet properly connected with an air-pump. No efforts of diving will ever produce such a suit, though the diver can put it on when he has got it. The act of a supernatural virtue is, as we have shown, an act performed by a natural faculty after that faculty has been upraised. The faculty is only capable of the act after such elevation, and this elevation depends upon the supernatural virtue. It is therefore obvious that the supernatural act cannot generate the virtue. Even though it is possible to make a series of supernatural acts under the influence of a series of actual graces before the bestowal of the habits of grace and of the virtues, still such acts cannot beget the virtues.

Since, then, the infused virtues have no cause in the subject who enjoys them, since they are not made by him or out of anything that was in him, they, like the grace from which they flow, are spoken of in Scripture as the work of a *creation*, as a new creature: "If then any be in Christ a new creature, the old things are passed away"; ² "for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision: but a new creature"; ³ "and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth." ⁴

Like the natural virtues they can increase: "As newborn babes, *Growth of supernatural virtues* desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation." ⁵ But this increase also is the direct work of God. This is all summed up in the expression that virtue is that which God effects in us without our help (*in nobis, sine nobis*).

But all this is not to say that the sinner can do absolutely nothing towards the production of virtue. He can dispose himself for the reception of the good habit. This he can do, under the influence of actual grace, either by withdrawing his will from that which is contrary to the virtue, or by an act of the love of God which almost demands the infusion of the virtues by God. But such a disposition

¹ We are not here confusing the two meanings of *habitus*.

² 2 Cor. v 17.

³ Gal. vi 15.

⁴ Eph. iv 24.

⁵ 1 Pet. ii 2.

is only a "material" disposition. It is like the preparation of the material by rough workmen for the skilled artist, the removal of knots from the wood or the hewing of the marble block on which the sculptor is going to work. And once we have the virtues, we can do more for their increase. We can never effect it ourselves, but we can merit it by acts of virtue.

*Loss of the
supernatural
virtues*

With regard to the loss of the virtues, here again there is complete dissimilarity between natural and supernatural. Natural virtues are lost by a succession of contrary acts or by a cessation from the practice of the virtue; and that, because they are developed from acts. But the supernatural virtue is lost by one act opposed to the virtue, by one mortal sin. On the other hand, cessation from practice does not destroy it. To return to our former example: the diver's suit is completely effective as long as it is not torn, no matter how much it may be worn; but one tear will make it ineffective and useless. Acquired virtues are lost by a gradual process; the infused are lost at one step. They cannot in themselves diminish; any injury is a mortal injury. There is no process of weakening; it is life or death.

This looks like a paradox. What about the universally received doctrine that venial sin leads to mortal sin, and that in the spiritual life there is no standing still? Venial sin does lead to a loss of charity, and therefore of the other supernatural virtues (exception being made with regard to Faith and Hope, as we shall explain later); but it is not by a process of diminution. The ease with which virtuous acts are accomplished is the result of the frequent performance of the acts. Venial sin weakens the natural habit; and makes it harder to resist temptation; and thus it paves the way for mortal sin, which in a flash destroys the supernatural habit. The same is true of the effectiveness of the cessation from the practice of virtue. Scupoli tells¹ us that it is a common wile of the devil to leave us in peace for a time, when he sees that we are established in virtue. If he constantly tempted us, and if, as constantly, we vanquished him, then every such act of ours would have a twofold effect: meritoriously it would strengthen the supernatural virtue (which, however, has nothing to do with the facility of the act), and efficiently it would strengthen the natural virtue, and so increase the ease with which we perform the good act. But if he leaves us alone, there is the chance that we shall grow careless in the exercise of virtue. Thus, although the supernatural virtue will not diminish, the acquired virtue will. Then he will swoop down on us when we are off our guard, and although we have the supernatural virtue which enables us to resist the temptation, human nature is weakened, and we may fall. Fervour means the subservience of all the strength of the soul and the bodily members to charity; and by venial sin this fervour is chilled.

*Grace and
nature*

As I have said, facility in the exercise of virtue depends upon an

¹ *Spiritual Combat*, chap. xiii.

acquired, natural virtue which in its genesis, growth and decay, obeys all the laws which have been laid down for such virtues. It is commonly observed that in the saints the practice of virtue grows easy by their frequent repetition of virtuous acts. Even very ordinary Christians who are trying to serve God know that the control of the tongue, patience, the restraint of appetites, ejaculatory prayers, the constant sense of the presence of God, which in the beginning meant a struggle and a deliberate self-conquest, in course of time become almost natural. Furthermore, it is a particular virtue whose exercise becomes easy, and various saints are conspicuous exponents of various special virtues: a St Francis de Sales of meekness, a St Teresa of prayer, a St Aloysius of purity, a St Francis of Assisi of poverty. Now this particular facility might conceivably arise from one of two sources: it might be attributable to a growth of the supernatural virtue by way of merit, or to the development of the corresponding natural virtue, acquired efficiently by repetition of acts. But it cannot be the first, for as we have so often insisted, supernatural virtue does not give facility; and, moreover, as we shall presently see, all supernatural virtues grow together proportionately, so that any facility, or special intensity arising from their growth, would affect them all simultaneously; and that is contrary to experience. The facility, therefore, must be caused by the acquired virtue.

We have remarked that the absence of facility in the practice of virtue for one who is lately converted from habits of sin is a source of disappointment and of dismay. Here, in the teaching concerning the loss of virtue, we have a corresponding source of consolation. The one act that destroys the habit of virtue does not destroy the acquired facility. The sinner can still make acts of the natural virtue, and with an actual grace he can even make the supernatural act. Thus, if he had acquired facility in making acts of perfect charity or of perfect contrition, it would be easy to imagine his speedy restoration to the state of grace, under the impulse of actual grace, even before he had time or opportunity to go to confession. It is a very practical consequence of this teaching to insist on the value of frequent acts of contrition. When we are in the state of grace we should accustom ourselves to sorrow over our past sins as offences against an infinitely good God, as treasonable acts which put us out of friendship with our eternal Lover. Then, if under a sudden temptation we have the misfortune to fall, we shall be ready with God's grace to turn to him again immediately, and not have the horror of lying in our sin until such time as we can get sacramental absolution.

This is an illustration of the way in which grace builds on nature. As the natural faculty, of itself impotent to perform a supernatural act, can act supernaturally when perfected by an infused habit; so, too, natural habit plays its part in facilitating good acts when it is

associated with the corresponding infused virtue. And this will account for the part played by natural character in the lives of the saints. It is true that God chooses the weak to confound the strong ; but if there is a strong natural character to begin with, grace has something on which to build. The saints have been men and women of great natural courage, strong will, temperate habits, remarkable for even-handed justice, great self-discipline, love of their fellow-men. It is not that God could not, or does not, give supernatural virtues in the absence of their natural counterpart. It is not that we do not sometimes find holy men and women lacking in natural prudence or fortitude. It is not that there is never a bad streak of nature to be eliminated. But, as a rule, the saint's natural character is an index of the supernatural heroism that is going to distinguish his life. St Teresa had great native courage and common sense ; St Peter had enthusiasm and zeal ; St John was by nature loving. This natural character is itself a gift of God. " Some are disposed by their bodily disposition to be chaste, or gentle, or suchlike," says St Thomas. These have a start, as it were, in the way of virtue, by the hidden, but certainly not unjust, disposition of God. Of course they have to fight nature, but it is probably in other particulars. St Francis de Sales was naturally noble and *fine*, but he had to fight against his temper. St Thomas Aquinas was subtle-minded and intelligent ; also he was chaste ; but he was allowed to be very violently tempted against chastity.

Saudreau, in *The Degrees of the Spiritual Life*, seems to make too little of this gift of God. While it may be granted that very often the character of the saints, their evident prudence, wisdom, charity, are the results of infused virtues (and Gifts of the Holy Ghost) ; that often persons of no education are wonderfully enlightened by infused knowledge ; this does not seem to be contrary to the principles we have laid down. And if, as Saudreau goes on to say, " natural defects may have a negative influence, producing an adverse effect and hindering any progress in holiness," this seems to amount to the same thing as we have declared. But this teaching is not averse to Saudreau's essential doctrine that there can be no " positive influence of the natural virtues in the way of sanctification," if by that he means that natural virtues can do nothing efficiently or meritoriously to produce an increase of supernatural virtue. As we have been at pains to state, they merely facilitate the activity. Every natural good habit that we possess can be used for advance in virtue, if only we are supernaturalised. It is safe to speak thus positively, but it would not be safe to establish comparisons between nature and grace in different individuals who were both supernaturalised. The comfort which St Bonaventure gave to Brother Giles was perfectly well founded : " an ignorant man can love God as much as one that hath great learning, and a poor simple woman can love God as much as a doctor of theology " ; nevertheless, the

doctor of theology has a gift which can, and should, help him on the way to perfection and union with God ; and if, as a matter of fact, it does not, this is his fault and not the fault of his learning. St Teresa demanded *courage* of her daughters.

A clear understanding of this relation between the natural and supernatural virtues should be a help to the person who, after confession of mortal sin, still finds an unexpected difficulty in the exercise of his newly restored virtues. Now that his heart is turned away from sin, he cannot be the victim of *formal* vice. But his former bad habits have left their mark on him materially. He has a bodily disposition to sin : he may be teased by lust or crave for drink. The vice is in his flesh and in his bones. This he can eradicate according to the rules which govern the growth or decay of any acquired habit. At first he will have to fight hard, but every victory will mark a stage in natural self-conquest. A series of acts opposing the vice, a deliberate subduing of the flesh, for example, will in course of time substitute a good natural habit for the bad one ; and then the supernatural goodness which is made possible by the infused virtues will become more pleasant ; he will find the yoke sweet and the burden light.

§ IV: NATURE AND CONNECTION OF INFUSED VIRTUES

We have seen that God has set before mankind, as the great aim ^{*Necessity of*} of existence, the enjoyment of the direct vision of himself in eternity. ^{*infused*} Of the double activity of intellect and will implied in this eternal ^{*virtues*} reward we have not now to speak. In this life there can be no such activity, for we cannot here see God face to face. But he has made us sharers of his own activity even in life, by habitual grace which gives us the adoption of sons, and by the infused virtues which enable us to aim at him as he has revealed himself to us. He must have made provision for these virtues, otherwise the gift of his grace would be imperfect. Every lowest creature has those powers which are necessary for the pursuit of its end. Merely natural man has the faculties to pursue his natural end. It is unthinkable that God should not have endowed man with what is necessary for his supernatural end. And though man's native faculties are adequate to the knowledge and love of God as known in the works of creation—physically adequate, even if, as a matter of fact, they are in his present state morally inadequate—they are wholly inadequate to the belief, hope, and love which are directed to God as our revealed supernatural end. Given the present state of the world in which God has revealed to all men himself, his power, goodness, amiability, it is physically possible for the man who has no grace or virtue to believe in God on the authority of God revealing, to hope for God's help and eternal reward, to love God as the one infinite good ; but it is not physically possible that he should do these things in such a

way as will be an effective pursuit of that last end. The difference between natural and supernatural acts lies, not in their proper object, nor in the reason by virtue of which they are performed, but in the fact that the supernatural act emanates from an uplifted principle and is thereby capable of being ordained to an end which is beyond the power of nature.¹

We can, then, distinguish three possible stages in man's knowledge and love of God. First, the merely natural man (physically speaking) can know God as his last end, and believe in him as revealed; and St Thomas teaches us that by nature man is bound to love God above all things, and that he would be a monster if he did not. Secondly, the supernaturalised man can believe in God and hope in him in such a way as will merit an eternal reward. Thirdly, in the Beatific Vision, by an entirely new equipment, man will be able to see God as he is, face to face, and love him. In this last case, although the object of the acts is the same God,² there is a shade of difference in the charity, arising from the difference in the mode of apprehension by the intellect whose function it is to enlighten the will; then we shall see face to face, now we see "as in a glass darkly."

Now the supernatural virtues are all those which are necessary for the production of acts which lead to God. These may have as their object either, first, God himself or something intimately connected with him, or, secondly, the means of approach to him. The first class, because of their preoccupation with God himself, are called the theological virtues; the second, because of their immediate concern with conduct, are called the moral virtues. The theological virtues are three: Faith, Hope, and Charity. Faith enables us to assent to the facts of God's revelation about himself on the authority of God revealing, or to make the preliminary assents to the motives of credibility. Hope enables us to rely upon God's power and goodness for our eternal reward in himself, or for those present aids which are necessary if we are to merit that reward. Charity enables us to love God as our sovereign good, and (as a secondary connected object) our neighbour for God's sake. These virtues are the homologues of our natural faculties, for this reason: man's will needs no habit, no added perfection to enable it to be set towards its last end in the way of nature; God himself is its object, as he is the object of the theological virtues in their own order.

Now the virtues which are concerned with supernatural conduct are the obvious homologues of the virtues which perfect the natural man, and which are necessary for him if his faculties are to be used aright in the details of conduct. They are manifold, but they are

¹ This is the subject of a famous controversy, the discussion of which is outside the scope of this treatment. In the text we state the view that appears to us the best.

² The intimate union of the blessed with God is already inaugurated "in germ" by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the souls of the just.

grouped under the heads of the four cardinal virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance. We have said that the will of itself is directed to its last end; if it wander from the straight path to that end, this is attributable to lack of knowledge in the intellect or to wandering desires concerned with the means to the end. So to safeguard the will from these induced errors, prudence must first of all regulate the intellect; then justice must keep the will upright in those operations which concern our intercourse with our fellow-men as citizens of heaven; and, finally, fortitude and temperance must preserve the will from the interference of the passions, temperance controlling impulses towards the unreasonable, fortitude conquering the obstacles which are set in the way of good.

There is an old adage to the effect that virtue stands in the middle *The golden mean* line. This applies to all the moral virtues. Their very object is the mean between excess and defect: between giving too much and too little, between taking too much pleasure and too little, between attempting too much and too little. It does not imply that the virtue is a mean between two vices; it is not the virtue, but the object, that is the mean, the mean between excess and defect in its own matter. But when excess and defect are both contrary to the virtue (which is not always the fact) then there are two vices between which the virtue lies. So, for example, we get the sequences:—

Gluttony, Temperance, Insensibility,
Rashness, Fortitude, Timidity.

But sometimes only one of the extremes is directly against the virtue, the other simply having nothing to do with it, and then there is but one corresponding vice, though the virtue is still in the mean: for example, Justice *v.* Injustice.

All this applies only to the moral virtues. For the theological virtues, taken in themselves, there is no mean. "The measure of the love of God," said St Bernard, "is to love him without measure." The same applies to hope and faith. God himself is their object. In him we can never repose too great faith, for he is infinite wisdom and truth; nor too great hope, for he is omnipotent, supremely generous and faithful to his promises; nor can we ever love him too much, for he is the absolute good. As we have remarked above, the idea of the mean is not derived from a consideration of opposed vices; so the general rule is not affected by the commonly misinterpreted sequence, Despair—Hope—Presumption. Presumption is not an excess of hope in God's promises, but a hope for what God has not promised. The only qualification arises from our own weakness, not from the virtue itself. In the exercise of the virtues we must observe the rule of prudence, otherwise by excess of zeal we might do more harm than good. A man might put too great a strain on his nature by setting out to make, say, ten thousand acts of charity every day.

But while there is no possibility of excess in the theological virtues, the virtue may fail by defect. In order to retain the virtue of charity we have to attach our wills so completely to God's will that we would not forsake him for any creature. We must appreciate him more highly than ourselves or anything else that he has made. But we are not bound to love him more intensely than any creature. A boy loves a game of football with far greater intensity than he loves his studies ; but, for one reason or another, he has his mind made up that he will not forsake his lessons in order to play football. That means that he has a greater "love of appreciation" for his studies. The soldier going to battle has a far more intense love of his wife and family than of the duty which calls him from their company ; but he has a greater love of appreciation for his duty :

" I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more."

The first and most obvious application of this important distinction between appreciation and intensity is to the virtue of charity ; but we can extend the distinction with quite definite meaning to faith and hope. By our faith we believe in God more firmly than in any creature of God ; by our hope we rest our confidence on God more stably than on any of his creatures. We would relinquish anything which should be in opposition to either of these virtues rather than give up believing or hoping in God.

So much is necessary for the lowest grades of the spiritual life, but progress is marked by an ever closer identification of our will with that of God, and also by a love of ever-growing intensity. In this life we shall never attain the highest that even we are capable of reaching :

" For a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a Heaven for ? "

A saint may love God more intensely than we love any creature ; we should all strive so to love him ; but there are endless degrees of intensity even in this life, and the greatest intensity of an act of love attainable by any saint in this life is lower than the least intensity that is found accompanying face-to-face vision in heaven.

*Solidarity of
the virtues*

Speaking quite generally, and, for the moment, prescinding from one striking exception, we can say that all the virtues are infused simultaneously, and exist all together, and, if they are lost, are lost all together. This statement depends on three principles :

1. The virtues are all most intimately connected with sanctifying grace. It is grace which makes the "new creature," and the virtues are the "faculties" of that new creature. Where sanctifying grace is, all the virtues must be, and, anteriorly to the appearance of the new nature, there can be no call for the new principles of operation.

2. But it is the very definite teaching of the Council of Trent that the virtues of faith and hope can remain in the soul after the

loss of sanctifying grace : " If anyone says that when grace is lost by sin, faith is always simultaneously lost, or that the faith which remains is not true faith, though it be not living faith, . . . let him be anathema." Though this definition was primarily directed against the Protestant error of justification by faith only, it clearly teaches the present truth. It says nothing about hope, but theologians are agreed that the same teaching holds for hope, for the same theological reasoning applies to both. This is the ground of the exception we have mentioned.

3. Charity is the " form " of all the virtues. That means that no virtue has its full perfection as a supernatural virtue unless it is, by association with charity, directed to the last end. This " form " is something added to the essence of the virtue, which gives it a fuller richness of being in the way of a designation. If a child puts his pennies in a money-box, he marks them for saving. If a man is sworn in as a soldier or policeman he has an added form, extrinsic to his nature, designating him for special duties. The pennies are just as much pennies even if they are out of the money-box ; the soldier or policeman is just as completely a man if he leaves the army or the police force. Charity gives the other virtues an extrinsic form of this type. It does not change their essence, but it refers their operations to man's final end. A man with the supernatural habit of fortitude is by that habit enabled to seek the means to the last end, and to conquer such difficulties as arise in the pursuit of virtue. Here we have the proximate object which specifies the virtue. But it is the charity which accompanies the virtue that directs the act of the virtue to something beyond the proximate object, to the ultimate object which is God himself. So it is only by charity that any virtue is constituted in its perfect state, the state in which it is able to fulfil the end for which all virtues are given. Now hope and faith can be present without charity ; but then we speak of them as " dead," thus opposing them to the perfect virtues " informed " by charity, which we call " living " faith and hope.

But it is only these two virtues which can persevere after the loss of grace. Charity is so intimately united with grace on the one hand, and with the moral virtues on the other, that grace, charity, and the moral virtues not only come together, but must go together. They move as one thing. Charity implies the presence of sanctifying grace. The union of the two is so intimate that many have identified them—wrongly, as we think. But charity means friendship with God. There can be no friendship without some community of life, and this, we know, is found in that participation of the divine nature which is formally given by habitual grace.

This establishes the connection of charity and grace. Now charity is inseparably linked with all the other moral virtues by prudence. Prudence has for its object the regulation of the moral virtues. There is no virtue without prudence, and there is no proper

prudence without the other virtues. But if prudence demands that a man should be properly directed to his immediate ends by justice, fortitude, and temperance, much more does it demand that he should be directed to his final supernatural end by charity. So whether it be in their first appearance, or in their remaining, or in their departure, all elements act as one.

This leaves us only to deal with the exceptional virtues of faith and hope. These make their first appearance with grace and the other virtues, for the reasons already assigned. And as long as grace and charity are present they must remain. But they do not depend on charity as do the other virtues. Obviously we can believe a person, or hope in him, without loving him. Nor do they depend on the other virtues; the others rather depend on these. And as a matter of fact, common experience teaches us that sinners, who must have lost charity and with it the moral virtues, retain their hope and their faith. These are not then perfect virtues, for they lack the "form" which is necessary for perfect virtues, but they are still the true supernatural habits of faith and hope, though they are "dead." Faith can be destroyed only by a sin against faith. By such a sin hope is also destroyed, for in its very essence hope depends on faith. Hope can also be destroyed by a sin against hope.

Suppose that any mortal sin has been committed other than a sin against these two virtues. When grace is restored, sacramentally or otherwise, all the virtues come back and at once are joined with the faith and hope that are already in the soul. So even here it is true that the whole group of virtues exists together. And, of course, faith and hope are at once vivified by charity. The supernatural structure rises in three levels from faith, in the order, (1) faith, (2) hope, (3) charity and grace, and the moral infused virtues. Destroy any level of the building, and all the superstructure falls, but not the levels below.

Thus :

Charity, Grace, Moral virtues, Gifts
Hope
Faith

*Co-ordination
of the virtues*

From the point of view of relative dignity, the theological virtues are more excellent than the moral virtues because their object is God himself, whereas the objects of the moral virtues are creatures. And of the theological virtues charity is the noblest: "the greatest of these is charity." It alone possesses God. The person loved is in a certain way in the lover, and the lover is in union with the object

of his love: "He that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him."¹ Among the moral virtues prudence takes the lead because of its directive influence over the rest.

But from the point of view of their degree of intensity in the individual subject the virtues are all equal. Taken as virtues in the fullest sense of the term, we have seen that they receive their perfection from charity, and their intensity depends on that one thing. As charity grows they grow with it. But the same is true, generally speaking, when they are regarded in their very essence. They all come together with grace. They are habits depending on grace and required by grace, if the new nature is to perform its operations; and so they are commensurate with grace, growing with its growth. Such growth may be by merit, which induces God to grant an increase of grace and a corresponding infusion of virtues, or by the sacraments which bear grace to the soul.

But here again we have to take account of the same exception as before. Let us consider a person whose grace and virtues have attained a certain degree equal for all. If he falls into sin, he loses all except faith and hope. These persevere in their same degree, and when grace and the other virtues are restored sacramentally, at probably a lower level on account of lack of preparation in the penitent, faith and hope will be greater than the others. Every fall means a reduction of the main body of virtues to zero while faith and hope are left, "dead" indeed, but at the same level; every rise and period of development means that faith and hope grow with the others. Evidently, then, they will be much greater than the others. Thus, perhaps, we can account for the amazing faith and hope which we find in the most sinful Catholics, who seem to have but the rudiments of any other supernatural virtues.

With this exception, the virtues are, according to the figure of St Thomas, like the fingers of the hand, which, though different in size (as the virtues in specific dignity), are all in proportion to each other and to the hand, and all increase in equal proportion.

Now at first sight this teaching seems to be at variance with all our experience. Not only do the saints shine in the manifestation of particular virtues, but even ordinary Christians will easily do the works of one virtue while they are in constant danger of sinning against another. A good man, absolutely chaste and sober and truthful, may be very ill-tempered or niggardly; the generous are often unjust. The petty vices of the good are the scandal of the indevout. The solution of this paradox is fairly evident at the present stage of our inquiry. In both saints and sinners we are considering the *exercise* of the virtues, which is the only thing that is open to our view. The virtue itself we can never know directly. And the thing that we remark is the constancy, the facility, the almost naturalness of the exercise. But this we know is the evidence of the

¹ 1 John iv 16.

corresponding acquired virtue ; it does not depend upon the intensity of the infused virtue, but arises, perhaps from natural character and habit, perhaps from a special help of God. Thus is achieved the wonderful variety in the lives and examples of the saints. Each of us can find among them a model whose most manifest virtue appeals to him or is necessary for him. From our principles we know that all the virtues are present in an equal degree whether they are apparent in exercise or not.

*The virtues
after death*

In the damned there can be no virtue at all. The damned are confirmed in evil ; for them there is no possibility of a conversion to God. And it is the function of virtue to lead to God either immediately or eventually. We are told that "the devils believe and tremble" ; but this is not even the dead faith which the sinner may have had at the point of death. God cannot infuse virtue into those who are irretrievably separated from him.

The souls in purgatory have the three theological virtues. Charity they can now never lose. As they neither see God nor possess him, faith and hope are not incompatible with their state ; and as they are not in a state of sin they have these virtues. And probably they have the moral virtues too.

The blessed in heaven have charity in its full development. It is the same charity as they had in life, but with the vision of God it has evolved into a greater and nobler condition. Faith they cannot have, for faith is of things not seen ; nor can they have hope, for they are in possession of the highest and all-satisfying good. They cannot even be said to hope for the resurrection of the body in glory ; for, though they have not as yet this perfection, they have not to struggle for it, and have the guarantee of it. "Charity never falleth away : but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away."¹ It is the common opinion of theologians that the moral virtues will persevere in the Beatific Vision, though it is impossible to assign the subject-matter of their activity.

§ V : THE VIRTUES IN PARTICULAR

I. *Faith*

WE are now in a position to discuss each of the virtues in particular. And we shall begin with the virtue of faith. This is the supernatural habit by which our intellect is disposed to assent to all that is revealed by God, who is infinite truth and wisdom, who, therefore, "can neither deceive nor be deceived." The act of faith is treated in a separate essay of this volume,² and the full implication of the above definition must be sought there. Here we shall concern ourselves with the habit alone. For any act of faith the intellect

¹ 1 Cor. xiii 8, 10.

² Essay i · *Faith and Revealed Truth.*

must be moved by the will ; nevertheless, the virtue perfects the intellect only. The necessary disposition of the will is provided by the virtue of charity when faith is a perfect virtue ; when it is dead faith, the necessary aid for the will comes from a transient actual grace. Ordinarily, " faith works by charity." ¹ As we have already explained, supernatural faith is essentially the same faith whether it be " dead " or " living," the same after the subject has fallen into sin as when he is restored to a state of grace, for charity is only an " extrinsic form."

Faith is an act of homage to God in which he takes pleasure and which he demands from us. *The meaning of Faith* If we refuse to accept a person's testimony it must be because we question either his veracity or his competence to speak in the present case. We judge of each particular case on its merits. I can believe a man, whom I know to be a rascal and a liar, if he is giving evidence against himself, and if there is nothing for him to gain by incriminating himself. But if I know that a man is truthful, and I assent to any testimony of his, I ought to assent to every testimony, as long as he is within the sphere of his competence. But if he goes outside that sphere I can reasonably refuse to credit him though I have assented to his testimony in other matters. Thus I may reject the teaching of a biologist who tells me that man is evolved from an anthropoid stock, even though I believe him when he presents to me the facts on which he bases his opinion. I do not doubt his word or his competence in his own science, but I do doubt his philosophic judgement when he goes outside that science to integrate its results in a theory.

Now when God speaks to me, I know that he is infinitely true and that all things are clear in his sight ; and therefore I pay homage to his veracity and omniscience by giving my assent to everything that he has revealed. To refuse my assent to any particular point of his revelation would be to question one of the two attributes upon which any faith rests, and therefore would be equivalent to the rejection of all faith. Such a sin destroys the virtue of faith, but such a sin is not committed unless I know that God has spoken. As a rule, I learn this through the Church.

The Church is the infallible witness to the matter of the divine revelation. *The Church and Faith: heresy* We Catholics must believe explicitly everything that we thus know to have been revealed ; and implicitly, everything which as a matter of fact the Church does teach as of divine revelation, whether we are aware of it or not. To refuse either of these assents would be to become a formal heretic ; but, in ignorance of the fact, to refuse assent to some particular, while giving the implicit assent, would result in one's being a merely " material " heretic. This distinction is of the greatest importance in a country like ours, where so many who have received the virtue of faith in baptism have, through no fault of their own, grown up in ignorance of many of the

¹ Gal. v 6.

truths of revelation. Leaving out of account the possibility of doubts about the functions or identity of the Church, their implicit faith would be guaranteed by their prevailing desire to believe whatever God has revealed. But, as long as they refuse to believe any truth which the Church teaches as of divine revelation they are material heretics; and, of course, if in deliberate contempt of the Church's teaching they insist on picking and choosing according to their own private judgement, they are formal heretics, whether they accept much or little. There can be degrees of ignorance, but there cannot be any more or less in the extent of faith; there, it is "all in all, or not at all." There can be degrees, however, in the intensity of faith. Hence Christ rebukes St Peter: "O thou of little faith,"¹ and the Church prays, "Almighty, everlasting God, give us an increase of faith, hope, and charity."

*Temptations
and doubts*

Faith is destroyed only by the sin of refusing to believe that which is adequately proposed as an object of divine revelation. Either doubt or positive rejection constitutes heresy in the baptised subject, infidelity in the unbaptised. It is important to notice that doubt involves heresy. In doubt the assent is withheld; there is no decision on either side, whereas revelation demands the assent of faith. Those who would fly the very suggestion of heresy will sometimes say that they "doubt." They probably mean no more than that they feel the difficulties against some article of faith, or against the whole scheme of revelation. Such people should remember that "ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt"; that the acute realisation of difficulties presents the occasion for an act of faith; and that such acts strengthen the natural habit, and merit an increase of the supernatural virtue. Temptations against faith are always to be rejected at once, with the same promptitude as temptations against purity. Any dalliance with them or carelessness with regard to them is most dangerous. That is why the Church prohibits the reading of certain books. Wantonly to read such books is a sin against faith, but not a sin which destroys the virtue.

Other sins against faith which cannot be called heresy are the refusal to assent to certain truths which, though not defined, are so intimately connected with defined doctrines as to bind our belief under the sanctions of one or other of the theological notes, "rashness," "proximity to heresy," "offensiveness to pious ears," and the like. Similarly the teaching of Roman Congregations to which is attached the sanction of the Pope, binds under sin.

2. *Hope*

*The meaning
of Hope*

Hope, in general, means the longing after something which is conceived as good. But it is not the longing of desire merely. There is in hope the element of the recognition of a difficulty to be overcome.

¹ Matt. xiv 31.

I contemplate the prospect of a struggle, and that temper in me which rather enjoys a struggle is roused. But I know, too, that I am not faced with the impossibility of attaining my object. I stand a chance of winning through. Hope therefore implies four things: the surging of the desire towards something that appears as good; a future good; a good that is hard of attainment; but a good that can be attained. In hoping we are like men setting out to climb a mountain peak. We see before us the goal of our desires, but it is a long way off, and we shall have hard work to reach it and many dangers from moraine and crevasse to pass on the way, and meantime the ground is heavy and the sun hot on our backs; but we can arrive finally at the peak, and enjoy a revelation of beauty which we can only speculate about now. In our efforts we may be depending on our own strength only, or we may be relying upon the help of others.

The supernatural virtue of hope is that disposition in our souls which enables us to aspire to God as our last end, and to all the means which will enable us to achieve that end. In so hoping we realise that we cannot achieve either the end or the means by our own efforts—to depend on them would be presumption—but we look for all from God's grace. So, although this is a theological virtue, its object is not confined to God himself, but is extended, in a secondary manner, to all those created helps which may be ours in our endeavours to reach God who is the primary object. The primary object of our hope, then, is God himself, and, indirectly, that vision of God which will constitute our happiness in heaven. The secondary objects are the glory of our bodies after the resurrection, all spiritual and temporal goods, and, finally, the like happiness and blessings for others.

As it is well pleasing to God that we should by the virtue of faith assent to the word of his truth, so it pleases him that we should rely on his goodness and promises, and cling to him by the virtue of hope. But some men take up an attitude of appalling pride in the presence of their Creator, and stand over against him as if he were a man like themselves. You will sometimes hear a sinner say, "If I have done evil, then I am prepared to stand by my sin and take the appropriate punishment, rather than beg for mercy"; and, similarly, you will find men who say that hope is a mean virtue which is unworthy of a disinterested lover. The Quietists taught that we should aim at a state of indifference to our own salvation, that there should be no disturbance of our quiet either to do good works or to resist temptations however foul. Michael de Molinos fathered these opinions, and they were condemned as heretical by Innocent XI. The holy archbishop, Fénelon of Cambrai, while he could never have subscribed to such outrageous statements as these, did favour Semi-quietism, which taught that the virtue of hope found no place in the higher states of perfection, wherein there was no room for any self-

Errors concerning this virtue

interest, no room for the admission of such motives as the fear of hell or the desire of heaven. These opinions were condemned, not, indeed, as heretical, but as rash and erroneous and pernicious in practice, by Innocent XII.

If the virtue of hope is a perfect virtue it can never be unbecoming to any creature however holy. St Paul could not afford to discard the "helmet of the hope of salvation,"¹ and he encouraged Titus "to live soberly, justly, and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."² But, indeed, Holy Scripture is full of encouragement to the virtue of hope: "Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain."³

Hope will not lead us into slackness in the pursuit of our great end. It does not mean that we are certain of getting to heaven some day. For although hope relies most confidently on God's goodness and power to help us, we know perfectly well that neither of these will avail unless we accomplish our part of the bargain. I can depend on God with the greatest certainty, but, alas! I cannot depend on myself. "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall."⁴ And the warning is repeated to the Philippians: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling."⁵ I know of faith that God will never fail me, but I have to work and pray that I enter not into temptation, and thus prove false to myself. Moreover if I have sinned, hope is necessary for justification. Conversion is impossible without hope, and after turning our backs on God such conversion is required as a condition of our reacceptance by him: "Turn ye to me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn to you, saith the Lord of hosts."⁶

*Sins against
Hope*

There are two sins against hope: despair and presumption. Either of these will destroy the virtue of hope; and, as we have seen already, the loss of faith involves the loss of hope. Despair means a relinquishing of our hope, either because we do not reckon that God and heaven and the means necessary to attain them are worth the trouble; or because, while still desiring the objects of hope, we no longer depend on the divine goodness and mercy to save us for, and by, them. The first kind of despair is the more common, and it is the frequent cause of worldliness and sins of the flesh. Men think that these temporary pleasures are more to be desired than the glory to come. Despair, though a less heinous sin than infidelity or hatred of God, is more dangerous than either of these, because it means the loss of the lever of hope which could pull us back to safety when we have turned our back on God.

The second sin, presumption, is always a sin against hope, but it

¹ 1 Thess. v 8.

² 1 Cor. ix 24. See also Heb. xi 24 *seq.*

³ 1 Cor. x 12.

⁴ Phil. ii 12.

⁵ Titus ii 12-13.

⁶ Zach. i. 3.

is not always so directly contrary to hope as to destroy the virtue. It is important to state carefully the nature of the different kinds of presumption. There are two ways in which the presumptuous person may sin directly against hope. The first is by expecting to attain eternal happiness by one's own unaided efforts ; the second by expecting pardon without sorrow, or eternal glory without final perseverance. These sins must be very rare, but one does sometimes hear people say lightheartedly : " Oh, God would never send me to hell." In an age when men do not hesitate to judge their Creator, when they are prepared to make a God after their own psychological image, this may be commoner than would seem possible. The man who continues to sin depending on a death-bed repentance, is guilty of presumption, but this sin does not destroy the virtue of hope. There is no presumption in the attitude of the sinner who persistently keeps at the back of his mind the hope of one day amending his life and so receiving pardon ; this disposition rather diminishes the gravity of the sin. Such a sinner, however, should remember that although God has promised that he will turn to us as soon as we turn to him, he has not promised to allow us time for preparation on our death-bed.

3. *Charity*

" The greatest of these is charity." ¹ Charity is the queen of all *Love of God* the virtues, the form, as we have seen, with which every other virtue must be endowed if it is to realise perfection as a virtue. It is the virtue which joins us to God in bonds of friendship, enabling us to love him for his own sake as a friend, to identify the movements of our will with his, *idem velle, idem nolle*. It involves the divine indwelling : " He that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him." ² " The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost who is given to us." ³ This union with God, to be realised completely only in heaven, is the one great aim of our lives on earth. All other spiritual activities and endeavours are only the means to this end. Faith and hope are indeed directed straight to God, but faith as to the source of our knowledge, and hope as to the source of our enjoyment of him ; whereas charity is directed to him for himself alone.

It is true that we could not love God if we did not regard him as *our* good ; but though that is the necessary condition of charity, it is not its motive. It is a necessary condition, for I cannot be in a state of friendship with anyone with whom I cannot in some sense stand on common ground. If I am to love God, he must lift me up to participate in his divine life. This he does in heaven, by permitting me to find my joy in the contemplation of his goodness as he finds his own joy therein ; and on earth, by enabling me to know him by faith as the good to be enjoyed one day, and as such to love

¹ I Cor. xiii 13.

² I John iv 16.

³ Rom. v 5.

him even now, by charity. But this love of charity exercised whether here or hereafter is not evoked by consideration of self; the love that is *made possible* by the fact that its object is a good for me, is a love that is *evoked* by the goodness of God, for his sake alone. In the way of mere nature man must love God as his first beginning and his last end, as the source and explanation of his being; but that love is not charity, for charity cannot be built on anything less than that participation of the divine nature which is the work of sanctifying grace. "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he also is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."¹

That such friendship is possible is abundantly evident from Holy Scripture. "Son, give me thy heart," is God's own pleading invitation. Again, through the voice of St John he would constrain us, urging with a divine humility that he has been beforehand with us: "Let us love God, for God hath *first* loved us." We are told that they that use wisdom "become the friends of God."² The whole of the Canticle of Canticles is an inspired love-song lyrically celebrating the love of friendship between God and the soul. And at the end of his life, our Lord says to his Apostles: "Now I have called you friends."³

Love of our
neighbour

God is the primary object of charity, but it is obvious that the love of God will issue in the love of our fellow-man. Love primarily directed to any one person must always embrace as secondary objects of love those who are united in any way with that person. We may have no natural attraction to his friends and relatives, but we love them for his sake. And so it is that as secondary objects of the virtue of charity we must love all those whom God has exalted to his friendship or to whom he offers such friendship. All the citizens of heaven are united directly with God, and, in God, are united with one another. By charity we love, for God's sake, the blessed in heaven, the souls in Purgatory, and all men on earth, for all these are actually God's friends now, or may be some day. Only the devils and the damned are excluded from the scope of our charity; and they must be, for they cannot participate in God's friendship, they cannot love him as their supernatural end.

Of course, a man's charity must include himself, because he himself is loved by God. That is not an unnecessary thing to say, for it asserts not the obvious inclination to love oneself for one's own sake which is a law of nature, but the obligation to love oneself supernaturally for God's sake. The natural love of self for one's own sake can be directed to God, and be made virtuous, receiving a "form" from charity; but even then it is not charity. Indeed, it may easily come into opposition with charity. My natural love of self must be conquered in deference to my love of self as a friend of God, as when my love of ease and comfort is made to give way to

¹ 1 John i 6-7.

² Wisdom vii 14.

³ John xv 15.

my love of God's law or to the love of the poverty, humiliation, or pain, that associates me more closely with Christ.

Not only must a man love himself, but in the matter of his eternal salvation, at least, he must love himself more than any other created person. God is to be loved above all things; then myself; then my neighbour for God's sake. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."¹ The love of self is the norm of the love of one's neighbour.

We are bound by charity to love all men, even our enemies, for if we were to cut these off from the scope of our charity, in spite of the fact that God loves them, we should be preferring our own inclination to God's, and so offending against the first commandment: "If any man say: I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar."² But we are not bound to love all equally. Indeed, it would not be possible to do so. We must love most those who are allied to us by blood or friendship, by natural ties, in their proper order. All that the commandment means, as a commandment, is that we should have a desire for the good of every man, be ready to pray for all and to succour them in their need when we can. When it comes to the choice of those whom we should help, we must have a regard first to our own. "Charity begins at home." Spontaneous natural friendship is perfected by the supernatural friendship of charity, and the two motives as a rule are more powerful than the one alone, though the perfection of charity might lead us, while doing no injury to claims of kith and kin, to show special affection to those who had offended us; and so we have the counsel, "Do good to them that hate you." If I meet two men who are equally in need and who have no special claims on me, and I have but one half-crown to spare to meet that need, charity moves me equally towards both, but necessity forces me to prefer one. I can decide between the two by tossing the half-crown. But if one of the two is in my parish, or is a fellow-countryman, or is personally more attractive, I can let that circumstance be equivalent to the luck of the toss.

When we say that the law of God coincides with natural equity in demanding that we should love ourselves and those who are allied to us more than others, it is to be understood that we are thinking of the intensity of our affection and of what we can do practically for them in this life. But we can look at the order of charity in another way. As the principle of charity is the love of God, we must be conformed to God's will. So we must wish a greater good to those who shall be more deserving, irrespective of their relation to ourselves. But in this life degrees of merit are not stable; the saint of to-day may be the sinner of to-morrow, Magdalen's seven devils may be driven out, and she may become more closely united to God

¹ Matt. xxii 37-39.

² 1 John iv 20.

than is Martha. So we may always hope that our friends and intimates may grow in virtue so as to outstrip others ; but when we have arrived in glory, all these degrees of union with God will be fixed for ever, so that there will be no room for such desires. We shall accept heaven's ranks as we find them ; seeing God face to face we shall rejoice in the glory of those who are nearest to him, because that is his unchanging will. But even then we shall in one way love ourselves more than our neighbours, and there will always stand the multitude of holy ties established here on earth, though they will not disturb that first consideration of loving most those who are most closely united to God.

The very essence of charity depends on union. That union with God and my neighbour spells joy and peace. A friend rejoices in the presence of his friend, and love can transcend time and space and produce a spiritual nearness when bodily presence is denied. The love of God brings him to the soul in an intimacy of union which is full of joy. In the Beatific Vision that joy will be such " as eye hath not seen nor ear heard," ¹ but even in this life there is joy for the heart that loves God.

And there is peace also. For the possession of charity means that all our desires are harnessed, all our tendencies polarised. There is none of the irritation of domestic strife in our hearts. There is none of that conscious disharmony which disturbs the calm of peace. Also, between us and God there is a unity of will which guarantees us against the fundamental discord that is the lot of rebels, and makes us superior to the ephemeral troubles that destroy the peace of those who kick against the goad. There is still room for that holy fear which makes us flee from sin and the judgement to come ; but such fear does not drive out peace. Moreover, the charity which binds us to our neighbour in God secures a harmony of co-operation in the pursuit of good.

*Sins against
Charity*

Any mortal sin destroys the virtue of charity. The essence of love is union of wills, and therefore the first test of love of God is the keeping of the commandments : " If you love me, keep my commandments." To commit a mortal sin is to prefer the creature to the Creator, which is obviously incompatible with the love of God above all things.

But there are some sins which are directly against the virtue of charity. Besides such sins of commission as hatred of God and scandal of our neighbour, over which we need not delay here, there are sins of omission. These arise from the neglect of such *acts* of charity as are commanded by the precept of charity. It is clear from the condemnation of certain errors of Baius ² that such acts are commanded often, though their necessary frequency is not precisely determined. Anyhow, they are so valuable an aid to the perfection of that union with God which is the most important concern

¹ I Cor. ii 9.

² Michael du Bay (1513-1589).

of our life, that we should try to make them as often as is reasonably possible. We should establish the natural habit of making them easily.

It is sometimes suggested that to make an act of perfect charity *Acts of Charity* is difficult or impossible for the ordinary man of the world. That surely is not true of anyone who is trying to lead a Christian life. God does not command the impossible, and God does command acts of perfect charity. There is no need to take alarm at the name, *perfect* charity. It does not mean any great refinement of love. It simply means that love of God for his own sake which prefers him to any creature that might challenge his claim to the sovereignty of our hearts. It involves no sacrifice which is not equally necessary for a sacramental absolution. It is perfect, only as opposed to the imperfect, self-regarding charity, which is adequate for forgiveness of sins in the sacrament of Penance. But it does mean that one must get beyond the love of self, that one must progress from the mere fear of God or grateful love of God, to a love of friendship in which the friend is considered for himself. It does not eliminate these imperfect forms of love. It can coexist with them. As we insisted when we were dealing with the virtue of hope, we can never be so advanced as to despise these motives of sorrow or love. Instructed by faith about the supreme amiability of God, his infinite goodness and perfections, it should not be difficult to love him above all things for his sake. "We needs must love the highest when we see it." No habit could be more valuable for the man who is day by day struggling against mortal sin. For if he chance to fall, an act of perfect charity (with, of course, the implied intention of seeking later the sacramental absolution as commanded) will at once produce that disposition of soul which induces God to restore sanctifying grace, so that his sin is forgiven.

So far, we have only described an act of charity of the lowest grade of intensity. A more intense act is within the capacity of the Christian enjoying ordinary grace. By this the will rejects the intention of doing anything which, though not directly against God's will, is still not according to that will. With such charity we shall be disposed to forgo the distraction from our main end, the loitering by the way, which is implied in deliberate venial sin.

Finally, there is the advanced stage of charity which leads the soul to identify its will as completely as possible with that of God; which reaches out, in the yearning of love, to suffer for and with the Beloved; which welcomes such adverse circumstances as befall, or contrives self-immolation, as satisfaction for sin or expression of love. In this state the soul will not only bear with resignation to God's will poverty, hardship, and pain, but will welcome or go out to seek them, in sympathy with him who was born in a stable, worked at a bench, and died on a Cross. And this will lead to a correspondingly great charity for one's neighbour, to a zeal and desire to work

and suffer for souls, to such zeal as inspired St Paul when he said : " But I am straitened between two : having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better. But to abide still in the flesh is needful for you." ¹

4. *The Moral Virtues*

Prudence

The general discussion of the moral virtues necessitated a certain description of each. We have now only to fill the gaps. We saw that the first of these virtues, first because of its significance for all the others, is prudence. *Prudence* is the rule of action ; it is the virtue perfecting the intellect and thus guiding the will in its application of the other three moral virtues. It is, however, a distinct virtue with its own proper subject-matter. Its procedure is first to inquire, then to judge, then to state the case to the will for its guidance. It " prescribes " for the will. We have already shown the difference between true and false prudence, and we have also seen that there is a prudence which falls between these two in that it lacks the perfection of charity.² As prudence deals with the details of conduct, it is accompanied by a certain solicitude.

The vices opposed to prudence arise from the defect of any of the three elements which appear in the exercise of the virtue. The lack of inquiry results in precipitancy. The lack of judgement is the second vice. Inconstancy arises from the failure to direct the will aright, when this is under the influence of an evil passion. If the failure is due to sheer inertia, the vice is called negligence. But it is to be observed that these vices are not in the will, but in the intellect, for it is the intellect which is set to good by the virtue of prudence. Of all the evil influences which hinder prudence the worst is the predominance of the animal appetites. Envy, anger, avarice, ambition, deflect reason from its straight path ; but " luxury " tends to suffocate it.

But there are vices of excess of prudence. The first is that prudence of the flesh which, neglecting the great end of life, concerns itself with immediate pleasures. Then there is that worldly cunning or craft which employs tortuous methods to gain its ends, and which is comparable to the use of sophisms in argument. And, finally, there is an undue solicitude about the things of this world, a lack of confidence in the providence of God. St Thomas, whom we are following throughout, tells us that the evil spirit in these cases is that of avarice.

Justice

Justice is that disposition of the soul according to which we have a constant will to render to, and preserve for, everyone his due. It is called by St Thomas the most beautiful of the strictly moral virtues. It regulates our relations to God and our neighbour. It comprehends many virtues, such as religion, piety, truth, gratitude, liberality, affability.

¹ Phil. i 23, 24.

² Cf. pp. 639-40.

Fortitude is a virtue which enables us to face undismayed the dangers which stand in the way of the execution of our duty, to conquer fear and restrain rashness. Its most conspicuous efficacy is in conquering the fear of death, whether in war, when we have the natural fortitude of the soldier (which, of course, can be supernaturalised); or in martyrdom, when we have the highest type of supernatural fortitude. It was fortitude which enabled St Lawrence and St Thomas More to be so gay in presence of death, or St Joan of Arc to endure the flames which she so frankly dreaded. It does not mean the absence of fear, but the control of fear. Fear is an instinct which every man not deficient in sense or imagination must sometimes feel. The bravest soldier is not he who is thoughtless and unmoved by danger, but rather he who, fully realising the danger, has to conquer his dread of it while clinging to his post. "Are you afraid?" sneered an old soldier, observing a recruit's blanched cheeks. "Afraid?" was the reply, "if you were half as afraid as I am you would have run away long since." Fortitude is manifested both in defence and in attack; but it shows up more brightly in defence, where there is no supporting ardour of onslaught or sense of superiority. The soldiers who went down with the *Birkenhead* were, at least, as brave as "the gallant six hundred" who charged at Balaclava.

Here is a good instance of the general rule that acquired virtue is a predisposition for infused virtue, that nature builds on grace. The man who is not prepared to meet and conquer the difficulties of everyday life will find it hard to conquer temptation; he who, from boyhood, has learned self-conquest, will the more easily persevere in the pursuit of virtue. There is no limitation to the power of grace, but natural invertebrates will find it hard to walk upright to heaven.

Virtues allied to fortitude are magnanimity, patience, and perseverance. Opposed vices are "intimidity" (lack of fear where one ought to fear), cowardice, timidity, rashness, pusillanimity, ambition, vainglory, inconstancy, obstinacy.

Temperance is a moderating virtue. Fortitude is the "whip for the horse," temperance the "snaffle for the ass." As in the pursuit of virtue we have to control fear, so we have to withstand the seductiveness of pleasure, especially those most enticing pleasures which are associated with the preservation of the individual and of the race. Aristotle teaches that the temperate man uses pleasure with a view to his health, and also with a view to his efficiency. The Christian has to consider spiritual efficiency. For that he will not only restrain himself from any grave excess of the natural appetites, but he will be drawn to some discipline of asceticism, in order to ensure his strength and readiness against the day of temptation; he will undergo spiritual "training."

We have seen that temperance is set midway between the vices

of intemperance and insensibility. Insensibility means that habit (which is sufficiently rare) of attempting to break the natural order which has associated pleasure with certain necessary natural acts, a hate-inspired rejection of natural pleasures as if they were shameful or evil. Intemperance is a particularly odious vice, because it makes men brutish: "Man when he was in honour did not understand: he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them."¹

Specifically different virtues subordinate to temperance are abstinence, sobriety, chastity, and a sense of shame. Allied virtues are continence, clemency, modesty. Opposed to one or other of these virtues are gluttony, drunkenness, unchastity, anger, cruelty, pride.

§ VI: GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST, BEATITUDES, FRUITS

1. *The Gifts of the Holy Ghost*

*The Gifts in
general*

THUS is man supernaturalised. His nature is lifted up by grace, so that he becomes a partaker of the divine nature; his natural faculties are supernaturalised by the infused virtues, the theological enabling him to believe, hope, and love in an effective supernatural way, the moral enabling him to seek supernaturally the immediate good which leads to the true last end. But even yet he is not safe. Thus equipped he can avoid sin, at least for some time, and act meritoriously, but he is still weak and blind. The flesh is prone to evil, even after the mind has been healed; man is subject to that concupiscence, that struggle between spirit and flesh, of which St Paul writes so feelingly, "For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man: but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members."² Moreover, the mind is still darkened by ignorance, so that we "do not even know what we should pray for as we ought."³

Labouring under these difficulties, the heritage of sin, man cannot avoid sin and pursue his course of sanctification throughout life, unless he is specially aided by God. He needs special helps *occasionally*, helps *ad hoc*, to eke out the general help of sanctifying grace and virtue.⁴ We are like men who are living on the margin of poverty; times of sickness or misfortune arrive when we need a "bonus" if we are not to sink under the burden. Now that additional help must come from God. God will not do the work of virtue for us; if he did, it would no longer be ours. We must do it, but he will help us.

There must be a disposition in our souls to receive such transient helps from God. That disposition is called a Gift of the Holy Ghost. It is a permanent modification of the soul, whereby the

¹ Ps. xlvi 21.

² Rom. vii 22-23.

³ Rom. viii 26.

⁴ See Essay xvii, *Actual Grace*.

soul is enabled to respond swiftly and easily to the suggestions of the Holy Ghost. It is a habit of the intellect or will, by which these faculties are set in readiness to receive the light or warmth which comes from God. The faculties thus endowed can then elicit the act of virtue for which the help is given. The gifts are not to be confused with the transient help, the actual grace, itself. They are permanently in the soul when habitual grace is there. They, too, are habits. That they are not always used is our own fault, and this accounts for much of the failure in the spiritual life. They are like an auxiliary engine, or like the sail in a motor-boat. They are not intended to substitute for the virtues, but to help them out. Sometimes we meet an adverse current, or the engine is cold and will not start; then if the sail is hoisted it may catch a breeze, and so help the boat to get under weigh; but if the parallel is to hold, the engine must now work with the sails.

The occasion of the assistance bestowed may be almost anything; it may be a sermon, a spiritual book, a sunset, or a storm, a sickness, a sorrow, a success, or even a sin. In divers ways the grace may come to us, clearing our minds from the obscurity of passion, stirring us from our lethargy, warming our hearts; however it comes, the corresponding gift of the Holy Ghost must be there, disposing us to welcome it and to act upon it. We must be "tuned in" to receive the impulse and to respond to it. This disposition, this "tuning" of our souls, is the gift.

It is very clear that the gifts are different from the virtues. Both are infused by God, and both are habits. But the virtues dispose our faculties to perform those supernatural acts to which reason directs them, whereas the gifts dispose them to accept and (always aided by the corresponding virtue) to act upon, the divine inspiration. And it is because the "mover" in the second case is divine, whereas in the first it is human, that we need a nobler disposition in the second case than in the first. A student who follows the course of an advanced lecturer must be better prepared than his fellow who is addressing himself to more elementary work.

It is sometimes suggested that the difference between virtue and gift is a difference of material object simply; that the virtues are bestowed to cope with the ordinary difficulties or ordinary acts, whereas the gifts are for the extraordinary, the heroic. But if that were true, many Christians would be habitually in possession of gifts which throughout their lives they would never be called upon to exercise. It is true that the gifts do enable us to cope with these extraordinary circumstances, but they are not designed for that purpose only.

It must not be supposed from what we have said about the need of the gifts, that actual graces cannot be offered and accepted in the absence of the gifts. They can be, and are; by them, sinners are brought towards justification. And, of course, those in sin have

not the gifts, for the gifts come and go with habitual grace. But the gifts habitually draw from God the inspirations that are necessary, and they make the acceptance of these actual graces more ready and easy.

Although they are there from Baptism, the gifts are not always used. As a rule they do not seem to come into play immediately after the subject has come to the use of reason. And, indeed, some people seem to use them very little. Although in a state of grace, they seem to respond very little to the divine suggestions. They seem to be particularly obtuse or hard-hearted. They make no advance in prayer; they are unmortified and worldly-minded. Of course, such persons are on the way to lose both gifts and grace.

The Gifts in particular

As enumerated by Isaias,¹ the gifts are seven in number: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, Fear of the Lord. Of these, Understanding, Wisdom, Knowledge, Counsel perfect the intellect; the other three perfect the will. Understanding is intended to help us to a firm adhesion to the truths of faith in spite of difficulties. It results in that state of mind expressed in Newman's famous phrase, "Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt." It also leads to a fuller comprehension of the mysteries of faith, and is the cause of the remarkable phenomenon found among Catholics, that the unlettered poor have a grip of subtleties which may baffle the educated, an insight which, in extreme cases, goes beyond the grasp even of learned theologians. The other three intellectual gifts make for a correct appreciation of spiritual values as they affect God (Wisdom) and created things (Knowledge), and as they are applied in individual cases (Counsel). Constantly during the day the earnest Christian has to decide whether to do something or to leave it undone. No mentor, no confessor, is adequate for his guidance in these particulars. In dealing with others, in carrying out the duties of his state, the conscientious man must often pause to think and pray for guidance. The question of mortification, for example, is beset with the difficulty of deciding between prudence and fervour, of discerning the voice of cowardice from that of wisdom. In all such cases the gift of counsel comes to the aid of the virtue of prudence. It is, therefore, a valuable exercise to recite frequently the two hymns to the Holy Ghost.

Piety helps in our worship of God and in our regard for the due of other men as they pertain to God, for example, the respect due to the saints. Fortitude and fear of the Lord correspond to the virtues of fortitude and temperance. The fear of the Lord is particularly concerned with the restraint of the flesh: "Pierce my flesh with thy fear."²

There is a special type of prayer associated with the gifts. It is the prayer of simplicity or of faith, contemplative prayer. Whereas in ordinary meditation the soul approaches God by way of discursive

¹ Isa. xi 2.

² Ps. cxviii 120.

reasoning, deliberately trying to penetrate the truths of faith and making appropriate acts of love, desire, sorrow, etc. ; in mystic contemplation all such process is abandoned, and the soul simply rests quietly at the feet of Jesus, "like those noble courtiers whose whole duty is to be found at certain hours in the presence of their king."¹ It is very common teaching that every soul in the state of grace can aspire to such prayer as this, and that no exercise is more effective for the attainment of the intimacy of divine union. But the soul must be called to this state. The prayer is a grace for which the soul is held in readiness by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The action of the Holy Ghost may be by way of giving increased light to the act of the understanding itself so that independently of the work of memory the elements of mental experience arise in consciousness ; or it may actually supply such human elements or co-ordinate them, without any effort of the mind. Indeed, according to some writers, the Holy Spirit may infuse a gift of intuition of divine truth which is proper, not to man in the flesh, but to angelic beings, or separated souls.² The psychology of the question is extremely recondite, and there is much divergence of opinion about it. But, however that may be described, the action involves the gifts, and, of course, according to the general principle already laid down, the co-operation of the virtues, especially the theological virtues.

The language of the mystics has a superficial resemblance, which may be very misleading, to that of the Quietists and the false mystics of Oriental paganism. But there is one outstanding difference : in spite of the ideas of repose, quiet, wordlessness, there is in true mysticism the insistence on an intense activity of the will.

This is a subject of supreme importance in the spiritual life, which has been too much neglected in recent times. Owing to a combination of circumstances many look askance at the very word mysticism. They have been led to think that such prayer is no concern of ordinarily pious Christians. Such an opinion is a break-away from the classical tradition. But there has been a large output of mystic literature of very varied quality in the last few years. We cannot attempt to deal with the subject here, but readers may be confidently referred to such books as Poulain's *Graces of Prayer*, Besse's *Science of Prayer*, the mystical series of the Orchard Books, and the works of the Ven. Fr. Baker.

2. *The Beatitudes*

When a person in the state of grace resolves, under the influence of actual grace, to perform the acts which correspond to the gifts of the Holy Ghost, he puts himself immediately under the influence of the Holy Ghost, and from this divine inspiration the beatitudes

¹ *De Smedt*, quoted by Poulain, p. 54.

² Cf. Billot, *De Virtutibus Infusis*, p. 191.

result. There is no specific difference between these acts and the ordinary acts of the virtues ; the only difference is in the manner of their production and the greater dignity of those which arise from the more dignified source, the divine impulse.

The rewards which are attached to the beatitudes refer primarily to the future life, but they are realised to some extent here in the lives of the saints. They are of such a nature as to compensate for the yielding of that apparent good which worldlings seek. For example, the gift of fear enables a man to withdraw from the pursuit of riches and honours ; he becomes poor in spirit, and is rewarded by gaining the kingdom of heaven. Or they give a reward corresponding to the nature of the good work : " Blessed are the clean of heart " ; cleanness of heart is derived from the gift of understanding, and is rewarded with the contemplative vision of God.

3. *The Fruits of the Holy Ghost*

The fruits refer to acts done under the influence of grace by virtue or by gift. The name indicates the act as being accompanied by the pleasure of spiritual activity. It is of wider application than " beatitude," which is limited to such perfect works as call for the use of the gifts. The name " fruit " suggests the spiritual joy which accompanies the exercise of a good work, and also the fact that it is the issue of the growth of the divine seed of grace in the virtuous work of the man who receives the grace. There is much discussion among the Fathers and theologians of the Church regarding the exact significance of the words of St Paul,¹ but the best opinion seems to be that the fruits are the issue of the human spirit, divinised by grace, and that they impart to the soul the delightful savour of the performance of good works. They are *acts*, products of virtue, not virtues themselves.

Here, then, we find the temporal (as opposed to the eternal) fruit of the tree of the spiritual life. Nature and grace have contributed to its production : human nature with its faculties, and the habits of sanctifying grace and the infused virtues which perfect these. We have tried to study briefly the nature of supernatural activity, which constitutes a world more real and important than the world revealed by our senses, a world of which too many live in complete oblivion. Its ultimate evolution will be revealed to us only in the next life, when we shall enjoy its eternal fruit, the reward which " eye hath not seen, nor ear heard." ²

T. E. FLYNN.

¹ Gal. v 22.

² 1 Cor. ii 9.

THE TEACHING OF THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH

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The
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of the
CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Catholic Doctrine
arranged and edited by*

CANON GEORGE D. SMITH, D.D., Ph.D.

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XIX

THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

§ I: THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

OUR purpose in these few pages is to emphasise the truth that when we profess our belief in the Holy Catholic Church we make an act of faith in a great mystery of the Christian Revelation.

The Church is more than a religious society whose purpose is the worship of God, more than a society different from all others because it was founded by God, more than a depository of grace and revealed truth. The Church herself is supernatural in her nature and essence, since she is the Body of Christ, living with the life of Christ himself, with a supernatural life. From the "fulness of Christ" ¹ all his members are filled, so that the Church herself is "the fulness of him who is wholly fulfilled in all." ² Hence the mystery of the Church is the very mystery of Christ himself.

*The Church
the Mystical
Body of
Christ*

Our act of faith in the great mystery of Christ's Church means far more than belief in a wonderful world-wide organisation of millions of men, united as no other group of men has ever been in belief, in practice, and in central government; it means that there circulates throughout the Church the life of grace which Christ came to bring into the world, linking together the members of the Church under Christ their Head with such a closeness of union that Head and members form a unique reality: the mystical Body of Christ. Our act of faith in the Church is an act of faith in Christ ever active in our midst, ever speaking, ever teaching, ever guiding, ever sanctifying those who are one with him, through the organism he has willed should exist in the world.

The negation of the visible character of the Church of Christ, and of its hierarchical constitution, has led to such stress being laid upon the visible, tangible aspects of the Church that those who are not Catholics have come to think of it in terms of its external organisation and of its recent dogmatic definitions, and not a few Catholics, concentrating their attention upon the argumentative, apologetical, and controversial side of the doctrine concerning the Church, have been in danger of overlooking theoretically—though practically it is impossible for them to do so—the supernatural, the mysterious, the vital, the overwhelmingly important character of the Church as the divinely established and only means of grace in the world, as the Mystical Body of Christ. Practically the doctrine of the supernatural life, of sanctifying grace, of the development of the spiritual

*Visible and
invisible
elements in
the Church*

¹ Col. ii 9 ff.

² Eph. i 23.

life, has safeguarded these deep truths; though even there individualism has asserted itself to the detriment of the collectivism of Christian activity. The stress laid by St Paul on the edification of the body of Christ, on the benefit the whole derives from the perfection of the members, has tended to be passed over where the social value of the contemplative life is not appreciated.

It is in and through the Church that Jesus Christ has willed to effect the salvation of mankind. From the beginning that Church has been a complex entity, and its history is filled with incidents in which men have concentrated upon some one essential element of its constitution to the exclusion of another equally essential element, and have drifted into heresy. The Church has its visible and its invisible elements, its individual and its social claims, its natural and its supernatural activities, its adaptability to the needs of the times, while it is uncompromising in vindicating, even unto blood, that which it holds from Christ and for Christ.

The development of the doctrine of the visible Church and of the authority of its visible head upon earth has been very marked. The persistent rejection of these revealed truths demanded their reiterated assertion and their vigorous defence. No thinking man can overlook the fact of Catholicism: there stands in the midst of the world a body of men with a world-wide organisation, and a carefully graded hierarchy, with a well-defined far-reaching process of teaching, law-making, and jurisdiction. The Vatican Council teaches us that "God has instituted the Church through his only-begotten Son, and has bestowed on it manifest marks of that institution, that it may be recognised by all men as the guardian and teacher of the revealed Word; for to the Catholic Church alone belong all those many and admirable tokens which have been divinely established for the evident credibility of the Christian faith. Nay, more, the Church itself, by reason of its marvellous extension, its eminent holiness, and its inexhaustible fruitfulness in every good thing, its Catholic unity and its invincible stability, is a great and perpetual motive of credibility, and an irrefutable witness of its own divine mission. And thus, like a standard set up amidst the nations, it both invites to itself those who do not yet believe, and assures its children that the faith which they profess rests on the most firm foundation."¹

In that teaching the interplay of the visible element and the invisible element is set forth most clearly; and so it has been from the days of Our Lord himself.

His parables and his teaching on his Kingdom make it clear that it is an organic and social entity, with an external hierarchical organisation, aiming at bringing all men into such an attitude of mind and heart that the just claims of God his Father are recognised and honoured on earth, and hereafter in the heavenly kingdom in which alone Christ's ideal will be perfectly achieved. On earth the seed

¹ *Dogm. Const. De Fide*, iii.

is sown, the grain of mustard seed becomes the mighty-branched tree; the leaven works in the paste and raises it; even now we must needs enter in if our lot is to be with the elect; this, then, is the Kingdom preached by Christ and his followers.

On earth the kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field, but while men were asleep his enemy came and over-sowed cockle among the wheat; ¹ again it is "like to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together all kinds of fishes"; ² again it is likened to ten virgins—the wise and the foolish. Members of the Kingdom may give scandal and be rejected, they may be persecuted and falter before the deceptions of Antichrist. No doubt the Kingdom is life and spirit, and "the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth." ³ But it is also clear that Christ's Kingdom is seen and known and persecuted, and subject to the vicissitudes of human movements.

Now it was precisely the visible organised body of men that Saul the persecutor knew, when he was "consenting to the death" of Stephen, a deacon of the organised Church, and when he "made havoc of the Church," imprisoning its members; when he set forth from Damascus, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against them. In later years he recalls that he was "according to zeal, persecuting the Church of God"; ⁴ "that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God and wasted it." ⁵ "For I am the least of the Apostles . . . because I persecuted the Church of God." ⁶

Our Lord has willed that his Church should be what it is, and that it should be the instrument of salvation for all. He might have willed otherwise: he might have dealt with individual souls as though no other individual souls existed, by direct and immediate action, without taking into account the actions, the reactions, and the interactions of souls upon one another; without the realities underlying the Mystical Body; he might have ensured the preservation of his doctrine by direct revelation to individual souls; he might have willed that his followers should have been unknown in this world and known only to him, linked without knowing it in the invisible, mysterious life of grace—with no external sign of communion.

But that was not his will. He has taken into account the normal workings of our nature and he has supernaturalised them. Our individuality is respected, our social nature is respected too. Man is essentially a dependent being: dependent upon others for his life and its preservation, yearning for the company and the help of others. And so too in the supernatural life: the personal love of Our Lord for each one of us does not deprive us of the supernatural help, support, and sympathy of those with whom we are united in Christ, in his Church. Under the headship of the successor of Peter, the

*The relation
between them*

¹ Matt. xiii 24 ff.

² Matt. xiii 47.

³ John iv 23.

⁴ Phil. iii 6.

⁵ Gal. i 13.

⁶ I Cor. xv 9.

Christ-founded Church teaches, safeguards and sanctifies its members, and their co-ordinated, directed prayers and efforts combine to achieve the purpose for which Christ founded his Church—by mutual help and intercession and example.

Man is a sense-bound creature and the appeal of sense is continuous. Our Lord has taken our nature into consideration. The merely invisible we can accept on his authority. But he has given us a visible Church, with recognisable rules and laws and doctrines and means of sanctification, in which man is at home. We accept Our Lord's gift to us with gratitude and strive to avail ourselves of its visible and invisible character. He has willed that as individuals we should be united with him by sanctifying grace, and that at the same time we should be united to one another with a unique collectivity, an unparalleled solidarity, which is the reality designated as the Mystical Body of Christ. And he has further willed that all the members of that Mystical Body should be members of the visible, organised hierarchical society to which he has given the power of teaching, ruling, and sanctifying. That visible Church is to be the unique indefectible Church which is to last until the end of time, and in its unity to extend all over the world.

The analogy of Body and Soul is used of the Church of God, and may be useful in emphasising the relative importance of the two essential elements of the Church. Our Lord wills that all should have life and should have it more abundantly: we have that life when we form part of the Mystical Body of Christ by supernatural Charity. All the *merely* external elements of Church membership will be insufficient unless the purpose of that external organisation is achieved: life-giving union with Christ. It is for that purpose alone that the visible Church exists.

§ II: THE DOCTRINE REVEALED

*The teaching
of Christ*

OUR Lord's prayer for the unity of his Church stands out very vividly. "Holy Father, keep them in thy name whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we also are. While I was with them I kept them in thy name. Those whom thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition."¹

That last prayer of Our Lord, embodying his last wish, embodies also his abiding, effective will. He had told his apostles that "I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman. Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit, for without me you can do nothing."² When he sent his Apostles on their mission, he told them: "He that receiveth you receiveth *me*."³ "He that heareth you heareth *me*."

¹ John xvii 11-12.

² John xv 1-5.

³ Matt. x 40.

He that despiseth you despiseth *me*, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.”¹ And in the picture Our Lord gives us of the last judgement (Matthew xxv 31 to 40) he identifies himself with his followers, and declares that “as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to *me*.”

When St Paul was struck down on the way to Damascus he heard *The teaching* a voice saying to him “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”² *of St Paul* Who said “Who art thou, Lord?” and he, “I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.” Saul was persecuting the Church of God; Our Lord identifies himself with that persecuted Church: in persecuting the Church Saul was persecuting Christ himself. Thus at the very outset of his Christian career, St Paul learned that truth which was to affect the whole of his teaching, the truth of the union of Christ with his Church, a union so close, so unique, so unparalleled, that he uses one imaged expression after another to try to bring home to his hearers a fuller realisation of the supernatural reality which had been revealed to him. He uses the analogy of the human body, of the building, of grafting, to render more vivid the truth he wants Christians to understand. Christ is the Head of his Church, and “he hath subjected all things beneath his feet and hath given him for supreme *Head* to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him who is wholly fulfilled in all.”³ And again, “the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ too is *Head of the Church*, himself being the saviour of the body.”⁴ And speaking of the visionaries of Colossa, he emphasised their “not holding fast by the *head*, for from this [which is Christ] the whole body, nourished and knit together by means of the joints and ligaments, doth grow with the growth that is of God.”⁵ And again in the Epistle to the Ephesians,⁶ “Rather shall we hold the truth in charity and grow in all things unto him who is the Head, Christ.”

Christ, then, is the Head of the Church, which is his body; the Church is the fulness of Christ, made up of head and members. “You are [together] the body of Christ, and severally his members.” The body of Christ, like the human body, presents a variety of structure, but “now there are many members yet one body.”⁷ And there is a variety of functions which cannot be exercised in isolation. “The eye cannot say to the hand ‘I have no need of thee’; nor again the head to the feet ‘I have no need of you.’ Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are [still] necessary. . . . [Yea] God hath [so] compounded the body [as] to give special honour where it was lacking, that there may be no schism in the body, but that the members may have a common care for each other. And if one member suffereth, all the members suffer therewith. If a member be honoured, all the members rejoice therewith. Now you are [together] the body of Christ, and severally

¹ Luke x 16.² Acts ix 4.³ Eph. i 22-23.⁴ Eph. v 23.⁵ Col. ii 19.⁶ iv 15.⁷ I Cor. xii 20.

his members.”¹ Those varied gifts have their place in the Church, “and himself ‘gave’ some as Apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as shepherds and teachers for the perfecting of the saints in the work of the ministry unto the building up of the body of Christ.”² Again, “to one through the Spirit is granted utterance of wisdom, to another utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith in the same Spirit; and to another, gifts of healings [still] in the same Spirit; and to another, workings of miracles; to another, prophecy, [divers] kinds of tongues, and to another interpretation of tongues.”³

Yet in spite of this variety of gifts and endowments, all must tend to perfect unity. “For all you who were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. In him is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female; for ye are all one person in Christ Jesus.”⁴ “For the perfecting of the saints in the work of ministry unto the building up of the body of Christ till we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to the perfect man, to the full measure of the stature of Christ . . . thus . . . rather we shall hold the truth in charity, and grow in all things into him who is the Head, Christ. From him the whole body, welded and compacted together by means of every joint of the system, part working in harmony with part—[from him] the body deriveth its increase unto the building up of itself in charity.”⁵

Without going into exegetical detail, the truth that St Paul is trying to express is clear: that there is the very closest possible relation between the members of the Church and the Head of the Church, so close that together they may be looked upon as one person, and that there is an ever-growing, intimate compenetration of members and head; the working of the members together with their Head constitutes the fulness of Christ; and in order that this universal fulness of grace should be diffused, our effort and our collaboration is called for: Christ is only his whole self by the unceasing working of his members. The gifts they severally receive have no other purpose than to foster this increase, and in the working out of Christ’s scheme, the head is not the whole body, though it may be the focus of the whole vital influence. Merely to say that Christ is the Head is not fully to define Christ. “God hath given him for the supreme head to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him, who is wholly fulfilled in all.”⁶

In these many passages we are faced by a reality which goes beyond any mere moral influence, any relation of the merely moral order. The influence of Christ upon his members is a real, a vital influence, the nature of which we have to bring out more clearly. St Paul, in speaking of Christ as Head of the Church, is speaking of Christ as he now actually is. No longer the suffering Son of God

¹ I Cor. xii 20-27.

⁴ Gal. iii 27.

² Eph. iv 11-12.

⁵ Eph. iv 12-16.

³ I Cor. xii 8-11.

⁶ Eph. i 22.

making his way in the midst of men, but Christ triumphant, inseparable from the fruits of his victory, from those whom he has redeemed, whose redemption is realised by their incorporation with him; so that in virtue of their union with Christ they share in his merits and in his glory.

To the solidarity of human nature in Adam, with its Original Sin and consequent evils, God has willed to contrast a more glorious restoration, a triumphant solidarity of supernaturalised creation transcending the limits of time and place and uniting all "in Christ," whether Jew or Gentile, so that "through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father."¹ That is the great "Mystery of Christ,"² bringing together mankind in one city, one family, one temple, one body under the headship of Christ, "recapitulating" all in Christ, so that all who are justified should think and act as members of the Body of Christ, having the closest possible relations as individuals with Christ their Redeemer, and through him and in him, with their fellow Christians. Relations so close that the merits of Christ become theirs in proportion to the degree of their identification with him, and the merits of all avail unto all for the achieving of Christ's purpose, the application of his merits to the salvation of mankind.

This great Mystery of the identification of Christ and the faithful in the mystical body of which he is the head and they are the members dominates the mind of St Paul. Christ is the head, the Source of its corporate unity; the indwelling of his Spirit is the source of its spiritual activity.

"It seems to be true, speaking quite broadly, that where the Apostle refers to Christ's Mystical Body, whether *à propos* of the whole Church or of the individual, he is thinking primarily of external organisation, and when he refers to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, primarily of inward sanctification. The doctrine of the Mystical Body, like that of the Kingdom in the Gospels, has its internal and external aspect."³

St Paul teaches us that it is by Baptism that we enter upon our "new life" "in Christ Jesus," when we die to sin, and are crucified with Christ and, "putting on the Lord Jesus,"⁴ become one with him, identified with him, incorporated in him, members of his body and members of one another.

The doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ is one which has stood out quite clearly from the very beginning. It has not undergone development. The sacred writers have simply made known to us the reality revealed to them. This being so, it will be unnecessary to quote at any length the teaching of the Fathers on this most important point. A few indications will suffice.

St Irenaeus is familiar with the idea that the Churches scattered

¹ Eph. ii 18.

³ Lattey, *Westm. New Test.*, Vol. iii, p. 247.

² Eph. iii 4.

⁴ Rom. xiii 14.

throughout the world form a unique community; and that social reality corresponds to a mystical reality, for the Church is the grouping of the adopted sons of God, the body of which Christ is the Head, or is simply "the great and glorious body of Christ," which Gnostics divide and seek to slay.¹ For Tertullian all the faithful are members of one same body, the Church is in all those members, and the Church is Jesus Christ.² St Ambrose, explaining the teaching of the Epistle to the Ephesians, gives as the motive of the charity we must have for one another, our close union with Christ, as we form only one body, of which he is the Head.³

The teaching of St Augustine is so full that it might well fill a volume. The Church is the body of Christ and the Holy Ghost is the soul of that body; for the Holy Ghost does in the Church all that the soul does in all the members of one body; hence the Holy Ghost is for the body of Jesus, which is the Church, what the soul is for the human body. Therefore if we wish to live of the Holy Ghost, if we wish to remain united to him, we must preserve charity, love truth, will unity, and persevere in the Catholic faith; for just as a member amputated from the body is no longer vivified by the soul, so he who has ceased to belong to the Church receives no more the life of the Holy Spirit.⁴ "The Catholic Church alone is the body of Christ . . . outside that body the Holy Spirit gives life to no man . . . consequently those who are outside the Church have not the Holy Spirit."⁵ "His body is the Church, not this Church or that Church, but the Church throughout the whole world; . . . for the whole Church, consisting of all the faithful, since all the faithful are members of Christ, has in Heaven that Head which rules his body."⁶ In his *De Unitate Ecclesiae* (2), he tells us that "the Church is the body of Christ, as the Apostle teaches.⁷ Whence it is manifest that he who is not a member of Christ cannot share in the salvation of Christ. The members of Christ are bound together by the union of charity, and by that self-same charity they are united to their Head, who is Christ Jesus." In the *De Civitate Dei*,⁸ he emphasises the union of the souls of the departed with the Church which is the Kingdom of Christ. The members of the Church alive on earth are one with the departed; hence the commemoration of the departed at the Eucharist, and hence again the practice of reconciling sinners on their death-bed and baptising the dying. Hence again the commemoration of the martyrs who bore witness to the truth unto death, and who now reign in Christ's kingdom. To that Church of God belong also the just of all ages, and also the angels of God, for the angels persisted in their love of God and in their service

¹ *Contra Hær.*, iv 33, 7.

³ Letter 76, No. 12.

⁵ St Augustine, Letter 185, section 50.

⁶ *Enarrationes in Psalmos* lvi 1.

⁷ Col. i 24.

² *De Pœnitentia*, X.

⁴ Sermons 267, 268.

⁸ xx 9.

of God.¹ St Augustine thus explains the binding force of the Church of God: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered for us and rose again, is the Head of the Church, and the Church is his body, and in his body it is the unity of the members and the union of charity that constitute its health, so that whenever a person grows cold in charity he becomes a sick member of the body of Christ. But he who exalted our Head is also able to heal our infirm members, provided only they have not been cut off by undue weakness, but have adhered to the body until they were healed. For whatever still adheres to the body is not without hope of healing; but if he should be cut off from the body his cure is impossible."² "It is the Holy Spirit that is the vivifying force in the body of Christ."³

§ III: THE DOCTRINE EXPLAINED

IN view of the confusion that exists to-day in the use of the term *The term* "mystical" it may be well to give some account of its various meanings in ancient and modern literature.⁴ Etymologically it is akin to "mystery"; both words spring from the Greek *μύω*: to close the lips or the eyes, lest words should reveal or eyes see what is hidden. Thus in pre-Christian literature it is used of pagan cults, indicating a religious secret bound up with the "mysteries," which were closed to all but the initiated. Nevertheless it is sometimes used colloquially of non-religious secrets.⁵

The Christian uses of the term are manifold. We find the word commonly connected with the celebration of the Christian mysteries, especially of Baptism and the Eucharist. Whatever was concerned with the administration of the Sacraments, or their explanation, was "mystical." Even to-day we speak of the "mystical oblation," the "mystical sacrifice," the "mystical cleansing." It is easy to see, therefore, how the word "mystical" was used so frequently to designate the sacrament, or the outward sign of inward grace. It is also used in the sense of "symbolical" or "allegorical." Hence the "mystical meaning of Scripture" is the spiritual, figurative, or typical meaning, as distinct from the literal or obvious meaning. The mystical sense of Scripture is that hidden meaning which underlies the simple statement of events. Again the word "mystical" is applied to the hidden reality itself. The sacred writer often sets forth the truth in allegories, comparisons, and figures of speech; thus St Paul teaches us that the faithful are members of the organism

¹ *Enchiridion* lvi; Sermon, 341, 9.

² Sermon 137, 1

³ Sermon 267, 4. The patristic teaching will be found set out at length in Petavius, *De Incarnatione*, Bk. XII, c. 17, § 8; in Thomassinus, *De Incarnatione*, Bk. VI, c. 7-9; in Kirsch, *The Doctrine of the Communion of Saints in the Ancient Church*.

⁴ Cf. Prat, *Theologie de St Paul*, ii (10th Ed., 1925), p. 467.

⁵ Cf. Cicero *ad Attic.*, vi 3.

of which Christ is the Head, and of which the faithful form the body. This is what we have come to speak of as the "mystical body of Christ."

A further development of those earlier meanings is the application of the term to the hidden and mysterious realities of the supernatural order. In this sense the secrets of grace in the souls of men, supernatural communications with God, are "mystical." In a more restricted sense it is used of the spiritual life of faith and sanctifying grace with its striving after perfection through prayer and mortification: the "mystical life." But in the strictest and technical sense it is applied to the state of infused contemplation.

What may be designated as the post-Christian or non-Christian senses of the term are not easy to analyse. But in a philosophical religious sense the term is used of any teaching which admits the possibility of reaching "the fundamental principle of things" otherwise than by the normal use of the human faculties. A linked meaning takes us away even from that vague religious sphere into the realm of thought inaccessible to ordinary minds dependent on intuition, instinct, or feeling. A still more vague use of the term is the fashionable craze for designating anything that is secret, or in any way connected with worship, with sentiment, with dreams, with the undefinable, the invisible, as "mystical."

It may not be without interest to note that the term "mystical body" which is used by commentators on the scriptures and by theologians to designate the body of Christ, put before us so vividly by St Paul and by the early Fathers, does not actually occur in the New Testament, nor yet in the patristic writings. The two words "mystical body" are actually combined by St John Chrysostom, when he is speaking of the Blessed Eucharist.¹ And that patristic use of "mystical body" for the Eucharist persisted in Rabanus Maurus (died 856) and in Paschasius Radbertus (died 851). The latter's book on the Body and Blood of the Lord has a chapter (7) on the uses of the term "body of Christ," where "mystical body" is still confined to the Blessed Eucharist. Alexander of Hales, who died in 1245, in his *Universæ Theologiæ Summa*,² treating of the grace of Christ and his Headship of the Church, uses the words "mystical body" of the Church. The same use is found in William of Auvergne (died 1249) in his *De Ordine*,³ and in Albert the Great (1206-80). All three authors use the term quite as a matter of course, and it would seem to have been in common use in the early thirteenth century.

Albert the Great explains the term "Mystical Body," applied to the Church, as the result of the assimilation of the whole Church to Christ consequent upon the communion of the true Body and

¹ Homily on the resurrection of the dead, n. 8, Gaume edition, Paris 1834, p. 56 C.

² Edition 1622, Vol. 2, p. 73.

³ Opera, vol. 1, p. 545.

Blood of Christ in the Eucharist ; so that the true Body of Christ under the appearance of bread became the symbol of the hidden divine reality.

What, precisely, then, is meant by the Mystical Body of Christ ? ¹ *Meaning of the Mystical Body of Christ*
 It is obvious that the Church is not the natural Body of Christ. On the other hand it is more than merely morally the Body of Christ, *i.e.*, the union between its members and Christ is not merely the union of ideas and ideals—there is a much closer connection between Christ the Head and his members, constituting a unique entity, which, because of its close connection with the Word Incarnate, is designated by a unique name : the Mystical Body of Christ—a body in which the members, living indeed their natural life individually, are supernaturally vivified and brought into harmony with the whole by the influence, the wondrous power and efficacious intervention of the Divine Head. That Invisible Head ever abides, the members of the Mystical Body come and go, but the Body continues to exercise its influence in virtue of the vivifying power from on high animating its members, and that with such persistence and consistency, with such characteristic independence of action transcending the powers of the individual members, that we may speak of it as a Person, as Christ ever living in his Church, which is his Body, inasmuch as we are the members of which he is the Head.

What makes Christ's Mystical Body so very different from any mere moral body of men is the character of the union existing between Christ and the members. It is not a mere external union, it is not a mere moral union : it is a union which, as realised in Christ's Church, is at once external and moral, but also, and that primarily, internal and supernatural. It is the supernatural union of the sanctified soul with Christ, and with all other sanctified souls in Christ. Now, given the nature of the human soul, its individuality, its immortality, it is clear that the union of our soul with Christ in his Mystical Body excludes the conversion of our soul into the Divine Substance, excludes any identification of man with God, any confusion or a co-mingling of the Divine and human natures. In that union there is not and cannot be equality or identity, but there is a likeness, a supernatural likeness between our soul and Christ the Head of the Mystical Body.

With Christ we form one Mystical Body, whereof he is the Head *Vital influence of Christ*
 and we are the members. A unique Body indeed, not a physical body, not a merely moral body, but a Mystical Body without parallel in the physical or moral order. As our Head, Christ exercises a

¹ The principles of St Thomas utilised in this section will be found : *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. viii ; III *Sent. Dist.*, 13 ; *Quæstiones Disput.* : de Veritate, Q. xxix, art. 4 and 5 ; *Compendium Theologicæ*, Cap. 215 ; and also St Thomas's *Commentary on 1 Cor.*, chap. xii, lect. 3 ; *Commentary on Eph.*, chap. i, lect. 7 and 8 ; chap. iv, lect. 4 and 5 ; *Commentary on Col.*, chap. i, lect. 5.

continuous, active, vitalising, interior, and hidden influence, governing, ruling, and raising his incorporated members. So that from Christ as Head comes the Unity of that Body, its growth, the vitality transmitted throughout its members. The life and increase of that Body is obtained by the operations of each of the members according to the measure of the vitalising influence which each one receives from the Head.¹

That is the internal influence he exercises through his grace in our souls. There is, moreover, the external influence he exercises through his visible Church.

It is by the grace of Christ that we are united to Christ our Head, and Christ is the source of all our grace in the present dispensation. Not, indeed, that we are to conceive that the very grace which existed in his human soul is transferred to ours—that would be absurd ; but he is the source of our grace inasmuch as in the Divine Plan of Redemption he *merited* grace for us, and is the efficient instrumental Cause of grace, since as Man he taught the truth to men, he founded his Church and therein established the power of jurisdiction, teaching authority, and Holy Orders, and in particular because he instituted the sacraments, whereby grace is produced, and he gives to those sacraments all the efficacy they possess. This causality of Christ, this active influence exercised by Christ, the Church never loses sight of, ever directing her petitions to God : Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our chief concern at present is, however, not so much with the active influence exercised by Christ, as with the effect which is thereby produced in men by Christ, produced by the Head upon the members of the Mystical Body.

In virtue of our incorporation in Christ, we are united to Christ, and that union consists *in the supernatural likeness* established between our soul and Christ : for unity of souls is as we have seen obtained by likeness. Now that likeness is manifold. There is, first of all, *a real and physical* (not material) *likeness*, attained by the justified soul, inasmuch as the sanctifying grace, the infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit which are bestowed upon it, are of the same species as those which inhered in and were infused into the human soul of Christ : they differ, of course, in degree, inasmuch as in Christ they exist in the supreme degree. In the faithful soul this sanctifying grace, with its retinue of virtues and gifts, may, of course, be increased by meritorious good works, and thus the likeness to Christ increases. From that physical likeness there follows *moral likeness* also. For being informed, being vitalised by the same supernatural life, we are disposed to the same supernatural activity as Christ himself : that is to say, the infused supernatural habits dispose the soul to the same operations, freely performed, as those

¹ Cf. the scriptural texts quoted above, pp. 663-664 : Col. ii 18-19 ; Eph. i 22-23 ; iv 15-16 ; v 23.

elicited by Christ : the Christian by acting in accordance with those virtues, imitates or follows Christ. We are thus united to Christ in thought and word and deed, striving to look at all things as Christ himself would have looked at them, to speak of all as Christ would have spoken, to behave to all as Christ would have behaved—thus becoming “other Christs.” Christ became the living standard of holiness, the divine example which we strive to reproduce in ourselves.

Besides that union of our soul with Christ through supernatural likeness, we must recall the union consequent upon supernatural cognition and love, a most intimate union. Christ is known to his followers by Faith, he is loved by Charity : how deep may be that knowledge, how intense, how ardent that love, how efficacious and vivifying may be the influence thus exercised by Christ is to be seen in the lives of the Saints. It is clear that here exists true friendship, the mutual love of benevolence of Christ for the Faithful, of the Faithful for Christ. But this friendship not only exists between Christ and each of the faithful, but also mutually amongst the faithful themselves. The love whereby the Christian loves Christ is supernatural charity, the primary object of which is God himself, as he is himself Infinite Goodness itself. But the secondary object of that theological charity is every single one of our neighbours, inasmuch as he is actually or potentially a sharer in the Divine Goodness. And so by loving Christ, we wish happiness to ourselves and to our neighbours ; by the virtue of hope we hope it for ourselves and for others ; and finally, by performing works of mercy, we co-operate in procuring for one another sanctification in this life and eternal happiness in the next. And all this meets in due subjection and obedience to the Vicar of Christ, who in this world rules and governs the Mystical Body of Christ. Hence arises the Communion of Saints, which is the communication of good things amongst all the members of the whole Church : militant, suffering, and triumphant.

*Union with
Christ by
charity*

And thus the life which animates the Mystical Body of Christ consists in (1) the unity of souls by likeness to Christ, and (2) the unity of souls by knowledge and love and consequent co-operation.

What confronts the world and the powers of evil at every moment of the world's history is not merely the resolute will of strenuous and righteous men banded together in the most wonderful organisation the world has ever known : behind that will, behind that organisation, is the will and power of Christ working through his grace, reproducing in every age supernatural effects of virtue, arousing in every age similar opposition from all, of whatever type or character, who are not in the fullest harmony with Christ our Lord. Of the undying character of that hatred, that virulent, active hostility, there can be no doubt, and in the world there is one Body alone upon which all anti-Christians, and not a few professing Christians, can agree to concentrate their destructive energies : surely the very

*Christ lives
in the Church*

abnormal character and persistency of that attack, reproducing in its varying phases every phase of opposition to Jesus Christ himself, is a strong corroboration of the well-founded character of the claims of the Catholic Church, that she and she alone is the Mystical Body of Christ, that in and through her alone Christ still lives and speaks to the world.

It is this silent, supernatural influence radiating from Christ indwelling in his Church which is the real explanation of that wonderful unity of faith which characterises the genuine Catholic Church : which, as the priest speaks to the people, brings forth acts of faith from the hearts of his hearers, which, when Catholics are gathered together at a Eucharistic Congress, causes every heart and mind to be in complete, entire, and helpful harmony with every Catholic mind and heart throughout the entire universe. It is that same silent influence which accounts for the self-sacrifice and generosity of Christ's servants, manifesting itself in identical ways in cloister and home, in modern and ancient times, although no external communication has taken place between Christ's faithful ones.

*Holy Ghost
the soul of the
Mystical
Body*

The soul of the Mystical Body is the Holy Spirit : he is the inspiring, the animating principle. He indwells in the Church and in each one of the faithful, he is the internal force giving life and movement and cohesion. He is the source of the multiplicity of charismata manifesting the vitality of the Body.¹ From him proceeds even the smallest supernatural act, for "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord,' save in the Holy Spirit.

"The Holy Spirit is the spirit of Christ, in him he is and through him he is given to us. His work is to achieve unity, unity among men, and with God."²

Jesus in his mortal days was "full of the Holy Ghost,"³ "and of his fulness we all have received."⁴ "But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Creator will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you."⁵

"But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, that man is not of Christ."⁶ "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father!"⁷

Baptism, which incorporates us into the Mystical Body, gives us too the principle of our unity and activity : "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of the body, many as they are, form one body, so also [it is with] Christ. For in one Spirit all we, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, were baptised into one body ; and were all given to drink of one Spirit."⁸

This common teaching was set forth by Leo XIII in 1897 in his Encyclical *Divinum illud munus* on the Holy Ghost : "Let it suffice

¹ Rom. xii 4-11.

³ Luke iv 1.

⁶ Rom. viii 9.

² St Cyril of Alex., Com. on John xvii 20-21.

⁴ John i 16.

⁷ Gal. iv 6.

⁵ John xiv 26.

⁸ I Cor. xii 12-13.

to state that as Christ is the Head of the Church, the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church."

§ IV: THE MYSTICAL BODY AND REDEMPTION

THE record of God's dealings with man makes clear a two-fold contrast between grace and unity on the one hand and sin and discord on the other. God's grace has ever been the great unifying factor, uniting God with man and man with his fellow-men. Sin separates man from God and from his fellow-men. The purpose of Christ's coming into the world was to rid it of discord and unite it with God in the grace-union once more. His supreme prayer for his followers was "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us . . . that they may be one as we also are one. I in them and thou in me; that they may be made perfect in one."

*The Fall
and
Redemption*

In the mystery of the Redemption by the Word Incarnate we see the relation of fallen man to God changed to man's advantage; he has been redeemed, saved, reconciled, delivered, justified, regenerated; he has become a new creature. The significance of the Redemption from the point of view of our subject lies in this, that the Redemption of man is analogous to his Fall. All men, deriving their human nature from Adam, had inherited from him the stain of original sin, and thus the whole human race in one man had been set at enmity with God. Just as man's Fall had been corporate, so his reconciliation was to be corporate too. For the fatal solidarity with Adam which had resulted in death and sin was to be substituted a new and salutary solidarity whereby all men, born in sin of the first Adam, might be regenerated to the life of grace in the new Adam, Jesus Christ. Our lost rights to supernatural development in this world, and to a vision of God after the time of probation, have been restored to us through the supernatural action of Christ's human nature, hypostatically united to the Word of God. Christ is the Spokesman of mankind, the Representative Man, the Second Adam, carrying out for our sakes what we could not carry out for ourselves, giving to God that glory and adoration, that worship, thanksgiving, and reparation, which the Man-God alone could give. In virtue of our solidarity with him we share in the results of his activity, and our share will be the greater in the measure in which we more and more completely identify ourselves with Christ, "put on Christ," become "other Christs."

It is in terms of this solidarity of man with Christ, in terms of the Mystical Body formed by mankind united with its Head, that St Thomas, as follows, sets forth the doctrine of the Redemption, and of the application of its fruits:

*St Thomas
on redemption
and the
Mystical
Body*

"Since he is our Head, then, by the Passion which he endured from love and obedience, he delivered us as his members from our

sins, as by the price of his passion : in the same way as if a man by the good industry of his hands were to redeem himself from a sin committed with his feet. For just as the natural body is one, though made up of diverse members, so the whole Church, Christ's Mystical Body, is reckoned as one person with its Head, which is Christ." ¹

"Grace was in Christ not merely as in an individual, but also as in the Head of the whole Church, to whom all are united as members to a head, who constitute one mystical person, and hence it is that Christ's merit extends to others inasmuch as they are his members ; even as in a man the action of the head reaches in a manner to all his members, since it perceives not merely for itself alone, but for all the members." ²

"The sin of an individual harms himself alone ; but the sin of Adam, who was appointed by God to be the principle of the whole nature, is transmitted to others by carnal propagation. So, too, the merit of Christ, who has been appointed by God to be the head of all men in regard to grace, extends to all his members." ³

"As the sin of Adam reaches others only by carnal generation, so, too, the merit of Christ reaches others only by spiritual regeneration, which takes place in baptism ; wherein we are incorporated with Christ, according to Gal. iii 27 : *as many of you as have been baptised in Christ have put on Christ* ; and it is by grace that it is granted to man to be incorporated with Christ. And thus man's salvation is from Grace." ⁴

"Christ's satisfaction works its effect in us inasmuch as we are incorporated with him as the members with their head, as stated above. Now the members must be conformed with their head. Consequently as Christ first had grace in his soul with bodily passibility, and through the Passion attained to the glory of immortality : so we likewise, who are his members, are freed by his Passion from all debt of punishment, yet so that we first receive in our souls *the spirit of adoption of sons* whereby our names are written down for the inheritance of immortal glory, while we yet have a passible and mortal body : but afterwards, *being made conformable* to the sufferings and death of Christ, we are brought into immortal glory, according to the saying of the Apostle, ⁵ *and if sons, heirs also : heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ* ; yet so if we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him." ⁶

"Christ's voluntary suffering was such a good act, that because of its being found in human nature, God was appeased for every offence of the human race with regard to those who are made one with the crucified Christ in the aforesaid manner." ⁷

"The head and members are as one mystic person ; and there-

¹ III, Q. xlix, art. 1.

³ III, Q. xix, art. 4, ad 1.

⁵ Rom. viii 17.

⁷ III, Q. xlix, art. 4.

² III, Q. xix, art. 4.

⁴ III, Q. xix, art. 4, ad 3.

⁶ III, Q. xlix, art. 3, ad 3.

fore Christ's satisfaction belongs to all the faithful as being his members. Also in so far as any two men are one in charity, the one can satisfy for the other, as shall be shown later." ¹ "But the same reason does not hold good of confession and contrition, because the satisfaction consists of an outward action for which helps may be used, among which friends are to be computed." ²

"As stated above, ³ grace was bestowed upon Christ, not only as an individual, but inasmuch as he is the Head of the Church, so that it might overflow into his members; and therefore Christ's works are referred to himself and to his members in the same way as the works of any other man in a state of grace are referred to himself. But it is evident that whosoever suffers for justice' sake, provided that he be in a state of grace, merits his salvation thereby, according to Matt. v 10. Consequently Christ by his Passion merited salvation, not only for himself, but likewise for all his members." ⁴

The fruits of the Redemption, therefore, are applied to individuals inasmuch as they are incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ. Now the means which Christ has instituted for this incorporation are the sacraments, and in particular Baptism, the sacrament of regeneration. Hence in the teaching of St Thomas concerning this sacrament we are able to see again the far-reaching importance of the doctrine of the Mystical Body.

*On Baptism
and incor-
poration*

"Since Christ's Passion," he writes, ⁵ "preceded as a kind of universal cause of the forgiveness of sins, it needs to be applied to each individual for the cleansing of personal sins. Now this is done by Baptism and Penance and the other sacraments, which derive their power from Christ's Passion."

Even those who lived before the coming of Christ, and therefore before the institution of the sacrament of Baptism, needed, if they were to be saved, to become members of Christ's Mystical Body. "At no time could men be saved, even before the coming of Christ, unless they became members of Christ: 'for there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.'" ⁶ Before Christ's coming men were incorporated into Christ by faith in his future coming, and the seal of that faith was circumcision." ⁷

Treating the question whether a man can be saved without Baptism, St Thomas allows that where actual Baptism is absent owing to accidental circumstances, the desire proceeding from "faith working through charity" will in God's providence inwardly sanctify him. But where you have absence of actual Baptism and a culpable absence of the desire of Baptism, "those who are not baptised under such conditions cannot be saved, because neither

¹ Supplement, Q. xiii, art. 2.

² Q. xlviii, art. 2, ad 1.

³ Q. vii, art. 1, ad 9; Q. viii, art. 1, ad 5.

⁴ Q. xlviii, art. 1.

⁵ III, Q. xlix, art. 1, ad 4.

⁶ Acts iv 12.

⁷ Rom. iv 11. III, Q. lxviii, art. 1, ad 1.

sacramentally nor mentally are they incorporated in Christ, through whom alone comes salvation.”¹ He emphasises the same truth when speaking of men who are sinners in the sense that they will to sin and purpose to remain in sin. These, he says, are not properly disposed to receive Baptism: “‘For all of you who were baptised into Christ have put on Christ’; now as long as a man has the will to sin, he cannot be united to Christ: ‘for what hath justness in common with lawlessness.’”²

The reason why the effects of the Passion of Christ are applied to us in Baptism is that we are a part of Christ, we form one with him. “That is why the very pains of Christ were satisfactory for the sins of the baptised, even as the pains of one member may be satisfactory for the sins of another member.”³ Indeed, the effects of the Passion of Christ are as truly ours as if we had ourselves undergone the Passion: “Baptism incorporates us into the Passion and death of Christ: ‘If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live together with Christ’;”⁴ whence it follows that the Passion of Christ in which each baptised person shares is for each a remedy as effective as if each one had himself suffered and died. Now it has been seen that Christ’s Passion is sufficient to make satisfaction for all the sins of all men. He therefore who is baptised is set free from all liability to punishment which he had deserved, as if he himself had made satisfaction for them.”⁵ Again, “the baptised person shares in the penal value of Christ’s Passion as he is a member of Christ, as though he had himself endured the penalty.”⁶ “According to St Augustine,” he writes in article 4 of the same question, “‘Baptism has this effect, that those who receive it are incorporated in Christ as his members.’ Now from the Head which is Christ there flows down upon all his members the fulness of grace and of truth: ‘Of his fulness we have all received.’”⁷ Whence it is evident that Baptism gives a man grace and the virtues.”

From this explicit teaching it is clear that there is only one Body of Christ, and it is by Baptism that we are incorporated in it. Consequently we must be very careful in using the well-known distinction of the “body” and “soul” of the Church.

Every man validly baptised is a member of Christ’s Mystical Body, is a member of the Church. Now it may well happen that adverse external circumstances may prevent a man’s character as an incorporated member of the Church being recognised, and the absence of such recognition may involve the juridical denial of all that it involves. In the eyes of men he may appear to have broken the bond uniting him to the Church, and yet, because of the supernatural faith, and the persistent loving life of grace, whereby he seeks in all things to do the will of God, his union with the Church

¹ Rom. iv 11. III, Q. lxviii, art. 2.

³ III, Q. lxviii, art. 5, ad 1.

⁶ Q. lxix, art. 2.

² 2 Cor. vi 14.

⁴ Rom. vi 8.

⁷ John i 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, ad 1.

really continues: *spiritually* he remains a member of the Church, he belongs to the body of the Church. He may, all the time, through error, be giving his external adhesion to a religious society which cannot be part of the Church. But at heart, by internal and implicit allegiance, he may be a faithful member of the Church.

Evidently, if the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, then to be outside the Mystical Body is to be outside the Church, and since there is no salvation outside the Mystical Body, there is no salvation outside the Church. But, as we have seen, a man's juridical situation is not necessarily his situation before God.

The use of the term "the Soul" of the Church as distinct from "the Body," in the sense that Catholics belong to the Body and the Soul, and non-Catholics to the Soul only, and therefore may be saved because of their good faith, does indeed convey an element of truth, but not the whole of it. The continual stressing of the "good faith" of those who are unfortunately out of visible communion with us, does seem to undermine the traditional horror of heresy and of heretics, replacing it by a horror of "heresiarchs"; it seems to put a premium on muddle-headedness, and to reserve the stigma of heresy for the clear-headed ones. After all, the malice of heresy lies in the rending of the Body of Christ: what our Lord meant to be one, heretics, even material heretics, divide. They may be in good faith—and that good faith will at some moment lead them to see what they had not seen before—but the fact remains that their error or ignorance, however inculpable, retards the edification of the Body of Christ. Even the claims of Charity should not blind us to the importance of growth in the knowledge of objective truth, as contrasted with the limitations of error, however well-meaning it may be.

In this matter the advice of St Paul to the Ephesians is relevant: "With all humility and mildness, with patience supporting one another in charity, careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one Spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism."¹

The notions of Redemption, Baptism, and the Mystical Body are combined by the Apostle in the following magnificent passage: "Christ also loved the Church and delivered himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, purifying her in the bath of water by means of the word, and that he might present her to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish. . . . Surely no man ever hated his own flesh, nay, he doth nourish and cherish it, even as Christ the Church, because we are members of his body."²

¹ Eph. iv 2 ff.

² Eph. v 25-27, 29.

§ V: THE SACRIFICE OF THE MYSTICAL BODY

*Redemption
and
sacrifice*

THE Catholic doctrine of Redemption is inseparable from that of Sacrifice, for it was by his sacrifice on Calvary that Christ achieved our Redemption. "Christ, being come an high-priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is, not of this creation : neither by the blood of goats or of calves, but by his own blood, entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and of oxen . . . sanctify such as are defiled, to the cleansing of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who by the Holy Ghost offered himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God ? And therefore he is the Mediator of the New Testament : that by means of his death for the redemption of those transgressions which were under the former testament, they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance." ¹

Such being the intimate connection between Redemption and Sacrifice in the economy of our salvation,² it is not to be wondered at if the doctrine of the Mystical Body finds its clearest illustration and most practical application in the Catholic teaching concerning the sacrifice of the Mass.

*The Mass
the sacrifice
of the
Mystical
Body*

The central fact of human history is the Redemption, wrought, in accordance with the divine plan, by the life-work of Christ, and culminating in the supreme act of self-oblation made by his human will in manifestation of his love of his Father. The sacrifice which Christ offered to his Father on the Cross is the one perfect act of worship ever offered by man to God. But Christians have never regarded that sacrifice simply as an event of the past. They have been ever mindful of the command he gave his followers to do as he did in commemoration of him, "showing the death of the Lord until he come," ³ "knowing that Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall have no more dominion over him." ⁴ Christ as he is to-day is Christ triumphant with the fruits of his victory, with the faithful in whom his Spirit dwells and works. The same sacrifice which Christ offered on Calvary is unendingly renewed in the sacrifice of the Mass. The sacrifice is Christ's ; the victim is Christ ; the priest is Christ. The only difference lies in the absence of actual blood-shedding on the Calvary of the Altar. The Mass is the sacrifice of the Mystical Body of Christ.⁵

That the whole Church has a sacerdotal character is clear from several passages of the New Testament. Baptism, which made us sons of God, members of the Mystical Body, gave us an indelible

¹ Heb. ix 11.

² See Essay xiv : *Christ, Priest and Redeemer, passim.*

³ 1 Cor. xi 26.

⁴ Rom. vi 9.

⁵ See Essay xxv in this volume : *The Eucharistic Sacrifice.*

character: "But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation."¹ "Jesus Christ . . . who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us a kingdom and priests to God and his Father."² "Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."³ Together with our Head, through the ministry of the priests who have the power of consecrating, we co-operate effectively in the offering of the sacrifice in the measure of our supernatural importance in the Mystical Body.⁴

It would be a pitiable mistake to think of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Mass as a dead offering. It is a living offering and is offered by the living Christ. Christ is the priest of the Mass. It is Christ who celebrates the Mass, and he celebrates it with a warm and living Heart, the same Heart with which he worshipped his Father on Mount Calvary. He prays for us, asks pardon for us, gives thanks for us, adores for us. As he is perfect man, he expresses every human feeling; as he is God, his utterances have a complete perfection, an infinite acceptableness. Thus when we offer Mass we worship the Father with Christ's worship. Our prayers being united with his obtain not only a higher acceptance, but a higher significance. Our obscure aspirations he interprets; what we do not know how to ask for, or even to think of, he remembers; for what we ask in broken accents, he pleads in perfect words; what we ask in error and ignorance he deciphers in wisdom and love. Thus our prayers, as they are caught up by his Heart, become transfigured, indeed, divine.

Hence by God's mercy we do not stand alone. In God's providence the weakness of the creature is never overwhelmed, unaided, by the omnipotence of God. In particular the Catholic is never isolated in his prayers, in his pleadings with God. He is a member of the divinely instituted Church, his prayers are reinforced by the prayers of the whole Church, he shares, in life and in death, in that amazing combination of grace-aided effort and accumulated energy known as the Communion of Saints. But especially is the Catholic strong when he pleads before God the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Simply as a member of the Church, as a member of Christ's Mystical Body, every Catholic has a share in the sacrifice offered by Christ as Head of his Church, a share in the supreme act of adoration thereby offered to God. And that partaking in the offering of the Sacrifice is as real and as far-reaching as is the Mystical Body itself.

Christ, head and members, offers the sacrifice, but Christ, head and members, offers himself, and we, in union with our Head, are victims too. St Paul has told us that we are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if, that is, we suffer with him, that with him we may also be glorified."⁵ We must share in his sufferings if we would

*Christ,
Head and
Members,
offers the
sacrifice*

*Christ,
Head and
Members,
the victim*

¹ 1 Peter ii 9.

² Apoc. i 5.

³ 1 Peter ii 5.

⁴ Cf. *The Eucharistic Sacrifice*, pp. 902 ff.

⁵ Rom. viii 17.

share in his salvation. And in his epistle to the Colossians,¹ St Paul stresses the importance of our privilege: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and make up in my flesh what is lacking to the sufferings of Christ, on behalf of his body, which is the Church, whereof I am become a minister." So that as we are members of the one body, our sufferings, our prayers, our sacrifices, "may further the application to others of what Christ alone has secured for all."² "The Church," says St Augustine,³ "which is the body of which he is the head, learns to offer herself through him." "The whole redeemed city, that is, the congregation and society of the saints, is the universal sacrifice which is offered to God by the High Priest."⁴

"I exhort you therefore, brethren," writes St Paul,⁵ "by the compassion of God, to present your bodies a sacrifice, living, holy, well-pleasing to God, your spiritual service." Since we are members of Christ our sufferings, united with the offering of Christ, acquire a value in the carrying out of Christ's purpose in the world which they could never have of themselves. Our mortifications, our fastings, our almsdeeds are seen to have a range of effective influence in the Mystical Body, however trifling they may appear in themselves. The Lenten Fast is no mere personal obligation: the Church calls upon her children to do their share in furthering the interests of Christ in the world, insists that they should not be merely passengers in the barque of Peter, but should "pull their weight"; for they too have benefited and are benefiting from the fastings and prayers of God's holy servants throughout the world. The call to reparation on behalf of others is bound up with the privileges we enjoy through our solidarity with our fellow-members of the Mystical Body.

*The
sacrificial
attitude of
mind*

Every sacrifice is the external expression of an internal sacrificial attitude of mind, whereby we submit all that we have and all that we are to the divine will, that in all things it may be accomplished. In every sacrifice the victim is offered in place of him who offers it, as a means of expressing as adequately as possible the perfection of his submission to God. Now we have seen that our union as members of Christ's Mystical Body with the Victim offered to God in the Mass, unites us with our High Priest both as offerers and as offered. Hence, from our solidarity with the priesthood and the victimhood of Christ there follows as a necessary corollary the duty in Catholics of cultivating the sacrificial attitude of mind.

When the pursuivants were thundering at the door of the house of Mr. Swithun Wells in Gray's Inn Lane on the morning of All Saints' Day, 1591, as the priest, Edmund Genings, stood at the improvised altar and offered the Sacrifice of the Mass, there could be no mistake about the sacrificial attitude of mind of the small group of faithful present on that occasion. All had suffered for the

¹ i 24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

² Lattey *in loc.*

⁵ Rom. xii 1.

³ *De Civ. Dei*, x 20.

privilege of worshipping God as he would be worshipped in his Church, and had refused to conform to the observances of the Established Church. With calm deliberation they took their lives and fortunes in their hands, and offered them up to God in union with the redeeming sacrifice of Christ himself. The working out of God's will was to them as mysterious as it is to us. But their duty to God was clear, and the danger they ran was clear; but they commended themselves into the hands of God, and prayed that his will might be done. The spirit inspiring them shines out in Mr. Swithun Wells' reply when in prison he answered, "That he was not indeed privy to the Mass being said in his house, but wished that he had been present, thinking his house highly honoured by having so divine a sacrifice offered therein," and the Justice told him that though he was not at the feast, he should taste of the sauce. On 10 December, 1591, he won the crown of martyrdom.

If we compare the attitude of mind of the small group of devoted Catholics who were gathered round the martyr's altar with the attitude of those indifferent Catholics who under the most favourable conditions content themselves with deliberately conforming to the very minimum of the Church's requirements, we can see that there is room for many gradations in the intensity of the worship of God in the Holy Mass. Better perhaps than any technical definitions the example of our Catholic forefathers can teach the lesson so many of us have to learn.

Our lives are spent in the midst of men who, however religious-minded they may be, have lost all idea of sacrificial worship: the Great Christian Act of Sacrifice is no longer the centre of their religious observance. At times one may wonder whether the influence of atmosphere does not affect the less-instructed of the faithful. Our people have a firm and deep belief in the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, but it often happens that they have a less clear perception of what the Sacrifice means. At times one hears the question, "Why is it that when Our Lord is already present in the Tabernacle, such a great manifestation of reverence should surround the Consecration?" a question which shows how little it is realised that at the Consecration Our Lord comes offering himself as our Victim, bearing our sins, offering himself to his Eternal Father for us. Such a thought makes the Sacrifice real and living to us, and moves us to offer ourselves up with him, to be ready to suffer what we can for him who suffered and died for us.

§ VI: THE MYSTICAL BODY AND HOLY COMMUNION

THE end of all sacrifice is union with God; and the end of the Sacrifice of the New Law is union with God through and in Jesus Christ; ■ union which is consummated by Holy Communion, *Union with Christ consummated by Holy Communion*

wherein those who have offered the sacrifice partake of the sacred Victim. It is evident, therefore, that the Sacrament of the Eucharist, as well as the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the Mass, is intimately bound up with the doctrine of the Mystical Body. In fact, the Eucharist is the Sacrament of the Mystical Body of Christ.

*Nature of
this union*

How close this connection really is may be seen from the study of three well-known texts of the Gospel of St John: "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you the branches; he that *abideth in me, and I in him*, the same beareth much fruit, for without me you can do nothing."¹ "That they all may be one, as *thou, Father, in me, and I in thee*; that they also may be one in us . . . *I in them, and thou in me*; that they may be made perfect in one."² "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you; he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life. . . . He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood *abideth in me, and I in him*. As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me the same also shall live by me."³

The comparison of these three passages not only brings out in a striking manner the nature of the union that Christ wills should exist between himself and the faithful—and among the faithful themselves—but also shows what Christ intends to be the primary and chief cause of that union. The union for which Christ prayed is a union of life, a communion of supernatural life, of the divine life of grace and charity, that union which, as we have seen, knits together the members of the Mystical Body, as the branches are united with the vine. It is a union so intimate that those who are united may be truly said to be *in each other*; a union so close that Christ does not hesitate to compare it with the union existing between his Father and himself: "as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee." Now the union between Christ and his Father is a union of nature and life. "He that seeth me," he had said to Philip, "seeth the Father also. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? . . . Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more. But you see me; because I live, and you shall live. In that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. . . . If any one love me . . . my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him."⁴ The members of Christ, therefore, are united with their Head and with each other by the communication of the life of grace and charity, which, as St Peter tells us, is nothing else than a participation of the divine nature.⁵

¹ xv 4-5.

² xvii 21-23.

³ vi 54 ff.

⁴ John xiv 9 ff.

⁵ Cf. 2 Peter i 4. Cf. also 1 John iv 7: "Everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God"; *ibid.*, 15-16: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God. . . . He that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him."

What is the chief means whereby this life of grace is to be communicated to the members of his Body? The answer is found in the third of the texts quoted above: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me." The Sacrament of Our Lord's Body and Blood is the divinely appointed means for incorporation into his Mystical Body. The Eucharist, in other words, is not only the Sacrament of Christ's true Body; it is also the Sacrament of his Mystical Body. Hence St Paul writes: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not fellowship in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not fellowship in the body of Christ? We many are one bread, one body, for we all partake of the one bread." And commenting on these words of the Apostle St Augustine says: "The faithful know the body of Christ if they do not neglect to be the body of Christ. Let them become the body of Christ if they wish to live by the Spirit of Christ; and therefore it is that St Paul, explaining to us the nature of this bread, says, 'We being many are one bread, one body.' O sacrament of piety! O symbol of unity! O bond of charity! He who wills to live has here the place to live, has here the source of his life. Let him approach and believe, let him be incorporated, that he may receive life."¹ "Be what you see," he writes elsewhere,² "and receive what you are. . . . He who receives the mystery of unity and does not hold the bond of peace, does not receive the mystery for his profit, but rather a testimony against himself."

Hence also St Thomas, dealing with the sin of unworthy Communion, having pointed out that the Eucharist signifies the "Mystical body, which is the fellowship of the Saints," writes: "He who receives this sacrament, by the very fact of doing so signifies that he is united to Christ and incorporated in his members: now this is effected by charity-informed faith which no man can have who is in mortal sin. Hence it is clear that whosoever receives this sacrament in a state of mortal sin is guilty of falsifying the sacramental sign, and is therefore guilty of sacrilege."³

The intimate connection of the Sacrament of the Eucharist with the Mystical Body may be clearly illustrated by the teaching of St Thomas on the necessity of the Eucharist for salvation.⁴ It has been seen in a preceding section that Baptism is the Sacrament of incorporation in the Mystical Body, and hence for infants the actual reception, and for adults at least the desire, of this sacrament is indispensable for salvation; for outside the Mystical Body of Christ none can be saved. Now to assert that Incorporation is the proper effect of the Eucharist would seem at first sight to contradict the

¹ *In Joan.*, tr. xxvi 13.

² Sermon 272.

³ III, Q. lxxx, art. 9.

⁴ See Essay xxxiv: *The Sacrament of the Eucharist*, pp. 877-879.

undoubted truth that Baptism is the "gate of the Sacraments" and, alone, is necessary for salvation. St Thomas solves the difficulty by pointing out that the Eucharist is the source of the efficacy of all the other Sacraments, these being subordinated to the greatest of them all. "This Sacrament," he writes,¹ "has of itself the power of bestowing grace; nor does any one possess grace before receiving this sacrament except from some desire thereof; from his own desire in the case of the adult; or from the Church's desire in the case of children." If this desire in adults is a sincere one, as it should be, and the baptised person is faithful to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, he will complete what is expected of him and receive the Blessed Sacrament:

"The effect of this sacrament is union with the Mystical Body, without which there can be no salvation; for outside the Church there is no entry to salvation. . . . However, the effect of a sacrament can be had before the actual reception of the sacrament, from the very desire of receiving it; hence before the reception of this sacrament a man can have salvation from the desire of receiving this sacrament. . . . From the very fact of being baptised infants are destined by the Church for the reception of the Eucharist, and just as they believe by the faith of the Church, so from the intention of the Church they desire the Eucharist, and consequently receive its fruit. But for baptism they are not destined by means of another preceding sacrament, and therefore before the reception of baptism infants cannot in any way have baptism by desire, but only adults. Hence infants cannot receive the effect of the sacrament (of baptism) without the actual reception of the sacrament. Therefore the Eucharist is not necessary for salvation in the same way as Baptism."²

And elsewhere:³ "There are two ways of receiving this sacrament, namely, spiritually and sacramentally. Now it is clear that all are bound to eat it at least spiritually, because this is to be incorporated in Christ, as was said above (*i.e.*, in the passage just quoted). Now spiritual eating comprises the desire or yearning for receiving the sacrament. Therefore a man cannot be saved without desiring to receive this sacrament. Now a desire would be vain, except it were fulfilled when opportunity presented itself."

Union of the faithful

But it would be a mistake to regard the Eucharist as having its effect merely in the individual soul that receives it. All that has been said hitherto about the solidarity of the members of Christ forbids any such restricted view. The Eucharist has far-reaching effects passing beyond the mere individual to the masterpiece of divine Love, the sanctification of mankind; bringing all men under the Headship of Christ, uniting soul with soul, and souls with Christ, until all the elect in Heaven and in Purgatory are one in Christ with his faithful on earth; so that all work together to achieve his Fulness:

¹ III, Q. lxxix, art. 1, ad. 1.

² III, Q. lxxiii, art. 3.

³ III, Q. lxxx, art. 11.

“for the perfecting of the Saints in the work of ministry, unto the building up of the body of Christ, till we all attain to the unity of the Faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to the perfect man, to the full measure of the stature of Christ . . . thus . . . we shall hold the truth in charity, and grow in all things unto him who is the Head, Christ.”¹

§ VII: THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

THE term “Communion of Saints” seems to have been first inserted in the baptismal creeds in the South of Gaul; and it is to be understood as the South Gallic writers of the fifth and sixth centuries understood it; giving the word “Saints” the normal meaning which it still holds to-day: the Elect, those who have attained the end for which they were made, in the Kingdom of God. The term “communion” is used in the abstract sense and means a spiritual benefit conferred in the Church, or the Mystical Body of Christ. “And so the addition ‘the Communion of Saints’ signifies the inward spiritual union of the faithful as members of Christ’s Mystical Body with the other members of this Body, especially the elect and perfectly just, whose participation in the heavenly kingdom of God is absolutely certain, and through whose intercessions help may be given to the faithful still wayfaring on earth.”²

In venerating the Saints of God and especially the Mother of God, we give them due honour because of the supernatural excellence we recognise in them as derived from God himself through the merits of Jesus Christ. It is therefore to the honour and glory of God that is ultimately directed all the veneration paid to his servants. Strictly speaking a like honour might be paid to saintly men and women while they are still living on this earth. It is, however, the custom of the Church not to venerate the just until she has declared by infallible decree that they are in definitive enjoyment of their eternal reward in heaven. In English we are accustomed to speak of “honouring” or “venerating” the Saints, while the cult of “adoration” is reserved for God alone. This distinction—for the rest, a convenient one—may be regarded as roughly corresponding to the Latin theological terms *dulia*: the honour paid to the Saints, and *latria*: the worship paid to God alone.

Mary is particularly honoured because of the special greatness of the favours she received from God. She is what God made her, and as such we recognise her. All her graces on earth and her glory in heaven are celebrated in relation to her unique privilege: her Divine Maternity. By reason of her unique supernatural

¹ Eph. iv 12-15.

² Kirsch, *The Doctrine of the Communion of Saints in the Ancient Church* (Tr. McKea), 268.

excellence the special veneration which we pay to her is called "hyperdulia."

In honouring her and the Saints of God the Church would have us celebrate with veneration their holiness which they owe to the merits of Jesus Christ; obtain their prayers—which avail only in so far as by the divine ordinance they intercede in virtue of the grace they have received from Christ the Head of the Mystical Body, and in view of his merits; and finally set before ourselves the example of their virtues, the exercise of which is due to the grace of God through which they were united to the Mystical Body, and so imitated the model of all virtues, Jesus Christ himself. The veneration of the Saints is thus directed to the glory of God, who is wonderful in his Saints, and therefore in his Saints is duly honoured.

So eminently reasonable is this practice, so perfectly in accord with the doctrine of the Mystical Body, that we are not surprised to find that from the earliest times Catholics have paid honour to the Saints. We may see it especially in the commemoration of the Martyrs. Thus when Faustus the Manichean objected to the practice St Augustine replied: "Faustus blames us for honouring the memory of the martyrs, as if this were idolatry. The accusation is not worthy of a reply. Christians celebrate the memory of the martyrs with religious ceremony in order to arouse emulation and in order that they may be associated with their merits and helped by their prayers. But to none of the martyrs do we erect altars as we do to the God of the martyrs; we erect altars at their shrines. For what bishop standing at the altar over the bodies of the martyrs ever said 'We offer to thee, Peter, or Paul, or Cyprian?' What is offered (*i.e.*, the sacrifice) is offered to God who crowned the martyrs, at the shrines of the martyrs, so that the very spot may remind us to arouse in ourselves a more fervent charity both towards them, whom we can imitate, and towards him who gives us the power to do so. We venerate the martyrs with the same love and fellowship with which holy men of God are venerated in this life . . . but the martyrs we honour with the greater devotion that now, since they have happily gained the victory, we may with the greater confidence praise those who are blessed in their victory than those who in this life are still striving for it." ¹

*Intercession
of the
Saints*

With regard to the intercession of the Saints let it suffice to note with St Thomas that "prayer may be offered to a person in two ways, either so that he himself may grant it, or that he may obtain the favour from another. In the first way we pray only to God, because all our prayers should be directed to obtaining grace and glory, which God alone gives, according to the Psalmist (83): 'The Lord will give grace and glory.' But in the second way we pray to the angels and Saints, not that through them God may know our petitions, but that through their prayers and merits our petitions

¹ *Contra Faustum*, l. 20, c. 21.

may be effective. Hence we read in the Apocalypse¹ that, 'the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the Angel.' And this is manifest also from the method which the Church uses in praying; for we ask the Trinity to have mercy upon us; but we ask the Saints to pray for us." ■

Closely associated with the veneration of the Saints is the honour *Relics and images* paid to their relics and images. The principle underlying the veneration of relics is thus set out by St Thomas: "It is manifest that we should show honour to the saints of God *as being members of Christ*, the children and friends of God and our intercessors. Wherefore in memory of them we ought to honour every relic of theirs in a fitting manner: principally their bodies which were temples and organs of the Holy Ghost dwelling and operating in them, and as destined to be likened to the body of Christ by the glory of the Resurrection. Hence God himself fittingly honours such relics by working miracles at their presence." ■

A similar reason justifies the veneration of their images. The images recall the Saints to our minds, and the reverence we pay to them is simply relative, as the images themselves, considered materially, have no virtue in them on account of which they should be honoured. The honour paid to them passes to the rational persons, the Saints, whom the images represent. The purpose of the practice is explained by the second Council of Nicaea in its decree concerning sacred images: "that all who contemplate them may call to mind their prototypes, and love, salute and honour them, but not with true 'latría,' which is due to God alone. . . . For honour paid to the image passes to the prototype, and he who pays reverence to the image, pays reverence to the person it depicts." ■⁴

A final application of the doctrine of the Mystical Body may be *Indulgences* found in Indulgences.⁵ The matter is explained by St Thomas as follows:

"The reason why indulgences have value is the unity of the Mystical Body, in which many of the faithful have made satisfaction beyond what was due from them. They have borne with patience many unjust persecutions, whereby they might have expiated many temporal punishments if they had deserved them. The abundance of those merits is so great as to surpass all the temporal punishment due from the faithful on earth, and that particularly owing to the merit of Christ. That merit, although it operates in the Sacraments, is not limited to the Sacraments in its effectiveness: but its infinite value extends beyond the efficacy of the Sacraments. Now, as we have seen above,⁶ one man can make satisfaction for another. On

¹ viii 4.

³ III, Q. xxv, art. 2.

⁵ Cf. Essay xxvii: *The Sacrament of Penance*, pp. 976-980.

⁶ Q. xiii, art. 2.

■ II, IIæ, Q. lxxxiii, art. 4.

■ Denzinger, 302.

the other hand, the Saints, whose satisfactory works are superabundant, did not perform them for some one particular person (otherwise without an indulgence he would obtain remission) but in general for the whole Church, according to the words of St Paul,¹ 'I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and make up in my flesh what is lacking to the sufferings of Christ, on behalf of *his Body, which is the Church.*' And so these merits become the common property of the whole Church. Now the common property of a society is distributed to the different members of the society according to the decision of him who is at the head of the society. Consequently, as we should obtain the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, if another had undertaken to make satisfaction on our behalf, so too do we obtain it when the satisfaction of another is applied on our behalf by him who has authority to do so." ■

§ VIII : CONCLUSION

ONE of the most striking phenomena of the present development of the Church's life in the course of the last few years is the appeal made to the minds of the faithful by the doctrine of the Mystical Body. Books are being published in every tongue setting out its implications, especially in its bearing on the practice of frequent Communion, and of assisting at Mass.

The time is ripe for it. For as far as the Church at large is concerned, Protestantism is of the past, however much it may linger on in these islands. It has left us a legacy for which future generations will be grateful. The last four hundred years have witnessed a remarkable development in the working out and clear formulation of the revealed teaching concerning the Church, and more particularly of the teaching concerning the *visible* headship of the Church. The great disadvantage of the controversial treatment of any doctrine is that it involves the stressing of the controverted point to a disproportionate extent, and there is a consequent lack of attention paid to other truths. Not that those other truths are entirely lost to sight—the remarkable correlation of revealed truths, each involving and leading up to the others, which so impressed Newman, is sufficient to prevent such an oversight: but the truths which are not actually under discussion attract less attention and study, and consequently what is involved in them is not made fully explicit nor is the connection which actually does exist between them always clearly seen.

Now Catholics and Protestants alike agree that Christ is the Head of the Church—the struggle arose and has continued on the question as to whether the Pope, as Christ's Vicar on earth, was the visible Head of the Church. But even that argument was largely verbal: since the very constitution of the Church was in dispute, and the

¹ Col. i 24.

² *Summa Theol.*, III, Suppl., Q. xxv, art. 1.

character of the Headship differed fundamentally as conceived by both sides. That point, however, remained in the background, and did not attract the attention it deserved.

A second obstacle stood in the way of the development of the doctrine of Christ's Headship of the Mystical Body—involving, as it does, the full Catholic doctrine of Sanctifying Grace.

Baianism, Jansenism, and Cartesianism are all bound up with erroneous or heretical teaching concerning sanctifying grace. The influence of Cartesianism was particularly disastrous on the philosophical setting of Catholic teaching: its rejection of the distinction between substance and accidents cut away the basis of the traditional treatment of sanctifying grace and the virtues, and not a few eighteenth-century theologians took to the simple method of ignoring the supernatural accidents of the soul as mere mediæval subtleties, and that unfortunate attitude of mind made its influence felt well into the nineteenth century. This statement admits of easy historical verification: consult the text-books in use in theological seminaries in the early nineteenth century and you will be amazed at the indifference or, at least, the astonishing reserve with which the all-important doctrine of sanctifying grace is treated. Actual grace and all the interminable controversies to which it gave rise absorb all their energies. A sad practical result followed: the clergy being insufficiently instructed in these important doctrines were incapable of instilling them into the faithful, of bringing them to realise what the supernatural life is, and so were unable effectively to resist the onset of naturalism. The heavy penalty of this neglect is now being paid in many Catholic countries on the Continent.

Fortunately, happier days have dawned. These anti-Protestant polemics, necessary as they may be, do not absorb all our energies, and the stimulating and consoling truths of our supernatural life and destiny are being studied more and more, so that we may hope for a fuller development of the truths involved in Christ's Headship of his Mystical Body.

We know that the Church is a perfect society; we analyse all that that statement involves, we realise the Church's complete and entire independence of the State within her own sphere. We have defended every detail of her visible organisation against non-Catholic assault. But let us be on our guard against imagining that because we have grasped every element of her visible and of her moral constitution which Christ willed should be in order that his Church might utilise all that is best in man's human nature—that we understand Christ's Church through and through. For there still remains the most potent element of all in the supernatural constitution of the Church, that divine, all-pervading, all-guiding and directing influence interiorly exercised by Christ upon every individual member, and upon all the members collectively, bringing the individual soul into harmony with himself, and with all faithful

souls, so that, as St Paul wrote to the Ephesians :¹ " We may in all things grow up in him, who is the Head, even Christ. From whom the whole Body, being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body unto the edifying of itself in charity."

We have to strive to realise more vividly Christ's living influence in the world to-day, and the need in which we stand of it, to realise, too, the wonderful way in which Our Lord meets this need by making us, and preserving us as members of his Church, members of that Mystical Body of which he is the Head.

EDWARD MYERS.

¹ iv 15-16.

XX

THE CHURCH ON EARTH

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE purpose of this essay is to give a brief but comprehensive outline of the nature and constitution of the community of believers founded by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Christian Society with which the Catholic and Roman Church affirms her substantial identity. What is chiefly aimed at is not an apologetic defence of the Church, or even a direct vindication of her claims against those who would challenge them, but to explain the import which Catholics themselves attach to the words of the Creed: *Credo in . . . unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam*. The sources for such an exposition are the official pronouncements of the Church herself, as formulating the deliverances of Scripture and Tradition. Accordingly these will be generously drawn upon, personal comment and reflection being reduced to a minimum. Among the documents of the Church's teaching authority, Pope Pius XII's great Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*¹ now holds a place of first importance: it is a magisterial restatement of traditional doctrine in the face of the divided Christendom in which we live, and should clarify much of the contemporary confusion about the nature of the Church. From this treatise, for it is nothing less, the following pages draw their main inspiration. The preceding essay has dealt with "The Mystical Body of Christ" considered in its inner life. Here we shall be concerned to show, what is in fact one of the objects of the Encyclical, how the inner mystery of the Mystical Body is inseparably linked with the concrete juridical structure of the Catholic Church.

PART I

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: THE SOCIETY OF THE REDEEMED

§ I: CORPORATE FALL—CORPORATE REDEMPTION

THE Church of Christ did not come suddenly into existence, un-heralded and unannounced, during the lifetime of our Lord. It has its roots deep in the past, not only in the previous history of Judaism, but in the remote origins of the human race, when Adam

*Remote
origins of the
Church*

¹ 29 June, 1943. All references are to the marginal numbers in Canon G. D. Smith's translation for the Catholic Truth Society.

fell from grace and with him his whole progeny. Our first parents were not, however, left without the hope of ultimate redemption; the evil one who had compassed their downfall would finally be crushed; ¹ someone was to restore what was lost and, as we gather from subsequent prophecy, a new people would be born endowed with a life of undreamt of fulness. The connection which exists between the Church and the sinful state of man, due to Adam's disobedience, is of capital importance to understand, for it provides the key to the Church's *raison d'être*. Just as there is little evidence to suggest that the Son of God would have become incarnate had Adam not offended, so the Catholic Church as we know it would never have appeared in history but for man's being cut off from God, and at odds with his fellows, through the primal disaster of sin.

The fact of sin

Nevertheless, "where sin abounded, grace did more abound."² Sin has worked itself out in all manner of rebellion and human selfishness, but its first result, so far as Adam was concerned, was to deprive him of that state of holy innocence and integrity which he was intended to transmit to posterity. The sons of Adam were thereby robbed of God's adoptive sonship and the participation in the divine nature which should have been theirs and became instead "children of wrath."³ This was the calamity which, first and foremost, Christ came to undo.⁴ The Son of the Eternal Father took to himself a human nature, innocent and stainless, becoming as it were a "second Adam"; for from him the grace of the Holy Spirit was to flow into all the children of our first parent. Through the Incarnation of the Word men would regain their lost inheritance, become brethren according to the flesh of the only begotten Son of God, and so themselves receive the power to become the sons of God. Thus, by the great redemptive act on the Cross, not only was the Father's outraged justice placated, but an immense treasury of graces was merited for us, his kindred. These heavenly gifts might have been bestowed upon us directly; but God's plan was that they should be distributed by means of a visible Church in which we, being united together, should co-operate with him in his redemptive work. "As the Word of God vouchsafed to use our nature to redeem men by his pains and torments, in a somewhat similar way he makes use of his Church throughout the ages to perpetuate the work he had begun."⁵

Mankind, broken away by its own act from its Creator and Lord, bereft of a divine inheritance, turned in upon itself, no longer united but disintegrated and atomised, each man for himself and no man for his brother—such was the tragic state of things from which Christ came to set us free. And, in this very act of liberation, he restored

¹ Genesis iii 15.

² Romans v 20.

³ Ephesians ii 3.

⁴ Cf. Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* (hereinafter designated *MCC*),

⁵ *Ibid.*

what was lost and raised us to a supernatural destiny surpassing in splendour all human conception. "For God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son: that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting." ¹ Nor did he will to bring salvation simply by his physical presence on earth, to serve as a gracious memory for the ages to come; or even by the great act of redemption achieved on the Cross, considered as a climax to a life to which there was to be no sequel. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was to remain united to humanity, and his saving work continue, until the end of time. There was never again to be a day when man should find himself in the condition of "having no hope of the promise and without God in this world." ² The human race was to be transformed, born anew, integrated and reunited to God through the Church.

By the Incarnation a single human nature was taken up into union with God in the Person of Christ our Lord. Jesus is the Son of God by nature. The manhood of Christ is perfect and undiminished; but in Person he is none other than the Word of God himself. But he is also "the firstborn amongst many brethren"; ³ he wills that, so far as may be, we should share his divine sonship. Whereas he is the Son of God by nature, we are meant to become the sons of God by adoption. It was to enable us to be admitted as it were into his family that he lived and died. "But as many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name." ⁴ The plan he devised for carrying out this project was to continue the Incarnation through the centuries; not simply in its effects but, so to say, in its very substance. This prolongation of the Incarnation is but another name for the Church. So we find the great incarnational principle—viz., the pouring out upon the world of what is divine and spiritual through the medium of material elements—verified in every aspect of the Church's life.

From this we should be able to understand why the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church, to employ her official title, rejoices in proclaiming herself "the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ." ⁵ For she is animated by his life, co-operates with him, declares his message and distributes the fruits of his redemption; in a very real sense she suffers with him, just as one day she will triumph with him, when her supreme task of perpetuating his work throughout the ages has been accomplished.

§ II: CHRIST THE FOUNDER OF THE CHURCH

THE Mystical Body, which is the Church, took its rise from the death of Christ on Calvary. "By his death on the Cross he made void the Law with its decrees and fastened the handwriting of the Old

¹ John iii 16.

² Ephesians ii 12.

³ Romans viii 29.

⁴ John i 12.

⁵ MCC 13.

Testament to the Cross, establishing the New Testament in his blood which he shed for the whole human race.”¹ So centuries before it had been foretold ; so in fact it was fulfilled.² By the Incarnation itself our Lord had become Head of the whole human family ; but it is in virtue of his saving death that he exercises in all its fulness his Headship of the Church.³ “ It was by the victory of the Cross that he merited power and dominion over all nations.”⁴ All the graces which through the centuries were to be poured out upon the Mystical Body were won for it by this supreme act of atonement. At that moment the Church, like a second Eve, a new “ mother of all the living,”⁵ was born from the Saviour’s side.

But without prejudice to Christ’s sacrificial death as being the decisive factor, we may yet distinguish three stages in the formation of the Mystical Body. Though the Church, as a juridical institution, had no proper existence before the death of Christ, nevertheless, during his public ministry, he had outlined its constitution, described what were to be its functions and powers, and prepared the organs through which these were to be exercised. “ For while he was fulfilling his function as preacher he was choosing his Apostles, sending them as he had been sent by the Father,⁶ that is to say, as teachers, rulers and sanctifiers in the community of believers ; he was designating him who was to be their chief, and his own Vicar on earth ;⁷ he was making known to them all the things which he had heard from the Father ;⁸ he was prescribing Baptism⁹ as the means by which believers would be engrafted into the Body of the Church ; and finally, at the close of his life, he was instituting at the Last Supper the admirable sacrifice and the admirable sacrament of the Eucharist.”¹⁰

This preparatory work, as we have said above, was ratified by the redemptive act on the Cross. At that moment “ the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom,”¹¹ the Old Law was abolished and the Messianic Kingdom on earth came into being. The Church, thus brought to birth, was, so to say, formally constituted on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit animated the organism of the Mystical Body, infusing each of its organs with his own power and endowing the whole with life, vigour and abiding fruitfulness.

Thus, within the limits of the New Testament writings, we can discover three successive states of Christ’s Church : (a) an inchoative, or initial period, during the lifetime of its Founder, when

¹ MCC 28.

▪ Cf. Hebrews viii 8 ff.

² Cf. MCC 29.

⁴ St Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, III, Q. xlii, art. 1.

⁵ Genesis iii 20.

▪ John xvii 18.

⁷ Matthew xvi 18-19.

▪ John xv 15 ; xvii 8, 14.

⁹ John iii 5.

¹⁰ MCC 26.

¹¹ Matthew xxvii 51.

he announced and prepared the Kingdom of God ; ¹ (b) its foundation, beginning with the death of Jesus, by which the Old Law was done away with and the new Messianic Kingdom, the Church, instituted ; (c) its definitive existence with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost when the Church, both as a collectivity and in its individual members, became instinct with divine power, and began as a social organism the new life which was to continue "even to the consummation of the world." ²

§ III: THE RELATION BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

"RATHER we hold the truth in charity, and grow in all things unto him who is the Head, Christ. From him the whole body, welded and compacted together by means of every joint of the system, part working in harmony with part—(from him) the body deriveth its increase, unto the building up of itself in charity."³

*Christ the
Head of the
Church*

We shall now pass briefly in review the chief points of the Catholic doctrine concerning the relationship between Christ and the Church,⁴ and consider in greater detail (below, § VIII) the manner in which his Headship is exercised through his Vicar, or visible representative, the Pope, who, together with the Bishops, rules the juridical society which is the Church on earth.

It will help us to understand how Christ is the Head of the Church if we paraphrase St Thomas's teaching on the point.⁵ As

¹ The notion of "the Kingdom (perhaps, more accurately, the *Rule*) of God" is extremely rich. We find three aspects of it foreshadowed in the prophetic teaching: (i) a Kingdom that was national and at the same time universal; reigning over Israel as his chosen people, God was to extend the Kingdom to the Gentiles; (ii) a spiritual Kingdom in which the moral qualities of justice and peace were to flourish; (iii) an eschatological Kingdom, in the sense that its perfection was to come after a judgement in which the wicked were to be separated from the just. In continuity with, and development of, this doctrine, our Lord announced a Kingdom that was to be (i) no longer national but universal, embracing all peoples and times; (ii) external and social, but at the same time internal and spiritual; (iii) present, but also future and eschatological, when the good should be separated from the bad. We may note, for it is sometimes overlooked, that theologians do not identify *tout court* the Catholic Church with the Kingdom of God. The Church is the Kingdom of God *on earth*. Cf. Schultes, *De Ecclesia Catholica*, p. 41: "Nevertheless the Kingdom of Heaven (*i.e.* of God) and the Church founded upon Peter are not wholly identical. For the Church founded on Peter belongs to this world and this life: for it is founded on Peter, a mortal and terrestrial man, who will bind and loose 'on earth';—but the Kingdom of Heaven will exist when time is at an end and for all eternity."

² Matthew xxviii 20.

³ Ephesians iv 15-16 (Westminster Version).

⁴ Briefly, because the matter, which is of paramount importance, has been dealt with more fully elsewhere. See Essay xix, pp. 667 ff.

⁵ *Summa Theologica*, III, Q. viii, art. 1, "Utrum Christus sit caput Ecclesiae."

the whole Church is one Mystical Body by a similitude with man's natural body, each of whose members has its appropriate activity (as St Paul teaches in Romans xii and 1 Corinthians xii), so Christ is called the Head of the Church by a parallel with the human head. This Headship may furthermore be considered under three aspects, viz., from the point of view of order, perfection and power. To take the first, order: we note that, beginning with what is highest, the head is the principal part of a man; it is thus that we call the source or origin of anything its "head." Considered in this way, Christ has the chief place, by reason of his soul's nearness to God; he is pre-eminent in God's grace to such a degree that all others receive grace in virtue of his. This is what is implied in St Paul's words: "For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son: that he might be the firstborn amongst many brethren."¹ Secondly, in the hierarchy of perfection: St Thomas points out that, whereas in the head we find located all the interior and exterior senses, in the other parts of the body there is only the sense of touch. Similarly in Christ, as distinct from the inferior members of the Mystical Body, we find the fulness and perfection of grace.² Finally, with reference to power: just as the control of the other parts of the body resides in the head, so Christ rules over the Church's members by the influence of grace. "And of his fulness we all have received."³

Christ's influence upon the Church

In virtue of this pre-eminence our Lord "reigns in the minds and hearts of men, bending and constraining even rebellious wills to his decrees."⁴ He takes charge both of the individual soul, by reason of his intimate presence within it, and of the whole Church, enlightening and strengthening her rulers in the faithful discharge of their high office. It is by his power that the fruits of holiness are brought forth in the Church, as made manifest in the lives of the saints, with a view to "the building up of the body of Christ."⁵ Whenever sin is resisted, whenever a soul grows in holiness, whenever the Church administers her sacramental rites, "it is he himself who chooses, determines, and distributes graces to each 'according to the measure of the giving of Christ.'"⁶

His love for the Church

Of Christ's love for the Church it should be almost superfluous to speak, for it is but another aspect of his love for redeemed humanity. "Christ is the Head of the Church. He is the saviour of his body."⁷ In the illuminating words of Pius XII: "the loving knowledge with which the divine Redeemer has pursued us from the first moment of his Incarnation is such as completely to surpass all the searchings of the human mind; for by means of the beatific vision, which he enjoyed from the time he was received into the womb of the Mother

¹ Romans viii 29.

³ John i 16.

⁵ Ephesians iv 13 (Westminster Version).

⁶ *Ibid.* iv 7; MCC 49.

² Cf. John i 14.

⁴ MCC 37.

⁷ Ephesians v 23.

of God, he has for ever and continuously had present to him all the members of his mystical body, and embraced them with his saving love.”¹ Nor does that love ever grow less; our Saviour continues his redeeming work from his state of heavenly glory: “Our Head,” says St Augustine, “makes intercession for us; some members he receives, some he scourges, some he cleanses, some he consoles, some he creates, some he calls, some he calls again, some he corrects, some he renews.”²

Moreover, as the greatest pledge of this love, Christ has given us his own Spirit, the Paraclete, to be the life-force, the very “soul” of the Mystical Body. Again, it is impossible to state this doctrine more clearly than in the words of Pope Pius XII. Speaking of “the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and who in a special manner is called the ‘Spirit of Christ’ or the ‘Spirit of the Son,’”³ he continues, “For it was with this Spirit of grace and truth that the Son of God adorned his soul in the Virgin’s immaculate womb; he is the Spirit who delights to dwell in the Redeemer’s pure soul as in his favourite temple; he is the Spirit whom Christ merited for us on the Cross with the shedding of his own blood; the Spirit whom he bestowed upon the Church for the remission of sins, breathing him upon the Apostles.”⁴ And while Christ alone received this Spirit without measure,⁵ it is only according to the measure of the giving of Christ and from the fulness of Christ himself that he is bestowed upon the members of the Mystical Body.⁶ And since Christ has been glorified on the Cross his Spirit is communicated to the Church in abundant outpouring, in order that she and each of her members may grow daily in likeness to our Saviour. It is the Spirit of Christ which has made us adopted sons of God,⁷ so that one day ‘we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, may be transformed into the same image from glory to glory.’”⁸

The Holy Spirit and the Church

Where love does not find a likeness it tends to create it. So it is with the union between Christ and the Church. The Word, in taking flesh, assumed our human nature; this he did in order that his brethren according to the flesh might be made “partakers of the divine nature.”⁹ We were to be made conformable to the image of the Son of God,¹⁰ renewed according to the likeness of him who created us.¹¹ Thus all Christians have as the object of their lives the imitation of Christ, the shaping of their thought and conduct in response to his Spirit. So, in fact, the Church, as Christ’s Mystical

The Church modelled on Christ

¹ MCC 75.

² *Enarr.*, in Ps. lxxxv 5, Migne, P. L. xxxvi, 1085; quoted from MCC 57.

³ Romans viii 9; 2 Corinthians iii 17; Galatians iv 6.

⁴ Cf. John xx 22.

⁵ Cf. John iii 34.

⁶ Cf. Ephesians i 18; iv 7.

⁷ Cf. Rom. viii 14-17; Gal. iv 6-7.

⁸ 2 Cor. iii 18; MCC 54.

⁹ 2 Peter i 4.

¹⁰ Cf. Rom. viii 29.

¹¹ Cf. Col. iii 10; *vide* MCC 44.

Body, models her life upon his. "Following in the footsteps of her divine Founder, she teaches, governs and offers the divine sacrifice. Again, when she practises the evangelical counsels she portrays in herself the poverty, the obedience, and the virginity of the Redeemer. And again the manifold Orders and institutions in the Church—so many jewels with which she is adorned—show forth Christ in various aspects of his life: contemplating on the mountain, preaching to the people, healing the sick, bringing sinners to repentance, and doing good to all. No wonder, then, that during her existence on this earth she resembles Christ also in suffering persecutions, insults and tribulation."¹

*Co-operation
between Head
and members*

Finally there follows, as a consequence, the need for co-operation between Head and members. The Bridegroom and the Bride, which is the Church, must be of one mind. Our Lord invites—in a sense, he needs—our working together with him in the building up of the Mystical Body. We could not have affirmed a truth so audacious were it not for St Paul's reminder that the head of the body cannot say to the feet "I have no need of you."² That we depend utterly upon Christ our Head is clear enough: "Without me you can do nothing."³ But he has also condescended to make us joint-agents with him in the carrying out of the great redemptive plan. "By one and the same means," says Clement of Alexandria, "we both save and are saved."⁴ God need not have arranged it thus; for he lacks nothing of self-sufficiency; but in the divine liberality of One who "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant,"⁵ he has chosen this method for the greater glory of his Church.

The most striking example of this co-operation with Christ is the part played by the Blessed Virgin in man's redemption. "She, the true Queen of Martyrs, by bearing with courageous and confident heart her immense weight of sorrows, more than all Christians filled up 'those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, for his Body which is the Church.'"⁶ Within the sphere of Church government our Lord's appointment of a Vicar, or representative, on earth is a conspicuous witness to his design of delegating divine responsibility to a merely human agent. But, even in his personal capacity of direct and invisible ruler of the Church, Christ has honoured us by requiring our co-operation. "Dying on the Cross, he bestowed upon his Church the boundless treasure of the Redemption without any co-operation on her part; but in the distribution of that treasure he not only shares this work of sanctification with his spotless Bride, but wills it to arise in a certain manner out of her labour. This is truly a tremendous mystery, upon which we can never meditate enough: that the salvation of many souls depends upon the prayers and voluntary mortifications offered for that in-

¹ *MCC* 45.

² 1 Cor. xii 21.

³ John xv 5.

⁴ *Strom.* vii 21. Migne P.G. IX, 413; quoted from *MCC* 57.

⁵ Phil. ii 7.

⁶ Col. i 24; *MCC* 110.

tion by the members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, and upon the co-operation which pastors and faithful, and especially parents, must afford to our divine Saviour." ¹

§ IV: THE CHURCH: A VITAL ORGANISM

"FOR as in one body we have many members, but all the members *Diversity of function* have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ; and every one members one of another." ² The oneness of the Church does not consist in a universal sameness but, as we might have expected in a creation so beautiful as to merit the title of "Bride of Christ," ³ in a manifestation of unity in variety. There is subordination of function, diversity of office. This is most clearly to be seen in the doctrinal, sacrificial and juridical work of the Church, wherein she inherits our Lord's triple rôle of prophet, priest and king. It is evident also in the grades of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, bishops, priests and deacons, lawfully exercising their power of orders in virtue of their communion with the Pope, Vicar of Christ and successor to St Peter. But the rich and manifold life of the Mystical Body has multifarious patterns. Members of the religious orders and congregations, whether contemplative or active, or aiming at an apostolate which issues from contemplation, testify to its abundant fruitfulness. So too do the Catholic laity, more especially in their work of co-operation with the pastors of the Church. There are states of life holier than others: the episcopate, for example, as compared with the condition of the layman in the world; likewise do the religious vows offer to a select few instruments of perfection which are denied to the majority. But, in the last resort, "the Spirit breatheth where he will"; ⁴ the ultimate criterion is not official status but the measure of charity in the individual soul. ⁵ By this test the mother of a family may be more closely united to God than Pope or Bishop, a man or woman immersed in "worldly" duties than the monk or cloistered nun.

"To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ." ⁶ Thus there is a profound mystery, as well as a natural fittingness, in the variety of place and function proper to each member of the Mystical Body. We do not know, or, at best,

¹ MCC 42. Canon Smith, p. 13 in his C.T.S. pamphlet *Some Reflections on the Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, has pointed out how Pius XII "condemns a quietism which attributes all activity exclusively to the grace of God (MCC 86) and on no fewer than ten occasions insists upon the necessity of our energetic co-operation"; viz. 13, 16, 17, 42, 59, 85, 86, 88, 97, 98. Very strikingly, on the subject of reunion, the Pope himself asks for the co-operation of the faithful, "that most effective aid," to the end that "all of us may be one in the one Church which Jesus Christ founded"; *Encyclical Orientalis Ecclesiae Decus*, 9 April 1944. C.T.S. translation *Rome and the Eastern Churches*, 39-40.

² Rom. xii 4-5.

³ Cf. Apocalypse xxi 1-6; xxii 17.

⁴ John iii 8.

⁵ Cf. I Cor. xiii.

⁶ Ephesians iv 7.

can but dimly discern the rôle for which we are cast ; hence we have no material for passing judgement on one another, still less for mutual jealousy. St Paul was at pains to make this clear : " God hath set the members, every one of them, in the body as it hath pleased him." ¹ A fact which provides us with the chief motive for neighbourly charity. We are being invited to rejoice in, to show good will towards, our neighbour simply for being what he is and doing what he does. Our evil actions apart, we each make our distinctive contribution by being our own best selves and behaving accordingly. The doctrine of the Mystical Body excludes any enforced or rigid conformity to a single pattern. It teaches us to appreciate other people in their very differences from ourselves ; we are left with no grounds for assessing the worth of others, as we are all too prone to do, merely by our own individual standards.

*The
Sacraments*

The vital channels of this life of grace and charity are the Sacraments of the Church. These visible signs, effecting what they signify, minister to our spiritual needs progressively from the cradle to the grave. By Baptism we are reborn from the death of sin into the living membership of Christ's Body, the Church, and invested with a spiritual power enabling us to receive the other sacraments. Through Confirmation we are strengthened in the faith and gain spiritual maturity ; it has been well described as " the sacrament of Catholic action," as it fits us to defend the Church, conferring on us the privileges and duties of a soldier of Jesus Christ. To enable us to recover from the sins into which we may have fallen after Baptism we have been given the sacrament of Penance. Supreme among them all is the Eucharist, the sacrament *par excellence* of the Mystical Body, whereby we are continually nourished and united ever more closely with its Head. Lastly, to console us in mortal sickness, there is the comfort of Extreme Unction. Sometimes, if God so wills, it effects the restoration of bodily health ; always it ministers a supernatural balm to the wounded soul and prepares it for entry into heaven.

So much for our needs as individuals. For the benefit of the Church's social life our Lord instituted the two sacraments of Matrimony and Holy Order. Through the first the parties in marriage minister to each other the graces needful for their state. By this means is sanctified the whole process by which the Christian community gathers increase. The mutual love between man and wife is raised to the supernatural level of divine charity and the welfare of their offspring, especially in regard to that religious education which is of such moment to the growth of the Mystical Body, is safeguarded. Holy Order, finally, " consecrates to the perpetual service of God those who are destined to offer the Eucharistic Victim, to nourish the flock of the faithful with the Bread of Angels and with the food of doctrine, to guide them by the divine commandments

¹ 1 Cor. xii 18 ; but see whole passage 14-21 and 27.

and counsels, and to fortify them by their supernatural functions." ¹ Thus the whole sacramental system is designed to ensure the prosperity of the Mystical Body on earth, to enable it to grow and gather strength "unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ."²

§ V: THE VISIBLE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH

JUST as all men of good will who came into contact with our Lord *The Church* were able to know him for what he was, the Son of the living God,³ *a visible society* so it must be equally possible for them to recognise his Church as a divine institution. For the claims of the Church upon the world's attention are no less imperative than those of Christ himself. Indeed it is the Church's boast that she is, in her very constitution, "a perpetual motive of credibility and unassailable witness to her own divine mission."⁴ Whence it follows that she must be a society visible to all as an unmistakable concrete fact. Not that we shall be led to expect the sort of visibility proper to a building or landscape; rather must we look for certain marks or notes characteristic of the Church whereby she can be clearly and definitely apprehended by the mind for what she is. Thus, for example, when we hear of a book entitled "The History of the English People," though it may suggest to the imagination no very clear-cut picture, we know that its subject-matter is nothing vague and intangible; it is a reality as intelligible in its own order, as susceptible of scrutiny, as anything which comes within the range of sense observation. So it is with the Church. She is "a city seated on a mountain,"⁵ challenging men's gaze, proclaiming her own authenticity to those who will pause to examine.

Curiously enough, this claim of the Church to be a visible society *Hostility to this doctrine* has proved a stumbling-block to many. In the Middle Ages the Fraticelli thought they had discovered two Churches, one "carnal," the other "spiritual," while Wycliff and the Hussites vigorously opposed the notion of a Church that could be visible. In the same line of thought lies Luther's restriction of the Church to the Communion of Saints, and Calvin's to the number of the predestined. All these theories were devised to justify the repudiation of traditional Christianity as embodied in Catholicism. Analogous to them is the modern antithesis between "the religion of authority" and "the religion of the spirit"; likewise the familiar distinction drawn by idealists between the "institutional" and "mystical" elements in religion.

It is not to our present purpose to discriminate the amount of *The Church* truth which lies concealed in these fundamental aberrations. All *and mysticism*

¹ MCC 19.

² Ephesians iv 13.

³ Cf. Matt. xvi 16.

⁴ Vatican Council: Constitution *de fide catholica*, cap. 3; Denzinger,

⁵ Matt. v 14.

heresy is an isolating of a part of the Christian inheritance and setting it in opposition to the whole, a principle which is conspicuously verified in every attempt to concentrate attention on the hidden riches of the Church to the exclusion of what is visible. But it is worth remarking that there is an all but ineradicable tendency in certain minds, not least among the loftier and more intellectual, to show devotion to the spiritual by contempt for the material. The Manichean dualism, reproduced in a different form in the Platonic and neo-Platonic philosophical tradition, which has deeply influenced sections of Christian thought, bears striking witness to this. There is evidence of it also in the widespread, contemporary interest in "mysticism," as divorced from Christian faith and worship. The neo-mystics professedly inveigh against "established Christianity," which is alleged to have "failed," but in fact their revolt is against the Incarnation itself. Now, as to the intellectuals in St Paul's day, the notion of a God who so loved sinners as to identify himself with them in visible humanity is "foolishness."¹

The Catholic Church, though she gives scope to the highest aspirations of mysticism, provided it is based on an acknowledgement of sin and the need for salvation, is concerned with the eternal welfare of all mankind, not of a select group. And men in the mass need to approach the things of the spirit through the medium of what they can see and hear and touch. So the Church comes before them, as did Christ himself, with evidence which testifies to divinity, in lineaments recognisable by all who have eyes to see. As our Lord pointed to his life's work in proof of the validity of his claims,² so

¹ I Cor. i 18 ff. One of the objects of the Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* was the refutation of this error; cf. 9, 62, 63. "We therefore deplore and condemn also the calamitous error which invents an imaginary Church, a society nurtured and shaped by charity, with which it disparagingly contrasts another society which it calls juridical. Those who make this totally erroneous distinction fail to understand that it was one and the same purpose—namely, that of perpetuating on this earth the salutary work of the Redemption—which caused the divine Redeemer both to give the community of human beings founded by him the constitution of a society perfect in its own order, provided with all its juridical and social elements, and also, with the same end in view, to have it enriched by the Holy Spirit with heavenly gifts and powers. It is true that the Eternal Father willed it to be the 'kingdom of the Son of his love' (Col. i 13), but he willed it to be a true kingdom, one, that is, in which all believers would yield the complete homage of their intellect and will, and with humble and obedient hearts be likened to him who for us 'became obedient unto death' (Phil. ii 8). Hence there can be no real opposition or incompatibility between the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit and the juridical office which Pastors and Teachers have received from Christ. Like body and soul in us, the two realities are complementary and perfect each other, both having their origin in our one and the same Saviour who not only said, as he breathed the divine Spirit upon the Apostles: 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost' (John xx 22), but also enjoined aloud: 'As the Father hath sent me, I also send you' (xx 21); and again: 'He that heareth you heareth me' (Luke x 16)"—MCC 63; see also 64-66.

² John x 25.

does his Mystical Body exhibit to the world the distinctive qualities of unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity as warranting her divine origin.

UNITY.—To speak of the Church as the Body of Christ is to *The Church's* proclaim her unity, her undividedness. No truth was dearer to the *unity* heart of St Paul than this: "We, being many, are one body in Christ."¹ This oneness was not simply ■ unity of ideals and aspirations, or even that union in charity for which our Lord prayed at the Last Supper,² indispensable though that is if we are to be wholly united to him; rather was it a surrender to the complete "mind of Christ."³ The Church was one because her most sacred rite was one,⁴ because her Lord, her faith, her baptism was one.⁵ The Church worshipped "One God and Father of all";⁶ hence her unity was not a prospect set before her to be realised in the remote future; it was a mark of her constitution from the beginning. The unity promised by Christ was that proper to the society of his followers, to be manifested visibly in the unanimous profession of one faith, the performance of one act of worship, the acceptance of one system of government.

Both the divine and human elements in the Church alike demand her unity. She comes from the Triune God, the one and the true, in whom disunion is unthinkable, and shares in a manner the oneness of the life of the Godhead. This life is given to us through grace, faith, hope and charity, created gifts emanating from the depths of the Blessed Trinity and raising us up to a supernatural union with God. On the other hand, the unity of the human race, the whole of which is intended to be incorporated into the Mystical Body, demands a Church that is manifestly one and undivided. Moreover, the fact that there is no approach to God save through Christ, that he is the "one mediator of God and men,"⁷ reinforces the need for unity. He is the only door to God's sheepfold;⁸ we cannot hope to please the Father except in so far as he sees us in his Son.

HOLINESS.—No less evident a mark of the Church than her unity *The Church's* is the note of holiness. Christ's sanctifying mission demands that *holiness* the organised society, which is its instrument, should share in the sanctity of its Founder. We have express evidence that, in its consummated state at least, he willed it to be "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle,"⁹ and that he himself sanctified it for this very purpose.¹⁰ The Holy Spirit, who is the living source of holiness, had been promised to it for ever.¹¹ Sanctity means the dedication of ourselves and all our actions to God; it implies freedom from sin and impurity and the possession of grace, whereby the whole direction of our lives is brought into harmony with the divine

¹ Rom. xii 5.

⁴ 1 Cor. x 17.

⁷ 1 Tim. ii 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* vv 23-30.

² John xvii 21.

⁵ Ephesians iv 5.

⁸ John x 1.

¹¹ John xiv 16-17.

³ 1 Cor. ii 16.

⁶ *Ibid.* 6.

⁹ Ephesians v 27.

commandments. Accordingly the Church presents herself to the world as the fellowship in which this happy state of things may be realised. Her claim is that, on the authority of our Lord himself and as informed by his Spirit, she teaches what is holy both in doctrine and in conduct, that she offers the means whereby this may be put into practical effect, and that, despite the exceptions which prove the rule,¹ her teaching conspicuously bears fruit throughout her membership.

The fact that the Church proclaims the Gospel of Christ is in itself sufficient proof of the holiness of her teaching. From him she was given her mandate² and the promise of the Spirit's guiding presence.³ Our Lord himself claims to have received his doctrine from the Father and to teach only within the limits of that commission. "When you shall have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am he and that I do nothing of myself. But as the Father hath taught me, these things I speak."⁴ This message thereafter passed into the keeping of his Body, the Church, as witness St Paul's complete assurance on the point: "As we said before, so now I say again: If anyone preach to you a gospel, besides that which you have received, let him be anathema. . . . For I give you to understand, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For neither did I receive it of man: nor did I learn it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."⁵

Moreover, by means of her sacramental system, the Church effectively produces in her members the holiness which she preaches. She cleanses them from original guilt by Baptism, strengthens them by Confirmation, absolves them by Penance, and crowns these and other instruments of grace with the Holy Eucharist, the supreme sacrament and sacrifice of the Mystical Body, containing the living presence of Christ himself. This is the method by which the Saviour "who gave himself for us" fulfils for each individual his plan "that he might redeem us from all iniquity and might cleanse to himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works."⁶ In this people, which is the Church, we find realised the fruits of the Spirit, the source of sanctity: "charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity."⁷ With justice does the Vatican Council attribute to the Church "a marvellous holiness, an inexhaustible fecundity in all good things."⁸

CATHOLICITY.—The Fathers of the Council referred also to the "wonderful propagation" and "Catholic unity"⁹ of the Church.

¹ It need hardly be said that the Church's sanctity does not imply universal sinlessness. There is no incompatibility between this doctrine and the ready admission of "the lamentable tendency of individuals towards evil, a tendency which her divine Founder suffers to exist even in the higher members of his mystical Body." *MCC* 64; *cf.* 65, 66.

² *Matt.* xxviii 19-20; *cf.* *Luke* x 16.

³ *John* viii 28.

⁴ *John* viii 28.

⁷ *Gal.* v 22-23.

⁵ *Gal.* i 9, 11-12.

⁸ *Denzinger*, 1794.

³ *John* xiv 16.

⁶ *Titus* ii 14.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Not only is she one and undivided, but her unity is conspicuously diffused throughout all mankind. Hence she possesses a universality by which she appears as a constituted society in every part of the world. The Church's catholicity¹ was to pass gradually from the sphere of legal right to that of accomplished fact, as conditioned by the circumstances of time and place in which she finds herself. That the Church was intended to grow to full stature, not suddenly but by a process of gradual development, is clearly indicated by our Lord's parables of the mustard seed² and the leaven.³ But it is no less clear that this catholicity, far from arising as it were by an accident of history, was part of the divine plan from the beginning. The whole scheme of the redemption demands it; all division of nation against nation, free man against slave, is to be transcended. "There is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus."⁴ To this objective the Apostles had been directed from the outset of their ministry: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature."⁵ And forthwith they set out to achieve it: "But they going forth preached everywhere: the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed."⁶

APOSTOLICITY.—As a consequence of this Apostolic mission there follows, as a property and distinguishing characteristic of Christ's Mystical Body, its identity and continuity with the Church of the Apostles. In express words he built it upon the rock-foundation of the twelve,⁷ and pre-eminently of Peter.⁸ Whence there is to be looked for in the Church a legitimate, public and uninterrupted succession of pastors, heirs, as it were, of the Apostles, and in agreement with them in faith, worship and Church government. This condition of things is implicit in our Lord's manifest desire that his Church should remain substantially as he had founded it "even to the consummation of the world."⁹ Indeed such a continuity is

*The Church's
apostolicity*

¹ The phrase "Catholic Church" first appears in St Ignatius of Antioch († 117), *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* viii 2—"wheresoever Christ Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church." The word "Catholic" is Greek (καθ' ὅλον) and means "universal," or, literally, "according to the whole." Whence it follows that the Church can be called "Catholic" in a variety of senses: with reference to, first, *place*, inasmuch as she is diffused throughout the world; secondly, *time*, because she will always exist; thirdly, *peoples*, having members of every tribe, nation and tongue; fourthly, *conditions of men*, for neither masters nor slaves, neither wise nor foolish, are excluded from her fold; fifthly, *doctrine*, in that she possesses the entire teaching of Christ in its unimpaired truth; sixthly, *the means of salvation*, because, as the whole of Christ's Passion operates within her, she possesses a remedy against the spiritual ills of all men; seventhly, *the obligation and necessity of embracing the Church* which bears upon all, as she is the divinely appointed means for their salvation. Cf. Schultes, *De Ecclesia Catholica*, p. 179.

² Matt. xiii 31-32.

³ *Ibid.* 33.

⁴ Gal. iii 28.

⁵ Mark xvi 15.

⁶ *Ibid.* 20.

⁷ Matt. xviii 18; John xx 21.

⁸ Matt. xvi 18; John xxi 15-17.

⁹ Matt. xxviii 20.

demanding by the Church's oneness. To have departed from its original constitution would mean that the unity of the Mystical Body had been broken; that which St Paul regarded as an impossibility—the "division" of Christ¹—would have come about.

Thus we see that each of the properties of the Church emanates from the first and most evident of them all, its oneness. Catholicity is, so to say, the diffusion throughout the world of the Church's unity, a witness to the divine efficacy and power within her. Holiness demonstrates the world-wide fruitfulness of the life of the Church, disclosing her as the effective instrument of men's salvation. Apostolicity, in making clear the line of continuity with the primitive Church, points at the same time to her divine origin. Whence we catch a glimpse of the immense significance of the words of the Creed wherein we proclaim our faith: in *unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam*.

§ VI: MEMBERSHIP

"FOR in one Spirit were we all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free."² We have now to examine the conditions for membership of Christ's Mystical Body. What is it that makes us "fellow citizens with the saints and domestics of God"?³ Not a few erroneous answers have been given to this question. The Donatists in the fifth century, for example, maintained that only the "just"—or, as we should say nowadays, those in a state of grace—belonged to the Church. Others, notably Wycliff and Hus, have limited Church membership to the predestined; nor do Luther and Calvin, in this respect at least, seem to have held a different view.

Pius XII has reaffirmed in the clearest language what are the conditions for membership of the Church. "Only those are to be accounted really members of the Church who have been regenerated in the waters of Baptism and profess the true faith, and have not cut themselves off from the structure of the Body by their own unhappy act or been severed therefrom, for very grave crimes, by the legitimate authority." The Pope then cites the words of St Paul to the Corinthians with which this section opens and continues: "Hence, as in the true communion of the faithful there is but one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, and one Baptism, so there can be only one faith; and therefore whoever refuses to hear the Church must, as the Lord commanded, be considered as the heathen and publican. It follows that those who are divided from one another in faith or government cannot be living in the one Body so described, and by its one divine Spirit."⁴

¹ I Cor. i 13.

² I Cor. xii 13.

³ Ephesians ii 19.

⁴ MCC 21. The following is the Latin text of this highly significant passage: In Ecclesiae autem membris ii soli annumerandi sunt, qui regenerationis lavacrum receperunt veramque fidem profitentur, neque a Corporis compage semet ipsos misere separarunt, vel ob gravissima admissa a legitima

That it is through the reception of Baptism that we "put on Christ" ¹ is the Church's constant teaching, ² and the Code of Canon Law ³ lays it down that it is precisely by this means that we become a "person" in the Church with all the rights and duties of Christians. By Baptism we are incorporated in Christ and made his members; we attain a state of grace and become the adopted sons of God, all our sins being remitted, both that which we inherit from Adam and those of which we are personally guilty. Furthermore Baptism imprints on the soul a "character"—described by St Thomas as a "spiritual power" ⁴—which provides us as it were with a title to the reception of the other sacraments.

Sinners, as such, are not deprived of their membership of the Church. ⁵ It is true that, having lost baptismal innocence, they are now but imperfectly incorporated in Christ; for, though they retain supernatural faith and the baptismal character, they lack the sanctifying grace and charity which give full and living membership. They are, so to say, "putrefied" members, but, as long as they are on earth, not beyond revivification from the Church's inexhaustible treasury of graces. That our Lord did not wish to exclude sinners from membership of his Mystical Body is clearly indicated by his own words. "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill" ⁶ . . . "For I came not to call the just, but sinners." ⁷ The parables of the lost sheep and the prodigal son offer a moving illustration of the same point. ⁸

Nevertheless the melancholy possibility must be envisaged of those who may have "cut themselves off from the structure of the Body by their own unhappy act or been severed therefrom, for very grave crimes, by the legitimate authority." ⁹ In other words, the Church, as being a perfectly constituted society, has the right for grave reasons of excluding from membership. She may pass sentence of, or lay down conditions which involve, excommunication. This carries with it the deprivation of rights and privileges enjoyed by those in communion with the faithful. ¹⁰ But such a juridical penalty does not wholly nullify membership of the Church, still less does it necessarily imply the final condemnation before God of the

Sin does not exclude from membership

Excommunication, apostasy, heresy, schism

auctoritate seiuncti sunt. Etenim "in uno Spiritu," ait Apostolus, "omnes nos in unum corpus baptizati sumus, sive Iudaei, sive gentiles, sive servi sive liberi" (1 Cor. xii 13). Sicut igitur in vero christifidelium coetu unum tantummodo habetur Corpus, unus Spiritus, unus Dominus et unum Baptisma, sic haberi non potest nisi una fides (cf. Eph. iv 5); atque adeo qui Ecclesiam audire renuerit, iubente Domino habendus est ut ethnicus et publicanus (cf. Matt. xviii 17). Quamobrem qui fide vel regimine invicem dividuntur, in uno eiusmodi Corpore, atque uno eius divino Spiritu vivere nequeunt.

¹ Gal. iii 27.

² *Codex Iuris Canonici*, can. 87.

³ MCC 22.

⁴ Mark ii 17.

⁵ MCC 21.

² Denzinger, 696, 895.

⁴ III, Q. lxiii, art. 2.

⁶ Matt. ix 12.

⁸ Luke xv.

¹⁰ C.I.C. can. 2257-2267.

excommunicated person. Certain sins—viz., apostasy, heresy and schism¹—of their nature cut off the guilty from the living Body of Christ. Apostasy is a form of spiritual suicide, being the complete and voluntary abandonment of the Christian faith which one once professed. Heresy, objectively considered, is a doctrinal proposition which contradicts an article of faith; from the subjective point of view it may be defined as an error concerning the Catholic faith, freely and obstinately persisted in by a professing Christian. Schism consists in a refusal of subjection to the Vicar of Christ, the Pope, in whose office the source of the Church's visible unity is embodied, or a withdrawal from communion with the faithful subject to him. It can hardly be denied that those who take up any of these positions—most evidently is this the case with the deliberate apostate—sever themselves by their own act from membership of the Church.

Non-Catholics in good faith

The necessity of belonging to the Catholic Church in order to obtain salvation is a dogma based on the words of our Lord himself: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned."² But here we must remark briefly upon the position of non-Catholics in good faith.³ Even such authorities as Suarez and the theologians of Salamanca, writing at a time when, and in a country where, Catholicism reigned supreme, were prepared to allow that there could be heretics and infidels so untouched by Christian influences as to experience no doubt about the truth of their own religious tenets.⁴ The possibility of a sincere adherence to error is clearly recognised by the Church. Pope Pius IX has declared that, taking into account all the circumstances of time and place in which individuals might find themselves, as well as of their capacity to understand, it would be presumptuous to set limits to the possibilities of invincible ignorance of the true Church.⁵ The recognition of this fact, however, can do nothing to attenuate the Church's often repeated teaching that it is necessary for all men to belong to her explicitly.⁶

The "soul" and "body" of the Church

It has sometimes been argued that non-Catholics in good faith may be said to belong to the *soul*, as distinguished from the body, of the Church. In the previous essay it has been pointed out that this is not an entirely satisfactory way of viewing the matter, as the distinction in question is not free from ambiguity. It lends itself to the false antithesis between an "invisible" and "visible" Church,

¹ Can. 1325, § 2.

² Mark xvi 15-16.

³ That is to say, the much misunderstood doctrine of *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*: "no salvation outside the Church." For the meaning of "good faith" see the article "Bonne Foi" in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, tome ii, cols. 1009-1019.

⁴ Suarez, *De Fide*, disp. XVII, sect. ii, n. 6; Salamanticenses, *Cursus theologicus dogmaticus*, tr. XVII, disp. ix, n. 9.

⁵ Denzinger, 1647.

⁶ Denzinger, 423, 468, 714, 1646-1647, 1716 and 1717.

and suggests that one might belong to Christ's Mystical Body without being incorporated, simultaneously and in the same degree, in the visible Catholic Church—which is impossible. Moreover, the "soul" of the Church, according to tradition, is the Holy Spirit, by whose power the Mystical Body is animated.¹ Although, from a slightly different viewpoint, we may also consider the created effects of the Spirit's activity—viz., the vital organism made up of grace, the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit—as being the source of the Church's supernatural life,² and to that extent her "soul." But limitations of space preclude a detailed examination of the relevance of this doctrine to the position of non-Catholics in good faith. Here we shall be content to summarise the generally accepted teaching on a question of great theological difficulty.

The whole tenor of the Church's official documents makes it *Membership by desire* clear that, apart from two cases, it is necessary for salvation to belong explicitly (*in re*) to the Catholic Church. The two exceptions, wherein membership of the Church by desire (*in voto*) suffices, are the following: (i) In the event of the impossibility of Baptism, which is always necessary for membership, being effectively received. Since, according to the teaching of the Council of Trent (Session VI, cap. iv),³ the desire for Baptism (contained in the act of charity) can suffice for the soul's regeneration, it is clear that the desire for membership of the Church, which is made effective by this sacrament, can likewise suffice. And this holds good both for catechumens, who are prevented from receiving the sacrament owing to some insuperable obstacle, and for converts from heresy whose antecedent Baptism may be uncertain and who are impeded by the like extremity from the actual reception of the sacrament. (ii) The Church teaches no less clearly that actual membership of the Catholic Church is not necessary for the salvation of those in invincible ignorance of her true nature. This is stated expressly in the consistorial allocution *Singulari quadam* of Pius IX, 9 December 1854,⁴ and in his Encyclical to the Italian Bishops, 10 August 1863.⁵ It follows therefore that in this case also to belong to the Church *in voto* suffices for salvation.⁶

But, when rightly understood, these seeming exceptions serve *Necessity of belonging to the Church explicitly* to emphasise rather than diminish the universal urgency of full and explicit membership of the Catholic Church. "We invite them all," writes Pope Pius XII,⁷ alluding to the whole non-Catholic world, "each and everyone, to yield their free consent to the inner stirrings of God's grace and strive to extricate themselves from a state in which they cannot be secure of their own eternal salvation; for, though they may be related to the Mystical Body of the Redeemer by some unconscious yearning and desire, yet they are deprived

¹ Cf. MCC 55.

² *Ibid.*, 56.

³ Denzinger, 796.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1647.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1677.

⁶ Cf. art. "Église" in *D.T.C.*, tome iv, cols. 2166-2167.

⁷ MCC 102.

of those many great and heavenly gifts and aids which can be enjoyed only in the Catholic Church. Let them enter Catholic unity, therefore, and joined with us in the one organism of the Body of Jesus Christ, hasten together to the one Head in the fellowship of most glorious love. We cease not to pray for them to the Spirit of love and truth, and with open arms we await them, not as strangers but as those who are coming to their own father's home."

PART II

THE JURIDICAL STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

§ VII: PRELIMINARY: THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

The inner life of the Church and its outward structure inseparable

WE must now consider how Christ rules the Church visibly through his Vicar, the Pope, and the Bishops in their respective dioceses. Nor shall we lose sight of the fact that "in the first place, in virtue of the juridical mission by which the divine Redeemer sent forth his Apostles into the world as he himself had been sent by the Father,¹ it is indeed he who baptises through the Church, he who teaches, governs, absolves, binds, offers, makes sacrifice."² Although it must be admitted that "the structure of the Christian society, proof though it is of the wisdom of the divine Architect, is nevertheless something of a completely lower order in comparison with the spiritual gifts which enrich it and give it life,"³ we have seen how complete is the error of those who would detach the inner mystery of the Mystical Body from the outward framework of the Church.⁴ Both are so closely connected that it is impossible truly to love the one without loving the other;⁵ they are as integral to the Church as body and soul to man, as divinity and humanity to Christ, who is the Head and Pattern of his Church.⁶

Powers conferred by Christ on his Church

To enable the Church to carry out Christ's commission of leading mankind to salvation she has been vested by him with a threefold power, corresponding to his own office of Prophet, Priest and King: that of teaching, her *doctrinal* authority; that of order, her *ministerial* authority; that of government, her *jurisdictional* authority. We may note in passing that some theologians make further subdivisions within these three powers and arrange them differently,⁷ while others point out that they are fundamentally reducible to two, that of order and that of jurisdiction.⁸ But the classification here given⁹

¹ John xvii 18; xx 21.

² MCC 52.

³ *Ibid.* 61.

⁴ Cf. p. 685; cf. MCC 63.

⁵ *Ibid.* 91.

⁶ *Ibid.* 62.

⁷ Schultes, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-332.

⁸ Billot, *De Ecclesia Christi* (tome i, editio 5), pp. 339-342.

⁹ Cf. Tanquerey, *Synopsis Theologiæ Dogmaticæ* (tome i, editio 23),

perhaps lends itself to the clearest treatment in the space at our disposal. Further, as the power of order, which is concerned directly with the sanctification of the Church, is discussed elsewhere in this volume,¹ there remain for our consideration only the Church's (a) doctrinal authority and (b) jurisdictional authority.

(a) Doctrinal Authority

The doctrinal authority, or *magisterium*, with which Christ has equipped his Church includes all the rights and privileges necessary for the effective teaching of divine revelation and guarding intact the deposit of faith. He has willed that the human race as a whole should acquire God's truth, not by individual inspiration, nor by the private interpretation of Scripture, but by attending to the living voice of the Church. Hence, as a corollary, he has ensured that that voice shall not err; in other words, he has endowed his Church with the gift of infallibility. This infallibility extends, in principle, to the tradition of Christian belief (*faith*) and the manner of life (*morals*); it is concerned with what men must believe, and what they must do, if they are to be saved.

*The infallible
magisterium
of the Church*

As, however, the Church derives her teaching on these points from the original deposit, "the faith once delivered to the saints,"² she must know how to preserve her sacred trust from contamination by "philosophy and vain deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world and not according to Christ."³ That is to say, the teaching Church (*Ecclesia docens*) may pass an infallible judgement, not only upon truths of revelation, but on matters so intimately connected with those truths that, were an authoritative decision upon them lacking, men's hold upon revelation itself would be endangered. Such activities as the formulation of creeds, the public condemnation of errors, the prohibition of certain books as dangerous to faith and morals, are all functions of the Church's doctrinal magisterium. It is by the same authority that she sends out missionaries, both to the faithful and to unbelievers, that she opens her schools and, in general, supervises with such vigilance the education of the young.

But, as it has often been misunderstood, we must examine in greater detail the meaning and extent of the Church's infallibility. We recall that it has for its object all the truths, collectively and individually, which are formally contained in the sources of divine revelation; indirectly it bears also upon such other truths as are necessary for our knowledge so that the deposit of revelation may be safeguarded. Be it noted that infallibility is a gift, a *charism*, bestowed upon the Church, the effect of which is to exclude the possibility of error from her teaching with regard to faith and morals. It implies

*The nature
of infalli-
bility*

¹ Essay xxix: *The Sacrament of Order*.

² Jude 3.

³ Col. ii 8; cf. 1 Tim. vi 20.

the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and so may be called a supernatural grace ; ¹ its function, however, is not, as such, to sanctify the Church or her individual members, but to ensure that she does not teach false doctrine. Infallibility should further be carefully distinguished from *revelation* and *inspiration*. Revelation is the new manifestation of truth by God. Scriptural inspiration implies a divine prompting of the sacred author in the very act of writing, so that what results is literally the "word of God," even though what is contained in it need not always be a revelation. Or, to put the matter another way : revelation belongs exclusively to God ; inspiration is a joint divine-human act, the writer playing the rôle of God's instrument ; infallibility, as being proper to the Church and the Roman Pontiff, concerns a human activity wherein God is neither revealer nor inspirer, but in which he assists (*Deo adiutore*).

In the popular mind it is *Papal* infallibility which most arrests attention. But it should be remembered that, when the Pope defines infallibly, he does so as the mouthpiece or organ of an infallible Church. Technically, he may use his official prerogative without first consulting the Church ; nor do his decrees depend for their validity upon the Church's subsequent ratification ; but he cannot be thought of as defining doctrine *apart* from the Church—for " he enjoys that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed *his Church* to be endowed." ² Infallibility, then, belongs fundamentally to the Church, and to the Pope in his capacity of visible Head of the Church. In harmony with the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, it is a gift bestowed upon Head and members. Thus the Church enjoys not only an *active* infallibility in teaching, but also a *passive* infallibility in believing.

The *direct object* of the Church's infallibility includes, in addition to the revealed truths, such matters as the drawing up of the official Creeds or Symbols, the determination of the terms to be employed in dogmatic canons and definitions, the manner of interpreting Scripture and Tradition, the decision as to what is to be included in the Canon of Scripture, the condemnation of heresy. All these are but instruments for the expression and clarification of revealed truth ; were the Church deprived of them her doctrinal authority would be nullified and without effect. Accordingly they form an indispensable part of the Church's teaching office.

We must now briefly summarise the implications of what theologians call the *indirect object* of infallibility. This covers *inter alia* matters which, strictly speaking, are the concern of the natural philosopher, but error in which would undermine the rational structure on which faith is built ; *e.g.* the spirituality of the soul, which is the natural foundation for its immortality and future life. On occasion the Church, without stigmatising ■ proposition harmful

¹ *Gratia gratis data* ; cf. I-II, Q. III, art. 1.

² Denzinger, 1839.

to faith and morals as *heretical*, will attach to it a censure such as, *proximate to heresy, erroneous in faith, false*; in so doing she judges infallibly, for she thus defines, though negatively, a truth as closely affecting divine revelation.

Dogmatic facts fall likewise within the scope of this infallibility. These concern such information as is necessary for our knowledge if our belief in dogma itself is to be safeguarded; e.g. the legitimacy of a Pope, the oecumenicity of a General Council. Clearly, were there uncertainty on such points, we should have no guarantee of the authenticity of doctrinal definitions emanating from these sources. Similarly the Church can decide infallibly whether a given book, objectively considered, contains orthodox or heterodox doctrine—and this without prejudice to what the author *meant* to say. Thus the Fathers at Nicaea condemned the *Thalia* of Arius, and Innocent X certain propositions from the *Augustinus* of Jansen. The moral precepts of the Church, as affecting the conduct of all the faithful, are backed by her infallibility; so also is the Church's definitive approval of the various Religious Orders. Though what is here guaranteed is the essential goodness of what is proposed, the fidelity with which a given religious rule reflects the evangelical counsels, but not necessarily its suitability for all times and places; since this is a matter, not of infallibility, but of practical prudence. In the same connection the Church exercises her infallibility in the solemn canonisation of saints. For it is unthinkable that the lives of those whom the Church upholds as models of heroic sanctity should be other than she declares them to be.

We have yet to touch upon a subject which, after the original deposit of faith itself, first engages the attention of the Church's doctrinal authority, viz., *theological conclusions*, sometimes called *truths virtually revealed*. They are propositions not formally contained in, but deduced from, divine revelation. Often the mind reaches them by means of a reasoning process, or syllogism, of which one premise is known by faith, the other by reason. For instance, that "God will render to each according to his works" is a truth formally revealed. With this I may connect the thought: "God can only so act on the supposition that man is free," and draw from these two statements together the inference: "Therefore man is free." This is a theological conclusion. Some famous examples of truths arrived at in this way are the following: "Christ never lacked efficacious grace"; "Christ is impeccable"; "Christ's knowledge is immune from error." Now these conclusions fall within the scope of the Church's infallibility. In a matter so closely connected with the deposit of faith, involving also the whole process of the development of dogma,¹ it is imperatively demanded that the Church should have the deciding voice; without it her teaching authority

¹ See Essay i, *Faith and Revealed Truth*, pp. 33-5.

would be gravely deficient. Finally, we should note that infallibility in this connection guarantees that the truth in question is in fact virtually ¹ revealed, but it says nothing about the validity of the arguments by which the mind may have deduced it. The charism of infallibility safeguards, not the reasoning processes of theologians, but what the Pope and Bishops, as custodians of divine revelation, teach to the faithful throughout the world.

(b) *Jurisdictional Authority* ²

In addition to her authority to teach men the way of salvation the Church has been given effective power to guide them along its course. The right to rule, no less than the right to teach, is an integral part of her saving mission. So Christ very clearly laid it down: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." ³ "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven." ⁴ "Going therefore, teach ye all nations . . . *teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" ⁵ We shall see more clearly how this power of rulership is exercised when we come to consider the functions of the Pope and the Bishops, in whom it is chiefly vested. For the moment we may note that the practical government of the Church falls under three heads: the authority which she possesses is legislative, judicial and coercive.

Legislative
authority

The Church's *legislative authority*, as its name implies, means that she has power to make laws binding in conscience, for the general good of the Christian community. It includes also the right to impose precepts; that is, to apply the law to individuals in the form of a command. Every properly constituted society must, from the nature of the case, be able to legislate for its members. Least of all can this right be denied to the Church, which is a divine society organised for the most vitally significant of purposes: the eternal salvation of mankind. Nor may it be objected that the words of Christ and the precepts of the Gospel should be sufficient without any further commandments being added. It is true that the fundamental principles of the Christian law are to be found in these sources; but the Church has been promised the assistance of the Holy Spirit in adapting, interpreting and developing these for the benefit of the

¹ Or *mediately*, as distinguished from *immediately* (i.e. formally), revealed. The theologians further distinguish, within the sphere of formal or immediate revelation, between what is *explicitly* and what is *implicitly* revealed. But this complex, though highly important, subject cannot be pursued further here. Cf. Schultes, *Introductio in historiam dogmatum*, pp. 99-115; 166-179; F. Marin-Sola, *L'Evolution homogène du Dogme Catholique*, I, pp. 61 *et seq.*

² The Church's jurisdictional authority, strictly speaking, includes her doctrinal authority; for she teaches by divine *right* (*ius*). We here use the term in its more restricted sense of *power of rulership* (*potestas regendi seu regiminis*); to be distinguished again from the power of order.

³ John xx 21.

⁴ Matt. xviii 18.

⁵ Matt. xxviii 19-20.

faithful according to the diversity of time and place. Confident of the divine guidance, she has exercised this prerogative from the beginning, *e.g.*, in the decrees of the apostolic assembly at Jerusalem with regard to the Mosaic observance,¹ as also in the so-called "Pauline privilege."² So the Church has continued to act through the ages, assured that her charism of infallibility will protect her from enacting what is contrary to Christ's Gospel.

As a consequence of the Church's power to legislate there follows her *judicial authority*. This may be defined as the right, and duty, of deciding definitively in a given case the true meaning of her own laws, and of the conformity, or non-conformity, of the actions of her subjects with the law. Our Lord himself gave an indication of the exercise of this sort of power³ with reference to wrong-doing among the faithful. The offending brother is first to be corrected privately, then, if he refuse to amend, the case is to be brought before the Church. Ecclesiastical authority must next pronounce judgement. Should the guilty party refuse to abide by it, there is the appropriate sanction: he is to be regarded "as the heathen and the publican." St Paul acted as judge in this way in the case of the incestuous Corinthian,⁴ and he gives explicit advice to Timothy as to the correct procedure.⁵

Again, as an inevitable corollary to the foregoing powers, we find the Church possessed of *coercive authority*. In fact, the words of our Lord just quoted and the behaviour of St Paul illustrate the Church's judicial and coercive powers operating together. What is here meant is not that the Church can bring direct physical compulsion to bear upon her subjects, but that she has the right to punish them when they offend against her ruling. Unpalatable as this doctrine may be to the mind of the modern man, living as he does in a world contemptuous of all ecclesiastical authority, it is nevertheless bound up with the Church's function of government. It is only the counterpart, on a higher plane, of the right of civil society to attach to its laws the sanction of a penalty for their infringement. Canonical punishment normally consists in the wrongdoer being deprived by legitimate authority of some spiritual or temporal benefit.⁶ Excommunication is an example of a spiritual penalty, the imposition of fasting of a temporal. The object of such punishment, it need hardly be said, is not any arbitrary exercise of power, but the correction of the delinquent and the restitution of the order of justice broken by his offence. St Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians shows him conscious of the possession of coercive authority as here understood.⁷

With the power of the Church in temporal affairs we shall deal

¹ Acts xv 28 ff.

³ Matt. xviii 15 ff.

⁵ 1 Tim. v 19.

⁷ 2 Cor. xiii 10; cf. x 6.

² 1 Cor. vii 12 ff.

⁴ 1 Cor. v 3.

⁶ C.I.C., can. 2214-2219.

more fully when we come to consider her relations with the State. Here it will suffice to note that those directly subject to the Church's *potestas regiminis* are baptised persons ; for these only, as we have seen, are in the proper sense of the word members. Finally, it should be borne in mind that governmental authority was given directly and immediately by Christ to the Apostles and their successors, and not to the Church as a whole or to the collectivity of the faithful. In other words, this power is now vested in the Bishops, who are not delegates of the Church's members, but appointees of God. The constitution of the Church is thus not democratic,¹ but hierarchic, its pastors deriving their office from above, not from below. To this must be added, as a qualification, the principle of monarchy, inasmuch as the fulness of authority was given solely to Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and to his successors, the Bishops of Rome.

§ VIII: THE POPE: VICAR OF CHRIST²

It is the belief of Catholics that our Lord promised to Peter a primacy of jurisdiction over his Church,³ a primacy which he actually conferred after his resurrection ;⁴ they hold, moreover, that it was given, not to Peter alone, but to the successors in his office and that it is vested for all time in the Roman Pontiff, who is the visible Head of the Church. No article of the Christian faith is more fully substantiated in Scripture and Tradition than this. Our present task, however, is not to set out exhaustively the evidence for the doctrine,⁵ but briefly to explain its meaning.

*St Peter's
primacy*

Let us recall the words of the principal Petrine text : " And I say to thee : That thou art Peter (Aramaic : *kepha*), and upon this rock (*kepha*) I will build my church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth,

¹ Though there is a very real element of democracy in the appointment to the chief offices of the Church : the Pope and the Bishops, not being hereditary officials, are drawn from all nations and every condition and walk of life. Election by voting has also its part in the procedure.

² " Moreover it is absolutely (*omnino necessarium est*) necessary that there should be the supreme Head, visible to all, effectively directing the mutual co-operation of the members to the attainment of the proposed end ; and that visible Head is the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth. For just as the divine Redeemer sent the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, to undertake in his name (John xiv 16, 26) the invisible guidance of the Church, so he gave mandate to Peter and his successors, representing his person on earth, to conduct also the visible government of the Christian commonwealth." *MCC* 69.

³ Matt. xvi 18-19.

⁴ John xxi 15 ff.

⁵ This has been compendiously done in, e.g., Dieckmann, *De Ecclesia*, I, pp. 285-319.

it shall be loosed also in heaven.”¹ Our Lord here makes known his will in a series of three metaphors whose meaning, clear enough to us, would be still clearer to listeners familiar with Old Testament Scripture and the teaching methods of the Rabbis. He first compares his Church to a building of which Peter is to be the foundation; he next employs the comparison suggested by “the keys,” which will be handed to Peter as a sign of his power over Christ’s house; finally comes the reference to “binding and loosing,” a symbol of the moral nature of the office, which is furthermore backed by a divine sanction.

The comparison of the Church to a *house*—that is, of *Israel*—is derived from the Old Testament and occurs frequently in the New.² Equally scriptural is the idea of a *foundation* to the building.³ To the strength of this foundation the house owes its firmness and stability, enabling it to withstand rain, wind and floods, “for it was founded upon a rock.”⁴ Similarly it is from its foundation that the unity of the house arises, the walls, roof and whole structure being bound together in one single edifice in virtue of the rock on which it is based. All this illustrates the relation between the Church and Peter. He who was Simon is given the rôle of foundation to the building erected by Christ; hence he receives the name of “Peter,” which means “rock.” By him the new House of Israel is to be unified and stabilised so that nothing, not even “the gates of hell,”⁵ symbol of all that is opposed to Christ’s Kingdom, can prevail against it.

¹ Matt. xvi 18-19. The gospel text, of course, is in Greek, the words respectively for “Peter” and “rock” being *πέτρος* and *πέτρα*. M.-J. Lagrange (*Saint Matthieu*, pp. 323-324) comments as follows: “*Πέτρος* n’existait pas comme nom propre ni en grec, ni en latin, et ne peut pas être dérivé du latin *Petronius*. C’est donc un nom nouveau qui paraît dans l’histoire. Le nom commun *πέτρος* signifiait pierre, et *πέτρα* rocher. Mais *πέτρος* convenait mieux pour un homme, et *πέτρα* convenait mieux comme fondement de l’Église. En araméen, on ne pouvait réaliser cette élégance. Nous savons par le N.T. que Simon était nommé Cephass dans l’Église primitive (John i 42; Gal. i 18; ii 9; 1 Cor. ix 5 etc.). . . . On comprend donc très bien . . . que Jésus ait pu dire et Ma. écrire: Tu es Cépha et sur ce Cépha je bâtirai mon Église, et que le traducteur grec ait gardé en meme temps *πέτρα* qui répondait mieux à la situation, et *πέτρος* qui avait prévalu en grec comme nom masculin.”

² Cf. Acts ii 36; vii 42; 1 Tim. iii 15; Heb. iii 6.

³ See especially Eph. ii 19 ff.; cf. iii 17; Col. i 23; 1 Cor. iii 10.

⁴ Matt. vii 25. An interesting text, showing our Lord himself using “rock” in the same sense as in xvi 18. Cf. Luke vi 48.

⁵ Matt. xvi 18. See the striking corroboration of this text in Luke xxii 31-32: “And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you (plural), that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee (singular), that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.” We may note the parallels: Satan hath desired you—the gates of hell; I have prayed for thee—I will build upon this rock; confirm thy brethren—Peter the stabilising force in the Apostolic college. Cf. Dieckmann, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

*His primacy
continued in
the Pope*

“Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep.”¹ So the promised primacy was conferred in the words of the risen Christ. He who had spoken of himself as the “good shepherd,”² who desired that there should be “one fold and one shepherd,”³ was handing over the sheepfold to Peter’s care; for he himself was to ascend to the Father.⁴ True, he was only withdrawing his visible presence; he would still take care of his own as their chief pastor; hence the commission: “Feed *my* sheep.” But Peter had become shepherd of the flock of Christ in the same way as he was the foundation of his Church. Christ remains, in the words of the selfsame Peter, “the prince of pastors,”⁵ but he now acts as the Lord’s representative, his Vicar, and he, together with the rest of the Apostles under his leadership, is a true pastor of souls.⁶ Nor can it be argued that this pastoral office was to terminate with the death of Peter. For the Kingdom of God was to endure until the end of ages.⁷ Accordingly, unless the gates of hell were to prevail, there could never come a time when Christ’s sheepfold would be deprived of its shepherd, his Church of its rock foundation.

*Primacy of
jurisdiction*

When, four centuries later, the Fathers at the Council of Chalcedon, on receiving the *Tome* of Leo, acknowledged its author as “the interpreter of Pêter,”⁸ they summarised in a phrase the traditional belief of Christians in the position of the Pope. It is true that in an earlier age the great Patriarchs and Bishops acted with less frequent reference to Rome than is now the case, but they were none the less fully conscious of their subordination to the Apostolic See, “mother and mistress of all the churches.”⁹ In the Middle Ages the conspicuous exercise of the power inherent in their office by such pontiffs as Gregory VII and Innocent III was, in effect, no more than the Church’s assertion of the primacy of the spiritual over the temporal order. In modern times the breakdown of Christendom at the Reformation and the disruptive influence of the various National Churches, together with the development of easy and rapid communications, has indeed produced a highly centralised ecclesiastical organisation hitherto unknown. But this “ultramontanism,” as it has sometimes not very happily been called, serves only to emphasise the primacy, not merely of honour, but of jurisdiction, which belongs to the Pope in virtue of Christ’s commission to St Peter. The Pope’s rulership over the Church is thus not simply directive, it is wholly authoritative (*potestas iurisdictionis*); moreover, it concerns, in addition to faith and morals, matters of

¹ John xxii 15-17.

² John x 11.

³ *Ibid.* 16; cf. xi 52 ff.

⁴ John xx 17; cf. xiv 1 ff.; xvi 28; xvii 4 ff.; viii 21 ff.

⁵ 1 Peter v 4 (lit. “chief shepherd”); cf. ii 25.

⁶ Cf. Matt. xviii 18; ix 36-38.

⁷ Matt. xxviii 18-20; cf. xiii 38 ff.; xiii 47 ff.

⁸ *Synodal Letter to Leo*; No. 98 in the collection of Leo’s letters; P.L. 54, 951-960. Cf. Hefele, *History of the Councils* (Eng. trans. vol. 3), p. 429 ff.

⁹ Denzinger, 999.

discipline and government as they affect the Church in every part of the world.

The Church's doctrinal and jurisdictional authority, which we have briefly examined, is vested also in the Roman Pontiff. It is with regard to the first of these, as touching the Pope's office as teacher, that he enjoys the charism of infallibility. On this point it will suffice to quote the words of the Vatican definition: "We teach and define it to be a dogma divinely revealed that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when acting in his office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, by his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church, through the divine assistance promised him in Blessed Peter, he enjoys that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed his Church to be endowed in defining doctrine concerning faith and morals; and therefore such definitions of the said Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church."¹

Every word of this pronouncement was weighed and debated by the Fathers of the Vatican Council. It should be studied with equal care by those who would grasp the Church's teaching on Papal infallibility. Much of the hostility to which it has given rise has its source in ignorance or misunderstanding of the scope and limitations clearly indicated in the definition itself. An *ex cathedra* definition is one in which the Pope employs the fulness of his apostolic authority to make a final and irrevocable decision (*definit*) on a question of faith or morals, with the clear intention of binding all the faithful to its acceptance, as involving, directly or indirectly, the deposit of faith. It will be obvious that this does not necessarily include the normal teaching authority by which he is frequently addressing the faithful, either directly or through the medium of the Roman Congregations. Teaching of the latter kind, though it is to be received with all reverence, does not enjoy the charism of infallibility. The Holy Father may speak, for example, merely as Bishop of Rome; or, as Pope, he may give instruction to only a section of the universal Church; or again, he may address the whole Church, but without the intention of defining anything as of faith. In none of these activities does he enjoy, within the terms of the definition, immunity from error. The same may be said of the occasions when the Pope expresses his mind *motu proprio*, i.e. by initiating a question himself, or, it may be, in response to queries submitted to him by others. Teaching which is, technically, non-infallible may be imparted in Pontifical Decrees and Instructions and in Encyclical Letters, for all of which the Pope is the responsible author. His authorisation of the decisions of the Roman Congregations, notably that of the Holy Office and, of equal authority within its prescribed limits, the Biblical Commission, is not to be regarded in the light of a solemn definition.

¹ Denzinger, 1839.

To these decisions, on account of their great weight, a respectful internal assent is demanded of the faithful ; but they are not necessarily irreformable and have not the sanction of infallibility behind them.

*The Pope's
jurisdictional
authority*

Of the Pope's legislative, or jurisdictional, authority it will be enough to remark that all the power of rulership possessed by the Church is vested in his office ; adding that while he is subject to none, save God himself, all the members of the Church, not excluding the Bishops, are subject to him. He may appoint and depose Bishops and send Legates, with authority delegated by him, wherever he deems fit. In a word, his jurisdictional authority is supreme. But, though authoritarian and absolute within its own sphere, the Papal power cannot be fairly described as arbitrary or despotic. The Pope is as subject as the least member of the faithful to the prescriptions of the divine and natural law ; from these he can dispense neither himself nor any member of his flock. His jurisdictional authority is such that the canons and positive laws of the Church have no coercive sanction in respect of his actions, but they have for him their directive force none the less ; and he is bound to use his great powers with the charity and prudence of one ever conscious of his grave responsibility before God. To enable him to do so—how otherwise could he hope to succeed ?—he enjoys the assistance of the Holy Spirit, as a guarantee that his rulership will be “unto edification and not unto destruction.”¹

*The Pope
representative,
not
successor, of
Christ*

Finally, be it remembered that nothing we have said concerning the successor of St Peter militates against the supreme power over the Church exercised by Christ himself. He is the Head of the Church in his own right ; Peter and his successors only in virtue of the power received from him. Thus the Pope is the *Vicar* (*i.e.* representative), not the successor, of Christ. Christ is Head as Redeemer and Mediator of all men ; “and therefore,” writes Pius XII, “this Body has only one principal Head, namely Christ, who, continuing himself to govern the Church invisibly and directly, rules it visibly through his personal representative on earth.”² Christ is the Head of all men throughout all time,³ the successor of Peter only of those living under his Pontificate. Christ is Head alike of the Church militant on earth, suffering in Purgatory, and triumphant in Heaven ; the Pope's headship is concerned only with the Church militant. The Pope, as visible Head, rules the Church visibly ; but Christ, though hidden, rules it still, bringing to bear upon his Mystical Body all those unseen influences, of grace and light and strength, which can emanate only from the Incarnate Son of God and his life-giving Spirit.

¹ 2 Cor. xiii 10.

² MCC 38.

³ *Summa Theologica*, III, Q. viii, art. 3.

§ IX: THE BISHOPS: SUCCESSORS OF
THE APOSTLES

AN account will be found elsewhere in this volume of the institution of the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy and the origins of the Episcopate.¹ Here we shall be concerned, not with the power of Order, but with the jurisdiction proper to the Bishops of the Church as successors to the Apostles. For they collectively received from Christ a commission no less explicit than that given to their head, Peter. "Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven."² "Going therefore, teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."³

*Christ's
commission
to his
Apostles*

"Therefore the Bishops are not only to be regarded as more eminent members of the Universal Church, by reason of the truly unique bond which unites them to the divine Head of the whole Body . . . but each of them is also, so far as his own diocese is concerned, a true Pastor, who tends and rules in the name of Christ the flock committed to his care."⁴ The Bishops possess, within the limits of the dioceses assigned to them, jurisdiction in the fullest sense, *i.e.* as including doctrinal and jurisdictional authority. It should be noted that they are not merely the Pope's delegates, as, for example, are Apostolic Vicars in missionary countries; their jurisdiction is *proper* (*i.e.* belonging to them *ex officio*) and *ordinary* (*i.e.* not delegated). Thus, as the episcopacy was a method of government instituted by Christ, it would be against the constitution of the Church for their authority so to be superseded as to be reduced to vanishing point. On the other hand the Roman Pontiff's supremacy implies that the exercise of the Bishops' powers may be controlled by him, either by limitation, or extension, or, in a particular case, by their total removal.

*The Bishops'
powers*

Here also it may be explained that no Bishop, with the exception of the Pope, has, by divine law, any jurisdiction over his episcopal brethren. The episcopacy itself was instituted by Christ but, St Peter alone excepted, all the Apostles ranked as equals. Patriarchates, now little more than honorific titles, and archbishoprics have their origin in ecclesiastical law; their authority descends to them from that of Peter and his successors. It was found to facilitate the government of the Church to raise certain Bishops to a higher rank and give them, within prescribed limits, powers of delegating faculties to others; but they exercise these powers, not in virtue of their own episcopacy, but as sharing in the governing authority of the Apostolic See. Even the Cardinals, as such, have no powers

¹ Essay xxix.

³ *Ibid.*, xxviii 19-20; cf. Acts x 40-42.

² Matt. xviii 18.

⁴ MCC 40.

distinct from those proper to the Holy See, *i.e.* the Pope. They are his counsellors and assistants in the government of the Universal Church; to them also pertains the negotiation of such business as must be done while the Roman See is vacant, notably the supervision of arrangements for the election of the succeeding Pontiff; but the cardinalate, unlike the episcopate, is not of divine institution.

Other prelates in the Church

Abbots and Superiors of Religious Orders, though they may exercise a quasi-episcopal power in respect of their own subjects, do not belong to the hierarchy of jurisdiction in the Church as instituted by Christ. Nor, strictly speaking, can parish priests claim this privilege; though in the past a case has been made out for them. True, they have the power of Order by divine right and the indelible sacramental character; they may possess also, under the Bishop, ordinary jurisdiction over a portion of the faithful for the preaching of the word of God and the administration of the sacraments, but not for making laws or passing judgements in the external forum. Their historic function is that of assistants to the Bishop. They clearly share in the exercise of his pastoral office, but they are not pastors in the sense that he is, nor do they possess his jurisdiction. Parish priests are not to be thought of as holding the same relation to the Bishops as the latter have to the Pope. Their rights and privileges, though carefully legislated for in Canon Law,¹ are, according to the divine constitution of the Church, of a far more subordinate kind. The prerogatives of the Bishop, as successor to the Apostles, are inalienable.²

The Bishops' doctrinal authority

In virtue of the commission received from Christ it belongs to the Bishops to feed their flocks with the word of God; that is to say, they have *doctrinal authority* over their own subjects. The subject-matter of this is proportionately the same as that of the Roman Pontiff's magisterium, *viz.*, divine revelation and matters connected therewith. Accordingly, within their respective dioceses, they have the duty of supervising the teaching and defence of Christian doctrine, of proscribing errors, of prohibiting books and periodicals dangerous to faith and morals. As the Bishops individually, however, are not graced with the charism of infallibility, they do not normally take responsibility for decisions of great doctrinal moment; here the procedure is to refer the matter to the Holy See or to an Oecumenical Council. None the less, Bishops are authentic masters and judges in matters of faith, and their teaching is to be presumed sound until the contrary is proved. Should doubt arise as to a Bishop's orthodoxy, the question is to be settled, not by his subjects, but by an appeal to the Roman Pontiff.

¹ C.I.C., can. 451 *et seq.*

² These remarks apply in their full import to residential Bishops who rule a diocese: *vide* can. 334; not to *titular* Bishops, who exercise no jurisdiction in the diocese (*in partibus infidelium*) whose title they bear: *vide* can. 348.

But whatever be the possibility of individual Bishops falling into error, the Bishops collectively, *i.e.* the body of the episcopate, whether dispersed throughout the world in union with the Pope, or assembled under the presidency of the Pope in General Council, are infallible teachers of Christ's doctrine. Of General Councils we shall speak in the next section. But, apart from these, the Bishops' infallible doctrinal authority is exercised explicitly when, for example, they unanimously accept as the rule of faith the decrees of a particular Council ; or in giving an identical response to a question proposed by the Pope ; or by agreeing in the repudiation of some error. Implicitly the Bishops may testify infallibly to the truth of a doctrine by the fact that they unanimously allow it to be taught in their dioceses, since it is the duty of Bishops to oppose and forbid teaching that is untrue.

Their *jurisdictional authority* runs parallel with, or rather, is involved in, their office as pastors of the flock. They *rule* their subjects in both the internal and external forum. Accordingly they may legislate within their own dioceses in matters pertaining to faith, worship and Church discipline. They are also judges in the first instance and may inflict canonical penalties on delinquents. But, as has already been said, the Bishops exercise both their doctrinal and jurisdictional authority in dependence upon the Roman Pontiff ; he may impose limits on their powers even within their respective dioceses, as well as reserve special matters to his own competence. Bishops, it need hardly be said, may lay down nothing contrary to the decisions of the Holy See ; nor have they, as individuals, any power of legislation over the Universal Church.

Lastly, what has been said of the gravity of the Pope's personal responsibility before God applies with no less force to the Bishops. If the most eloquent description of his office is that of "the servant of the servants of God" so, proportionately, should it be theirs. They, as he, must be mindful of the dignity of their calling ; but as upholding the honour of the Church, not as a claiming of personal prestige. Being true pastors of souls, they look for their model, not to the autocracy and despotism of secular monarchy, but to the "Good Shepherd" who lays down his life for the sheep.¹ Notwithstanding the respect that is rightly paid them, like him they come "not to be ministered unto, but to minister."² If the Bishops can appeal for their great authority to the mandate given by our Lord to the Apostles,³ they have received from him instructions no less clear as to the spirit in which it is to be exercised : "You know that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them and they that are the greater exercise power upon them. It shall not be so among you : but whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your

¹ John x 14-15.

² Mark x 45.

³ Matt. xviii 18 ; xxviii 18-20.

minister. And he that will be first among you shall be your servant." ¹

§ X: COUNCILS OF THE CHURCH

*Councils in
the Church*

A CHURCH Council may be defined as a legitimate assembly of the Pastors of the Church for judging and legislating in matters of doctrine and ecclesiastical discipline. Such a council is described as *provincial* when there are present at it the bishops of a single province, under the presidency of its Archbishop or Metropolitan; *plenary* (at one time called *national*) when composed of the bishops of one kingdom or nation; *general* or *oecumenical* (from the Greek *οἰκουμένη* meaning "the inhabited world") when representing the Universal Church, with the Roman Pontiff presiding, either personally or through his representative. The decrees of provincial and plenary councils are not, of themselves, infallible; they may, however, become embodied in the rule of faith, if they are so regarded by the Bishops throughout the world, or are ratified by the Pope with his full teaching authority; as happened, for example, with the decrees of the plenary council of Carthage (418) and the second council of Orange (529).

*Oecumenical
or General
Councils*

The decrees of a General Council, on the other hand, are an infallible witness to the Catholic rule of faith. For a council to rank as oecumenical ² a number of conditions must be fulfilled, of which the most important is its confirmation by the Roman Pontiff. The convoking of such a council belongs to the Pope, as the supreme ecclesiastical authority; though this condition, with regard to certain of the early eastern councils, has been waived, or rather supplied by a subsequent ratification or the use of a legal fiction analogous to a *sanatio in radice*.³ Thus the first general councils at Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) were summoned by the Emperor, but received the hall-mark of oecumenicity by the Roman Pontiff's approbation. This procedure did not conflict with the present state of the law as violently as might be supposed. There existed at that date an inter-connection between secular and religious affairs the closeness of which we can scarcely realise to-day. The unity of the Church, then practically conterminous in its visible extent with the Empire, was a vital interest to the Roman Emperor; hence he was not acting

¹ Matt. xx 25-27.

² There have been twenty Oecumenical Councils (of which only the first seven are recognised by the Greek schismatics): Nicaea I (325), Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (553) and III (680-681), Nicaea II (787), Constantinople IV (869-870), Lateran I (1123) and II (1139), III (1179), and IV (1215), Lyons I (1245) and II (1274), Vienne (1311-1312), Constance (1414-1418), Florence (1438-1445), Lateran V (1512-1517), Trent (1545-1563) and Vatican (1869-1870).

³ Cf. Billot, *op. cit.*, p. 718. The phrase means "a validation from the beginning"; that is to say, the Council gains a retrospective legalisation by the Pope's recognition of it.

entirely beyond his rights in assembling the Bishops with a view to preserving that unity, especially as it lay with the civil authorities to keep open communications and generally to provide facilities for such a gathering. Nor did he interfere in the strictly ecclesiastical deliberations of the conciliar Fathers, even though he may have been given the place of honour among them. Due deference was always paid to the Papal Legates, and neither the Emperor nor the assembled Bishops were in doubt as to the need of having the Council's decrees ratified by the Roman Pontiff.

Those summoned to an Oecumenical Council, and having a deliberative vote, are ¹ the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, whether or not they be Bishops; Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, residential Bishops, even if not yet consecrated; Abbots and Prelates *nullius*; ² the Abbot Primate, the Abbot Superiors of Monastic Congregations, and the chief Superiors of exempt religious orders of clerics. Titular Bishops also have a deliberative vote when called to a Council. The expert theologians and canonists who always attend are there in an advisory capacity, not as judges and witnesses in matters of faith. The Pope, as sole superior to all the Bishops, is the only president of the council, a presidency which he may exercise by means of Legates; with him the decision rests as to what is to be discussed and its order of treatment, likewise of transferring, suspending or dissolving the Council; should he die while it is in session, its deliberations are automatically suspended pending the orders of the succeeding Pontiff for their resumption.

Nor is it necessary that all the Bishops of the Catholic world should attend a Council in order to make it oecumenical. This is a practical impossibility and it suffices that the whole Church, morally speaking, should be represented. A completely unanimous decision is not required. In the event of dissension arising, the final judgement lies with that portion of the Council adhering to the Roman Pontiff, since he is the Head of the Church and protected from error by the gift of infallibility. But if the decision is to be conciliar, and not simply Papal, the Bishops siding with the Pope, even though a minority, must be morally representative of the universal Church. Confirmation by the Roman Pontiff, as has already been said, is an indispensable condition of the oecumenicity of a Council; for a gathering of Bishops, no matter how numerous, could not, if separated from the Head, represent the Church as a whole. By the same principle, it is within the Pope's power to ratify some, but not all, of the Bishops' decisions; as instanced at Chalcedon, when Pope Leo repudiated its 28th Canon concerning the prerogatives of the See of Constantinople.

¹ C.I.C., can. 223.

² I.e. *nullius diocesis*, "of no diocese": ruling over territory, with clergy and people, not enclosed in any episcopal diocese (can. 319). Twelve Benedictine Abbots—among them the Abbots of Monte Cassino, Subiaco and St Paul's outside the Walls—enjoy this privilege.

*The function
of a General
Council*

In conclusion, it should be remembered that Papal infallibility does not, as is sometimes imagined, render the calling of a General Council superfluous. Such an assembly is not indeed absolutely necessary for the government of the Church, but there are occasions when it may be both advisable and highly beneficial. The Pope, being neither the recipient of private revelation nor divinely inspired, is morally bound to employ all available human means in his investigations; accordingly, he is much helped in discovering the content of the deposit of faith by consultation with the Bishops, who aid him in this way, as well as acting as judges of whatever may be decided. In matters of Church discipline the advantages of taking counsel with the pastors of souls from all parts of the world are too obvious to need emphasis; it is in this way that the needs of the faithful in the various countries can be understood and their case legislated for. Furthermore, although the authority of a Council is essentially the same as that of the Pope, there is an impressiveness about decisions issuing from such an assembly more arresting to men's minds than that of a single voice, however exalted. But it is vain to attempt to place the Catholic episcopate in opposition to the Roman Pontiff; the specious appeal of the Gallicans, and of many a heretic before them, from the decision of the Pope to some future General Council is subversive of the divine constitution of the Church. The Church's infallible teaching authority is vested in the body of Bishops joined with the Pope, and in the Pope himself. It is idle to seek to separate the two.

§ XI: CHURCH AND STATE

*The teaching
of Leo XIII*

“LET every soul be subject to higher powers. For there is no power but from God.”¹ All authority, whether ecclesiastical or civil, has for its final sanction the divine law. But, as the main object of the State's existence differs from that which is the chief concern of the Church, we must distinguish a duality of function. Pope Leo XIII has restated for the benefit of modern society the principles which should determine the relations between Church and State. “The Almighty, therefore, has appointed the charge of the human race between two powers, the ecclesiastical and the civil, the one being set over divine, the other over human, things. Each in its kind is supreme, each has fixed limits within which it is contained, limits which are defined by the nature and special object of the province of each, so that there is, we may say, an orbit traced out within which the action of each is brought into play by its own native right.”² Though both Church and State come from God, they are to be dis-

¹ Rom. xiii 1.

² Encyclical “*Immortale Dei*,” 1 November 1885: translated as “The Christian Constitution of States” in *The Pope and the People* (1929 edition), p. 51.

tinguished by the diversity of ends each has in view, a distinction which is the basis of the difference of powers enjoyed by each.

As we have gathered from the foregoing pages, the reason for which the Church exists is man's sanctification and eternal felicity. "Whatever, therefore, in human things is of a sacred character, whatever belongs either of its own nature or by reason of the end to which it is referred, to the salvation of souls, or to the worship of God, is subject to the power and judgement of the Church. Whatever is to be ranged under the civil and political order is rightly subject to the civil authority. Jesus Christ has himself given command that what is Caesar's is to be rendered to Caesar, and that what belongs to God is to be rendered to God." ¹ Among things "of a sacred character" there obviously fall such activities as the preaching of the Gospel, the administration of the sacraments, the celebration of divine worship, the final judgement with respect to the morality of human acts. Besides these and the like indisputably spiritual functions, there are other matters, in themselves temporal but consecrated to God by reason of the uses to which they are put, which are subject to ecclesiastical authority; e.g. Church buildings and all articles set apart for divine worship, as well as the sources of income appropriated to the upkeep of God's ministers.

*The sphere
of the
Church's
authority*

*"Mixed
matters"*

*The authority
of the State*

But in actual practice the division between the respective provinces of Church and State is not absolute and clear-cut; there is a "mixed" category, pertaining to the Church from one point of view, to the State from another. The marriage contract and education are conspicuous examples of this. Marriage is a sacrament, and as such pertains exclusively to Christ's Church; but it is also a social contract, and under this aspect the State rightly takes cognisance of it. Education, fostering as it does the growth and development of a free individual human person, potentially or actually a member of Christ's Mystical Body, must always be among the chief pre-occupations of the Church. But the State, responsible in large measure for the welfare of its future citizens, may also legislate within the sphere of education, provided that in doing so it does not override, but rather respects and reinforces, the freedom and spiritual interests of those chiefly concerned. More particularly is the State within its rights in using its powers to ensure that the benefits of the best education should not be withheld from any member of the community capable of profiting by them. In furthering justice in one department, however, the State must guard against perpetuating, or aggravating, injustice in another. Thus, for example, the State is beyond question exceeding its powers in determining that the adequate financial assistance, needful for the educational reforms which it imposes, shall be made conditional upon the acceptance of a religious syllabus offensive to the consciences of a large number of

¹ *The Pope and the People*, p. 52.

its citizens. This is to trespass upon the rights of the Church, a usurpation by Caesar of the things that are God's.

The business of the State is to foster the common good of its citizens, to provide for their temporal well-being. But, as man is so constituted that he cannot be happy even in this world unless his heart is set on his final end, which is God, the State cannot disregard these supra-temporal aspirations; it must, at least indirectly, encourage whatever may assist their realisation. Directly, however, the State is concerned with promoting the public good by legislation in the interests of the political, social and private rights of its citizens. The application of its laws to particular cases and the settlement of individual claims and counter-claims are subject to the State's judiciary. Determining the effects of civil contracts, the punishment of law-breakers, the imposition of taxes, preparation for national defence, subsidising the arts and sciences—these are the activities which properly engage the attention of the State. Nor can the State be fairly accused of undue interference with personal liberty when it reinforces the moral law with positive statutes; for example, by forbidding blasphemy and public indecency. Propaganda in favour of philanthropic endeavour and personal unselfishness and, in general, the fostering of an intellectual and moral atmosphere favourable to the practice of the natural virtues, especially justice and mutual well-doing, fall likewise within the legitimate province of the State.

*Power of the
Church in
political and
social orders*

In none of these matters has the Church the right of direct interference. Occasion might arise, however, when she must speak her mind even here. For the political and social orders, *in so far as they fall under the moral law and the judgement of human conscience*, are subject to the authority of the Church. This supremely important principle is not seldom overlooked: most often by those who resent the subjection of their political and social actions to any higher tribunal; though it is by no means unknown for the representatives of the Church to offend against it, for example, in advocating merely personal views on political and social questions by an illegitimate appeal to alleged "Catholic principles." The Bishops, it should be noted, are not qualified by their office to criticise the military strategy of a war, or express their views as to what the political and economic arrangements of a peace-settlement should be; but they may, as pastors of their flocks and witnesses to the Gospel, pronounce upon the justice, or otherwise, of the issues involved.

Political elections, as such, are no concern of bishops and priests, save in their capacity as private citizens; it is in fact their duty to remain strictly impartial, so as not to prejudice their position as spiritual guides to every section of their flock; but if a political party, or individual candidates, are advocating measures opposed to the Church's interests, then the faithful may be reminded of where

their duty lies. Again, ecclesiastical authority is not empowered to sit in judgement upon purely economic questions of supply and demand, though clearly it may use its influence, let us say, to ensure that the workers are not deprived of a just wage. Thus many human situations can arise upon which the episcopate is entitled to give guidance, without being charged with "interference" in matters outside its sphere.

These considerations should make clear both the distinction ^{Harmony} between Church and State, and the need for their harmonious co-^{between} operation. "When political government (*regnum*) and ecclesiastical ^{Church and} authority (*sacerdotium*) are agreed," writes Ivo of Chartres, "the world is well ruled and the Church flourishes and bears fruit. But when they disagree, not only do less important interests fail to prosper, but those of the greatest moment fall into miserable decay."¹ It is obvious that civil authority can, and should, while keeping within its due limits, facilitate the mission of the Church. The making of good and just laws, the respecting of its citizens' conscientious rights, especially in regard to religion, the preservation of peace and order effectively assist the growth of God's Kingdom on earth; just as their contraries, social injustice, the absence of religious liberty, discord and anarchy constitute so many hindrances. Similarly, though at a much deeper level, the Church contributes within its own order to the well-being of the State: by inculcating respect for authority, fostering the observance of civil laws, upholding the moral standard and encouraging the practice of the social virtues.²

It is beyond the scope of these pages to enter into the detailed ^{Concordats} relations of the Church with the modern State. Liberal democracy on the one hand, and the various forms of totalitarianism on the other, have given rise to a new set of problems, emphasised by the complete secularisation of politics and an attitude towards religion ranging from sceptical indifference to fanatical hostility; but the principles of their solution remain the same. The Church will always claim the right to judge of politics in their ethical and religious bearings; but she will never descend into the political arena or allow herself to be identified with any human polity. If her own prerogatives are infringed she will make known her protest, not indeed on account of mere prestige, but lest she prove unfaithful to her mission. In situations where the ideal is unobtainable, she will tolerate much that is imperfect for the sake of the good that may be preserved. It is thus that, without compromising her message, she comes to terms, by means of a *concordat*, with governments in many ways opposed to her own interests. Such a diplomatic instrument is a treaty between the Holy See and a secular State touching the

¹ Epistle 238; *P.L.* 162, col. 246.

² For the benefits conferred by Christianity on the State, see Pope Leo's Encyclical already quoted; *op. cit.*, pp. 53-56.

conservation and promotion of the interests of religion in that State. The extreme flexibility whereby the Church, in this way or by tacit agreement, can effect a *modus vivendi* with almost any political régime is a proof, not of unprincipled opportunism, but that she is committed to none. Here, as in many other of her activities, she may appeal for her mandate to the example of the Apostle Paul: "I became all things to all men, that I might save all."¹

EPILOGUE

Indefectibility of the Church

By way of concluding our brief survey of the juridical structure of Christ's Mystical Body, which is the Catholic Church, we may note that it possesses the property described by theologians as *indefectibility*. The Christian Society, of its nature "far more excellent than all other associations of human beings, transcending them as grace transcends nature and as things immortal transcend all things that pass away,"² is destined to survive until the end of time. "Unbelievers", says St Augustine,³ "think that the Christian religion will last for a certain period in the world and will then disappear. But it will remain as long as the sun—as long as the sun rises and sets; that is, as long as the ages of time shall roll, the Church of God—the true body of Christ on earth—will not disappear." The reason for this power of survival lies, not in the Church's juridical elements, but in the indestructibility conferred upon her by the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit and of Christ himself.⁴ The visible hierarchy, the elaborate Church organisation, being inseparable from human imperfections, though a part of our Lord's plan from the beginning, have not in themselves the stuff of immortality. This they derive from the sources of grace and divine life within, the hidden riches of the Mystical Body which constitute the veritable "Mystery of the Church."⁵

No one has put this point more forcibly than Pope Pius XII, in words that refute for ever the charge that Catholic Christianity oppresses the free life of the spirit under the weight of ecclesiastical formalism: "For although the juridical grounds upon which also the Church rests and is built have their origin in the divine constitution given her by Christ, and although they contribute to the achievement of her supernatural purpose, nevertheless that which raises the Christian society to a level utterly surpassing any order of nature is the Spirit of our Redeemer, the source of all graces, gifts and miraculous powers, perennially and intimately pervading the Church and acting in her. Just as the framework of our mortal

¹ 1 Cor. ix 22.

² In Psalm. lxx, n. 8.

³ MCC 61.

⁴ John xiv 16; Matt. xxviii 20.

⁵ The title of an invaluable little book by Père Clérissac; it comprises an admirable series of meditations on the Church.

body is indeed a marvellous work of the Creator, yet falls short of the sublime dignity of our soul, so the structure of the Christian society, proof though it is of the wisdom of its divine Architect, is nevertheless something of a completely lower order in comparison with the spiritual gifts which enrich it and give it life, and with him who is their divine source.”¹

It is by the Spirit within that the Church lives ; it is by our correspondence with that Spirit that the Church grows, speaking metaphorically, to “the fulness of Christ.”² While Christ and his members can never constitute physically one person, as some have mistakenly supposed,³ there is yet a profound sense in which the final consummation of the Mystical Body will realise, as St Augustine saw, “the whole Christ,” *totus Christus*. “It is due also to this communication of the Spirit of Christ that all the gifts, virtues and miraculous powers which are found eminently, most abundantly and fontally in the Head, stream into all the members of the Church and in them are perfected daily according to the place of each in the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ ; and that, consequently, the Church becomes as it were the fulness and completion of the Redeemer, Christ in the Church being in some sense brought to complete achievement.”⁴

The Church lives by the Holy Spirit

So it is that the Catholic Church remains, now as ever, the ultimate hope of the world. She is the one supra-national force able to integrate a civilisation fast dissolving in ruins. Outside her visible communion there may be “broken lights,” half truths of authentic Christianity ; but only within the fold can men respond to the full and objective will of Christ. Fittingly we may end with the memorable words of St Augustine :⁵ “Let us love the Lord our God ; let us love his Church ; the Lord as our Father, the Church as our

The will of Christ fulfilled in the Church

¹ MCC 61. Thus we are enabled to see how the overflowing richness of the Church’s inner life can find expression in a great variety of rites and formularies. We may note in this context, and indeed on the whole subject of the reunion of Christendom, the significant words of the same Roman Pontiff : “We would have this to be known and appreciated by all, both by those who were born within the bosom of the Catholic Church, and by those who are wafted towards her, as it were, on the wings of yearning and desire. The latter especially should have full assurance that they will never be forced to abandon their own legitimate rites or to exchange their own venerable and traditional customs for Latin rites and customs. All these are to be held in equal esteem and honour, for they adorn the common Mother Church with a royal garment of many colours. Indeed this variety of rites and customs, preserving inviolate what is most ancient and most valuable in each, presents no obstacle to a true and genuine unity. It is especially in these times of ours, when the strife and discord of war have estranged men’s hearts from one another nearly all the world over, that all must be impelled by the stimulus of Christian charity to promote union in Christ and through Christ by every means in their power.” Encyclical *Orientalis Ecclesiae Decus* ; C.T.S. trans., 27.

² Eph. iv 13.

³ MCC 85.

⁴ MCC 77.

⁵ He is alluding to the schism of Donatus.

Mother. . . . What doth it profit thee not to offend the Father, who avenges an offence against the Mother? What doth it profit to confess the Lord, to honour God, to preach him, to acknowledge his Son, and to confess that he sits on the right hand of the Father, if you blaspheme his Church? Hold fast, therefore, O dearly beloved, hold fast unswervingly to God as your Father, and the Church as your Mother.”¹

AELRED GRAHAM, O.S.B.

¹ *Enarratio in Psalm. lxxxviii*, sermon ii, n. 14 : quoted from Leo XIII's Encyclical *Satis cognitum*, 29 June, 1896.

XXI

THE SACRAMENTAL SYSTEM

§ I: MAN'S APPROACH TO GOD

SINCE these essays make one work, and follow one another in a definite order, I might assume that readers of this one have read those that come before it, and therefore, the one that treats of the nature of Man.

*Composite
nature of
man*

However, I must be forgiven if I recall the essential point of that essay. Man is not an Automaton, nor an Ape, nor an Angel. By this I mean, a man is not just a piece of mechanism, like a steam-engine; nor yet is he merely an animal, that has but instinct and cannot think nor choose. Nor yet is he an angel, for angels are simply Minds—they have no bodies: “a spirit hath not flesh nor bones as ye see *me* having,” said our Lord, when after the Resurrection the Apostles thought they were seeing a ghost. Man is Body-Soul. He is flesh-and-blood, *and* mind. Mind means the power of thinking, and the power of choosing. And in Man, Mind works along with the brain in a way which we need not here discuss, provided we remember it; and when I say “brain,” I include all the rest that man’s living body involves—the nervous system, the senses, the instincts. Therefore, whenever the ordinary living man feels, he also thinks; and when he thinks, his imagination and his emotions and his nervous system, and in fact all that is in him, respond and become active at least in some degree.

Therefore when you are dealing with man, it is quite useless to try to separate him into two, and pretend he is either just a body, or just a mind. This essay will show that God, according to the Catholic Faith, does not do so: but first, it is worth seeing that man, when he has dealt with God, or has sought to get into touch with him—in a word, to “worship” him—has always acted in accordance with this double nature of his: or, on the rare occasions when he has tried to do otherwise, has got into grave trouble.

I speak, of course, of the normal man behaving normally, and not of morbid, nor of mystical states; and, of course, I am speaking of man in this life, and not in the next.

From what I have said, you will see that man cannot so much *think* of God as if man were merely Mind. He has to use his brain, and when he does this, he makes pictures with his imagination—even to-day, after all our training, we make some sort of picture to ourselves when we say the word “God.” Even the Scriptures are full of phrases that represent God as though he were like ourselves—our Lord’s eternal exaltation in heaven is described as

*Man's know-
ledge of God*

“sitting down at the right hand of God,” “not,” as the Catechism reminds us, “that God has hands.” He is a Spirit : but we, being men, have to picture him to ourselves somehow. As a matter of fact, the human mind has always risen to the thought of God from the experience of material objects—that is, of course, save in the case of direct and special revelations : but these are abnormal and I am speaking only of the normal. For example, a quite uneducated man, call him a “savage” if you like, is quite able to rise from the spectacle of limited, changing things to the notion of that great Cause which must be at the back of them.

That he can do so is defined by the Vatican Council, though of course that Council does not say that all men as it were hatch the notion of God from what they see around them or that they do it in the same way, or successfully. In fact, experience shows that though the most simple man can quite well use the sight and touch of things in order to reach a notion of a God who made them, and keeps them, and arranges them, yet he can quite well go on to misuse his mind on the subject, and make many a mistake about it. For example, if he sees a violent storm, or a raging mountain fire, or volcano, he will very easily proceed to say that the God who is responsible for this must be not only powerful, but cruel or destructive. The fact remains that he has got, by means of his mind, to the thought of God, by way of his senses ; and then has proceeded, also because of what he sees and feels, to use his mind awry, and to draw deductions that careful training would show him to be unwarranted.

Let us therefore keep to this conclusion—When a man so much as begins to think about God, he always starts from something that touches his senses, and he can never altogether exclude the fact that he is Body as well as Mind, and in his life never will so exclude it. Nor should he. It is quite useless to try to pretend you are something that you are not, and God does not mean you to try. Why should he ? If he has made you a man, he does not wish you to behave as if you were something quite different, like an ape, or like an angel. Some men practically behave like the former, and you call them “sensualists.” A minority of students and over-cultured persons would like to behave as if they were just minds—you call them “intellectualists.” Each sort is lop-sided. You are sometimes tempted to think that the latter sort is in the greater danger. For the sensualist may always pull himself up—human nature does not take kindly to a complete collapse into animalism. But the man who despises material things is quite likely to experience a sudden fatigue, to give up, and to suffer a “reaction,” and become extremely greedy for the good things of life. If he does not, he is none the less quite out of touch with ordinary men and women.

Worship

Now when a man is very convinced of anything, he always wants to *do* something about it. If he is a simple person, he probably

does it at once, and rather noisily. With education, he may behave with greater restraint: but if he never tends to *express* himself, as we say, he is probably a languid and colourless person. If children are pleased, they jump and dance. When a man feels in good form, he sings in his bath. When he is in love he wants to kiss the girl he loves; and, in short, he wishes to do something exterior to give vent to the interior state of his feelings. So when men have been convinced of the existence of God, they have always done and said things to reveal the fact. They feel how small they are compared to him—they fall flat on the ground, or kneel. They feel he is good and great and takes care of them—they sing hymns or gesticulate or even dance. Above all, when they feel that everything, and themselves in particular, belongs to him, they have invariably tended to show this outwardly—usually by “giving” him something, to prove that they recognise his right to everything. Men interested in fields, will offer him field-produce: in orchards, fruit: in flocks, a sheep or goat or ox. This has gone so far that they feel they ought to offer him something which represents *themselves* even more adequately, and you find instances of men killing their eldest son, or mutilating themselves so that the “life-blood” flows. Why “killing”? It seems fairly clear that men, by destroying the “gift” they offer to God, are trying to prove to themselves, and even to show to God, that they truly recognise that he deserves the whole of the gift, and that nothing is kept in reserve: and that they must never take it back, because they have in reality no “right” in it at all. They will also feel the need of expressing outwardly what they think in their minds and picture with their imaginations, and so they make images, and surround these images with signs symbolical of the homage they want to pay to the invisible God. They will do all the things that occur to them; and everything that their senses or imagination can suggest does occur to them. They will burn sweet spices: they will light bright fires: they will sing and dance, and they will collect coloured flowers or stones or anything else that strikes them. And above all, since man is “social” and lives together in groups, of which he feels the unity very acutely, men will tend to do all these things in common, and make social acts of them.

This is what I mean by worship—any and every piece of human homage paid to God: and while it is quite true that the supreme and only necessary homage is that of the mind, whereby we know God, and the will, whereby we love him and choose to subordinate ourselves to him, yet man rightly tends to express himself exteriorly, and “cult” or “worship” has always, in accord with complete human nature, contained an exterior, material element.

It is well to see that neither in the Old nor the New Testament has exterior cult been disapproved of, any more than the use of our brains concerning God and the things of God has been rebuked.

It is perfectly clear from what I have said that just as a man can make all sorts of mistakes when he starts thinking about God, so he can make mistakes about the ways in which God likes to be worshipped. For example, the human sacrifices and mutilations I mentioned above are not really an apt way of expressing the completeness of our response to God's all-inclusive claim. So what you will find in the Old and New Testaments is a progressive check upon inadequate *ways* of showing your worship of God, but you will not find that the exterior worship is in itself condemned. The Hebrews inherited from their pagan ancestors a number of forms of worship, and picked up a number more during their sojourns among pagans. When Moses gave them their Law, he abolished many of these, and regulated others, and above all taught a true knowledge of God's nature and attributes so as to prevent a wrong meaning being given to the acts of worship they still used. The one thing that was absolutely forbidden was, the making of images of God for the *eye*. It was too easy for men to attach a wrong value—a "person-value," so to say, to such images. But the Hebrews still went on talking about God in terms that suit the imagination, for they were not abstract philosophers; and as late as you like in Hebrew history, ritual is very minute and exact, and even increasingly so in some ways. As to the New Testament, I say no more than this, so as not to anticipate: Our Lord shows perfectly well that he recognises the duty of expressing exteriorly our interior worship, if only because in the Our Father he provided his disciples with a form of words; and what he rebuked was, not exterior actions, but the idea that exterior actions were good enough without interior dispositions, or, hypocrisy in the carrying out of such actions, for example, in order to win esteem, and not to worship God. And he himself, in the Garden of Gethsemani, allowed his body to reveal the agony of his mind, by falling prostrate, and lifted his eyes to heaven when giving thanks, and raised his hands when he blessed the Apostles, and by the use of clay cured the blind man, and by the use of formulas—like the very term "Father" as applied to God—sanctioned our drawing help from customary things of sense, and pictured heaven as a feast.

This leads me to my second point: the first has been, that man by his very nature tends to worship as well as think about God by means of his knowledge and experience of created things, and that God has not prohibited him from doing so.

§ II: GOD'S DESCENT TO MAN

I WANT now to go much further than this, and say that God not only as it were puts up, reluctantly, not to say disdainfully, with this sort of worship from the men whom he has made, but spontaneously deals with them in accordance with their whole nature, in which the material element plays so great a part.

After all, God is himself the Author of nature. He could quite well, had he chosen, have created nothing but angels. (Even had he done so, the angels would have had to worship him, as in fact they do, in accordance with *their* nature.) However, he not only created this visible universe, but created Man in particular, and continually thrusts nature into his eyes and on to his attention so that to worship God by means of nature and in nature is the very suggestion, so to say, of God himself. St Paul¹ insists that men had no excuse for not knowing and worshipping God, since "what is invisible in God is (none the less) ever since the foundation of the world made visible to human reflection through his works, even his eternal power and divinity"; and to the Lystrians² he preaches a charming little sermon to those simple-minded pagans about how God has never left himself without sufficient witness, by means of his ceaseless gifts of rain and sun, of harvests and happiness. As I said, the nature of pagan notions about God, and worship of God, could easily degenerate; but the root of the matter is there, and was supplied by God himself.

God reveals himself through visible things

Catholics hold, no less than the Protestant tradition does, that God revealed himself freely and specially to the Hebrews. From the first, we read how God revealed himself and worked through what struck the senses—objects, like the Burning Bush, the Pillar of Fire, the Glory over the Ark—in a sense, through the symbol of the Ark itself: phenomena, like the storm upon Mount Sinai: events, like the Plagues of Egypt. The rules for sacrifice and ritual were not just tolerated by God, but sanctioned positively by him: and, altogether, the Old Testament dispensation was so made up of material things intended to be used spiritually in a greater or a less degree, that the Prophets had to spend much more time in recalling the Jews to interior dispositions of soul than in exhorting them to be true to the details of the Law. I add, that God chose to reveal himself by means of writings—the Old Testament religion is a "book-religion"—and again, through men: prophets, priests and kings. And all this was essentially social: the People was held together not only by its worship of One and the selfsame God, but by tribal and national and family ceremonies, from what concerned marriage right up to the great festivals like the Pasch, the Day of Atonement, and Pentecost.

Concerning the manifold reasons for, and nature of, the Incarnation, this volume already contains an essay. Let me then say here only one thing: It establishes once and for ever, and in fullest measure, the principle that God will not save human nature apart from human nature. The material side of the transaction of our Saving might have been minimised. God might have saved us by a prayer, a hope, by just one act of love. He might have remained invisible to eye, inaudible to ear. But he did not. He took our

The Incarnation

¹ Rom. i.

² Acts xiv.

human nature—the whole of it. Nothing that is in us, was *not* in him. Jesus Christ was true God, and true Man. In him was that two-fold nature, in one Person. And indeed, in his human nature was that double principle that is in ours—there was body, and there was soul. In Jesus Christ are for ever joined the visible and the invisible; the Infinite, and the created, limited thing that man is: Man, in short, and God. Since, then, the Incarnation, no one can possibly criticise a religion because it is not wholly “spiritual.” We are not wholly spiritual: Christ is not wholly spiritual. The religion that we need, the religion that he gives, will not be totally unlike what we are, and what he is. Christ did not treat us as though we were stones: nor yet, as if we were angels. He became Man, because we are men; and *as* men he, perfect Man, will treat us.

*The work of
salvation in-
carnational:
the sacra-
ments*

You expect that a man's work will be characteristic of him. When therefore you observe that the whole method of our salvation was an incarnational one, wherein the Spirit operates in and by means of the flesh, you will expect to see this work itself out in detail. You see that it does so, first, in the massive fact of the sort of Church that Christ founded. The Church, existing as it does upon this earth for the sake of men who live on the earth and not for disembodied souls, still less for angels, is so constructed as to suit the situation. It is visible, yet invisible. It has its way in, and its way out. It has quite definite frontiers. It has a perfectly unmistakable form of government. Of the structure of the Church, this volume has also spoken. I need therefore not dwell on it, any more than I need upon the Incarnation itself. I need but add, that the nature of its Founder being what it is, and the nature of the Church being what it is, and our nature being such as we have described it, you cannot possibly be surprised if what goes on within the Church is in keeping with all the rest. The object of the Church being the salvation and sanctification of ourselves, the method of the Church will include and not disdain a material element. Even beforehand, we might have expected this, nay, felt sure that it would be so. In the concrete, this method will turn out to be, normally, the Sacramental System. This is what we have to study.

Let me but add, that we should be glad that this is so. Had our Lord given us a wholly “spiritual” religion (if such a thing is conceivable), we might have reproached him for neglecting those bodies of ours, which minister to us so much good pleasure, and provide for us such grave difficulties. We might have grieved that he had done nothing for our social instinct, that always, in every department, forces us to create some social unit or other. Again, knowing ourselves all too well, we might have felt that the ideal, just because so disembodied, would prove to be beyond us: we would be sure that the weight of our bodily humanity would sooner or later drag us down. After all, we must eat and drink: men

marry : they mingle with their fellows—if we can in no way co-ordinate all this with what is spiritual, catch it up, use it, see how it is legitimate and can be made of value—we are practically being asked to despair of human life. On the other hand, if we see that no part of human nature is neglected by our Lord, we are, as I said, not only grateful but most humbly grateful, seeing that what has so often supplied material for sin is judged, by Christ, as none the less able to be given a lofty task, the sublimest duty—that of co-operating with Grace, nay, being used by Grace and in its interests. And once and for all, we see that God scorns nothing that he has made : that Jesus Christ was Man, not despising nor hating his manhood ; that his Church understands, as he does, all that is “ in man ” ; and that as the Eternal Son of God assumed a human nature, never to lay it down, so too in our very bodies, and helped by bodily things, we are to enter into that supernatural union with God through Christ, wherein is to consist our everlasting joy.

§ III: THE SACRAMENTAL SYSTEM

WHEN we read the earliest documents relating to the Christian Church, we find Christians at once using all sorts of religious *behaviour*. They do not only pray, or propound a moral code—you find them being dipped in water : meeting for common meals of greater or less solemnity : “ laying hands ” on one another : maintaining the institution of marriage : anointing sick persons with oil : not eating certain sorts of foods : paying attention to certain days, such as that of the New Moon, and also the first day of the week, and sometimes adopting quite strange rites, like putting honey upon the lips of children or even adults.

These rites did not all stand upon the same footing. Some were prohibited : some were tolerated or kept within certain bounds (like the observance of special days) : some were regarded as quite exceptionally solemn, and were imposed officially. Looking at the matter from outside, you see, on the whole, that what these last-named had of special about them was, that Christ himself had instituted them, or at least his Apostles officially imposed or used them : and that they implied something beyond themselves, and even produced certain results in the soul. No one, for example, professed to suppose that Christ had ordered the observance of the New Moon : though placing honey on the lips of a child, or milk, might signify something spiritual, no one quite claimed that it produced any special result in the child's soul. On the other hand, you will hear expressions such as that we are “ saved by means of the Bath of New Birth ” (Titus iii 5) : that the Holy Spirit, or Grace, is given “ by means of the laying-on of hands ” (2 Tim. i 6 ; Acts viii 18). And marriage is spoken of as a “ mighty symbol ” (Eph. v 25).¹

¹The word “ *musterion*,” here translated as “ symbol,” is explained below, p. 741.

It is easily seen that there was much here that might induce confusion, and even abuses, and needed clearing up. Indeed, the confusion is often manifest. Some people urged that it was better not to marry at all : others acted as though Christianity had abolished all restrictions upon whom you married. Some began to make life intolerable by introducing all sorts of food-restrictions ; others went freely to pagan feasts. Some seemed to think that the " bath of New Birth " was meant to give you even bodily immortality : others that you could bathe in it vicariously, on behalf of those who had already died. Some turned the meals, taken in common, into an occasion for creating social cliques, and quite failed to see in the meal that which it stood for or signified—to put it at the lowest, for Paul makes clear that as the ceremony to which it was but a preface proceeded, there was more in it than just a noble or pure idea : the " Lord's Body " itself was to be discerned therein, to be fed upon as he had ordained, with vast consequences to those who thus received it. Hence even the preface to this, with its signification of union in charity, was being travestied by these social schismatics.

We must not be surprised that these Christian rites were not, at first, exhaustively explained, nor perfectly understood by all. Very little, in Christian doctrine, was or could be immediately stated in an adequate formula : even in the simpler matter of issuing orders, it was at once found that questions were asked, and interpretations had to be given. Thus, the Apostles decreed that meat that had been used in a pagan sacrifice must not be eaten. " What," asked the Christians, " are we to do when marketing ? what, when invited to dinner ? How can we tell whether the meat in the butchers' shops, or offered at table, has come from a pagan temple or not ? " Such questions needed answering whenever they arose. So with dogma. The Christians knew that they worshipped Christ as God. " How then," some of them asked, " could he have been also man ? He could not. His humanity must have been merely apparent—he was a ghost-man." " No," said the Church, " he was true man." Already St John has to make this point. Thereupon the pendulum swung back. " Then he cannot have been true God—his sonship can have only been one of adoption, not of nature. He must have been ' divine,' not God." " No," insisted the Church, " he was true God too." Questions and answers continued till the theology of the Incarnation, as we say, was worked out—the complete *theory* and the proper official expressions in which the dogma was to be stated were provided. The same sort of process is seen in regard of these pieces of ritual behaviour that the Christians carried through. It will be clear that I am not remotely suggesting that what we now know as the Seven Sacraments did not exist from the beginning, and exist in substance just as they do now : but, if I may say so reverently, the first Christians needed desperately to *use* our Lord Jesus Christ himself, rather than speculate about him—though the

time came and came soon when they had to do that, and did it : and somewhat in the same way they were baptised, married, confirmed, went to Communion, but had no "covering formula," so to call it, to apply to all these transactions precisely from what we call the "sacramental" point of view.

You first see coming to light the notion that certain transactions *Signs* are "signs"—they visibly represent something you do not see—an idea, or an event. Washing with water is a very natural symbol of spiritual purification ; sharing in a common meal naturally symbolises social unity, and, indeed, the breaking of bread could well represent the sacrifice of Christ himself : oil had always stood for a symbol of health and well-being. Hence the word "mystery" began very soon to be used by Christians of their rites, and the Latin word "sacramentum" after a while began to be used as a translation of "mystery." But be careful about these words. "*Musterion*" originally only meant something "shut up," and then, something which had a meaning concealed within it, and then, just a "secret." The pagan rites known as "Mysteries" consisted in ceremonies of a symbolical sort, wherein religious impressions were made on the minds of the participants—for example, the solemn exhibition of an ear of corn represented the presence of a god : an elaborate dance or procession represented the progress of a soul in the underworld, and so forth. What the devotee had learnt or experienced was to be kept a dead secret. "Mystery," then, in this original sense has nothing to do with the word technically used now to mean a Truth in itself surpassing human intelligence, and needing to be revealed by God, and even so, not fully intelligible to our natural powers of thinking. Similarly, "sacrament" meant at first no more than a "holy thing," or rather, a "religionified" thing, so to say. It was first applied to money deposited by litigants in some religious place, or forfeited by the loser and given to religious purposes. It came thus to mean any solemn engagement, and in particular the military oath. As equivalent (very roughly : the Latins were not skilful in finding equivalents for Greek words) to "mystery," it meant little more than that what it was applied to was more sacred than its mere external nature would lead you to suppose.

But you see at once that this notion of "sign" extends so widely as to cover almost anything ; similarly, almost any religious performance could be called a "holy thing," and indeed the word "sacrament" for a long time was applied to all sorts of religious activities—the Lord's Prayer was a sacrament in this sense. We ourselves apply the word "mystery" not only in the technical sense, but, for example, to the incidents commemorated in the Rosary, because they were material occurrences with profound significations. The notion then admits of much further definition.

It is at once clear that some "significant" transactions stood out as quite special because they had been instituted by Christ himself.

He said : " Go, baptise in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." He said : " Do this in commemoration of me." Yet even this would not be sufficient as a definition of certain special transactions ; for Christ told his Apostles to " Wash one another's feet," for example. Here is an obvious symbol, and it was instituted by himself, and the institution is duly observed from time to time in the Church even now. Yet it stood on quite a different footing, for instance, from baptism. But why did it do so ?

Causes

Because it became clear that some of these signs were instituted by Christ to produce certain results in those who used them, and by no means ordinary results of a moral or devotional sort, such as the looking at a pious picture might do, or even what I have just quoted—the Washing of Feet. Our Lord says definitely that Baptism is necessary for salvation (Mark xvi 16) ; that to enter the Kingdom of Heaven you *must* be born again by water as well as by the Holy Spirit (John iii 5) ; and St Paul (quoted above) says we are " *saved* by means of the bath of New Birth." When, after baptism, hands are laid on the newly baptised, or when they are laid on those set apart for the Christian ministry, the Holy Ghost, and Grace, are said to be given " by means " of this laying-on of hands.

We see then that there exist in the Church certain material transactions, such that they stand as signs of something spiritual, and also, somehow cause and confer and contain what they signify, and that these efficacious signs were in some sense instituted by Christ himself. There is one more preliminary remark to be made.

The Sacramental System

I have called this essay *The Sacramental " System."* This implies that Christ has not as it were instituted " sacraments " casually, but according to a principle ; and that the sacraments are not thrown haphazard into the Church, but form an orderly series : not only that their existence is governed by an *idea*, but that an *idea* rules, no less, their number and their nature, gives them coherence and a unity. The *idea* that governs their existence has already been sufficiently, perhaps, explained. I therefore merely recall that it involves the doctrine that matter is not bad, nor to be despised, but can be, and is, made use of by God and by Christ and by the Church in the work of our sanctification. The opposite to this would be the doctrine that matter, or the body, or the visible world at large *is* somehow bad, and this doctrine was best seen in the sect of the Manicheans—a curious sect, Persian in origin, but made up as time went on of all sorts of ideas and practices. As a matter of fact, the notion has always existed in some shape side by side with the true Catholic one, which is, that nothing that God has made is bad, nor has it become bad since and because of the Fall. Right down to our own day, a false Puritanism has existed : the Middle Ages saw many strange versions of it, involving strange results, such as, that food, marriage, and in fact anything to do with the physical life of man, was bad, owing to his fallen state, or even to the essential bad-

ness of matter. It is no part of my duty to go into this here ; but you will see at once that the Sacramental System opposes this definitely. No part of God's creation is bad : every part of it can be used by God for the most spiritual purposes. The results, on the other hand, of the false doctrine have been very bad indeed. Men, by dint of thinking that matter and the body were bad, have developed a sort of insane hatred of them, and have gone so far in their desire to be rid of them as even to commit suicide. Or again, since they saw that they had not the strength thus to inflict pain and denial upon themselves consistently, they took refuge in the notion that their body was not really part of themselves at all, but that the real "self" resided somehow inside the body, like a jewel in an ugly and filthy case or shell ; and so they said that it could not really matter what their body did, because it was not really "they." They could then allow the body to indulge in every kind of debauchery, while still maintaining that their soul, or "self," was living a lofty and holy life. The sacramental doctrine of the Church prevents both these disastrous notions taking root amongst us. Even were the body no more than the shell of the soul, it has to be treated with extreme respect, and kept holy and pure, because it contains so precious a thing. But it is more than the soul's shell : along with the soul it constitutes "man" : and so, body must be saved no less than soul, and by means of bodily or material things the living man is approached and may be helped as well as by spiritual things. We thank God that this is so : were it not, we might despair.

When I said that the sacramental "system" also implies that the actual Sacraments can be arranged in an "order" of an intelligible sort, I meant that they could be thought of by us, in proportion as we understand them better, in that sort of way. Thus, there is obviously such a thing as *natural life*—the life by which we all of us live by dint of being born and not having yet died. In the essay on Grace you have seen that God has freely willed to make to man a "free gift" (which is what the word Grace really means), namely, a supernatural life which is in no way due to him nor can be earned by him, but which involves a far greater happiness and well-being for him if he lives by it. Now just as a man requires to be born in order to live at all, so must he have a "new birth" if he is to begin to live by this "new life." This New Birth is given by the first Sacrament, Baptism. After a while, boys and girls begin to "grow up" : they take stock of their position and responsibilities : also, their bodies and their minds change in many ways, and their human nature may be described as being "completed." They also require not a little strengthening, body and mind, during this period. In many ways the Sacrament of Confirmation may be regarded as fulfilling a like "completing" function in the supernatural life : it does not give that life, but it completes and establishes it, and St Thomas compares it to adolescence. As life proceeds, it is normal for men

and women to go even further in the completing of their human life, by joining another life to their own in marriage. The Church does not substitute anything for human marriage, but it so infuses grace into and through the Christian marriage contract as to raise it to the dignity of a Sacrament, and a supernatural element enters into this great human crisis-in-life. Within the Christian Church, however, men may be called to consecrate their lives to the immediate service of God as priests. This choice and vocation are of such overwhelming importance, and so unlike anything else, that we are not surprised to see that Ordination, in the Catholic Church, is a Sacrament too, not merely a setting aside of a man for a special duty. But for the proper maintenance of any part of life, appropriate food has to be given: for the maintenance and development of the supernatural life it will be seen that there is in the Church a unique and a uniquely appropriate food, the Eucharist. Again, a man may fall sick: he thereupon requires doctoring: there is in the Church a Sacrament instituted precisely for the purpose of healing even the gravest sicknesses of the soul, which are all due to sin. But after all, no human life lasts for ever upon this earth: men die. When death is imminent, or probable, in how great a need does the spirit stand! for the body and its brain can now no more assist it. At such an hour the supernatural life, too, runs its grave risks; and the "Last Sacraments" are there to succour it.

Thus it will be seen that the Sacraments can all be thought of under the heading, or general idea, of "Life" and its needs. In this way their unity of purpose and order in action can be clearly seen, and more easily appreciated and remembered.

I have now to enter with somewhat more detail into the Catholic teaching concerning the various elements that make up a "Sacrament."

§ IV: THE THEOLOGY OF THE SACRAMENTS

IT used to be said that the Sacraments, as Catholics understand them, were medieval inventions. Research showed that St Augustine, who died in 430, taught a fully "sacramental" theology. He was therefore said to be the guilty innovator. Finally it is clear that well before his time, in fact from the beginning, the Church contained the *fact* and, better than that, the *use* of those things which we now call Sacraments.

That the Sacraments always included and could not but include the element of "sign," "symbol," is evident. The water used in baptism symbolised at once the washing away of spiritual stains: also, as St Paul saw, it symbolised (especially when the candidate for baptism was often, though not always, *immersed* in the baptismal water) the complete passing away of the "old man," the merely natural man, and the emergence of the New Man, the supernatural

self. The "bath" is a "bath of second and new birth." The Eucharistic meal symbolised forthwith a unity among Christians, in charity, which any common meal, taken among men, naturally symbolises even in our Western world, and still more in the Eastern one. The Bread, one loaf of many grains, symbolised that mystical Body of Christ which the Church is. And the Breaking of the Bread, the Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross; and again, the participation of all in that one Bread, the fellowship of Christians in Christ himself. The wine, again, so manifestly symbolised Christ's Blood outpoured in sacrifice, that the heresy of the Aquarians, who wished to use water instead of wine, stood condemned, if for no other reason, because the "sign" provided by the wine thus disappeared. The "imposition of hands," used in Confirmation and in Ordination, was even more obviously a sign of the giving of the Holy Ghost when the metaphor of "God's Right Hand," meaning that same Holy Ghost, was more in use than it is now. The hand, issuing from clouds, so common in ancient days, was at once recognised as meaning the Holy Spirit; when the priest to-day, at the Blessing of the Font, plunges his hand into the water, this symbolises the same thing—the infusion of the Holy Spirit. Oil, used in Confirmation, Ordination, and in the Sacrament of the Sick, also carried an obvious symbolical value both to Jewish and ex-pagan converts. For, among the Jews, the olive had always gone along with the vine and the fig-tree as a symbol of prosperity, and oil had been poured on those who were consecrated to kingship and so forth, in sign of the gift of the richness of God's blessing. Among the Greeks, its use by athletes at once connected it with the idea of suppleness and strength. Marriage, even natural marriage among pagans, had always been fenced about with ceremonies expressive of union, even when that union was far rather one of possession by the man than of true union between two. But the very event of a marriage, necessarily expressing itself outwardly, enabled St Paul to present it as the sign and symbol of a far higher union, that between Christ and his Church, and indeed the metaphor of Espousal as applied to the union between God and the chosen people, or God and the individual soul, was quite ancient and familiar. Finally, the whole concrete behaviour of penitent and priest could not but express, exteriorly, the spiritual events of forgiveness and restoration to grace.

Naturally enough, those Sacraments which were not only most necessary, but whose institution was most vividly described in Scripture, and whose material element was most obvious, such as water, bread and wine, were most dwelt upon by early writers; and, again naturally enough, the idea of their symbolic character was chiefly worked out in a place like Alexandria, where people tended to see signs in almost everything, and attached symbolical values to the most concrete historical events. The Latin world was far less inclined to look below the surface of things, yet here too from the

beginning the "sign" value of Sacramental transactions is perfectly clear.

St Augustine, who was very fond of working out the notion of God's "traces" in nature—even in connection with such doctrines as the Holy Trinity—naturally elaborates the meaning of "signs" in general. He says that a "sign" is a thing which, because of its outward form which it thrusts upon the senses, makes something else, by its own nature, come into the mind. A Sacrament, then, he says, is a "sacred sign of a spiritual object." It is a natural object that evokes the idea of, because picturing, a spiritual object. Of course he says much more than this; but we are keeping close to the "sign-element" in Sacraments.

As the Middle Ages began to dawn, it was seen that men were insisting rather upon the "mystery-element" in Sacraments, *i.e.*, of the hiddenness of what was in them, rather than on the manifesting of the spiritual and invisible by the material and visible. But the balance soon swung back, or rather, reached a good equilibrium—in Sacraments was seen *both* the outward sign, *and* the inward thing that was symbolised. The thing by its nature was "secret," because invisible; but it was meant to become visible by means of what signified its presence.

*Matter and
form of
Sacraments*

I might perhaps just mention here that you may often read the phrase "the *matter* and the *form*" of the Sacraments. This is a philosophical notion that need not really delay us. In practice it means that the exterior element in the Sacraments can be seen as consisting of two parts, one more general, like the water in baptism—for water can stand for all sorts of things, as oil can, or bread—and the other more specific and more accurately expressing what the general symbol really stands for in the circumstances; this second part consists of words or their equivalent actions: thus "I baptise thee" shows for what, precisely, the water is being used, and what, in consequence, it symbolises: something more is required than the mere fact of meeting and living together, to show that a man and woman really mean to be husband and wife. And so for the rest.

These philosophical terms, derived from Aristotle, have been found useful, so as to make clear what are the essential elements of the sacramental sign, *i.e.*, what is necessary for the validity of the *sacrament*.

So far, then, it is at least clear how foolish are they who talk about Catholic Sacraments as "meaningless bits of ritual" and so forth. They include ritual; but since they are essentially and from the nature of the case *signs*, they cannot possibly be "meaningless."

*The
Sacraments
are causes*

We have, however, insisted that the Sacraments are a very special sort of "sign." They are *not* mere pictures. The essence of the matter is seen in phrases like: "you are saved *by means of* the bath of New Birth." "The grace which is in thee *by means of* the im-

position of my hands." If I decide to become a Christian, and then go through a ceremony to show that I have acted on my decision, that ceremony is a sign of my decision, but need not be anything else. If I went to Holy Communion, and it made me remember the Passion, and this memory touched my heart, my act of Communion might well count as a "commemoration" of the Passion, which occasioned my having religious sentiments, but it still would not be more than an exterior commemoration, even symbolical, of a past event, such as my touching my hat when I pass the Cenotaph, which may well fill me with affectionate or patriotic emotions and resolves. Nay, even though *on the occasion* of my doing this or that, God gives me grace, the thing that I do remains merely the occasion of that gift. Thus I might do a kind act to a sick man, and on occasion of this God might bless and help me. But the doing of that act would not be a Sacrament. You see then the difference between a sign which is a mere representation of something else; and a sign of something invisible which is the mere occasion of my obtaining that invisible thing; and a sign which is that *by means of which* I obtain the invisible thing it symbolises. It is in this last sense that the Sacraments are Signs.

Since the perfectly definite "by means of" so clearly to be read in the Scriptures, and the almost violent description of the effects produced by good or bad Communions, given by St Paul (1 Cor. xi), there could be no doubt as to the *work done* by the Sacramental Signs, which become, as Origen says (about 250 A.D.), symbols which are the "origin and fount" of the invisible thing they symbolise. The notion became clear precisely by way of that double nature of man on which we have already insisted. The Sacrament was one thing, and yet it reached and affected both elements in man, the invisible spiritual soul no less than the body. When these very early writers asked themselves *how* this might be, they contented themselves on the whole by answering: "By means of the Spirit or Power of God, working in" the water, and so forth. The fact that a Sacrament is an efficacious symbol, as we now say, was then clearly realised well before Augustine. Cyprian, indeed, insists that the Eucharist at once symbolises, and *is*, the Sacrifice of Christ; it is a representation which contains the reality. In Augustine, the notion of efficacy is so strong that he keeps saying that in the Sacrament it is Christ who acts; Christ who washes; Christ who cleanses. But it could still be argued that Augustine does not make clear the difference between a divine action *on the occasion* of a sacramental rite carried through and a divine action *so bound* to the rite that it is done through and by means of it. But you can see from an examination of his whole mind that if you had asked him directly this question: Am I given grace by means of the Sacrament? he would have answered: Yes. But as language became ever more exact, keeping pace with thought ever more accurate, the nature of the bond between the divine action

and the sacramental sign become perfectly clear. Hugh of St Victor (c. 1140) says : A Sacrament is a corporal or material element, set forth exteriorly to the senses, which by its similarity portrays, and by its institution means, and by blessing contains, some invisible and spiritual grace. While Peter Lombard (c. 1150) says even more clearly : A Sacrament is properly so called because it is the sign of the grace of God, and the expression of invisible grace, in such a way as to be not only its image, but its cause.

What perhaps helped more swiftly than anything else to make this nature of a Sacrament—"efficacious sign"—quite clear, was a series of three questions : What exactly is it that is done to us by our using a Sacrament ? Who can administer a Sacrament ? if not just anyone, how far does the effect of the Sacrament depend on the person of its minister ? and how far do my personal dispositions enter into the affair ? does the good result obtained from using a Sacrament depend upon *me* ? Many details of the answers to be given to these questions belong to other essays which deal with the Sacraments severally. Here I need do little more than get at the various principles involved, illustrating them by allusion to the several Sacraments rather than examining each Sacrament separately.

*Causes of
Sanctification*

The answer to the first question—What does the (due) use of a Sacrament bring about in me ? was easily and immediately answered—Sanctification. Baptism was from the very words of Christ seen to be absolutely necessary if the soul was to be saved at all. But salvation comes through grace and only through grace. Therefore sanctifying Grace is what is given through the use of the Sacraments. I need but add one point here. This grace is, quite simply, a divine life infused into the soul—a supernatural union with God. Grace then is always and everywhere one and the same thing. But Grace may be given to a soul in which grace is not—as to the unbaptised, or again, to those who by mortal sin have lost grace ; or, more grace may be given to those who already possess grace. There may be the first infusion of Grace, or the restoration of Grace, or the ever renewed intensification of Grace. Already, then, you can see that though the gift be, in all the Sacraments, one and the same thing, yet it may be given in various circumstances, and in fact is variously given according to the circumstances of those using the various Sacraments—for example, Baptism, Penance, or Confirmation. However, this is not the only difference between Sacraments. Marriage and Ordination, for example, are not just means of providing more grace to people who happen to be going to get married or be ordained. They are meant to provide them with grace *because* they are going to be married or ordained ; that is, grace so acting as to help them in their circumstances—to sanctify them precisely *as* married people or as priests. That is, grace is given not just in general, but in view of the state upon which its recipients are entering

or in which they live and need special assistance. Baptism gives the first grace of all which unites a man to God through Christ : Confirmation establishes him in this : Penance restores a man to that supernatural life if he have lost it : the special needs of the married or of the clergy are obvious ; so, too, are those of the sick : all our life through we have need of more and more grace, especially in difficult moments, and we gain it supremely through Holy Communion. This special grace is called " sacramental grace," to distinguish it from " sanctifying " grace at large.

The fact that the whole existence of the Sacraments, and of each Sacrament, is concerned with the giving of Grace, involves a point so important that it may be touched on here. It is, that the Sacraments were instituted by Christ. Historically, this fact became emphasised for the very reason that we have been giving. It was because the Sacraments give grace that men saw, and insisted on, the fact that they were instituted by Christ ; it was not because they were instituted by Christ that men concluded they gave grace. Both ways of looking at the thing can be true ; but the former was the way in which men first and chiefly looked at it. The Sacraments give grace. But Grace is only given by God through the merits of Jesus Christ. Therefore if the gift of Grace is so annexed to the Sacraments as to make them (anyhow in the case of baptism) an instrument of salvation, they must have been of divine institution : but since everything in the Church, that is essential and substantial, was created by Christ himself upon earth, therefore the Sacraments were instituted not just by God, but by the God-Man, Christ.

*Christ the
author of the
Sacraments*

Not that such a statement settles a variety of subsidiary questions, any more than the definition of the Council of Trent does, which simply states that the Sacraments were " all of them instituted by Jesus Christ " ; and even the Modernist errors condemned by Pius X can be grouped under the general notion that it was not Christ who instituted the Sacraments in *any* real sense, but that they grew up under pressure of circumstances, either in the time of the Apostles or even after it, and began by being mere rites of various sorts, quite different in nature from anything we have been talking about.

This clumsy notion is as alien to facts as would be the idea that for a Sacrament to have been instituted by Christ, it was necessary for Christ personally and in so many words to institute it just as it is at present carried out in the liturgy of the Church. The earlier writers of the Church did not go into details on the subject : no one ever disputed that Baptism and the Eucharist were instituted by Christ in person and in a form from which the Church must never recede. But it was usually through something else that the point was reached and the fact asserted—I mean, for example, it was the habit of the Gnostics to appeal to a kind of inner light, as settling truth and right, which drove an Irenaeus to insist that the proper guardian of truth was the episcopate, whose origin was Christ himself

by way of the Apostles, though Ignatius had already been clear enough on the subject.¹ But when it began to be thought that the administration of the Sacraments or at least their "matter and form" must always remain, and have remained, unchanged in every way, then writers were either forced to assert that Christ had so instituted them in person, or, since that would be very difficult and in fact impossible to show, that he need not have instituted them in person at all, but that, for example, the Holy Ghost, not Christ, instituted Confirmation, and a Church council in the ninth century instituted Penance (so Alexander of Hales, *c.* 1245). In this department, Dominican and Franciscan schools of thought seem to have clashed not a little, the Franciscan ones going too far away from the doctrine of institution by Christ himself—St Bonaventure, for example, allowing that Confirmation and Unction might have been instituted either by the Apostles or immediately after their death, though by divine authority. There was, however, current the idea that Christ might have instituted the Sacraments quite generally, and no more—that is, have appointed the divine effect, leaving the method of its obtaining to the arrangement of his Church. The real point is reached when one sees that a man can be described as "instituting" a thing whether he does so in detail, or whether he initiates a thing only "in the rough," and leaves the working out of it to others.

Take the case of Confirmation. You could, conceivably, imagine Christ saying: "When a man has been baptised, lay your hands on him and anoint him with oil, saying certain words: this sign will produce grace in him, such as to 'confirm' him and 'complete' his baptism." Or, "When a man has been baptised, he will require to be 'confirmed': do this by some suitable sign." Though the Council of Trent has defined that all the Sacraments were instituted by Christ, which settles for us that they were not merely invented by the Apostles, nor merely grew up under pressure of circumstances, yet that Council does not state in what way exactly they were instituted by Christ. It does not, to start with, follow that they were *all* instituted in the *same* way. But it would never be admitted by a Catholic theologian, and should not be asserted by any historian, that Christ merely gave the Apostles some vague hint that there were to be transactions of a sacramental sort in his Church, and then left them to do what they thought best in the matter. Apart from all other considerations, a historian would, I think, see that the older Apostles were so very conservative—and among them all, perhaps, St James the most conservative—that they would never have started anything at all unless they were quite sure that Christ meant them to do exactly that. Hence since no one ought to dispute that Baptism and the Eucharist were instituted immediately and explicitly by Christ himself; and since the Apostles immediately began to confirm and to ordain; and since it was precisely St James who promulgated

¹ Irenaeus fl. about 140-200; Ignatius, † 107.

what was to be done in the way of anointing the sick ; and since it was St Paul (who positively piqued himself on not being an innovator) who declares the sacramental value of Christian marriage ; and given Christ's assertion that those sins which the Apostles remitted were remitted, and those that they retained were retained—with the necessary consequence that they would be called upon at times to remit and to retain sins—we are right to be morally certain, historically, that the Apostles had Christ's direct order to do, in substance, all those things which we now know as the administration of the Sacraments.

Historically, then, we can show that all the Sacraments can be connected up with something that Christ said ; and a foundation for the assertion that he instituted them can be found in his own words : the general behaviour and temperament of the Apostles bear out that herein they acted on some sort of mandate received from Christ in person : precisely in what way he gave it, save in the case of Baptism and the Eucharist, we cannot ever know. What further is certain is that the Church cannot substantially alter anything that he instituted, though in what precisely the substance of the material element of the Sacrament, by his order, consists, again can be matter for discussion. What the Church has the perfect right to do is to ordain that a Sacrament has now to be administered in such and such a way, under pain of its being illicitly or even invalidly administered. Thus the Church can add conditions to the administering of the Sacraments, but she cannot subtract anything in them that is of Christ's ordaining and has been substantial in them from the beginning.

Our purpose is rather the explanation of Catholic doctrine than the refutation of false doctrines. It is however so often said, nowadays, that St Paul practically invented the Sacraments by introducing into certain current practices quite new ideas, that this theory has to be glanced at. I might notice, in passing, how far things have travelled since the time when the Sacraments were called "medieval accretions." So thoroughly "sacramental" is the earliest Church seen to have been, that no one short of St Paul is appealed to as the originator of Sacraments. Paul therefore is said to have borrowed religious terms and notions from the "mystery-cults" of the contemporary pagans. These mystery religions involved the exercise of a great deal of magical ritual (magic is spoken of briefly below) and the recitation of formulas, so that the "initiate," as he was called, became on the one hand much impressed by the uncanny spectacles he had seen, and, on the other, was convinced he now was guaranteed to escape the dangers in the next world which were calculated to befall one who found himself there without some such magical preliminary. In more philosophical forms of these cults, a good deal of allegory was introduced, and a more philosophical initiate might maintain that in some sense he was incorporated with the

*The
Sacraments
and pagan
mystery-
cults*

god in whose honour the mystery was celebrated. Indeed, the god's history might be enacted during the celebration by means of a symbolical dance or other piece of ritual. Briefly : Paul knew of, as did everyone, the existence and general nature of mystery-cults, and once or twice remotely alludes, with contempt, to them. The rule observed by himself, St John, and early Christians in general, with regard to pagan forms of worship, was to keep from all contact with them : their abhorrence of them was almost ferocious. Paul does *not* use any of the characteristic words of the mystery-religions ; he insists that he introduced nothing into the Christian creed or code that was new—save, if you will, the emphasis laid by him on the truth that non-Jews were to be admitted as freely into the Church as Jews were, and that none of them had to observe the Jewish ritual. The mysteries moreover were expensive affairs, and reserved for a small minority who were pledged under secrecy to reveal nothing that they experienced ; Christianity on the other hand was for all. Christianity was a doctrine ; there was no doctrine in the mysteries—they affected not the intelligence, but the imagination and the nerves. The whole method and effect of the mysteries was “magical”—you recited the due formula, performed the proper programme, and the effects occurred automatically. There was nothing moral about the mysteries, the purity you there gained was merely a ritual one—in the concrete the celebration of the mysteries was anything but pure : one writer has called them a mixture of shambles and brothel. If anyone imagines that Paul is going deliberately to borrow or even unconsciously to absorb anything from such a source, with which to improve the Faith to which he had turned, we abandon such a critic as foolish, or, as determined to discover at any and every cost some non-Christian source for the Christian Sacraments.

*The minister
of the
Sacraments*

The Sacraments therefore receive their efficacy from Christ. What then is the rôle played by the “minister” of the Sacrament ? for after all you cannot baptise nor confirm nor ordain nor anoint nor absolve yourself, nor can a layman at any rate consecrate the Eucharist ; and though the man and the woman are the ministers, each to the other, of the sacrament of Marriage, yet each does require the other, and obviously cannot administer that Sacrament to himself by himself.

Again, the rôle of the minister in the administration of Sacraments did not come up on, so to say, its own merits, but, because of the claim of heretics to administer the Sacraments equally with the orthodox. This claim seemed so horrible to certain groups, or to fierce-tempered individuals like the African Cyprian that, on the grounds that where the Church was not, the Holy Spirit was not, and where he was not, nothing of a sanctifying nature could exist, and therefore not the Sacraments, they denied to heretic ministers the power to administer any Sacrament whatsoever validly. This

dispute will be found explained, and the course it took, in the pages of this volume dealing with the Sacrament of Baptism. But behind that dispute existed the universally admitted certainty, that a proper minister is necessary in the case of each and every Sacrament, and the dispute really turned upon the question—Who *was* the proper one? It was, all admitted, the “word” of the proper minister that made the bread to be Christ’s Body, that made the water to be no mere water, but baptismal water. This conjunction of the word with the thing, so that a moral whole was created, supplied that due material element through which the Spirit of God could act. But the minister was not ever regarded simply as a man. Had he been so regarded, certainly much might have turned upon his moral or mental dispositions. But he was definitely regarded as representing, in his person, the Church; and the Church was the continuation of Christ, and the dwelling-place of his Spirit. Therefore, albeit it was a man who spoke the words, Christ spoke through them—“Christ cleanses.”

It is therefore certain that the moral condition of the minister of the Sacrament does not interfere with its validity on its own account. The mere fact that his soul has sin in it, does not render him useless as an instrument in the hands of the Church and of Christ, for the “making” of the Sacrament. It is desirable, in every way, that a priest, for example, should be a holy and even a cultured man. But the fact that he is immoral, or boorish, cannot affect the Sacrament as such. Certainly a devout priest will obtain, by his holiness and the fervour of his prayer, additional grace for those on whose behalf he administers a Sacrament; but this is a consideration exterior to the essence of the Sacrament itself. Similarly, two people who intend to get married and go through the marriage ceremony in proper circumstances, may, if they be frivolous, obtain little enough actual grace, but they will be truly married, and have administered to one another the Sacrament. It is very important even here to distinguish between a valid Sacrament and a fruitful one.

Is there, then, no way in which the minister can interfere with the validity of the rite he accomplishes? Certainly, but only one—*The intention of the minister* that is, by not “intending” to accomplish a Sacramental rite at all, even though he goes through the ritual quite scrupulously. Illustrate this as follows. If an unbaptised person says to me: I do not intend to become a Christian, but I wish you would show me how people are baptised. And if I were to answer: Very well. I do not intend to baptise you; but were I to do so, this is how I would do it—and proceeded to pour the water, pronouncing the words. I did not mean to baptise the person, and the person did not intend to be baptised; therefore I did not baptise him despite the complete performance of the ritual. After all, this is the merest common sense. In just the same way, if a woman, for example, is forced to go through a marriage ceremony, and does so, but does not intend

that her submission to the rite should mean a real marriage, married she is not. Observe what a denial of this would imply. It would mean that a woman could be married off, willy nilly, like a head of cattle. All civilised persons would reject so barbarous a notion.

However, just what sort of intention must the minister have? He must have "the intention of doing what the Church does." The Council of Trent, while defining that intention was necessary, did not settle whether a purely external intention of doing the rite properly sufficed, or whether some deeper kind of intention was needed too. It is at least certain that the minister need not personally believe that the Church's doctrine is true: provided he intends to do what the Church does, whatever that may be, he does do it. Of course, if the minister intends, positively, to do something different from what the Church does, he has not the requisite intention: I mention this, because while the ordaining bishops in the days of the Protestant revolution in this country would undoubtedly have said that they meant to do what Christ did when ordaining, and therefore, what his true Church did, yet they meant definitely *not* to create sacrificing-priests in the old sense; therefore they did not create them. Add to this that by changing the rite they showed that they had not the slightest intention of making priests in the old sense. So, owing to this lack of due intention (as well as for other reasons), the old sort of priest was not made. The traditional sort of Order was no more given.

*Dispositions
of the
recipient*

This leads us to the final question, How far do the dispositions of the recipient of the Sacrament affect its work in his soul? The question was most urgently asked when the Reformers began to say that nothing *save* the dispositions of the recipient mattered. There could be two extremes—one, where the action of the Sacrament would be described as purely mechanical; carry the rite through, and then, whatever be your interior dispositions, its effect is produced; this would be the extreme of "magic": the other extreme would involve (as among many of the Reformers it actually did) the assertion that the minister and the form of administration mattered nothing at all; all that mattered was the faith of the recipient: this would be complete subjectivism. Anyhow the question, so far as Catholic doctrine goes, has already been half answered above. If the subject to whom the sacramental rite is administered does not in any sense intend to receive the Sacrament, he does not receive it. I say, "in any sense," because there can be such a thing as a virtual intention. the recipient may be distracted at the moment and not think about what he is doing; or (in the case, for example, of Penance and the Eucharist) the action may have become so customary that he does what he does without reflecting on the nature of his action at all. However, were you to interrupt, and ask him what he intends to be doing, he would answer that he means to be getting absolved, or to be receiving Communion. He has therefore a

virtual intention, and validly, so far as that is concerned, receives the Sacrament in question. Even an habitual intention—an intention once made and never retracted—suffices for the valid reception of any Sacrament except Penance and Matrimony, which, by reason of their special nature, require at least a virtual intention in their recipients.

The special question of Baptism being given to children is treated of in the essay upon that Sacrament. Enough here to say that the will of the Church, and in a sense of the parents or sponsors, creates a social solidarity such that the child, embedded therein, can be answered for by that will.

But the real problem arises when a man approaches a Sacrament with such dispositions as to present an obstacle to grace. Such obstacle, in the case of the "Sacraments of the Living,"¹ would be *conscious* mortal sin; in the case of the "Sacraments of the Dead," *unrepented* mortal sin. The question is particularly important for those Sacraments which cannot be repeated—*i.e.*, Baptism, Confirmation, Order and Matrimony (which cannot be repeated, at any rate, while the matrimonial bond persists). If I approach these sacraments with an obstacle to grace, yet desiring to receive the Sacrament, I am indeed validly baptised, confirmed, ordained, or married, but I cannot actually receive grace (which is the union of the soul with God), since I am all the while resolving to be disunited from him. What then happens? Theologians teach that the grace of the Sacrament is produced in my soul when I remove the obstacle set by my evil will.

Does this then mean that the whole of the effects of the Sacraments are achieved within me if I merely interpose no obstacle of evil will to those effects? Is grace given *wholly* "ex opere operato,"^{Effects "ex opere operantis"} the mere subjecting myself to a certain rite? By no means. There is also the effect which comes "ex opere operantis," which means, through the effort I myself put into the transaction. If I approach a Sacrament without an obstacle to grace indeed, yet dully, Grace will no doubt reach me: but if I approach it with, so to say, an appetite, Grace will be appropriated and assimilated by me far more richly. All our Christian religious life, and our sacramental life most certainly, is in reality co-operative. The special feature about Christ's activity is, that it always comes first—the very impulse to seek or desire a Sacrament or any other good thing comes from God before it exists in our own heart; and that it creates, and creates what is supernatural, whereas our own best efforts, unaided, cannot create more than what is commensurate to them, that is, what is natural. I cannot lift myself up by the hair of my own head.

¹ The Sacraments of the Living are those which presuppose the state of grace in the recipient—*i.e.*, all the sacraments except Baptism and Penance, which two are called Sacraments of the Dead.

*The
Character*

Three Sacraments, then, produce an effect such that they cannot be repeated. They impress upon the soul what is called a "Character," or seal. The sacramental "Character" is not grace, but is a separate effect produced in the soul by the three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Order. They place my soul for ever in a special relation to Christ, and I cannot be replaced in it. I am for ever a baptised, confirmed, or ordained person. Even apostasy cannot alter this fact. Even though, by my evil will, I prevent the Sacrament from producing grace within me, yet I cannot prevent it from producing this "Character," if I will to receive the Sacrament validly at all. The theory of the Sacramental Character followed on the Church's consistent practice of not re-baptising, re-confirming, re-ordaining anyone who had properly been baptised and the rest. The controversies on this matter concerned, not the principle, but the concrete question whether so and so had been properly baptised, and the rest. I think that further discussion of these points, and of allied speculations, is now unnecessary.

*The
Sacraments
and "magic"*

Certain critics of the Catholic Faith and practice are never tired of denouncing the Sacraments as pieces of "magic." It is seen by now how wrong at every point they are. A magical transaction would be of the following nature. I repeat a formula, or perform an act, like "Open Sesame!" or, sticking pins into a wax figure of my enemy, either without knowing why, or merely because someone whom I consider to know why tells me to. Automatically, an effect takes place, such as a door opening, or the sickness and death of my foe. All I have to do is to carry my part through with mechanical accuracy. In the use of a Sacrament, first of all, the rite *means* something: it is a sign. Further, I use that rite because *Christ*, the Son of God, appointed it and told me to use it. Further, I do so, not because there are any mechanical consequences attached to it, but because it is the cause in me of Grace, a purely supernatural thing of which God alone is the origin and giver. Again, he who administers to me that rite, does not do so in any private capacity, nor because he has the key to certain spells or pieces of esoteric knowledge, but because he acts as the Church's minister, and she acts in him, and Christ acts in her. Finally, whether or no the Sacrament be fruitful in me depends on my intention and will, wholly or in part. Hence at no point do a magical transaction and a sacramental transaction coincide.

*Synopsis of
the teaching
of the Council
of Trent*

Before concluding, it may be of service to summarise the teaching of the Council of Trent, our classical source of information, upon the Sacraments in general. That Council denounces those who should say that the Sacraments of the New Law were not, all of them, instituted by Christ, or, that they are more, or fewer, than the seven often enumerated above. That any of these is not a true and proper Sacrament. That these Christian Sacraments differ in no way from Old Testament Sacraments save in their ceremonial. (Observe,

that this implies that there were Sacraments under the Old Law, but that they were different from ours. The main differences are, that the Old Testament Sacraments were indeed Signs instituted by God, but that they looked forward to and promised the Grace of Christ, yet did not impart it : in so far as they were efficacious signs, they effected not a moral, but a legal and ritual purity.) The Council proceeds to denounce anyone who says that the Seven Sacraments are all of them on an equal footing, so that none is in any way nobler than another (clearly Baptism, an absolutely necessary Sacrament, is on a different footing from Marriage or Ordination, since no one is obliged to get married or ordained). That the Sacraments of the New Law are not necessary for salvation, but superfluous, and that without them or the desire of them a man obtains the grace of justification from God by means of faith alone. Not, the Council adds, that all the Sacraments are necessary for each and every man. The allusion to the " desire " for a Sacrament alludes primarily to " baptism by desire," which is explained in the essay on Baptism : briefly, it means that if a man does not know of Baptism, he can (by means of an act of perfect charity, that is, of love of God for his own sake, and of detestation of sin for his sake, with the implied readiness to do all that God might command him, if he knew it) obtain grace and salvation. Similarly, if he knows of Baptism, and wishes for it, and cannot obtain, *e.g.* anyone to baptise him, or water, he can cleanse his soul from sin, as I have just explained. The " faith " alluded to by the Council means faith as Protestants conceived of it, *i.e.* trust. The Council further denounces one who should say that Sacraments exist only in order to nourish faith in the recipient. That they do not contain the Grace that they signify, or do not confer that grace upon those who interpose no obstacle, as though they were merely external signs of grace or justice, received by means of faith, or were mere marks, as it were, of the Christian profession, whereby believers might be distinguished from unbelievers. Or that Grace is not always given, and to all, so far as God's action goes, even if the Sacrament be duly received ; but only sometimes, and to certain persons. (This regards the false Protestant doctrines of predestination, according to which God so predestines certain souls to hell, that no matter what they desire and do, they are not given Grace.) Or that Grace is not given through the Christian Sacraments " ex opere operato," but that sheer trust in the divine promise suffices for the obtaining of Grace. That the three Sacraments, Baptism, Confirmation, Order, do not impress a " character " on the soul, that is, a spiritual and indelible sign, so that these three Sacraments cannot be reiterated. Or that all Christians have power to celebrate and administer all the Sacraments. That the intention at least of doing what the Church does is not required in the ministers when they celebrate and impart the Sacraments. That a sinful minister, who observes all the essential

elements in the celebration or imparting of a sacrament, yet does not celebrate or impart it at all. Finally, that the traditional Catholic rites, wherewith the Sacraments are surrounded, can be despised, omitted, or altered at the whim of any and every pastor.

As for the errors of Modernism, condemned by Pius X, which concern the Sacraments, I have sufficiently indicated their general character. Those which touch upon the nature of Sacraments at large are, that the opinions concerning the origin of Sacraments, entertained by the Fathers of the Council of Trent and doubtless colouring their dogmatic decisions, are very different from those which are now rightly admitted by those who study the history of Christianity. That the Sacraments took their rise from the Apostles and their successors who interpreted some idea or intention of Christ according to the suggestion or impulse of circumstances. That the aim of Sacraments is merely to recall to men's minds the ever-beneficent presence of the Creator.

How such doctrines fly in the face of the traditional Catholic dogma concerning the Sacraments must by now be clear.

§ V: RECAPITULATION

TURNING our eyes back, then, to those brief records of the life of Christ that the four Gospels are, we see that the Eternal Son of God was sent to redeem our race, and to elevate it to an unthinkable lofty state of union with its God, and was sent to do all this as Man, and by means of his manhood. We see that no thing that was in man did he despise: no human element did he fail to make his own. He did not, if I dare say so, just verify in himself the definition of "man," but in every way he lived as man in this our world of human men and women and of all material things. In his teaching he constantly helped himself, and his hearers, by using the things he saw around him for the conveying of his doctrine; and submitted himself not only to the rich and meaningful ritual of the Law, and was circumcised, and went to the Temple feasts, and observed the Pasch, and so forth, but spontaneously, for his own reasons, sought for and carried through an action that in his case seems to us almost uncalled-for. He was baptised by John. Thus Christ our Lord was human, and lived as man among men, and used all simple and human things during his life, and caught them up into his own spiritual life, and wove them into his teaching.

Hence we are not surprised to find him saying that we too, his disciples, are to be dipped in water; salvation is to come, not just to him who "believes," but to him who believes and is baptised. If we are surprised at anything herein, it is at the sudden increase of solemnity that invests his words when this topic of baptism arises. When after his resurrection he sends forth his Apostles to that worldwide, world-enduring work that he came to inaugurate, he bids them

not only to baptise, but to do so in a manner that involves the invocation of the whole of the Most Blessed Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, are all knit into this tremendous act ; and into it, you would say, all that is, is taken up—man's new birth, that transforms him from being child of earth into son of God, takes place by means of "water and the Spirit," the two in conjunction and co-operation : the new World of Grace is definitely seen in mysterious parallel with that first creation, when the Spirit of God was borne over the face of the watery abyss and earth took shape and the world grew into life.

Along with this, at the most solemn hour of all, when he was about to leave the house where for the last time before his Passion he had eaten with the men he loved and chose, he orders them to do what he has just done—to take bread, to bless and break it—to take wine, and to bless it—and then to partake in what has been blessed, because it is his Body and his Blood—Himself. What should be the consequences of entering thus into himself, and receiving himself into us, if not the living by an intertwined life, his and ours ? We become "one thing" with him, even as he with the Father is "One Thing." And if indeed it be true that without the New Birth by water and the Spirit, we cannot be said to live at all from the Christian point of view, so, in his words in the synagogue of Capharnaum, he insists and re-insists that without this eating of his Flesh and drinking of his Blood, we cannot maintain that new life, still less develop it and bring it to its consummation.

There is another moment of exceptional solemnity—when, breathing on his Apostles, he tells them that they now possess the Holy Ghost, and adds that the sins they remit, are remitted, and the sins that they retain, are likewise retained. Elsewhere, doubtless, he definitely wishes his Apostles to give a special, healing, Christian care to the sick ; and certainly he insists that the old permission for divorce, dating from Moses, was now to be regarded as over and done with, and indeed become impossible, for it is God, he says, that joins the hands and lives of those who marry.

Sometimes, then, by solemn declarations, sometimes by gentle hints and suggestions, amplified, it may be, in unrecorded parts of his instruction during those Forty Days after his resurrection when he must have fulfilled his intention of telling them the "many things" that earlier they "could not bear," or, perhaps, left just as hints to men whom his Spirit was going to guide into using even his hints aright—well, by grave asseverations, or by quiet suggestion, he prepared the Apostles for their work, and started them off on that career which was to be theirs, and which was to continue itself in all the Church's history.

Pentecost comes : the Spirit is given, and the Apostolic Age of the Church's history begins. From the outset we see that there is one Gate into that Church—Baptism. "Here is water ! What

hinders me from being baptised ? ” asks the convert officer. Without the slightest question, Baptism follows upon conversion. This mighty action is installed upon the very highest plane : there is One Baptism just as there are one Faith, one Lord, one God. Into the baptismal laver we descend, just the men to whom our mothers gave life : we come forth therefrom, a New Creation, new-born, Christ-men : our lives are hid in Christ, and in us, Christ lives. And forthwith after Baptism we see the Apostles again without discussion “ laying hands ” upon the new Christian, and at once the Holy Ghost is given ; and similarly, when men are set apart for the Christian ministry, hands are laid upon them, the Holy Ghost descends, and a permanent gift exists within the man by means of this imposition of hands, so that it can be invoked, and stimulated by the will of him who has received it, for it is always there.

Marriage, too, is declared by Paul to be a mighty “ mystery,” or symbol : henceforward it is not to be thought of save in terms of Christ and of his Church, between whom Grace has achieved an ineffable espousal ; and James, manifestly initiating nothing but setting order in and explaining a rite already familiar and authoritative, bids the sick to be anointed so that sins be forgiven them, and they be saved. And even in life, men can be (as St Paul’s action with regard to the incestuous Corinthian proves) cut off from the body of the Church, handed over to Satan, and thereafter, on the Apostle’s own terms, reinstated.

Finally, yet with paramount dignity, the Breaking of Bread is established among Christians, and Paul leaves us in no doubt as to its meaning. It involves a real participation in the life and sacrifice of Christ, such that the soul, that shares in that Feast unworthily, becomes guilty in regard of the Body and Blood of Christ himself, and sickens to its death. The Eucharist is, in a unique sense, what it signifies.

The Apostles passed : the Christians of the Early Church continued happily—heaven-wise happily in their human-wise tragic conditions—living their Christian life ; living in company with Christ, and experiencing his presence, experiencing too those overwhelming gifts of the Spirit that were so necessary in days when there was no other accumulated experience such as we have, of what Christianity means and can do for men ; and using in all simplicity the practices that they had been taught to use. For a while there was little enough speculation, though even from the outset they began to draw conclusions—sometimes exaggerated and mistaken ones, as when it seems pretty clear that some of St Paul’s converts were so impressed by the “ life ” which they had understood was given by Baptism, that they were surprised and almost shocked when a convert died so much as physically, and anyway, felt sure that there must be some method of baptising, by proxy, those who had already died but would, they felt certain, have wished for baptism had they lived.

Others soon enough were to surmise that Communion—that “medicine that makes immortal”—must confer even bodily incorruption; and others, again, began to wonder whether the Holy Ghost did not somehow actually take up his dwelling in the baptismal water, and whether the reality in that water were not somehow similar to that veiled beneath the Eucharistic Bread. It will be noticed that all the mistakes lie on the side of *reality*, not of understatement, so very far were they from imagining that the Sacraments were mere ways of suggesting pious thoughts, of evoking faith, and so forth, or that the virtue of the Sacrament was wholly in the well-disposed recipient.

Naturally, the two all-important Sacraments, Baptism and Eucharist, the necessary ingress into the Christian Life, and the unutterably precious “daily bread” of the living soul, were what immediately and outstandingly occupied the minds of those who had, after all, constantly to make use of the latter when once they had made the vitally necessary use of the former. Naturally, too, I suppose, it was in the Latin half of the Empire—Africa, at any rate—that attention was first notably given to the Sacrament of Penance—that rectification of violated Law. The Romans always understood Law better than the Greeks did; and the lawyer Tertullian, the first Christian thinker who wrote in Latin, began according to his temperament to think this topic out. Doubtless that same temperament, hard and even ferocious at times, caused him to err in his views of the merciful Sacrament: still, he rendered great services to those who were, more accurately, to follow him. At first it may seem strange that along with Penance, Confirmation claimed his more close attention. Yet not strange; for Tertullian, personally, and like all good Roman men, was a soldier, and in the vigorous Sacrament he detected something that harmonised with his idea of what a Christian, militant in this antagonistic world, ought to be.

Not much later, another African, Cyprian, again rendered great service to the better elucidation of the Sacraments of Baptism and of Order, because the tendency of his compatriots to split off into a mere nationalist church, forced his attention to all that concerned unity and schism; and so passionate was his abhorrence of the latter, that inevitably he tended to deny to heretics and schismatics powers that they actually possessed, or could possess, those, that is, of ordaining and baptising. Here then the question of who was the due minister of these or of other Sacraments began to get aired, and again, of Intention; and again, the fact of the non-repetition of Baptism, Confirmation, and Order, if once it could be shown that they had been properly conferred, struck out the clear notion of the sacramental Character or Seal; while the deaths of unbaptised martyrs brought into the open, the idea of baptism of blood, and by desire. Even the tremendous importance seen to belong to the Blessing given by the minister of a Sacrament, to the material

element used in it, made a remote preparation for that theory of "matter and form" in Sacraments that was to have so great an historical importance later on.

Thus little by little the thing that Christians had always possessed and serenely made use of, came to be better understood, more clearly described and defined, shielded against abuse, linked up with other parts of the Christian Faith and practice, and to take its place within that mighty system of Theology that the ages are still bringing towards perfection.

The colossal figure of St Augustine dominated the imagination of the centuries that succeeded him: he did not complete the theology of the Sacraments; but scattered up and down his works may be found practically all the elements that were to compose it. It was he, perhaps, that brought into prominence the action of Christ himself in the several Sacraments, and who developed the notion of Character, and again, of that revival of Grace of which we spoke, when an obstacle placed by the human will in the way of the fruitful effects of a validly administered Sacrament was at last removed. This cleared up most usefully the problem which confronted those who observed that heretics of a manifestly rebellious sort were ordaining priests, who themselves continued rebellious and ill-disposed. They had felt it was all or nothing—either these ordinations were valid, and then it looked as if a contumacious rebel could confer grace upon another contumacious rebel; or, that the ordination was not valid at all, and must be repeated when the heretic was converted. In its measure this problem had affected Confirmation too and even Baptism. However, the explanation that a Sacrament could indeed be valid and therefore produce the Character, although grace was excluded so long as the obstacle remained,¹ solved the difficulty, which returned however, when in the bad centuries of Europe the reformation of incontinent clergy which had obtained its ecclesiastical position by simony had to be thought of. The practical question of whether these men had to be re-ordained when they repented could be solved along Augustinian lines without much difficulty.

As I said, the theology of St Augustine contained in itself practically all the elements of a complete treatise upon the Sacraments. Not much was left to do but to co-ordinate them. When therefore all the elements which compose a Sacrament in the strict sense were set before the eyes, it was easily enough seen that seven rites, and no more nor less, contained them all. Hence we are not to be surprised when we find that a writer so far forward in the Church's history as Peter Lombard (*c.* 1150) was the first definitely to catalogue the Sacraments as Seven. Other rites were seen to approximate to them, and to contain some but not all of the requisite elements,

¹ There are theologians who suggest that *all* the Sacraments give grace that revives when an obstacle, set by sinful will, is removed.

and could be called with greater or less accuracy Sacramentals, but not Sacraments.

I think it may safely be said that after the Middle Ages little more that was constructive in sacramental theology was done. Certain points were cleared up—the distinction between the *opus operatum* and the *opus operantis* was made explicit; the kind of causality brought into play when a Sacrament was described as “causing” Grace was thought out, and so forth. Since then what has really happened has been that the history of the several Sacraments has been far more closely studied, and the Catholic theory has been defended against attacks far more vigorous and definite than the old ones were. For of course the religious revolution of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with its claim to reinstate Christ in the position from which the cultus of Saints, ritual, sacerdotalism, the Papal authority, and so forth were said to have dislodged him, did all that it could to discredit the Catholic doctrine with regard to Sacraments in particular. If you had to find one word in which to crystallise the Catholic sacramental tradition, I think it would be “Efficacy.” The Sacraments are, as we see, efficacious of themselves. It was this that the Reformers attacked. A Sacrament was an absolutely inert thing. They could not eliminate all the Sacraments (as a matter of fact, the Quakers did, as the Salvation Army to-day also does), but they got rid of five out of the seven, and then stripped the two that remained of any intrinsic value or force. The whole “work” was done by the recipient. He arrived with that trust in God to which the word “faith” was attached, and on the grounds of that faith, good was accomplished within him. At least this much credit has to be given to the Reformers—they believed in certain fundamental things, such as sin and grace, forgiveness and salvation, to which modern creeds pay practically no attention at all. None the less, the Reformation was the immediate ancestor of that scepticism which to-day pervades almost everything religious, and has succeeded in making modern non-Catholics forget, above all, anything connected with the dogma of the Supernatural as such. But, as we saw, the Sacraments have no meaning save on the Supernatural plane.

Catholics may well be grateful for the institution by our Lord Jesus Christ of those Seven Sacraments that we have been speaking of. We have had once or twice to look aside from the Catholic doctrine to those alien systems, or that alien chaos, that confronts all that we mean by the Sacramental System. We can afford to smile when non-Catholics talk of “meaningless” or “magical” rites, and we need not retort with gibes of “subjectivism,” for not only are all gibes, directed even to the most mistaken of honest and sincere men, out of place, but they have practically come to be off the point, for, save among Catholics, there is to-day very little theory about Sacraments at all, and less and less use of them or of their substitutes.

As always, this doctrine carries us back to the love of God for man. Why, unless God had loved us, should he have willed so much as to offer us the gift of Supernatural Life, and why, save again because he loved us, should he have willed to restore to us that life, once our race had lost it through sin? Well, he did decree to restore us to the place from which the race, in Adam, had fallen; and that restoration was not to be done as it were in some technical way, as though, for example, God taught us just how to make a "good act of contrition," and thereupon pronounced us once again his sons. The redemption and restoration of mankind was to be done through God's eternal Son taking our human flesh so as to knit up our nature with his divine nature into one person, Jesus Christ. This torrential invasion of God's love makes any sacramental doctrine we may proceed to tell of quite "natural," since never can the Sacraments catch up, in their tender intimacy, with that tremendous and total approach of God in human guise. Or is there a way in which one of them, at least, so catches up? I suggest it in a moment. At any rate, God has entered our world as man, and in a sense Christ himself can be called the Supreme Sacrament, since his humanity veils, yet is the vehicle of, his invisible divinity, and through that Humanity the eternal God energises and does his work in our souls if we but make use of him.

But, after all, Jesus Christ our Lord no longer treads this earth. He has left it, and "sits ever at the right hand of the Father." Yet would he not leave us desolate and without himself. In that visible-invisible Society which the Church is, he continues himself, and in the Church lives and teaches and rules and gives life to the world.

But that Church, like her Head, has never preached some chill doctrine of the salvation of our souls such that we must think that our bodies are of no interest or value. We are and ever hereafter shall be true men, body-soul, however much our bodies shall be perfected and exalted by glory. And in many ways, though in seven chief and special ways, Grace, that is the germ of glory, reaches us, and all of these ways most mercifully take into account our bodies as well as our souls. Simple elements are taken up by Christ, and are made the visible part in those transactions through which we appropriate salvation. For ever, henceforward, Water must be regarded by us with awe and affection, since Christ has used it in his Sacrament of Baptism. Drowning and barren water has become that which washes from us all spiritual stain, and that from which we ascend, new-born sons, to God. He takes that ancient gift of Oil, in which our forefathers saw so many hints of the richness and grace of God, and anoints and consecrates us by its means—anooints our youth, that it may be strong for God and joyous in God; anooints the men who are to be priests, the royal priests, of God Most High; anooints too those sick who stand in such special need of consolation

and spiritual power. Is there not a quite special tenderness in the fact that the Sacrament of Marriage takes—not, this time, some non-human element, but the human action and will of two human beings who should love one another and who desire to join in building up that true vital cell of the full human life, which a home is? The contract that these two freely enter upon is the very stuff of God's Sacrament; and, again a special delicacy of his goodness, it is these same two, the man and the woman, who are ministers of this Sacrament, and give to one another the Grace of Christ. For my part, I cannot but see once more in the Sacrament of Penance a great revelation of the gentle "homeliness" of our Lord, since here too he refrains from introducing some alien material on to which the divine forgiveness may descend and in which it may operate. Here too the material element in the Sacrament consists in human acts—in the acts of that very penitent who might be thinking that he was not so much as worthy to enter into the house of his Father, nor lift up his head in the presence of his offended God. No. God calls him to his side, bids him confess his sins, and then uses the acts of contrition and resolution, as of confession, nay, uses the very sins themselves that the penitent has spread forth before him as that wherein his healing Grace may work.

But it is the Eucharist beyond which the inventiveness of God's humble love could not proceed. God takes, once more, the simple elements of Bread and Wine, and, this time, not only becomes as it were their partner in the sacramental work, but, leaving only their appearance for the sake of our poor senses, transubstantiates their reality into his most real Self, so that the Gift here is the Giver; the means have become the End. We are given, not a memory, not a hope; not a metaphor, not an instrument, but himself.

We shall then be wise to practise *living* as it were upon this Sacramental principle. We shall seek ever to look below the surface. We shall see in all nature traces of God's presence and of his power. We shall reverently anticipate, as it were, the Church, by creating "sacramentals" for our own use, by seeking to see God in all things, and above all in our fellow-men, by worshipping him there—for there indeed and of necessity he is—and by drawing thence his reward, which is grace, love, and truth. But this is matter for our private devotion; and though we are wise to keep that devotion in the framework, so to say, of the Church's sanctioned ideas, yet we shall be wisest of all to recall continually those great Sacraments that we have received and can receive no more—Baptism, that opened every grace to us: Confirmation, that established in us that Christian Character owing to which we can call on the Indwelling Spirit, as by right, to succour us: and above all we shall be wise and acting rightly if we make the maximum of use of the two great Sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist, wherefrom we draw sure and certain healing if we are sick, even if we are spiritually sick

to death, and increase of soul's health and strength if, as God grant there be life in our souls and sin be absent from them.

Finally, we shall pray for those who know nothing of these Sacraments : we shall pray that all men and women now alive may make those acts of faith and contrition upon which all the rest of the spiritual life is built (for they involve, too, charity), and we shall ask that as many as possible may pass from the realm of desire and what is but implicit, to the full, conscious, deliberate and most joyous appropriation of all the riches of our God.

C. C. MARTINDALE, S.J.

XXII

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

§ I: INTRODUCTORY

OUR Blessed Saviour, after his Resurrection from the dead and just before his Ascension into Heaven, told his Apostles to teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.¹ To what was he referring when he told them to baptise in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? He was referring to a sacramental rite which he himself had instituted. Let us briefly demonstrate this simple fact.

That he was referring to a rite which he had instituted is perfectly clear to anyone who reads the New Testament, wherein the baptism of Christ is often contrasted with the baptism of John; the basis of this contrast being that the baptism of John, which is inferior to that of Christ, is to give place to the baptism of Christ; for John came baptising in preparation for the Messiah, in order that he might be made manifest in Israel.² It was this baptism, then, his own baptism, that he ordered his Apostles to administer. Clearly, therefore, he was referring to a rite which he himself had instituted. But was this rite a sacramental rite?

That it was a sacramental rite is equally clear from many passages in the New Testament. The reader will already know what a Sacrament is from the essay on the Sacramental System in this volume: he will know that it is a rite which not only signifies some specific Grace, but which of its intrinsic power produces that Grace in the soul of the person to whom it is administered. Our Blessed Lord's own words enable us to see in what his baptismal rite is to consist, when he tells Nicodemus that unless a man be born again of *water* and the Holy Ghost he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God;³ and when he tells his Apostles to *baptise in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. We have then a rite of washing with water which is done in the name of the three Divine Persons, a rite which signifies something, namely, a spiritual cleansing. Nor less evident is it that this rite not only signifies a cleansing Grace, but that it also produces in the soul the Grace which it thus signifies. In the first place, it is a rite that regenerates man; for Christ tells us that by it a man is born again. Secondly, this regeneration which begins a new life in the soul ensures the salvation of the baptised person; for St Paul tells us that Christ saved us by the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy

¹ Matt. xxviii 19.

² John i 31.

³ John iii 5.

Spirit.¹ Again, baptism not only produces this new life in us, but it kills sin in us, as St Paul tells us that all who have been baptised are dead to sin.² Further, this baptism creates in us a new relation towards God, making us the children of God,³ and it incorporates us in the Church of Christ.⁴ These points we shall go into in more detail when we are speaking of that effect in the soul which we call the sacramental Grace of baptism; our one object just now being to show the reader that the Sacred Scriptures clearly, and indeed abundantly, demonstrate to us that the baptismal rite instituted by Christ is a sacramental rite; that is to say, it is an exterior sign that produces in the soul the Grace it signifies, a Grace that cleanses the soul of sin and begins its supernatural life.

What is thus shown to us in the Sacred Scriptures is repeated in the most unmistakable way in the tradition of the Church from the earliest times. We may dispense with all quotations from tradition on a matter so obviously true and so generally admitted. From this point of view the position of the Sacrament of Baptism is somewhat unique; for there is no Sacrament the existence of which is so generally admitted outside the Church. Its existence is recognised by all the Christian sects, and the errors into which they fall concerning this Sacrament arise, as a rule, indirectly. Thus, they may fall into error concerning Grace, which undermines the whole sacramental system; or they may fall into error on the Divinity of Christ, which undermines the whole body of revealed truth. In such partial and total collapses baptism is inevitably involved in the general ruin, but it is rarely singled out in an isolated way as the object of direct attack. Let us, therefore, pass on to a full explanation in the next section of what baptism is; reserving for subsequent sections the question of its necessity, its minister, and its subject.

§ II: THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

At the outset, let us observe that when we speak of a Sacrament we mean one or more than one of three things that are perfectly distinct. First of all, we may mean just the exterior rite or "Outward Sign," as it is called, made up of actions and words which constitute the *matter* and *form* of the Sacrament, and known to theologians as the "Sacrament only." Secondly, we may mean the Grace produced in the soul by the Sacrament, which is known to theologians as "The Thing." Thirdly, we may mean another effect produced by the Sacrament which is quite distinct from Grace, and means a title or disposition in the soul to receive sacramental Grace; which title or disposition is necessarily and infallibly connected with the outward sign. The reader will readily understand

¹ Titus iii 5.

³ Gal. iii 26-27.

² Rom. vi 11.

⁴ 1 Cor. xii 13; Acts ii 41.

what this title or disposition means from the following illustration : Let us suppose that a man is married in the state of mortal sin. It is clear that he cannot receive any sacramental Grace from matrimony while he is in that state, and that not only does he receive no Grace by being so married, but he even adds the sin of sacrilege to his already burdened soul. None the less, he has been validly married and has received the Sacrament just as truly, as far as validity is concerned, as if he had been in the state of Grace. Later on he repents and has his sins forgiven. Now, at the moment in which his sins are forgiven, the Sacrament of Matrimony immediately produces its effect of Grace in his soul. How is this to be explained ? Simply in this way, that the valid reception of the Sacrament of Matrimony entitled him to receive sacramental Grace, but this effect was held up owing to the obstacle of sin in his soul. The moment that obstacle is removed he receives the Grace.¹ Therefore, in every Sacrament there is an effect upon the soul distinct from Grace, which, as we have said, is a title or disposition to receive Grace ; and which is known to theologians as “ The Thing and the Sacrament.” In putting a full explanation of baptism before the reader in this section we shall adopt this threefold division, and the reader will find this method of great assistance in obtaining an orderly and simple idea of all that is meant by baptism. Not to harass him with theological terms which may be unfamiliar, we shall call these three things respectively :

1. The Sacrament.
2. The Grace.
3. The Character.

I. THE SACRAMENT

In this section we are speaking of the rite or the outward sign. What does it consist in ? It is an exterior washing of the body under a prescribed form of words. The remote *matter* of the Sacrament is water, and the proximate *matter* is a washing of the body with water. The *form* is this : “ I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ” ; or, as with the Greeks, “ The servant of God is baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Let us now explain this *matter* and *form* in greater detail.

THE MATTER.—The remote matter of this Sacrament is water. *The matter* That this is so is shown by Christ’s words to Nicodemus, when he says that water is necessary for producing the regeneration that is to give a new life to man. There can be no doubt but Christ is speaking literally here and not in any symbolic way. For we find that after the Ascension of Christ water is always used in the administration of this Sacrament. Thus, the deacon Philip baptises the

¹ See pp. 755, 762 and n.

eunuch of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, as soon as they come to some water.¹ Moreover, the universal teaching and practice of the Church leave us in no doubt on this point. The author of the work *The Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles*, written about the year 100, tells us that candidates for baptism are either to be plunged in flowing water, or, failing that, in the still water of a pool, etc. If one has not enough water for this purpose, then the water may be poured three times on the head. From the writings of the Fathers of the Church it is clear that any attempt to abolish the use of water or to introduce customs at variance with Apostolic tradition were vigorously put down by the Church as being destructive of the very Sacrament itself. For instance, we find the Fathers, from the second century, inveighing against heretics like the Gnostics and Quintillians, who wish to dispense with the use of water, owing to their tenet that water was a source of evil, as it was something material; all matter, according to them, being something evil in itself. Other quaint practices, such as the use of sand, or a mixture of oil and water, or fire, instead of water, were at once condemned.²

*The Blessing
of water*

Though water of any kind was used for the administration of this Sacrament, the custom of blessing the water is of very great antiquity, and soon became universal in the Church. And very naturally so, because the water which is used in baptism is raised by the work of the Holy Spirit to the dignity of an instrumental cause of our regeneration, and as such is fittingly hallowed by a blessing. We find this custom frequently referred to by the Fathers, and we have to-day a prayer of very great antiquity in our Liturgy—deriving from the writings of the Fathers, and of St Ambrose in particular—which is used for the blessing of the water in the baptismal font on Holy Saturday and the Vigil of Pentecost. As it is very long, we shall quote but a portion of this beautiful prayer :

“May this holy and innocent creature (the water) be free from all the assaults of the enemy, and purified by the destruction of all his malice. May it be a living fountain, a regenerating water, a purifying stream : that all those who are to be washed in this saving bath may obtain, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, the grace of a perfect purification. Therefore I bless thee, O creature of water, by the living God, by the true God, by the holy God, by that God who in the beginning separated thee by his word from the dry land, whose Spirit moved over thee. Who made thee flow from the fountain of Paradise and commanded thee to water the whole earth

¹ Acts viii 38.

² We might remind the reader at this point that when he finds, as he will frequently find throughout this essay, quotations from the Fathers, these quotations are not given as if the isolated testimony of a single Father here and there were sufficient evidence for an argument from tradition, but simply as examples of the customary belief and practice of the Church, which is the real argument from tradition.

with thy four rivers. Who, changing thy bitterness in the desert into sweetness, made thee fit to drink, and produced thee out of a rock to quench the thirst of the people. I bless thee also by our Lord Jesus Christ his only Son : who in Cana of Galilee changed thee into wine by a wonderful miracle of his power. Who walked upon thee dry-foot, and was baptised in thee by John in the Jordan. Who made thee flow out of his side together with his blood, and commanded his disciples that such as believed should be baptised in thee, saying : Go, teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Do thou, Almighty God, mercifully assist us that observe this command : do thou graciously inspire us. Do thou with thy mouth bless these clear waters : that besides their natural virtue of cleansing the body, they may also be effectual for the purifying of the soul."

The proximate *matter* is the washing of the body with water. In what way is this washing to be done ? It may be in any of these three ways : immersion of the body in water ; infusion or pouring of water on the body ; and sprinkling of the body with water. Something must now be said of each of these.

Immersion.—Many people, including some Catholics, believe *Immersion* that baptism by submerging the body in water was the only method followed in the early Church. Such a belief is quite groundless. One might say, indeed, that such immersion was common ; but it was probably just as customary for the candidate to stand in water, perhaps up to the thighs, and then have water poured over him ; and infusion and sprinkling were known and used, most probably from the very beginning. What we have already quoted from *The Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles* shows that pouring and sprinkling were recognised as valid proximate matter, and many other quotations to the same effect might be given. It is very interesting to note that some of the baptisms recorded in the New Testament were given in circumstances in which baptism by submersion of the body would have been awkward and therefore improbable ; as when St Paul baptised his gaoler and the gaoler's family,¹ or when three thousand, converted by St Peter's sermon, presented themselves all together for baptism. Again, the fact that St Paul stood up in the house of Ananias in order to be baptised ² has sometimes been taken to mean that he was not baptised by a submersion of his body in water.

Where baptism was given by submerging the body, this was usually done three times. The custom of submerging the body once only appears to have arisen in Spain. It was looked upon askance for some time, not as if it interfered with the validity of the baptism, but simply as being against the ordinary use. Pope St Gregory the Great informed Leander, Bishop of Seville, who had consulted him on this point, that such a method was valid, but that in Rome it was customary to give three immersions, to signify the

¹ Acts xvi 33.

² Acts ix 18.

three days' burial of Christ ; ¹ the whole Liturgy being based on the text of St Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, ² where he shows that our baptism represents the death of Christ. The second method of immersion, where—as we have said—the candidate stood in water up to the thighs and then had the water poured over him, is represented to us in the very interesting and valuable pictures discovered in the Catacombs, which prove that this method of baptising is very ancient and suggests that it was very common.

Infusion

Infusion.—Baptism administered by pouring water on the head while the candidate did not himself stand in the water was recognised as valid at all times, but was not much used, as far as we can gather, except in cases of necessity, such as the scarcity of water or the sickness of the candidate. The same may be said of sprinkling. Infusion, however, grew in popularity, and eventually, as everybody knows, supplanted all other methods in the Roman rite. Baptism of the sick was known as “clinical” baptism. It was probably very common indeed during the fourth century, at least from the peace of Constantine, owing to the deplorable custom that arose of postponing one's baptism until the last moment. This custom was largely due to a desire to have all guilt and punishment remitted at the opportune time of one's last illness ; but it was also due to the seriousness with which baptism was regarded, and the clear realisation of the high standard of life that would be demanded of any baptised person.

It is important to note, in connection with baptism by infusion or sprinkling, that the proximate matter must always be a washing *of the body*. The body may be said to be washed when there is an infusion or sprinkling of water on some principal part of it, such as the head or the breast. Could one say that the body was washed if the water was poured or sprinkled on the hand only or the foot ? One could not answer definitely. Certainly, if baptism were so administered owing to necessity, it would be obligatory to baptise conditionally later on, if the opportunity of doing so presented itself.³

The form

THE FORM.—The form of the Sacrament of Baptism is this : “ I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Or, as among the Greeks, “ The servant of God is baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Are all these words in the form necessary for the validity of the Sacrament ?

Beyond doubt, the words expressing the act of washing are necessary. Thus, the act of washing would not be expressed if the words “ I baptise thee ” or “ The servant of God is baptised ” were omitted. Again, the express and distinct invocation of each Person of the Blessed Trinity is necessary. The command of Christ that men should be baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son,

¹ P.L., tome lxxvii, col. 498.

² Chap. vi.

³ See p. 790.

and of the Holy Ghost, puts this beyond all question. When St Paul met some of the disciples of Christ at Ephesus, who had not heard of the Holy Ghost, he immediately asked them: What baptism have you received?—much as to say: If you have received the baptism instituted by Christ you could not have failed to have heard of the Holy Ghost, as each Person of the Blessed Trinity is invoked. Occasionally one sees certain texts quoted from the Acts of the Apostles (ii 38, vii 12) in which baptism in the name of Jesus Christ is mentioned, as if these texts showed that baptism could be given in the name of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity only, and not in the name of all three. But this contention is really frivolous. For it is clear that these texts have absolutely no reference to the form of baptism, but simply to the Sacrament which Christ instituted, and which he commanded his Apostles to administer (as he commands us to do all things) in his name. It is the baptism of Christ that must be distinguished from the baptism of John, a distinction all the more necessary in the beginning, when many of those baptised by John were still alive. Thus—to refer again to a text alluded to above—in chap. xix of the Acts we read: “Paul . . . came to Ephesus and found certain disciples. And he said to them: Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? But they said to him: We have not so much as heard if there be a Holy Ghost. And he said: In what then were you baptised? Who said: In John’s baptism. Then Paul said: John baptised the people with the baptism of penance, saying that they should believe in him who was to come after him, that is to say, in Jesus. Having heard these things, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The evidence supplied by ancient liturgical books gives us a striking proof of the universal agreement in the Church as to the form of baptism. Were our Church not a Divine institution, it would certainly appear remarkable that the same form should be given everywhere; especially when we consider that we have ancient liturgical evidence on this point in the following rites: Roman, African, Ambrosian, Gallican, Mozarabic, Celtic, Alexandrian, Syrian, and Byzantine. Even among heretics this form of baptism was, as a rule, rigorously adhered to; so that St Augustine tells us that it is easier to find heretics who do not baptise at all than to find heretics who, in baptising, do not invoke the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.¹

2. THE GRACE

We have now to speak of that effect of baptism which we call Grace. This grace, as the sacramental rite shows, is a cleansing. “Christ,” says St Paul, “cleanses his Church by the laver of water.”² This cleansing grace is a full renovation by which a man is freed

¹ *De bapt. cont. Donat.*, vi 25, 47.

² *Eph.* v 26.

from all stain of sin and born to a new spiritual life. We must now explain the meaning of the terms we use, and make clear everything that they imply.

By the stain of sin we mean here both the guilt of sin and all the punishment, whether temporal or eternal, that is due to it. By being born to a new life we mean the reception of habitual Grace, the infused theological and moral virtues, and all the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

St Paul, in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, uses these words : " Know you not that all we who are baptised in Christ Jesus are baptised in his death ? For we are buried together with him by baptism unto death : that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer. For he that is dead is justified from sin. Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall live also together with Christ. Knowing that Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more. For in that he died to sin, he died once ; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. So do you also reckon that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord."

From these magnificent words of the Apostle it is clear that baptism reproduces in us, as it were, the death and resurrection of Christ. We share through baptism in the death of Christ, because our " old man " is crucified with him ; that is to say, baptism destroys in us all the sin that defiled our souls. In the same Epistle ¹ St Paul says that there is nothing to condemn in those that are in Christ Jesus. That is to say—for such is the interpretation of these words given by the Fathers of the Church, the theologians, and the Council of Trent—baptism exonerates us completely before God, since there is neither guilt nor debt of punishment in the souls of the baptised. More explicitly, whether it be a question of original sin or actual sin, baptism not only delivers us from eternal loss, but also remits all temporal punishment due to actual sin, and entitles us to eternal life. It does not, of course, mean that we cannot sin again, for our salvation will depend on our fidelity to the obligations we have undertaken in baptism ; but it means that as regards all sin that has gone before, Christ has saved us by this laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Spirit.

Taking the words of Christ, in which he speaks of our being born again through baptism, in conjunction with the words of St Paul, we find that baptism has not merely the effect of destroying sin in us, so that sin is as dead in us as the body of Christ was dead upon the Cross—and in what more forcible way could the power of baptism over sin be described ?—but it also causes a new birth in the spiritual order, which begins a new life, corresponding to the

Resurrection of Christ. Everyone, then, who is baptised, at no matter what period of his life, is beginning this new life, is completely innocent, and a newly-begotten infant, without guile, in the sight of God. The life of sin is at an end, and the life of innocence has begun. This life, as the reader can learn from the essays on grace in this volume, involves an infusion of habitual grace, a title to actual graces in the future, an infusion of the theological and moral virtues, and all the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Again, this life begun by baptism establishes us in new relations towards God, as St Paul tells us when he says, in his Epistle to the Galatians: "You are all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been baptised in Christ have put on Christ."¹ One must also bear in mind that every single passage in the New Testament dealing with the effects of justification might be quoted, at least indirectly, as descriptions of the effect of baptism, because that Sacrament is the source and origin of it all.

That very word *Justification* is in itself a complete summary of the effect of baptism. By it the soul is adjusted towards God in a supernaturally perfect and complete relation of innocence and favour. Sin is gone and the soul can rejoice, in peace and serenity, in that unhindered intimacy with God to which grace has raised it.

3. THE CHARACTER

The effect of sacramental grace can be hindered by a lack of due dispositions in the recipient; but there is another effect, distinct from grace, which—as we have mentioned before—is necessarily and infallibly produced in the soul, as it cannot be separated from the outward sign or rite. This effect is the title to receive grace. Now in three of the Sacraments this effect is known as a Character, and Baptism is one of these three; the others being Confirmation and Holy Order. The reason why this effect is called a Character in the case of these three Sacraments is that, in addition to the title to grace which they confer, they assign one, in the divinely ordered parts or hierarchy of the Church, to a particular state, which has definite duties and rights attached to it. To what does baptism assign one? To the state of membership in the Church, membership of the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church. Whoever is baptised, then, has all the duties and rights of a member. By what process does baptism make one a member? By causing one to be born in the Church, and into the Church; for this is the meaning of Christ's words to Nicodemus. Now, it is clear that, in virtue of this Character, the Sacrament of Baptism cannot be repeated, and that anyone who is baptised must always and unalterably belong to the Church. If a man had been born in England nothing could ever alter that fact; and so it is—though we need not push the

¹ iii 26, 27.

example to the point of lameness—with anyone who, being baptised, is born in the Church. As a member one is obliged by all the duties of Christian life, and entitled to all the graces (such as the reception of other Sacraments) that flow from the inexhaustible treasury of the Church.

Nor let the reader suppose that all this applies only to those who have received baptism at the hands of Catholics. It applies to anyone who has received the Sacrament of Baptism, whether he received it at the hands of Catholic or heretic, man or woman, believer or infidel. For, as we have said more than once—and it is no harm to repeat it several times—the Character of baptism is necessarily and infallibly received whenever baptism is validly administered, as this effect cannot be separated from the outward sign. It may well be, as with large heretical bodies, that the Church cannot enforce her rights over all that belong to her, and it may equally well be that, prudently weighing what is ultimately best for mankind, she may not wish to enforce these rights. Yet she always has those rights; for they are, and must be, co-extensive with that portion of the human race that is marked with the Character of baptism.

That baptism has this effect of making one a member of the Church is clearly put before us in the Sacred Scriptures. We have already referred to Christ's words that entry into the Kingdom is by baptism. Again, we are told in the Acts of the Apostles that those who received the word of Peter were baptised, and there were *added* in that day about three thousand souls; that is to say, there were added to the Church by means of baptism. But probably this truth could not be put in more forcible terms than those St Paul uses, when he says that in one spirit we were all baptised into one body.¹ We need not dwell on the tradition of the Church concerning this fact, beyond saying that there is no tradition more clearly or explicitly before us, and that the entire Liturgy of Christian Initiation is based upon it.

§ III: THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM

*Indispensable
for salvation*

THERE are two ways in which a Sacrament may be necessary for salvation. It may be necessary as a means, or it may be necessary as the fulfilment of a precept only. Now, in saying that baptism is necessary for salvation, we mean that it is necessary as a means of salvation; so that, without it, it is impossible to go to Heaven. That being so, it is obvious that baptism is also necessary as the fulfilment of a precept, as we are bound to do whatever is indispensably necessary for our salvation.

It is a fact that is easily demonstrated. Habitual grace, which is the root principle of eternal life, is an absolutely indispensable means of salvation. Now, every soul is originally deprived of this

¹ 1 Cor. xii 13.

habitual Grace through the sin of our first parents ; and, in the case of adults, it may be doubly deprived owing to the presence of grave actual sin. It is, then, indispensably necessary for salvation that the soul be spiritually regenerated or born again to this life of which it is deprived ; and it is baptism, as we have seen in the previous section, that effects this regeneration.

At this point the reader should avoid any confusion of mind that may arise from his knowledge of the existence of the Sacrament of Penance. It must be perfectly clearly understood that if, after baptism, one has had the misfortune to fall into grave sin, it is the baptismal Character and nothing else that entitles one to avail of God's mercy in the Sacrament of Penance. For this Character entitles us to the advantages that arise from being a member of the Church. Once we have received the baptismal Character, Satan can never again have the same power over us, and can only make us soil our feet, as it were. If Christ had not washed us we should have no part with him ; but since he has washed us we need but to wash our feet, and be clean wholly again. In saying this we do not wish to detract in any way from the fact that mortal sin after baptism is both a destruction of our new life and the gravest infidelity to our baptismal obligations. Indeed, we find that in the early Church, ever since the neophytes had heard the ringing words of Paul, it was regarded as a catastrophe that anyone should sin after baptism ; so much so that many of these early converts never went to Confession, for there was no need of it, and it is doubtful if many of them even reflected on the fact that they might make use of the admitted power of the Church to forgive post-baptismal sin.¹ Our point is simply to stress the fact that it is fundamentally and originally to the great baptismal Character that we owe all spiritual graces and blessings.

Christ himself tells us that we must receive this spiritual regeneration through baptism, and that without it we cannot save our souls. He says to Nicodemus : " Unless a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God." ² When Nicodemus asks him : " How can a man be born when he is old ? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born again ? " Christ explains his meaning, without in any way diminishing its force, declaring solemnly : " Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."

Naturally, what Christ had said so clearly the Fathers of the Church repeated, as occasion arose. Such occasions did arise *Heretic on this point* through various heresies, which the Fathers were obliged to combat. There were the Cainites and the Quintillians in the second century, who held that faith alone was sufficient for salvation and that baptism was not necessary ; there were the Manicheans, from the third century onwards, who regarded water as something evil in nature,

¹ Cf. Essay xxvii, *The Sacrament of Penance*, pp. 965, 967. ² John iii 3 sq.

and as such quite unsuited as a means of salvation ; there were the Massalians, who regarded it as useless ; and there were the Pelagians, against whom St Augustine wrote, who regarded it as unnecessary. These latter, not recognising the existence of original sin, inevitably regarded baptism as of no real necessity, but admitted its utility for the remission of actual sin and for facilitating one's access to the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Fathers

These and all other errors on the necessity of baptism were resolutely condemned as soon as ever they showed themselves, as the Church always regarded baptism as of absolute necessity. In the controversy between St Cyprian and Pope St Stephen on the question of rebaptising heretics (of which more in a later section),¹ it is taken for granted by all parties that baptism itself is absolutely necessary for salvation. Again, St Irenaeus says that Christ came to save all through himself—that is, all who are born to God again by him, infants and little ones, children, youths and adults.² Tertullian points out to us that while the words “Teach all nations, baptising them,” etc., show us that baptism is necessary as a precept, the words “Unless a man be born again,” etc., show its necessity as a means.³ St Ambrose tells us that without baptism faith will not secure salvation, as the remission of sin and special graces come only through baptism.⁴ St Augustine regards it as a principle that admits of no dispute that no unbaptised person is without sin, and baptism therefore is necessary for his salvation.⁵ This is true, he tells us, even of persons who practise virtues and walk in the way of a relative perfection. Even if one has given his possessions to the poor, is better instructed in the truths of faith than the majority of baptised persons, and is careful not to be vain on that account and not to despise baptism, but is not yet baptised—then all his sins are still upon him, and unless he comes to saving baptism, where sins are loosed, in spite of all his excellence, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.⁶ Moreover, in his controversy with the Pelagians, St Augustine lets us see that he regards the baptism of infants as necessary, owing to the stain of original sin upon their souls.

*No substitute
for Baptism*

At this point the reader may have a difficulty. It can be put in this way : Is it not true that Mary Magdalen was a saint from that moment in which Christ forgave her because she loved much ? And yet we are not aware that she was then baptised. Is it not true that the Holy Innocents did not receive the Sacrament of Baptism ? Also, that some of the canonised saints were only catechumens, and so forth ? Now, it will promote tidiness and clarity of thought if we deal with this difficulty by proposing to ourselves these two questions, and by answering them : First, Has Christ instituted any other positive means of regeneration besides baptism, either by way

¹ See pp. 785 ff.

² *De bapt.*, 12.

³ *Cont. litt. Petil.*, l. ii, n. 232.

⁴ *Cont. haer.*, i 22, n. 4.

⁵ *De myst.*, iv 20.

⁶ *In Ioa.*, tr. iv. 13.

of addition to or exception from the law of baptism? Secondly, Is it not possible that, from the very nature of things which precedes all positive law and is allowed for in positive law, it might happen that a person could receive justification without the actual reception of the *Sacrament* of Baptism?

We answer the first of these questions in the negative. We cannot admit any other means of salvation positively instituted by Christ, for the very good reason that his positive law has provided one means and only one. If, therefore, any theories are advanced on the question of salvation which involve the recognition of some means of salvation positively instituted by Christ, other than baptism, such theories must immediately be rejected as at least erroneous. Attempts of this kind have been made from time to time. The best known is that of the theologian Cajetan, who expressed the opinion that in the case of infants dying in the mother's womb, the prayers of the parents could secure the justification and salvation of the children. He thought that a blessing of the child in the womb, given in the name of the Blessed Trinity, would secure this. This opinion was regarded with great disapproval by the theologians of the Council of Trent, and though it was not actually condemned, Pope Pius V ordered that it should be expunged from the works of Cajetan. A somewhat similar view was held by Gerson, Durand, Bianchi, and others. Even St Bonaventure seems to have nodded; for he says that an infant would be deprived of grace if unbaptised, unless God made it the object of some special privilege.¹

The fundamental error of all such views is that they introduce, without warrant of any kind from Revelation, a second means of salvation positively instituted by Christ. They demand the recognition of what we might call a pseudo-Sacrament. If, for instance, such a rite as blessing an infant in its mother's womb is sufficient for its justification, then we must admit a pseudo-Sacrament positively instituted by Christ, by way of addition to or exception from the law of baptism which he has made. To admit this is gratuitous, as it is not mentioned by Christ, and it is erroneous, as it is plainly against the universality of the words of Christ.

We must conclude then that infants dying in their mother's womb do not enjoy the Beatific Vision in Heaven. At the same time they do not suffer from what is called the pain of sense. According to St Thomas, they enjoy a real happiness which consists, not indeed in that vision of God which grace alone makes possible, but in the natural love and knowledge of God.²

We answer our second question in the affirmative. It can happen *Two equivalents* that a person receives justification without actually receiving the Sacrament of Baptism. And it can happen in one of two ways: either, 1, by Martyrdom, or 2, by Charity. Let us take them

¹ *In IV Sent.*, I iv, dist. iv.

² *In IV Sent.*, I ii, dist. xxx, Q. II, art. 2, ad 5.

separately, giving exact explanations of the words we use, and showing that each of them amounts to baptism.

Martyrdom

By martyrdom we mean suffering death for the cause of Christ. We must first make this important proviso : to have the merit of martyrdom it is not necessary that one should be an adult, knowing the teaching of Christ and acting with deliberation. It is sufficient that one should simply suffer death for the cause of Christ. Now, the cause of Christ may mean something concerning the Person of Christ ; as when the Holy Innocents were put to death by Herod, in the hope that Christ might be among the victims of the general slaughter. Or it may mean something concerning the religion and faith of Christ, as with the majority of the martyrs. Or, finally, it may mean something concerning a virtue which is specially enjoined by the law of Christ ; as when St John the Baptist was beheaded for defending the virtue of chastity.

Having made clear what we mean by the cause of Christ, we may say that two conditions are necessary for true martyrdom. The first is that the person guilty of inflicting death persecutes Christ in one or other of the three ways mentioned above. The motive for which the persecutor acts is not of the slightest importance as far as martyrdom is concerned, provided that it is *because of their Christianity* that the victims are made to suffer. Thus we are told by Tacitus that Nero's first persecution of the Christians was simply in order to make the public believe that the Christians, and not he, were guilty of the burning of Rome.¹ His motive was the purely personal one of averting suspicion from himself, yet his victims were none the less martyrs, as it was because they were Christians that they were made to suffer.

The second condition is that the person who is killed dies by allowing himself to be killed. If one were killed simply through being overcome by superior force, in spite of the stoutest resistance that one was capable of, it could scarcely be called martyrdom, as it would not conform to the type of Christ, who as a lamb was led to the slaughter.² The Church has never shown any disposition to canonise all those who lost their lives in the Crusades. Crusaders may be said to have suffered for the cause of Christ, but the element of being meekly led to slaughter was decidedly to seek.

Perhaps one ought to mention a question that is discussed a good deal to-day. Could we say that those who lost their lives during the Great War, and who discharged their exalted duty from motives that referred to Christ, are entitled to the name of martyr ? It is hard to see how they can be entitled to that name. For one thing, they did not suffer for the cause of Christ, as they were put to death, not for being Christians, but because they belonged to this or that nation. Again, they did not submit to death, but were overcome by force. If we admit to the merit of martyrdom all those who bear

¹ Tacitus, *Annal.*, l. 15, n. 44.

² Isa. liiii 7.

their death from Christian motives, then it is hard to see how any good Christian can be excluded. For any good man might suffer his last illness and accept his death from Christian motives. It is true that the word martyrdom can be used in a certain broad sense of all those whose motives Christianise their death ; but they cannot be called martyrs in the strict sense of the word. Certainly, we may believe that anyone who accepts death that comes to him in the discharge of duty, from some Christian motive, may immediately be admitted to Heaven. It would be very rash to disbelieve it, since Christ has said that greater love than this no man hath, that a man should lay down his life for his friend.¹ One might, therefore, regard death in such circumstances as a proof of baptism of Charity or Desire—of which more anon.

Is it necessary, for true martyrdom, that the motive which prompts one to give one's life should be perfect charity or love of God ? It is not. It is sufficient that one should accept death for any motive of Holy Faith, such as the fear of Hell, the hope of Heaven, and so on.

Having determined with precision what we mean by martyrdom, we must show that it is equivalent to baptism. This is put beyond doubt by the words of Christ : " He that shall lose his life for me shall find it." ² It is also shown by the constant teaching of the Church. We find, for instance, that the cult of the Holy Innocents is of the greatest antiquity. Their feast is to be found in the Leonine Sacramentary, which is one of the oldest liturgical books we possess, and it is also found in the Gelasian Sacramentary, which is the most important of the early liturgical books of the Latin rite. Besides, the Fathers of the Church affirm this truth in the most unmistakable way. St Cyril of Jerusalem says : " If a person has not been baptised he cannot be saved, always excepting martyrs, who receive the kingdom without water. Our Saviour, who redeemed the world through the Cross, sent forth blood and water from his pierced side ; so that in time of peace men might be saved by water, and in time of persecution by their own blood." ³ St Augustine says that those who die for confessing Christ without being baptised have their sins forgiven by their death, just as much as if they had been washed in the sacred font of baptism. And if Christ said that unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, he also said : " He that shall lose his life for me shall find it." ⁴ St Augustine tells us, too, that he who prays for the martyrs commits an outrage against them.⁵ St Cyprian asks us : " Can the power of baptism be greater or stronger than the confession a man makes by confessing Christ before men, and being baptised in his own blood ? " ⁶

¹ John xv 13.

³ *Catech.* 3, n. 10.

⁵ *Serm.* 17 *de verbis apost.*

² Matt. x 39.

⁴ L. 13 *de civ. Dei*, c. 7.

⁶ *Ep. ad Iubaian.*, n. 21.

Martyrdom, then, is baptism. How does it compare with the Sacrament of Baptism? It is less and greater. It is less, because it is the Sacrament alone that confers the Character. It is greater, because it not only justifies the soul, but it removes—as the Sacrament does not—the possibility of the soul ever being stained again by sin, and places it in the white stole of radiant sanctity in the presence of God. The martyrs are those who have come through a great tribulation, and have washed their stoles and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.¹

*Charity—
Baptism of
desire*

We have said that Charity, or Desire, as it is just as frequently called, is another form of baptism. And here, again, let us define what we mean by the word, and then show how it is equivalent to baptism.

We may say quite briefly that charity is an act of the love of God because he is infinitely good in himself, or an act of perfect contrition—that is, contrition arising from the motive of the love of God. In an adult sinner charity will always imply the presence of contrition; for no sinner could love God unless he was sorry for his sin.

Now, an act of charity always and necessarily contains a desire for the Sacrament of Baptism, hence the expression Baptism of Desire. The reason why it must contain this desire is that an act of the love of God must contain a desire of conforming to his will in every way. Therefore, since it is God's will that we should receive the Sacrament of Baptism, this act must contain the desire for baptism. But this desire may either be implicit or explicit, and each alternative requires our careful consideration.

The desire is explicit, for example, in a catechumen who is instructed in all the essential truths of faith, who is actually preparing to be baptised, and is well disposed in every way. If, however, a catechumen were well instructed, and yet his baptism had to be postponed because he was unwilling to give up something grievously sinful in his life, we could not say that he had baptism of desire, as it is evident that he has not charity. It is implicit in anyone who makes an act of the love of God, and, through invincible ignorance, does not know of the necessity of sacramental baptism. This might happen in a country like England to people who are not baptised. They might easily know sufficient of the truths of faith to make an act of the love of God, and yet be in ignorance of the true necessity of baptism, which they would not, therefore, explicitly desire. Might it not also happen to heathens who had never heard of Christ? It might, if we suppose that these heathens have in some way obtained the necessary minimum knowledge of Revelation, and are capable of a salutary faith and hope in God. For it is very important to understand that when we speak of charity, we do not mean just any kind of love of God above all else, such as the natural love of a creature for its Creator. Charity is essentially a love of friendship

¹ Apoc. vii 14.

(Our Blessed Lord does not call us servants, but friends), which implies an intimate communication with God, such as is only possible in a supernatural order. The existence of this supernatural order can only be known through Revelation. Charity, therefore, cannot exist without at least the knowledge of the principal truth of Revelation, which St Paul describes for us in his Epistle to the Hebrews, when he says: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and is a rewarder of them that seek him." How heathens have in some way received or can in some way receive this minimum knowledge of revealed truth it would be outside the scope of this essay to enquire.¹

That charity infallibly justifies man, obtaining remission of all sin and infusion of grace, is evident from the words of Christ: "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him and will manifest myself to him." ■ Again: "If any one love me he will keep my word. And my Father will love him: and we will come to him and will make our abode with him."³ And again, when the lawyer answered Christ's question, saying: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind," our Blessed Lord rejoined: "This do, and thou shalt live."⁴ No portion of the Sacred Scriptures makes it clearer to us that this charity is the love of friendship than the writings of St John, who tells us once directly, and in numerous passages equivalently, that charity is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God.⁵

In these passages of the Sacred Scriptures there is not, as is evident, the least suggestion that there should be any explicit knowledge of the need of the Sacrament of Baptism. In patristic times we find abundant proof of the sufficiency of charity where the desire of baptism is explicit. We may quote, as an example, the famous funeral oration of St Ambrose over the Emperor Valentinian, who died as a catechumen. He says that he had heard people expressing regret that the Emperor was not baptised. He points out that the Emperor had the intention of being baptised, and had asked him, St Ambrose, to baptise him. Will he not then receive the grace which he desired and obtain what he asked for? Did he not court unpopularity on the very day before his death, by putting Christ before men on the question of the pagan temples? If he had the spirit of Christ, did he not receive the Grace of Christ? If the martyrs are cleansed in their blood, then so is he in his good-will and piety.⁶

Could we say that the Fathers recognised charity as equivalent to baptism where the desire for baptism was only implicit? They did not develop this point for us, with the exception of St Augustine,

¹ See Essay xvii, *Actual Grace*, pp. 608-610.

² John xiv 21.

³ John xiv 23.

⁴ Luke x 27, 28.

⁵ I John iv 7.

■ *De ob. Valen. cons.*, n. 51.

who may be said to have defended the sufficiency of charity without any explicit reference to baptism. In discussing the question of the salvation of the Penitent Thief, he is not altogether satisfied with St Cyprian's contention that he died a martyr, but seems more disposed to attribute his salvation to his faith and the conversion of his heart. It is true that St Augustine afterwards expresses uncertainty about the whole question of the Penitent Thief ; but, quite independently of this question, he recognises faith and the conversion of the heart as a means of justification ;¹ basing his argument on the text of St Paul : " For with the heart, we believe unto justice ; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." ² The development of this point after St Augustine was but slow, yet always inclining towards the acceptance of charity with the implicit desire as sufficient. To-day it is the opinion of all theologians. It is, of course, always understood that charity with the explicit desire exists only if there is the intention of receiving the Sacrament when possible ; and that charity with the implicit desire exists only when the ignorance of the Sacrament and of its necessity is invincible and therefore inculpable.

How does charity compare with the Sacrament of Baptism ? It is something less. For, though it is sufficient for justification, it does not give the Character which comes from the Sacrament, and it does not necessarily remit all debt of temporal punishment. We say it does not necessarily remit all debt of temporal punishment ; but we do not deny that an act of charity might be so perfect as to secure this end as well.

Summary

To sum up : apart from martyrdom, the Sacrament of Baptism, either in reality or in desire, is necessary for salvation. Martyrdom and charity, or baptism of desire, we recognise as equivalent to baptism as regards their essential effects. Any other way of receiving justification, such as that invoked by Cajetan, we reject. Let us suppose that the State were to make some law to the effect that to obtain certain rights and privileges the taking of a certain oath were necessary. It is conceivable that these rights and privileges might be granted to people who did not take this oath because, for some excusable reason, it was not in their power to do so, but who had otherwise given indisputable and even extraordinary proof of their loyalty. On the other hand, it is not conceivable that they would receive these rights and privileges simply because they had employed some rite of their own, other than the oath which the State had sanctioned. In the same way—using the example for what it is worth—we recognise that Almighty God accepts the giving of one's love and the giving of one's life on the part of those for whom the actual reception of the Sacrament itself is not possible. But we can never admit that he would recognise some positive rite as an alternative to the law of sacramental baptism which he has sanctioned.

¹ L. 4 *de bapt.*, c. 22.

² Rom. x 10.

§ IV: THE MINISTER OF BAPTISM

ALL that has to be said about the minister of baptism can be summed up in these two statements: First, anyone, man or woman, baptised or unbaptised, can validly administer the Sacrament of Baptism. Secondly: while all can administer this Sacrament validly, only priests (and bishops, of course) are the ordinary lawful ministers of it; others being lawful ministers only in cases of necessity. In the first statement, then, we deal with the valid administration of baptism, and in the second with its lawful administration. Let us examine each of these statements in detail.

We say that anyone can validly administer this Sacrament. Is *Valid* it possible to establish this truth from the Sacred Scriptures alone? *minister,* In the full ambit of our assertion, no. The chief argument, therefore, *anyone* must come from the tradition of the Church. But we can say this much: that the Scriptures make it clear to us that others besides priests and bishops can administer this Sacrament, and that the position of baptism in this respect, as compared with the other Sacraments, is unique.

It is, of course, certain that the Apostles baptised, as they were commanded by Christ to do. Very probably St Paul baptised less than any of the other Apostles, as he tells us that his work was to preach the Gospel rather than to baptise.¹ Yet he certainly administered baptism on different occasions. We are told, for instance, in the Acts of the Apostles, that he baptised his gaoler and all the gaoler's family; and at Corinth he baptised Crispus and Caius and the household of Stephanas.² But it is clear from the Scriptures that not only the Apostles, but even a deacon could baptise. For Philip, who was only a deacon, baptised Simon the Magician, a number of people in Samaria, and the eunuch of Queen Candace.³ More interesting still is the baptism of St Paul himself, as it is probable that Ananias, who baptised him at Damascus, was only a simple layman.⁴ It is true, of course, that Ananias did this in obedience to a command that came directly from Christ himself, and the incident cannot, on that account, be claimed as an indication of any general custom. The conclusion, therefore, which we are entitled to draw from the evidence of the Scriptures is this: that the administration of baptism is not on a par with the other Sacraments, as we find that not only priests, but deacons, and possibly the faithful laity, can baptise. As to whether heretics or infidels can validly baptise we cannot say on the authority of the Scriptures, and must, therefore, seek our information from tradition. Let us briefly follow this interesting question in its historical setting.

The teaching of the Fathers of the Church on this question of valid ministry may be stated in this way: apart from the solemn

¹ 1 Cor. i 17.

³ Acts viii.

² *Ibid.* i 14, 16.

⁴ *Ibid.* ix 18.

administration of baptism, and when it is not possible to have recourse to the clergy, any baptised person can administer this Sacrament.

A constitution attributed to Pope St Victor (189-198), authorises the administration of baptism in case of necessity, in any place whatsoever, by a Christian to a pagan who has previously recited the symbol of faith. St Cyril of Jerusalem tells us that baptism can be conferred by the ignorant as well as by the learned, by slaves as well as by freemen.¹ Clearly, though he is speaking of Christians, St Cyril is not speaking of the clergy alone, as they would not come under the category of the ignorant. St Jerome tells us that though neither a priest nor a deacon can ordinarily baptise without chrism and the mandate of a bishop ; yet, if necessity arises, even laymen can baptise.² We need not multiply quotations on a point that is so often stated by the Fathers. No doubt there was some dissent, but the general Catholic custom and conviction was clear and emphatic. It was, however, always recognised that a person baptised in such circumstances of necessity by a layman should present himself, as soon as possible, to a bishop, for the imposition of hands and the Sacrament of Confirmation. None the less, should anyone die who had been baptised by a layman, and had not been confirmed, his salvation was regarded as secure. The reader may be puzzled as to the urgency of Confirmation ; it simply arose from the fact that originally Confirmation—and, for that matter, Holy Communion—followed immediately after baptism, the rite of initiation embracing all three Sacraments.

*Validity of
heretical
baptism*

So far we have shown that the Fathers held that the faithful could baptise. But what of heretics ? To answer this question we must briefly review the controversy on the point in patristic times.

Towards the end of the second century, when the heretical sects were becoming discredited, many of their members, moved by grace, sought to be reconciled to the Catholic Church. On what conditions were they to be admitted to the Catholic Church ? If they had originally been Catholics who had lapsed into heresy the question was readily answered : they were obliged to do penance, often for long periods of time, and were reconciled to the Church. But suppose that they had never been Catholics, and had received baptism at the hands of heretics ? The general custom was to admit them to the Church after the imposition of hands, and not to baptise them again ; provided, of course, that the heretical sect from which they came had preserved the correct rite, or, as we should say, the matter and form of the Sacrament. In certain localities, however, it was thought that they should be rebaptised. This custom was followed in Proconsular Africa at the beginning of the third century. How did it arise ? Very probably from the erroneous

¹ *Cat.*, xviii 35.

² *Dial. cont. Lucif.*, 9.

view of Tertullian that the baptism administered by heretics differed from that administered by Catholics. Since then there is but one baptism¹ and that the baptism given by Catholics, anything differing from it cannot be baptism at all, and therefore heretics do not validly baptise. This doctrine had been sanctioned by a local council of the bishops of Proconsular Africa and Numidia under Agrippinus, Bishop of Carthage, and a contemporary of Tertullian.

The position thus taken up was bound to lead to trouble before long, and matters came to a head under St Cyprian, who was made Bishop of Carthage, probably in the beginning of the year 249. He, like St Augustine, had been converted from a life of pleasure, and had become distinguished for his zeal in defending Catholicity and defeating heresy. But, unlike the great Augustine, he allowed his zeal to flourish at the expense of his better judgement and discretion. Being asked by a certain Magnus if it were necessary to re-baptise members of the Novatian sect who wished to be reconciled to the Church, he replied with emphasis in the affirmative. In 255 he was asked a similar question by eighteen bishops of Numidia. Again Quintus, a bishop of Mauritania, asked him this question, and from one source or another he was continually consulted on this particular point. His answer was always the same : such people should always be re-baptised. Cyprian even expressed astonishment that any of his colleagues should admit heretics to the fold without first re-baptising them ; preferring—so he said—to do honour to heretics rather than to agree with him.

At a council of the bishops of Proconsular Africa and Numidia in the autumn of 255 it was declared that baptism administered by heretics was null and void. Cyprian himself informed the Pope, St Stephen, of this decision. Stephen, invoking the tradition of the Apostles, condemned the African custom and proclaimed the validity of baptism administered by heretics. He further threatened to break off ordinary relations with the recalcitrant African bishops if his decision was not accepted. Whether he ever put this threat into effect is not known. Apparently the question of excommunication never arose, as alarms and excursions of this kind between Rome and Africa were not uncommon, and it was not customary to resort to excommunication. Stephen's decision, however, was not accepted, and two further councils in Africa, in the spring of 256 and on September 1 of the same year, in which the error was adhered to, made matters worse rather than better. There is nothing to show that Cyprian ever came to any agreement with Stephen, who was martyred on August 2, 257, shortly after the first edict of Valerian. But the fact that Cyprian immediately resumed relations with the successor of Stephen, Pope Sixtus II, would show that there had been no complete rupture between the Holy See and Africa. Cyprian himself was martyred on September 14, 258, being beheaded

¹ Eph. iv 5.

at the gates of his episcopal villa, and being the first bishop of Africa to win the martyr's crown.

His error, however, did not die with him, but continued to create, not indeed an open breach, but a divergence between Rome and Africa. But the truth is great and it gradually prevailed. Thus, the Council of Arles in 314 declares that baptism conferred by heretics is valid, provided they administer it correctly as the Catholic Church does, and with the invocation of the Blessed Trinity. Again, a canon added to the Council of Constantinople in 381 declares that baptism administered by certain heretics, such as the Arians, Novatians, and others, is valid; whereas that administered by the Eunomians, Montanists, and Sabellians is invalid; because the latter do not administer the Sacrament correctly with the formula of the Blessed Trinity. Finally, the victory of Rome was for ever assured by the writings of St Augustine, who developed the entire theological doctrine of this Sacrament to such an extent that he left little indeed to be completed by his successors.

So much for this very brief historical outline of this controversy. Let us now ask, To what error in doctrine was the behaviour of Cyprian due? Undoubtedly to this, that he did not distinguish between validity and lawfulness in the administration of a Sacrament. He did not realise that, though it may be unlawful to administer baptism in certain circumstances, yet it may be quite validly done in spite of that. We say that he did not realise this; for one could scarcely say that he positively did not know it. Quite early in the controversy one Jubaianus had put the situation neatly to him, by pointing out a distinction between the unlawfulness of the minister's action and the validity of what he did. It is not a question, said Jubaianus, of *who* did a thing, but of *what* he did. Cyprian replies that such baptism cannot be recognised as valid, as what is done is *illicit*. His otherwise admirable zeal kept him from reflecting that an action may be illicit and yet be valid.

We sum up the teaching of the Fathers, as shown by the history of the controversy, in this way: the valid administration of baptism depends on the use of the correct rite. If this is followed, heretics can baptise validly as well as others. If they mutilate this rite they do not administer baptism. In other words (the words of the Schoolmen), if you intend to administer the baptism of Christ and use the right matter and form you do administer it; if you destroy either the matter or the form you do not administer it.

So far we have shown that the Fathers taught that any baptised person, be he one of the faithful or a heretic, can validly baptise. But can those who are not themselves baptised administer this Sacrament? The Fathers do not answer this question, which to them was academic rather than practical. But they give us, very clearly, the lines on which the answer is to be found, by their insistence that the validity of baptism does not depend on the minister

Even the unbaptised can baptise

or the kind of person he may be, but on the fact that, wishing to administer the baptism of Christ, he uses the correct rite. St Augustine indeed raises the question in a speculative way. Though he does not dogmatically answer it, he gives his opinion very strongly: anyone who follows the rite instituted by Christ administers baptism validly.¹ After the Fathers, this question was gradually developed, and by the time of St Thomas it was universally held by theologians that anyone, man or woman, baptised or unbaptised, could validly baptise. It must, of course, be clearly understood that a right intention, that is, an intention of doing what the Church of Christ does, is always necessary for the validity of the Sacrament.

Why did our Blessed Lord confer this power of baptising, not upon his priests alone, but upon the whole world? No doubt, as St Thomas tells us, because it is due to the great mercy of God that he should make it easy for men to obtain whatever is absolutely necessary for their salvation. Now—always prescinding from martyrdom—the actual reception of the Sacrament of Baptism is absolutely necessary for the salvation of infants, and the actual or desired reception of it is absolutely necessary for the salvation of adults, and for the remission of all debt of punishment. Therefore our Blessed Lord has given this power to all; assigning water as the matter of the Sacrament, in order that we might have an agency of salvation that is easily found.

The second part of this subject need not detain us long. We have shown that anyone can validly baptise. We have now to show that this power must not be used indiscriminately. Let us insist, however, that whether lawful or illicit the baptism is always valid, so long as the minister who intends to baptise uses the correct matter and form.

That the ordinary lawful minister of baptism is a priest or bishop arises simply in this way: only those who have received a special authorisation from Christ to administer the Sacraments to others are the ordinary lawful ministers of them. Now, it is only priests who have this special authorisation. From what does this special authorisation come? It comes from the Character imprinted on their souls by the Sacrament of Holy Order, which deposes them to the administration of sacred things to others, making them, as St Paul has it, dispensers of the mysteries of God.² Could a deacon administer this Sacrament solemnly? By a special commission from a bishop he could do so, but not otherwise. His position is not that of a priest, because the office proper to the diaconate is not to administer the Sacraments solemnly to others, but to assist the priests when they are engaged in doing so.

The solemn administration of this Sacrament, then, is reserved to the clergy, and in no conceivable circumstances could anybody else administer baptism *solemnly*—that is, in its official liturgical

*Ordinary
lawful
minister,
priest or
bishop*

¹ *De bapt. cont. donat.*, vii 53, 102.

² 1 Cor. iv 1.

setting. The reason for this is that the solemn administration of a Sacrament implies that one is acting in virtue of a special authorisation from Christ, such as comes only through the Sacrament of Holy Order ; in virtue of an office which is proper to the state in which the Character of Holy Order places one. The administration of baptism by the laity is, as it were, unofficial, and therefore can never be solemn or ceremonial. It is therefore called private baptism.

Unofficial action, however, in things divine as well as human, is often lawful in matters of great urgency. On this account it is lawful for anyone to baptise in case of necessity. Such necessity arises when a priest cannot be had, and the salvation of a soul may depend on baptism here and now. This we have already shown from the traditional teaching of the Church. The passages we have quoted in order to prove that anyone can baptise are also passages which demonstrate that it is only in circumstances of necessity that it is lawful for people, other than priests, to do so. It is important to note that, when necessity arises, it is not only lawful but obligatory to baptise. The obligation arises from the fact that if baptism is not given under such circumstances a soul is deprived of salvation. When a priest cannot be had, then, it is lawful and obligatory to baptise an infant in danger of death, or an adult in similar danger, who has faith and contrition and wishes to be baptised. In the case of infant baptism a parent ought not to baptise if some other person is available, and a woman should not baptise if a man can be had.

*Some
instructions*

Before concluding this section we must mention a few points which it may be useful and even necessary for a section of our readers to know.¹

1. No infant should be baptised in its mother's womb, as long as there is a probability of its being born alive.

2. If, in childbirth, the head of the infant emerges, and the infant is in imminent danger of death, it must be baptised on the head.

3. If some other member, such as the hand, emerges, and a similar danger exists, the infant must be baptised conditionally on that member ; the person who baptises saying : " If thou art capable of being baptised, I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The reason why the conditional clause is inserted is that we cannot be sure if the washing of such a member as the hand is a true washing *of the body*. Should the infant (so baptised conditionally) be born and live, it must be baptised conditionally in this way : " If thou art not baptised, I now baptise thee," etc. Should the baptism administered previously not have been true baptism, owing to the absence of a washing *of the body*, it is now made certain. The necessity for the condition expressed in the words, " If thou art not baptised," arises from the fact that

¹ See *Codex Iuris Can.*, c. 746.

we must not attempt to repeat the administration of this Sacrament. However, unless a new necessity arose, this second conditional act would be done by a priest.

4. If a pregnant mother dies, and the fœtus is extracted, it should be baptised if alive ; if there is doubt as to its being alive, it should be baptised conditionally—" If thou art capable," etc.

5. A fœtus baptised in the womb should be baptised conditionally after birth—" If thou art not baptised," etc. ; this conditional act would, unless a new necessity arose, be done by a priest.

6. All abortions, at whatever period of pregnancy they may occur, should be baptised if they are alive, and should be baptised conditionally (" If thou art capable ") if there is doubt of their being alive.

7. The way to administer baptism is this : The person who baptises, intending to administer this Sacrament, pours some water on the forehead of the person to be baptised, saying at the same time (the action accompanying the words) : " I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It is correct, though not necessary for the validity, to give a name when baptising, thus : " John, I baptise thee," etc.

8. Those who have been baptised by the laity should be brought, as soon as possible, to church, to have the ceremonies supplied by a priest.

§ V: THE SUBJECT OF BAPTISM

We have already seen that baptism is necessary for all. In speaking, then, of the subject of baptism here, we are simply dealing with the conditions requisite for the reception of this Sacrament. It will be convenient to divide this section into two, corresponding to the answers to these two questions : 1. What condition is required for the valid reception of baptism ? 2. What conditions are required for the lawful reception of baptism ?

For valid baptism no further condition is requisite on the part of the adult subject than the intention of receiving this Sacrament. Needless to say, no conditions whatsoever are necessary for valid baptism on the part of infants. So long, then, as an adult has the intention of being baptised he is validly baptised. Any wrong dispositions on his part cannot interfere with the validity of the Sacrament. Even though he may, owing to these wrong dispositions, be guilty of sacrilege, he is none the less validly baptised.

What conditions are required for the lawful reception of this Sacrament ? Baptism, as we have seen, is a Sacrament which destroys all sin and all consequence of sin in our souls, and which bestows upon us a new life. Now, this destruction of sin and birth to a new life obliges us to a renunciation of Satan and to faith in the teaching of Christ. For we could not live according to this new life unless we had been cleansed from original sin, unless we were determined not

*Conditions
for valid
reception*

*Conditions
for lawful
reception*

to sin, and unless we knew and believed in the teaching of Christ. Again, actual sin and its consequences in our souls could not be destroyed unless we repented of them. It is clear, then, that the two conditions attaching to the lawful reception of baptism are these : faith and the renunciation of Satan. Let us now see how these conditions must be fulfilled in every kind of circumstance.

For an adult sinner the conditions necessary for the lawful reception of baptism are faith and repentance. Let us explain our terms. By an adult sinner we mean one who, in addition to inheriting original sin, has also been guilty of actual sin. By faith we do not, obviously, mean the virtue of faith possessed as a principle of activity arising from habitual grace (for baptism is the means to this habitual grace), but simply an act of faith to which the aspirant to baptism is assisted by actual graces from God, preparing and disposing him for the habitual grace that is to come from baptism. By repentance we mean that, in the case of an actual sinner, the renunciation of Satan must inevitably include contrition for the actual sins of which he has been guilty. Nor, unless one would deny the great efficacy of this Sacrament, is it necessary that the contrition should be perfect. Imperfect contrition is quite sufficient for the reception of this Sacrament, as it is for the reception of the Sacrament of Penance. Let it be noted, however, that contrition is required as a part of the Sacrament of Penance ; the acts of the penitent being the *matter* of the Sacrament, without which the Sacrament cannot exist. In baptism, on the contrary, contrition is required as a disposition only : the *matter* of the Sacrament being the washing of the body with water, so that the absence of contrition would make the reception of baptism unlawful, but it would not invalidate it.

The teaching
of Scripture
and Tradition

That these dispositions of faith and repentance are necessary for adult sinners is shown to us in the Sacred Scriptures. Our Blessed Lord joins faith and baptism together, saying that whoever *believes* and is baptised will be saved.¹ Again, the eunuch said to Philip : " See, here is water : what doth hinder me from being baptised ? " And Philip said : " *If thou believest* with all thy heart, thou mayest." ² Moreover, when the multitude, moved to compunction by Peter's words, ask him what they shall do, he replies : " *Do penance*, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins." ³ Again, it is the most obvious of truths that, throughout our Lord's teaching, there is this insistence on the conversion of the heart as a necessary condition for admission to his Kingdom.

These two conditions were recognised and insisted upon by the Church from the earliest times. The whole system of the catechuminate, in which aspirants to baptism were prepared, is based upon these two ideas : that they must know the teaching of Christ and believe in it, and that they must repent of their sins. The gradual

¹ Mark xvi 16.

² Acts viii 36, 37.

³ Acts ii 38.

understanding of the faith that came through the instructions of the catechumenate brought these aspirants to a realisation of the unhappy state to which sin had brought their souls. This realisation, when they did not resist the working of grace, led them to a detestation of sin, to a readiness to renounce it, and a longing for the holy way of life to which the grace of baptism would raise them; the aspirants being helped still further by the exorcisms of the Church, through which Satan is expelled from their souls, and forced to give way to the Holy Spirit. The enlightenment, too, that comes through faith gives them a new taste for the things of the Spirit and a detestation for the works of darkness. In the solemn administration of baptism to-day these renunciations of Satan, profession of faith, and exorcisms, are embodied in one beautiful liturgical act. It would be very interesting to explain all this beautiful liturgy in detail, but, unfortunately, it would take us outside the modest scope of this little essay. We shall, therefore, confine ourselves to a summing up of what we have said on the necessity of these conditions of faith and repentance by the following words from the Council of Trent:

“Men are prepared for justification in this way: aroused and sustained by divine grace, led to believe from what they have heard, they turn to God freely, believing in the truth of the Divine Revelations and promises, and believing especially that God justifies the sinner by his grace, through the work of Redemption by Jesus Christ. Then, as they know that they are sinners, they pass from the fear of Divine justice, which oppresses them for their good, to a consideration of the mercy of God; they are raised to hope, confident that, for the sake of Christ, God will help them; and they thus begin to love him as the source of all justice. In this way they begin to turn from sin with hate and detestation; that is, by that sort of repentance that is necessary before baptism. Finally, they form a resolution to be baptised, to commence a new life, and to keep the commandments of God.”

But suppose that an adult sinner does not so repent, and is yet baptised? He is certainly validly baptised, but he can receive no grace from the Sacrament which he has received. Can he ever receive grace from his baptism? He certainly can; for the baptismal Character which he has received entitles him to sacramental grace, as soon as the obstacle of sin in his soul is removed. When is this obstacle removed? Fully to answer this question, we must consider three hypotheses.

First, let us suppose that he received baptism, without repenting, in good faith—that is, not knowing or suspecting that such repentance was necessary for its lawful reception. And, let us further suppose, that he has committed no grave sin since being baptised. In such circumstances he receives the grace of the Sacrament the moment he makes a simple act of repentance, as by doing so he removes the only obstacle in his soul. Secondly, let us suppose that he receives

*The “re-
vival” of
baptism un-
worthily
received*

the Sacrament without repenting, in good faith as before, but that since receiving it he has been guilty of grave sin. In this case he must go to Confession, and the moment he is absolved each Sacrament produces the effect of grace proper to it in his soul. But in this case it is to be noted that all temporal punishment attached to sin is remitted by baptism only as regards those sins committed before baptism; the temporal punishment due to the sin committed after baptism not being affected by that Sacrament. Thirdly, suppose that he is baptised in bad faith—that is, knowing that he ought to repent and yet not doing so. He then receives no sacramental grace until he has been to Confession. This case differs from the second, because he actually committed a sacrilege in being baptised. Now, when he is absolved, is the temporal punishment due to this sin of sacrilege removed by baptismal grace? Not so, because it belongs to the period after baptism. Certainly, in the order of time it is simultaneous with baptism, but, in the nature of things, it is really after baptism, as it impedes that ultimate effect of baptism which is grace. In each of these hypotheses, it may be well to point out, the Sacrament of Penance does not produce the sacramental grace of baptism, but simply removes the obstacle of sin, thus allowing baptism to reach its ultimate effect.

Is it necessary that along with repentance one should confess one's sins and have satisfactory works imposed? Certainly not. The confession of sin is necessary for one who, being a member of the Church through the baptismal Character, falls into sin and becomes thereby subject to the judicial and merciful power of that Church to which he belongs. Satisfactory works cannot be necessary, for he who is baptised dies to sin as Christ died to redeem us. We cannot, then, without detracting from the efficacy of the Passion and death of Christ, recognise any consequence of sin remaining in the soul of the baptised.

*Infant
baptism*

So much for the adults. And now what of infants? Before speaking of any conditions relating to their baptism, let us ask this question: is it right to baptise them at all? There is no direct answer to this question in the Scriptures, but there is no mistaking the directness of the answer supplied from tradition. Origen spoke truly in saying that the Church received this custom from the Apostles.¹ Even those who, like Harnack, deny the apostolicity of this custom, are none the less obliged to admit that it was a widespread custom in the time of Tertullian, who was born about the year 160. We have said that there is no direct answer in the Scriptures, but let us not forget that St Paul tells us that the grace of Christ abounds much more than the sin of Adam.² If it were not possible for infants to be baptised, and thereby be released from the effect of Adam's sin, it could scarcely be said that the grace of Christ abounded more than the sin of Adam, which was universal in its effect on mankind.

¹ *In Rom.*, l. v, 9.

² *Rom.* v 15.

There is one objection to the baptism of infants which we ought to answer here. It may be put in this way : it does not seem possible that infants could receive the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, and the moral virtues too, since they are incapable of making acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity, and of performing moral acts. Therefore it does not seem possible that they could receive the Sacrament of Baptism. Again, they cannot prepare themselves by faith and the renunciation of Satan, and consequently cannot be disposed for the reception of this Sacrament.

We answer the first of these difficulties (which are really not very profound, but have troubled people here and there since the time of Tertullian) as follows : an act and the source or principle from which it arises are not the same thing. The act of seeing is not the same thing as the sense of sight ; the act of willing is not the same thing as the will ; an intellectual act is not the same thing as the intellect, and so forth. These sources of activity can exist and, of course, do exist even when they are not active. If it were true that an infant could not receive these virtues as the sources or principles of activity of the supernatural life that is given it in baptism, simply because it cannot as yet make use of them, then it would be equally true that infants could not be human beings, since they cannot perform intellectual acts or moral acts. The principles, then, or sources of supernatural activity are there, and will become active coincident with the activity of the reason and the will, as soon as the development of the child permits it.

To the second objection there are several irrefragable answers. The first is that the objection implies a misunderstanding of the nature of a Sacrament. A Sacrament, of its inherent power, produces an effect upon the soul when there is no obstacle placed in its way by the person to whom it is administered. An infant cannot place such an obstacle.

Again (and this brings us back to the main subject of this section), as regards the obligations of baptism, the obligation to live according to faith and to renounce the devil, we may say at first that nothing can be more erroneous than to think that obligations cannot exist without the consent of the human will. At the same time the Church in divine things, as the State in human things, can and does insist on the guaranteeing of these obligations in the case of infants. We have seen that baptism obliges one to live according to faith and to renounce sin. These obligations, as we have stated in the beginning of this section, the Church cannot waive. We are, therefore, in a position to state the situation with regard to the baptism of infants as follows : wherever the discharge of these obligations can be guaranteed, not according to absolute certainty, but according to human frailty, it is both lawful and obligatory to baptise infants. In what circumstances can we say that such a guarantee exists ?

It exists for all infants who are about to die ; for they cannot,

from the nature of the case, ever abuse the Sacrament they are about to receive, or forfeit the grace, the virtues, and the gifts that it confers. Again, children of Christian parents must be baptised, as must also children of infidel parents who are abandoned by these parents; the act of abandonment meaning that the parents have forsaken their natural rights.

God-parents

By whom is this guarantee to be given? By the god-parents,¹ who, by professing faith for the infant and promising to renounce Satan on its behalf, guarantee that the child will live according to the obligations of baptism, and according to the life and virtues that are now conferred upon it. If the parents bring the child up well, the god-parents will have nothing to do. If the parents neglect their spiritual duties towards the child, the god-parents must seek to remedy this omission by whatever zeal and prudence may suggest. Let us add, lest an important point of doctrine should be misunderstood, that as the child grows up the obligation of living a good life according to faith arises from the Sacrament itself, from the baptismal Character, and not from its accepting what the god-parents have promised for it. On that point it has no choice. A little practical information on the subject of god-parents may be useful.²

1. One god-parent is sufficient. There may not be more than two, and if there are two they may not both be of the same sex.
2. Parents may not be god-parents.
3. God-parents must be Catholics. An excommunicated Catholic could not act as a god-parent.
4. They ought to be chosen by the parents.
5. They must touch the infant at baptism, either by holding or putting a hand on it, or by raising it from the font or from the hands of the minister immediately after baptism. This they must do in person or by proxy.

There are also two conditions necessary in order that one may lawfully act as a god-parent.

1. God-parents should not be under thirteen years of age, unless the minister of the Sacrament, for some good reason, allows a younger to act.
2. They should know the rudiments of faith.

Both the minister of the Sacrament and the god-parents contract spiritual relationship with the person baptised. When a god-parent acts by proxy, it is, of course, the god-parent and not the proxy who contracts the spiritual relationship. If baptism is given privately, owing to necessity, and no god-parent has been assigned, the person who acts as god-parent later on when the ceremonies are being supplied does not contract spiritual relationship.

What of the insane? If they are incurably insane they are to be baptised as infants, and nothing is required of them. God's mercy

¹ *Codex Iuris Can.*, c. 769.

² *Ibid.*, 765, 766.

is manifest here, inasmuch as those whose condition is most pitiable of all in this life are certain of happiness in the next. If, however, their insanity is intermittent, it is necessary that they should have had at some time the intention of receiving baptism, and should have, as far as they are capable, the dispositions required in ordinary adults.

Are there any infants for whom these guarantees cannot be given? Yes, the children of unbelievers. It would not be lawful to baptise them, as they would be brought up, if not to hate, at least to disbelieve in the teaching of Christ, and most probably to follow a mode of life inconsistent with the Christian conscience. Nor would it be lawful to withdraw these children by force from their parents, and bring them up in the faith against their parents' wish. For the parents by natural law have the care of their own children, and this law would be violated by such compulsion. Wrong must never be done that good may come of it. Suppose a child of infidel parents had been thus unlawfully baptised. In that case the child belongs to the Church, the natural right of the parents yielding to the divine right of the Church which the baptismal Character establishes. Whether or no the Church would insist on her rights would depend on what prudence would have to say to the merits of the individual case.

§ VI: SUMMARY

In this summary we shall review each of the preceding sections quite briefly, pointing out concisely to the reader what he must believe.

§ I.—Of what has been said in this section we must believe that baptism is a Sacrament, and that it was instituted by Christ. The Council of Trent (which deals exhaustively with baptism in its Seventh Session) has defined that all the Sacraments are of Divine institution, and that baptism is one of the seven Sacraments.¹

§ II.—Before putting before the reader what he must believe in this section, we must take the precaution of calling his attention to the system by which we have divided it. We have divided it into three sections, adopting the system of distinguishing between the "Sacrament only," "The Thing," and "The Thing and the Sacrament." Now, we must impress upon the reader that he is not bound to believe that these three elements are to be found in every Sacrament; for theologians are not in agreement on the point. We make use of it, none the less, because it is held by some of the greatest theologians, and because it enables us to put information before the reader in a tidy and orderly way. The one thing about which all theologians are agreed and which the reader must believe (on this particular point) is that whenever the Sacrament of Baptism is validly received the baptismal Character is given. Let us now

¹ Denz., 844 sq. (1913 ed.).

point out what one must believe with regard to the different points touched upon in this section.

We are bound to believe that true and natural water is necessary for this Sacrament. Anyone who asserts (as Luther somewhat vulgarly does in his *Table Talk*) that other substances, such as milk, beer, etc., could be used instead of water, would certainly sin against the faith. Still more would one sin who denied that water was necessary at all, maintaining that Christ only spoke in a figurative way when he mentioned water. Are we bound to believe that washing (proximate matter) is necessary? We are. No Council of the Church, it is true, has defined this point for us; but that is simply because the need of such definition has not arisen. To deny the necessity of washing would be to contradict the Scriptures, which speak of baptism as a laver or washing, and would undermine the Scriptural meaning of the word *baptism* itself; for it simply means a washing.

What of the form? We must believe that the expressions signifying the act of washing and the invocation of the three Divine Persons are necessary. Thus, the Council of Florence (1438-1445), in its famous decree for the Armenians, says that the form of baptism is, "I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; or, "The servant of God (so-and-so) is baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; or, "So-and-so is baptised at my hands in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."¹ The seeming indirectness of the two latter forms does not militate against their correctness, because, since the principal cause from which baptism derives its efficacy is the Blessed Trinity, the function of the minister is sufficiently indicated in these forms. The assertion of the Council of Florence is not to be taken as a definition of faith, as the entire decree for the Armenians is intended as a practical direction and not as a definitive declaration. It is, however, of the highest authority, as coming from an Oecumenical Council. Nor are there wanting other important documents on this subject. Among thirty-one propositions condemned by the Holy Office under Alexander VIII, on December 7, 1690, is the following: "Baptism conferred in this way 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' and without the words 'I baptise thee,' is valid."² Again, Pope Pelagius I (556-561), in his letter to Gaudentius, Bishop of Volterra, says that if it is truly shown that certain heretics have been baptised only in the name of the Lord, without the slightest hesitation they are to be baptised in the name of the Blessed Trinity.³ We have, then, the Council of Florence directing us on the whole form of baptism, and Alexander and Pelagius directing us on each part of it respectively.

¹ Denz., 696.

² *Ibid.*, 1317.

³ *Ibid.*, 229.

As regards the effects of baptism, we are bound to believe the following: that it remits sin, both actual and original, and all temporal punishment due to sin; that it gives grace and sanctification, virtues and gifts; that it makes us the adopted children of God; that it gives a Character to the soul; makes us members of the Church; and that it cannot be repeated. We are, moreover, bound to believe that baptism produces all its essential effects in infants as well as in adults.

The Council of Trent has made many definitive assertions on the effects of baptism, which we need not go into here, as they are primarily assertions against Luther and others, whose errors are so out of fashion to-day that the reader is not likely to encounter them. Thus, the Council anathematizes those who assert that the mere act of recalling one's baptism rids one of sins, or that the grace given by baptism cannot be lost.

§ III.—We must believe—always excepting the martyrs—that the Sacrament of Baptism in reality or in desire (Charity) is necessary as a means of salvation; and we shall act very prudently in believing that the implicit desire, where nothing more is possible, is sufficient.

We must also believe that martyrdom is a means of justification and salvation. This has not formally been defined by the Church, but a denial of it would amount to a denial of our Lord's words: "He that shall lose his life for me shall find it"; and it would also amount to a contradiction of the teaching and practice of the Church, as shown in the writings of the Fathers, of the theologians, and in the Sacred Liturgy.

What if one were to hold the opinion of Cajetan? One would certainly be guilty of grave error. For, though the Council of Trent refrained from censuring the opinion of such a great theologian, it was ordered that this opinion should be expunged from his works.

§ IV.—We are bound to believe that priests are the ordinary ministers of baptism; and that, in case of necessity, the laity can and ought to administer this Sacrament; that women as well as men, and heretics, can administer it. Are we bound to believe that the unbaptised, or infidels, can administer this Sacrament? Yes, inasmuch as it would be rash to go against the opinion of all theologians to-day, who maintain that if an infidel had the intention of doing what the Church does, and used the correct outward sign, he would baptise validly. We might mention here that all converts in England to-day, coming from the various sects, are baptised conditionally. The principle of the validity of baptism as administered by heretics is not at stake here, as the precaution of conditional baptism is taken lest, through carelessness, the outward sign might not be correctly used. That such carelessness might arise is all the more likely from the fact that, outside the Catholic Church, there is no clear theological teaching on the nature of the Sacraments and the way in which they

cause Grace. What of the intention of the ministers of baptism among the sects? Most probably it is a correct intention; for we may presume that they intend to do what Christ wishes us to do, unless (through an acute prejudice against the Church, which must be of very rare occurrence) they deliberately excluded the intention of doing what the Catholic Church does. In such an event, of course, the baptism would be invalid, as a person who will not do what the Church (which is the Mystical Body of Christ) does, will not do what Christ wishes us to do.

§ V.—We are obliged to believe that baptism can and ought to be given to infants as well as to adults. We are bound to believe that infants can and do receive grace and virtues at baptism. We are also obliged to believe that for lawful baptism adults must repent of their sins, and that they must believe. The words quoted from the Council of Trent above, p. 793, make this very clear to us. Also, we have a very interesting and important document in the letter of Innocent III to Humbert, Archbishop of Arles, in 1201, in which he points out how original sin and actual sin are washed away by baptism. We must understand, he tells us, that sin is of two kinds, original and actual. Original sin is contracted without our consent, and actual is committed with our consent. Original sin, therefore, which is contracted without consent, is washed away without consent (baptism of infants); but actual sin, which is committed with our consent, is not forgiven without our consent (need of repentance for adult sinners).

We introduced what we had to say about baptism with the observation that there is no Sacrament the existence of which is so generally admitted by all. Let us conclude by observing that there is no Sacrament concerning which all questions of importance have been settled from such an early date.

In fact, in the course of this essay we have found but two questions of importance that were not decisively settled in patristic times. These are: first, the question of the sufficiency of the implicit desire for baptism of Charity; and, secondly, the question of the validity of baptism administered by the unbaptised. And even in these two questions the principles on which a solution should be found were laid down. To whom do we principally owe this wonderful theological development in patristic times? It is not a departure from that sense of proportion which the enthusiast should be careful to observe in historical matters, to say that we owe it to the great St Augustine. His genius for seizing the fundamental principle to be relied upon in the solution of a difficult point, and his remarkable precision in stating a case theologically, are all the more praiseworthy when we remember that he had not, as the Scholastics had later on, the inestimable service of that handmaid of the theologian—the Aristotelian philosophy.

But Augustine was also indebted to his predecessors. When he was born, November 13, 354, the catechumenates had already been in existence for over a century and a half. In these catechumenates the aspirants to baptism were tried and instructed, and all the ceremonies and prayers accompanying the immediate preparation of those chosen for baptism embody the whole of the Church's teaching on baptism; not indeed expressed in theological terms, but expressed in her liturgical prayer, which is the spontaneous utterance of her teaching and her truth. Tertullian, who was born about 160, was himself, in all probability, a catechist in the school for catechumens at Carthage. So intense was the interest in baptism in his day that his writings not only contain frequent references to it, but show a development of the subject in such maturity that there is an entertaining air of modernity about them. How shall we explain this intense interest, to which the early development of the theology of this Sacrament is due?

We must remember that while baptism means the same for us as it did for Christians in every age, it is probably hard for us to realise the wonderful joy and the unexpected hope that this Sacrament brought to the pagan world of old. To a world that had largely begun to despair of itself there came the assurance, on the authority of a Church claiming to be and every day proving itself to be divine, that no matter what men had done, no matter how old they were, no matter how ineradicable their vices had seemed to be, their past could be completely wiped out and God himself would take them as his friends, enabling them to begin a new life with him and to persevere in that life with fidelity; the only obligation on their part being to prepare themselves by faith and repentance for the wonderful graces of baptism. This assurance, and the proof of the mysterious efficacy of baptism in the lives and the deaths of the early Christians, brought such a new happiness and confidence into the world that it led to the greatest reformation of society that the world has ever seen; a reformation so great, indeed, that it is inexplicable without recourse to a miracle of the moral order.

The writings of the Fathers are a witness to this wonderful reformation of society, but nowhere is it more vividly brought before us than in the Liturgy of Christian Initiation. Through the enlightenment of mind and the reform of his will that has resulted from his hearing the word of God, the neophyte is given a new taste for heavenly wisdom to replace the folly of sin, and an odour of sweetness to replace the foulness of Satan. This much results from the opening of his ears. But the power of Satan, who would try to wrest from the neophyte the good dispositions to which he has been brought, is offset by the great exorcisms of the Church. He turns to the west, the region of darkness and the setting sun, and for ever renounces Satan and all his works and pomps; then he turns to the east, the region of light and the rising sun, and solemnly makes

his profession of that faith through which he is saved. Finally, he is baptised, and, when the rite of his Confirmation and first Holy Communion is finished, he is for ever admitted to a land that is flowing with the milk and honey of God's abundant Grace. All these things are represented and effected by the ceremonies and prayers of initiation, of which baptism is the focal point. These prayers and ceremonies are so full of a chaste joy, of a new and wonderful hope, that they recover for us, with a vividness that is extraordinary, the iniquity of the pagan world and the wonder of its reformation through Holy Baptism. Even the inscriptions in the ancient baptisteries bring this hope and joy before us. We may well believe that many a poor sinner, so happy and so repentant, read through the inscription in the baptistery of the Lateran, and perhaps repeated the last two lines again and again :

“ Nec numerus quemquam scelerum, nec forma suorum
Terreat, hoc natus flumine salvus erit.”

Which we may translate freely :

“ Let no one be terrified by the number or the nature of his sins ;
he who is born of these waters will indeed be holy.”

JOHN P. MURPHY.

XXIII

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

§ I: THE SACRAMENT OF MATURITY

As Baptism is the sacrament of supernatural birth so Confirmation is the sacrament of supernatural maturity. The baptised are mere infants in the life of grace, *modo geniti infantes*;¹ the confirmed are adults, they have reached the status of Christian manhood. Confirmation thus confirms or perfects the life which Baptism has bestowed, and for this reason is called in Christian tradition the consummation, the perfection, or the complement of Baptism, and in the early stages of the Church was administered immediately after Baptism itself.

*Confirmation
the comple-
ment of
Baptism*

But if the notion of maturity is to convey accurately the peculiar meaning and effect of Confirmation it must not be understood in the sense of completed supernatural growth. Full growth in the life of grace means Christian perfection, it means the attainment of the greatest possible likeness to Christ through the perfect exercise of the Christian virtues. In this sense the attainment of maturity is, quite literally, a life's work; for of no man can it be said, so long as life lasts, that he has reached the full stature of sanctity or achieved that particular degree of holiness which God has assigned to him for his measure. In the performance of his task he has the valuable aid of the sacraments, each of which has its appointed part to play in the process of sanctification, but there is no one sacrament which of itself confers the seal of accomplishment. It is not in this sense that Confirmation perfects the work of Baptism.

*Conferring,
not full
supernatural
growth*

Nor must we allow ourselves, in assigning the place which Confirmation holds in the sacramental system, to usurp functions for it which belong to other sacraments; in particular we must not ascribe to it effects which Baptism already suffices to produce. Thus, we might perhaps be tempted to suppose that, Baptism being the sacrament of birth or infancy, it is for Confirmation to supply that vital strength which will enable the infant life to develop. This, however, would be to belittle the efficacy of Baptism. It is true that the soul newly baptised is supernaturally an infant. But this does not mean that it has received only and barely that minimum which is needed to make it supernaturally alive. Just as the child newly born to the life of this world receives by the natural process of generation all those intrinsic vital powers by the development of which he will grow to manhood, so the newly baptised Christian possesses already

*Nor the
power of
growth*

¹ 1 Peter ii 2.

every inherent supernatural power by the development of which he can grow to perfection. Endowed with sanctifying grace, infused virtues, gifts of the Holy Ghost, he has within himself all the inner principles or springs of supernatural life and activity. It is not, therefore, as conferring the power of growth that Confirmation perfects the work of Baptism.

Nor supernatural nourishment

Supernatural growth does indeed call for supernatural nourishment. But to provide this is, again, not the function of Confirmation but rather of the Eucharist, instituted by Christ for the very purpose of giving us his own true Flesh and Blood as our spiritual food. If, therefore, among the sacraments there is one to which the supernatural growth of the soul is especially to be attributed, it is surely this. "All those effects," writes St Thomas, "which material food and drink produce in regard to bodily life are produced in respect of the spiritual life by this sacrament: it sustains, it gives increase, it repairs loss, it gives delight."¹

Nor, specifically, the power of resistance to temptation

Nor, finally, would it seem to be the specific purpose of Confirmation to strengthen the life of the soul by arming it against the agents of destruction as such, by enabling it to resist the devil, the world, and the flesh, which are the enemies of the supernatural life of grace. For this also is a function which belongs properly to other sacraments. In the first place it belongs to the Eucharist which, besides "nourishing and strengthening those who live by the life of him who said, 'He that eateth me the same also shall live by me,' serves also as an antidote to deliver us from the sins which we daily commit and to preserve us from those sins which kill the soul."² And the same effect is also produced by those sacraments (Penance and Extreme Unction) whose purpose is not only to repair the ravages of sin but also to forearm the soul against temptation by the sacramental graces which are proper to each.

But the power to fulfil one's public duty as a Christian

We are thus forced to conclude that the maturity which Confirmation bestows is not to be understood merely in terms of vital vigour or development. It is in some other characteristic of adult age that we must find an analogy to illustrate the special effect of this sacrament. What else, apart from the mere fact of physical and mental growth, distinguishes the adult from the child? Surely it is the sense of public responsibility. "In childhood," says St Thomas, "a human being is an individualist; he lives, as it were, only for himself. But when he reaches the full vigour of manhood he begins to exert his activity upon others."³ The child, naturally and legitimately, is an individualist; he is himself the only object of his own solicitude and of the loving care of all who surround him. And this is quite right and proper. Nature bids a child direct all his powers and energies to his own self-development, to the nourish-

¹ *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxxix, art. 1.

² Council of Trent, sess. xiii, cap. 2.

³ *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxxii, art. 2.

ment of his little body and the exercise of his little limbs, to the preservation of his life against the dangers that beset it especially when it is young and tender, to the education and training of the physical and mental powers which are to bring him to his full stature as an individual human being. A child's responsibilities are all for himself. It is only when he reaches manhood that he must take his place as a citizen and shoulder his burden as a member of society.

Something of the same sort is true of the Christian in his supernatural life. His baptismal endowments are intended for his spiritual status and growth as an individual. "In Baptism," says St Thomas, "a man receives power for those actions which concern his own salvation, in so far as he lives his own life."¹ This does not mean that he is an isolated unit, entirely self-contained, and able to grow in grace independently of any relations with his fellow men. The Christian life is essentially a life of union, of union with God and of union with one's neighbour. The Christian, whether confirmed or not, is bound by the paramount duties of charity, charity towards God and towards men; indeed it is upon his observance of the first and greatest commandment, and of the second which is like to it, that his continuance in the state of grace and his progress in the spiritual life essentially depend. He has his duties of justice towards others, and in all his dealings with his fellow men he is bound by the code of the moral virtues. He has the duty, moreover, in virtue of his baptism, of guarding his supernatural life against hostile influences, conformably with the solemn injunction laid upon him when he was born to grace: "Receive this white garment and see thou keep it without stain unto the judgement seat of God."

And yet he remains only a child in the supernatural order until the moment comes in which, so to speak, he takes the *toga* of public life in the Church. And this is the stage marked by the Sacrament of Confirmation. Ever since his baptism he has been a member of the Church, a son of God, a citizen of the City of God, and has enjoyed all the privileges of that status. But it is only in Confirmation that he receives the charge and the strength also to shoulder its responsibilities, to fulfil those obligations in the eyes of the world which rest upon him, not merely as a son of God, bound already by his Christian duties towards God and men, but as a mature and officially accredited citizen of the one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

A summary indication of the responsibility which Confirmation imposes is so important for the understanding of what follows that it must be given at once. It is described briefly by Christ himself in the words which he used to his Apostles before he ascended into heaven: "You shall be witnesses unto me."² It is the bounden duty of each spiritually mature and adult member of the catholic and apostolic Church to be a witness. The Church is the authentic

¹ *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxxii, art. 5.

² Acts i 8.

witness to Jesus Christ on earth, and every responsible citizen of this City of God shares in that divinely appointed function of the Church, according to the place which he occupies in the organism of the Mystical Body of Christ. This is surely the deep significance of that gift of tongues which in the primitive Church, both on the day of Pentecost and on other occasions, gave external proof of the coming of the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Ghost descended upon them, and they spoke with tongues"; as though to say, they were confirmed and they bore witness. And not only did they bear witness, but they bore witness in the tongues of every nation under heaven, because they were members of a Church not only apostolic but catholic also. As St Augustine aptly observes, in Jerusalem the universal mission of the Church had already begun, and the Pentecostal tongues were but a symbol to foreshadow the reality of a Church which would in fact, and not merely in figure, preach the gospel throughout the world. And if the Mystical Body of Christ is a witness, he argues, then every member of it is a witness too. "I, too," he exclaims, "I, too, speak with the tongues of all nations. Am I not in the Body of Christ, am I not in the Church of Christ? If the Body of Christ speaks with the tongues of all nations, then the tongues of all nations are mine."¹

Such is the glorious task to which Confirmation calls the Christian and for which it endows him. Already truly a member of the Church, he now becomes a spokesman of the Church, of the Church who, "like a standard set up unto the nations, calls to herself those who have not yet believed, and at the same time gives assurance to her own children that the faith which they profess reposes on the firmest of foundations."² Proudly conscious of his citizenship, he testifies to the world that he is indeed a follower of Christ and an upholder of his faith, ready if need be to die as a soldier in its defence. In Baptism the life of grace appears as a white garment to be kept pure and unspotted from the stains of the world; in Confirmation the faith is raised aloft as a flying banner, under which we march as "strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus Christ."

Confirmation is called pre-eminently the Sacrament of the Holy Ghost. And it is fitting that to this Divine Person, in whom the eternal processions of the Godhead find their culmination, we should attribute in a particular way the seal of sanctification which sets the finishing touch of maturity to the making of the Christian. This "appropriation"³ reflects the words of Christ himself, who consistently assigns this perfective function to the Holy Spirit whom he would send, and it finds its firm support in the Acts of the Apostles, where this complement of Baptism is commonly called "the gift of the Spirit" or "the coming of the Holy Ghost."

¹ *Enarr. in psalm. cxlvii* 19.

² Vatican Council, *De fid. cath.*, cap. 3.

³ For the meaning of this term, see Essay iv, *The Blessed Trinity*, p. 137.

*The strong
and perfect
Christian*

*The Sacra-
ment of the
Holy Spirit*

It may be useful, however (though not necessary to those who have studied earlier essays in this work),¹ to observe that the confirmed are not receiving the Holy Spirit for the first time. Wherever there is an outpouring of sanctifying grace there is the mysterious presence of the Trinity in the soul, and an invisible mission of the Son and the Holy Ghost. Already in Baptism the three divine Persons have taken up their abode in the soul, already the Holy Ghost dwells therein as in his temple. Consequently, if Confirmation is called the Sacrament of the Holy Spirit *par excellence* it must be because the peculiar effect of this sacrament—to create official witnesses to God's truth—is one which is in a special way associated with the third Person of the Blessed Trinity. And that this is indeed the case it must now be our object to show.

§ II: THE SPIRIT OF TESTIMONY

IN the Nicene Creed the Church professes her belief in the Holy Ghost “*Qui locutus est per prophetas*” (*qui locutus est per prophetas*); and if by prophets we understand, as we should, not merely those who foretell future events but all those who deliver God's message to men, who bear witness to divine truth, we shall see that there is a close connection between this article of the Creed and the Sacrament of Confirmation.

This special function of the Holy Spirit is revealed to us already in the Old Testament. We are told how the Spirit rested upon the seventy elders so that they prophesied; ² Samuel assures Saul, the king of Israel, that the Spirit of the Lord will come upon him and he will prophesy; ³ and it is to the same Spirit that Micheas attributes the power in which he speaks. “I am filled with strength,” he says, thanks to “the Spirit of God.” ⁴ And we are even given an indication that the time will come when the Spirit of testimony will no longer be the privilege of a favoured few, but will be granted to all. “It shall come to pass after this,” the prophet Joel proclaims in God's name, “that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.” ⁵

But as the moment approaches which the Scriptures call the fulness of time, when the promises of the Old Testament are at last to be fulfilled, and when God, having in times past spoken to men by the prophets, is about to speak to them by his own Son, ⁶ then the Spirit of testimony becomes more and more active and is poured out in special abundance upon the immediate heralds of the Messias. The opening chapters of St Luke's Gospel tell us the story of this busy activity of the Holy Spirit in all those who are associated with the infancy of the divine Redeemer. The same Spirit who comes

¹ See Essay v, *The Holy Ghost*, pp. 161 ff.

² 1 Kings x 6-10.

³ Joel ii 28; cf. Essay v, p. 144.

² Numbers xi 25.

⁴ Micheas iii 8.

⁶ Cf. Heb. i 1.

upon Our Lady to operate in her the miraculous conception of the Son of God,¹ fills the heart of Elizabeth so that she bears testimony to Mary as the Mother of her Lord and utters those inspired words, "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb," with which the Church still salutes the Mother of God.² The same Spirit fills the soul of the Precursor, so that he leaps in the womb of his mother to bear witness to Mary's unborn Child.³ Zachary is moved by the Holy Ghost to chant his canticle in praise of the coming Saviour;⁴ and it is under the same inspiration that Simeon greets the Redeemer who is to be for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel, and that in prophecy he associates Mary with the redemptive sufferings of her Son.⁵

*In the
Saviour
himself*

But it is in Jesus himself, the true Christ, anointed by God with the oil of gladness (*i.e.* with the Holy Spirit) beyond his fellows,⁶ in Jesus, who came into the world that he might give testimony to the truth,⁷ that the Spirit of testimony pre-eminently exerts his power. From the moment in which the Son of God became incarnate in his Virgin Mother's womb, the Holy Spirit with all the plenitude of his supernatural gifts and graces took up his abode in the most holy soul of Christ, and to that fulness of grace and truth, which was the rightful heritage of the Word Incarnate, nothing could be added. If he is said to have grown in grace it is only because the hidden treasures of his soul became more and more manifest as men came to know him for what he was. And so, when the time came at which he must be shown forth before men as the Son of God, in complete possession of all the secrets of the Father and charged with the mission of revealing them to mankind, a special manifestation took place. After he had been baptised by John in the Jordan "the heaven opened and the Holy Ghost descended in bodily shape, as a dove, upon him. And a voice came from heaven: Thou art my beloved Son."⁸ It was the Spirit of testimony openly displaying himself in the King of the prophets. His work of bearing witness to the truth was about to begin.

*Jesus anointed
to preach the
gospel*

The deep significance of this visible manifestation of the Spirit at the beginning of Our Lord's public life did not escape the inspired vision of St Peter, who ascribes to the assistance of the Holy Spirit the power with which Jesus fulfilled his mission of preaching. "You know the word," he said at Caesarea after the conversion of Cornelius, "which hath been published through all Judea; for it began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power."⁹ And lest we should have any doubt that it is indeed the Spirit of testimony who speaks also in Jesus, we have his own words to the people of Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," he proclaims,

¹ Luke i 35.

⁴ Luke i 67.

⁷ John xviii 37.

² Luke i 41-42.

⁵ Luke ii 25-35.

⁸ Luke iii 21-22.

³ Luke i 44.

⁶ Heb. i 9; *cf.* Ps. xliv.

⁹ Acts x 37-38.

quoting the words of the prophet Isaias ; “ for he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel.”¹ No wonder that the Fathers have seen in that striking scene enacted by the river Jordan a prefigurement of the Christian sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

For the mission of preaching the Gospel which Christ had received from his Father was not to be completed with his earthly life. His Apostles were to continue the work : “ As the Father hath sent me, so I also send you . . . going teach ye all nations.”² The task of bearing witness to the truth had cost the Saviour his Passion and Death, and only the power of the Spirit had sustained him against the torrent of hatred which had greeted his message. It was not to be an easy task for the Apostles either. “ The disciple,” he warned them, “ is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master and the servant as his lord. If they have called the goodman of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household ? ”³ Their mission would not be one in which they would be welcomed with open arms : “ Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Beware of men ; for they will deliver you up in councils and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.”⁴

The Apostles were to be under no illusions, therefore ; they must be prepared to meet the same opposition as their Master. But were they to undertake their mission unaided ? Was that Spirit of testimony who had spoken through the prophets of old, through Zachary, Elizabeth, the Baptist, Simeon, who had anointed Jesus himself for the preaching of the Gospel, was this Spirit to be withheld from them ? Our Lord reassures them immediately. “ When they shall deliver you up,” he tells them, “ take no thought how or what to speak ; for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak. For it is not you that speak but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.”⁵

Their need of the Spirit is shown clearly when we consider their conduct before they received it. They did not lack faith in their Master, nor loving devotion to him ; what they needed was the courage to proclaim their faith and loyalty in the face of scornful opposition. The behaviour of Peter may be taken as typical of them all. He had so boldly professed his faith at Caesarea when there were no enemies of Christ at hand ;⁶ together with the other Apostles he had clung to his Master when so many of the other disciples “ went back and walked no more with him ” ;⁷ in the enthusiasm of his loyalty he had declared : “ Although all shall be scandalised in thee, I will never be scandalised. . . . Yea, though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee.”⁸ But none knew better than the Master

The Apostles sent to continue the work

Promise of the Spirit to the Apostles

Their need of the Spirit

¹ Luke iv 18.

³ Matt. x 24-25.

⁶ Matt. xvi 16.

² John xx 21 with Matt. xxviii 19.

⁴ Matt. x 16-18.

⁷ John vi 67-70.

⁵ Matt. x 19-20.

⁸ Matt. xxvi 33, 35.

himself how frail were such resolutions when unconfirmed by the Spirit of testimony, and therefore we must surely read a divine tenderness in the words of warning which he addressed to Peter : " Amen I say to thee that in this night before the cock crow thou wilt deny me thrice." ¹ As the event proved, it needed only the taunting of a serving maid and the questioning of a few casual bystanders to overwhelm a courage which was as yet not firmly established in the Spirit. ²

They are warned to await the Spirit

So well did Jesus know their weakness that, even after he had risen from the dead and so afforded them ocular proof of his glorious triumph, he still warns them that they must not attempt to begin their mission of bearing witness until they have received the needful strengthening of the Spirit. In his last discourse before ascending into heaven he shows them that they have now every ground for firm faith in him : " Thus it is written," he says, " and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead the third day ; and that penance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things." But then, as though bidding them beware of a self-reliance which had already betrayed them, he adds : " I send the promised one from my Father upon you ; *but stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high.*" ³ And again, as St Luke tells us more clearly in the Acts of the Apostles, " He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard (saith he) by my mouth. . . . You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth." ⁴

The promise fulfilled at Pentecost

On the day of Pentecost Our Lord's promise was fulfilled : " When the days of Pentecost were accomplished, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming ; and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak." ⁵

External phenomena and inner working of the Spirit

It is important both in this, the first instance of the giving of the Holy Ghost in the Christian dispensation, and in others which are related by St Luke, to distinguish between what is incidental and what is essential in the effects of his outpouring ; and if, in what precedes, we appear to have stressed unduly the terms in which the Spirit was promised by Christ and the need in which the Apostles stood of his strengthening grace, it has only been in order that we may now more clearly perceive wherein lies the essential fulfilment

¹ Matt. xxvi 34.

² *Ibid.*, 69-75.

³ Luke xxiv 46-49.

⁴ Acts i 4, 8.

⁵ Acts ii 1-4.

of the promise. We must not allow ourselves to be blinded to the interior workings of the Spirit by undue attention to his outward manifestations. These have their importance, and for St Luke, whose chief object is to explain the rapid spread of the Christian Church, they have a very great importance indeed. That the first communication of this divine power which was to renovate the world should be accompanied by unmistakable proofs of its presence, that the invisible Spirit should make himself seen in the brightness of fire, heard in the sound of a mighty wind, felt in the shaking of the earth;¹ that the Apostles themselves, and also the first members of the infant Church, should exhibit to the world outward and manifest signs (the gift of tongues, the working of wonders, the casting out of devils)² as proofs of the Spirit that worked within them—all this appears natural and appropriate when we remember that Pentecost is not only the "Confirmation" of the Apostles but also the first solemn promulgation of the Christian Church; and it would be strange if these phenomena did not assume great prominence in the story.

But if we were to see, as some have been led to see, in these visible portents the sole or the chief effect of the gift of the Spirit, we should be forgetting the principal purpose for which that gift was promised. The Spirit whom Christ had promised to send from the Father was to supply in them what had hitherto been so conspicuously lacking, namely, the courage to bear witness to Christ; if they were to be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence, if they were to receive his power coming upon them, if they were to be endued with power from on high, if they were to postpone the inauguration of their mission until they had received that power, it was in order that they might be enabled thereby "to speak the word of God with confidence."³

Therefore the essential working of the Spirit of testimony is within the hearts of the Apostles, and its outward showing is to be seen not in the working of miracles or the speaking with tongues, but in the new courage with which they now proclaim their message and which presents so marvellous a contrast with their former timidity. Peter, who not long before had denied his Lord at the word of a serving wench, now lifts up his voice before the whole people of Jerusalem, telling them how God had raised Jesus from the dead, "whereof all we are witnesses."⁴ "Let all the house of Israel know most certainly," he cries, "that God hath made this same Jesus whom you have crucified both Lord and Christ."⁵ Apprehended by the officers of the temple, he boldly preaches Jesus to the Jewish authorities; "filled with the Holy Ghost," he proclaims the power of Jesus of Nazareth whom they had put to death;⁶ charged by

¹ Acts iv 31.

² Cf. Acts viii 15-18; xix 2-6; iv 30-31; vi 5-8; viii 7.

³ Acts iv 31.

⁴ Acts ii 32.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁶ Acts iv 1-10.

*Essential
effect of the
coming of
the Spirit*

them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus, he joins with the other Apostles in making that solemn declaration which has been the motto of the Christian martyrs ever since: "We ought to obey God rather than men."¹ The power of the Spirit of testimony makes itself felt so irresistibly within them that they are constrained to bear witness to God's truth: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."² And with their shoulders still smarting from the scourges, they come forth from the council "rejoicing that they are counted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus."³

Could the promise of Christ have been more manifestly fulfilled? "They will scourge you in their synagogues. . . . But when they shall deliver you up it shall be given to you in that hour what to speak. For it is not you that speak but the Spirit of your Father who speaketh in you."

All the faithful must bear the burden of witness

But the burden of witness lies not only upon the chosen twelve; it lies upon the faithful also, all of whom are called, each in his own way, to bear witness to the faith of Jesus Christ. It was not only to the Apostles but to all his followers that Jesus said: "Everyone that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven. But he that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven."⁴ To preach the gospel by word of mouth will not be the task of everyone, but none is exempt from the obligation of so living that he may be recognised by the world for a disciple of Christ. "So let your light shine before men," he says, "that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."⁵

The task of witness will be hard

And for the faithful too the task of bearing witness to Christ will be a hard one. If their Christian conduct brings upon them the hatred of a hostile world, this is only the price that must be paid by all the prophets, by all who give testimony to God's truth: "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake. Be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven; for so they persecuted the prophets that were before you."⁶ They will be hated and reproached and their name will be cast out as evil for Christ's sake.⁷ St John tells the Christians of the first century not to wonder if the world hated them;⁸ he has in mind the words which Christ had intended for all believers: "If the world hate you, know that it hath hated me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."⁹ This is why the Prince of Peace himself had to proclaim that he came not to bring peace but the sword, and why he, who is the Author of

¹ Acts v 28-29.

⁴ Matt. x 32-33.

⁷ Cf. Luke vi 22.

² Acts iv 20.

⁵ Matt. v 16.

⁸ 1 John iii 13.

³ Acts v 40-41.

⁶ *Ibid.* 11-12.

⁹ John xv 18-19.

the commandment to honour father and mother, imposes upon his disciples one of the hardest tests of all: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."¹

But if every Christian must bear the burden of witness, we shall expect also that for every Christian there will likewise be a share in the outpouring of the Spirit by which Apostles are strengthened for their task. And so indeed it is. Christ promises that the Father "will give the good Spirit to them that ask him";² and it is of this same Spirit of fortitude that St John bids us understand the mysterious words of Christ in the temple: "He that believeth in me . . . out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." "Now this" (the evangelist explains), "he said of the Spirit which they should receive who believed in him; for as yet the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."³ The same reassurance is given to the early Christians by St Peter: "Dearly beloved," he writes, "think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you. . . . If you be reproached for the name of Christ you shall be blessed; for the Spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, resteth upon you."⁴ And it is of this universal promise that he understands the prophecy of Joel when he preached to the people of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost: "It shall come to pass . . . I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." "To receive this precious gift they need not belong to the chosen twelve. "Do penance," he tells them, "and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, whomsoever the Lord our God shall call."⁵

Already in the primitive Church we begin to see the promise fulfilled. Even the first Pentecostal outpouring, it would appear, was not reserved to the Apostles alone. St Luke's account leads one to suppose that, besides Mary the Mother of Jesus and the Apostles, the whole of the little Christian community (about one hundred and twenty souls) were present in that upper room when the Holy Ghost "came upon every one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."⁶ Thereafter the activity of the Holy Spirit is widespread throughout the infant Church. "We are witnesses," exclaims St Peter, "and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God has given to all that obey him."⁷ A new outpouring fills the faithful when the Jewish authorities begin their persecution, "and they speak the word of God with confidence";⁸ the seven deacons are filled with the Holy Ghost,⁹ and under his inspiration Stephen, first fruits of the Spirit of Christian martyrdom, confounds the Jews and with his dying

*The Spirit
promised to
all the
faithful*

*The Spirit
granted to
all the
faithful*

¹ Matt. x 34-37.

² I Peter iv 12, 14 (according to the Greek text).

³ Acts ii 16, 38.

⁴ Acts v 32.

⁵ Luke xi 13.

⁶ Acts i 13-15; ii 3-4.

⁷ Acts iv 31.

⁸ John vii 38-39.

⁹ Acts vi 3.

breath bears witness to Jesus whom he sees standing at the right hand of God.¹ Under the guidance of the same Spirit Philip the deacon evangelises the Samaritans,² upon whom the Apostles Peter and John subsequently confer the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands ;³ Paul is no sooner converted than he is filled with the Spirit ;⁴ Cornelius, in whose person the Gentiles are called to the Church, receives the Holy Ghost even before he is baptised ;⁵ the same Spirit is poured out upon all the converts from paganism ;⁶ and the disciples of Ephesus, as soon as they have been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus, also receive the Holy Ghost by the imposition of the hands of St Paul.⁷

What Joel had foretold was indeed coming to pass : the Holy Spirit who had spoken by the prophets of old, who had enlightened the immediate forerunners of the Redeemer, who had anointed Jesus himself for the preaching of the Gospel, who had been given with overwhelming evidence to the Apostles and the first disciples on the day of Pentecost—this same Spirit of testimony was being poured out “ upon all flesh.”

§ III: THE SACRAMENT IN SCRIPTURE

A Sacrament of Confirmation antecedently probable

THE information already gleaned from the Scriptures, combined with a consideration of the general plan by which Christ has provided for the needs of his Church, would lead us to expect that he has instituted a Sacrament of Confirmation. Supernatural gifts are by their very definition entirely gratuitous ; man has no claim to them and God is under no absolute obligation to bestow them. Still less is the Author of grace, should he see fit to bestow such gifts, in any way restricted as to the means he may choose for communicating them. Nevertheless the Christian dispensation of the supernatural is marked by a regular and harmonious arrangement which presents many analogies with the natural order, for both nature and supernature are equally the work of that Wisdom which “ reaches from end to end mightily and orders all things sweetly.”⁸ We are thus often able in some measure, by means of what theologians call the analogy of faith, to surmise in advance what the divine dispositions are likely to be.

Now among the graces given to men are some which we may call particular graces : that is to say, supernatural aids rendered necessary by particular circumstances which are not the common lot of all Christians and are not involved in the ordinary life of the Church. That such graces will never be lacking to those who need them we may be certain ; but we should not expect God to have

¹ Acts vi 5, 10 ; vii 55.

² Acts viii 14-17.

³ Acts x 44.

⁴ Acts xix 1-7.

⁵ Acts viii.

⁶ Acts ix 17.

⁷ Acts x 45, 47 ; xi 15, 17 ; xv 7-9.

⁸ Wisdom viii 1.

The sacramental system

established permanent and regular channels for their bestowal. There are other graces, on the contrary, which we may call normal ; normal because they form part of the usual equipment of the Christian, or are designed to meet common emergencies, or are required for the government and administration of the Church. For such needs God has provided by the institution of the sacraments : birth, nourishment, healing, wedlock, government and social welfare, all these ordinary features of our natural life have their counterpart in the supernatural economy, and the respective graces are available in a marvellously devised sacramental system.¹ It would therefore be surprising if this divinely established scheme did not include a sacrament for the bestowal of that grace, promised to all Christians, which enables them to confess their divine Master before men.

Let us examine our earliest sources, then, to see whether there existed in the primitive Church a rite or ceremony designed for the normal bestowal of what we have come to call, for convenience sake, the Spirit of testimony. I say, for its normal bestowal, because only such a rite can be regarded as truly sacramental, that is, as permanently instituted by Christ for the sanctification of the faithful.

But when we turn to the Acts of the Apostles, our chief inspired source of information about the primitive Christian community, we are immediately confronted with a difficulty. It is the difficulty of finding traces of the normal in the midst of conditions which are very far from normal indeed. Allusion has already been made to the emphasis which is laid upon the extraordinary in St Luke's narrative, an emphasis which is explained by the purpose of his writing. Primarily interested as he is in describing the overwhelming impact of the divine Spirit upon the world, it is no wonder that he writes chiefly of those challenging manifestations whereby the Spirit of testimony was compelling the attention of men to the first beginnings of Christianity, and thus makes little mention of the regular pastoral work of the Church which, for the rest, had scarcely yet begun. A study of the Acts accordingly reveals two types of "Confirmation" ; the extraordinary or supra-sacramental, which appears with greater prominence, and the normal or sacramental, of which the indications are casual and rare.

To the first category belongs certainly the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost ; the occasion called for an overwhelmingly manifest and direct intervention of divine power. Another extraordinary communication of the Spirit is that which was made to Cornelius and his companions. Here, too, was a crisis demanding abnormal measures. A new stage in the development of the Church (the admission of the Gentiles) was about to begin, and it had required a vision from God to overcome St Peter's hesitation in embarking on it. And so, while he is still instructing Cornelius and his company, and before he has baptised them, the Spirit of

Abnormal conditions of the primitive Church

Supra-sacramental Confirmation : e.g. Pentecost ; the case of Cornelius

¹ See Essay xxi, *The Sacramental System*, pp. 743-744 ; cf. pp. 73-74.

testimony intervenes with a special portent to endorse his action. "While Peter was yet speaking, the Holy Ghost fell upon all them that heard the word. And the faithful of the circumcision, who came with Peter, were astonished for that the grace of the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the Gentiles also. For they heard them speaking with tongues and magnifying God."¹ Neither Peter nor the converts from Judaism who were with him could have any further doubt. "Can any man forbid water," he exclaims to his companions, "that these should not be baptised, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"² And when, on returning to Jerusalem, he is required to justify his extraordinary action to those "of the circumcision," he appeals again and again to this manifest sign of the divine approval.³

The normal procedure : the Samaritans

And now here, to compare, and also in some measure to contrast, with these extraordinary outpourings of the Spirit, are two instances in which the same grace is conveyed by what has every appearance of being a normal sacramental rite. The first is the Confirmation of the Samaritans. Among the providential results of the persecution of the Church at Jerusalem was the dispersal of many members of the new community among the neighbouring districts, with the consequent preaching of the Gospel over a wider field. Philip the deacon found scope for his zeal in the province of Samaria, where he made many converts to whom he administered the Sacrament of Baptism. St Luke thus relates how they received also the Sacrament of Confirmation: "When the Apostles who were in Jerusalem" (where they had stayed despite the persecution) "had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. Who, when they were come, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For he was not as yet come upon any of them, but they were only baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost."⁴

A comment of St Cyprian

The incident bears all the marks of a normal procedure; it is just as though a modern bishop, being informed that a great number of converts had been received into the Church in one of the parishes of his diocese, immediately sets out (with his auxiliary) to make a visitation and to confirm them. Already, some seventeen centuries ago, St Cyprian has remarked upon the similarity between this incident and the ordinary administration of a diocese in third-century Africa: "Exactly the same thing happens with us to-day," he writes; "those who have been baptised in the Church are presented to the bishops of the Church so that by our prayer and the imposition of our hands they may receive the Holy Spirit."⁵

Simon Magus and the efficacy of the rite

Curiously enough Simon Magus, who was an admiring witness of these scenes in Samaria, has unwittingly and providentially

¹ Acts x.

² Acts x 47.

³ Acts xi 15, 17; xv 7-9.

⁴ Acts viii 1-17.

⁵ Ep. 73.

afforded us a valuable testimony to the sacramental efficacy of the imposition of hands: "When Simon saw (St Luke tells us) that by the imposition of the hands of the Apostles the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money saying: Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I shall lay my hands he may receive the Holy Ghost."¹

The second description of the ordinary method of conferring the Holy Ghost occurs in connection with a group of twelve believers whom St Paul found at Ephesus. Here is St Luke's account of the incident: "It came to pass that Paul . . . came to Ephesus and found certain disciples; and he said to them: Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? But they said to him: We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost. And he said: In what then were you baptised? Who said: In John's baptism. Then Paul said: John baptised the people with the baptism of penance, saying that they should believe in him who was to come after him, that is to say, in Jesus. Having heard these things, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had imposed his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came down upon them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied."²

*The disciples
at Ephesus*

Taking it for granted that the Ephesians in question had already received Christian baptism,³ the Apostle asks whether they have been confirmed; clearly he expected that they would have been, for the giving of the Holy Ghost was the normal complement of the Christian rite. No, they had not received the Holy Ghost; they had not even heard of his existence. St Paul's surprise disappears, however, as soon as he learns that they had been baptised only with John's baptism, which was not followed by the rite of conferring the Spirit. He thereupon gives them Christian baptism, and once more we are told of the ordinary ceremony which follows: he imposed hands upon them and they received the Holy Ghost.

But, whether ordinarily or extraordinarily bestowed, the gift is always the same. The Prince of the Apostles is himself our witness that the grace given to Cornelius and his companions when the Holy Spirit came upon them, was exactly the same grace as that which the Apostles and the first disciples had received on the day of Pentecost: "He gave them the Holy Ghost as to us," he says, "and put no difference between us and them. . . . He gave them the same grace as to us."⁴ Moreover, this grace, given in common both to Apostles and to converts from paganism, is in its turn the same grace as that which the Apostles had power to convey by the imposition of hands. Of this St Peter again gives us the proof, for on the very

*Always es-
sentially the
same grace*

¹ Acts viii 18.

² Acts xix 1-7.

³ The phrase "since ye believed" means "since you received Christian baptism"; cf. Rom. xiii 11: "Now our salvation is nearer than when we believed," *i.e.* than at the time of our baptism.

⁴ Acts xv 7-9; xi 15-17; cf. above, pp. 813-814.

day of Pentecost he promises to the people of Jerusalem that, if only they will do penance and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, they will receive that gift of the Holy Ghost of which they had just witnessed the stupendous effects.¹ The circumstances of its bestowal might be different, the outward phenomena accompanying it might vary, such phenomena might even be completely absent, but the essential effect is identical in all : an outpouring of the Spirit of testimony, enabling those who received it to “ speak the word of God with confidence.”²

The grace of the Spirit distinct from the grace of Baptism

But if Baptism must be received before the gift of the Spirit can be granted, it is not by Baptism itself that the gift is conferred. This is made plain in St Luke’s account of the Confirmation of the Samaritan disciples. “ The Holy Ghost,” he writes, “ was not as yet come down upon any of them, but they were *only* baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.” The same is seen in the case of the Ephesians who received the Spirit, not immediately upon being baptised, but only after Paul had laid his hands upon them.³ We may draw the same conclusion, that the grace of the Spirit is distinct from the grace of Baptism, if we consider the Confirmation of the Apostles themselves. For it cannot be doubted that these, already before Pentecost, had received the ordinary effects of Baptism, if not the sacrament of Baptism itself. Whatever view be held as to the moment in which Baptism was instituted by Our Lord—whether, as some maintain, at the time of his conversation with Nicodemus, or when he was baptised in the Jordan, or even, as a few theologians have held, when, after his Resurrection, he entrusted to his Apostles the commission of baptising and preaching the Gospel—it is certain that already at the Last Supper the Apostles were cleansed from original sin and endowed at least with the equivalent of the baptismal character when they received the Sacrament of Holy Order.

Complementary to the grace of Baptism

But the two graces, though so evidently distinct from each other, are shown throughout the Acts of the Apostles to be most closely associated. The words of St Peter to the people of Jerusalem, “ Be baptised every one of you . . . and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ” ; the prompt action taken at Jerusalem to ensure that the Samaritans should quickly receive the Holy Spirit after they had been baptised ; the surprise of St Paul at the unconfirmed condition of the twelve Ephesians whom he supposed already to have received Christian baptism ; and even the solicitude of St Peter to baptise Cornelius and his companions as soon as possible after they had already (by a unique inversion of the normal order) received the Holy Spirit—all this is evident proof that the one grace is normally called for by the other. It is proof in fact—since the exceptional case of Cornelius may be legitimately disregarded—that the gift of the Spirit is the ordinary complement of the Sacrament of Baptism.

¹ Cf. Acts ii 38.

² Acts iv 31.

³ Cf. Acts viii 16 ; xix 5, 6.

So close, indeed, is the connection which appears in St Luke's narrative between Baptism and the gift of the Spirit, that some have been led to suppose that this gift is nothing else than the effect of Baptism itself. The above considerations show that this is an error. But it is perhaps allowable to suggest that in the eyes of the author of the Acts the gift of the Spirit is so important, that the previous grace of Baptism appears in his account as little more than a preliminary to the gift which is its normal complement and crown. With an outlook which is primarily missionary and apostolic, his thought is not arrested to consider the sublime privileges which Baptism confers—divine sonship, the indwelling of the Trinity, heirship to eternal life—in a word, all those consoling aspects of justification upon which St Paul enlarges in his epistles. Rather he hurries on to the thought of the splendid mission which falls to every member of the catholic and apostolic Church, and therefore to that gift of the Spirit which makes the Christian a valiant witness of the faith and a bearer of the good news of salvation to those who have not yet received it.

Finally, this grace of the Spirit, distinct from the grace of Baptism and complementary to it, is exhibited in the Acts of the Apostles as being normally communicated by a special rite, employed by a special minister. The explicit and clear accounts of the Confirmation of the Samaritans and of the Ephesians leave us in no doubt as to the rite employed: it is the imposition of hands. Moreover, in both these instances, the only two which we can with certainty consider as representing the normal procedure, the ministers are Apostles. Philip the deacon, who had converted and baptised the Samaritans, had apparently not been qualified to confirm them; it is difficult to understand otherwise, especially when we consider the close connection between Baptism and its complement, why he should not have done so.¹ In the absence of any certain evidence to the contrary we are therefore justified in concluding that the ordinary minister of this rite, not only *de facto* but also *de jure*, was an Apostle.²

Thus within a year of the day of Pentecost we find already existing in the Church a special rite, distinct from that of Baptism, the administration of which appears to be reserved to the Apostles, and whose effect, also distinct from that of Baptism, is a special outpouring of the Spirit enabling the recipient to be a confident witness of the faith of Jesus Christ.

This is the Sacrament of Confirmation.

¹ See Acts viii 12, 16.

² But see below, p. 831 and n. 5.

§ IV: THE SACRAMENT IN TRADITION

*Confirmation
and martyr-
dom*

THE precious benefits conferred by the Sacrament of Confirmation were fully seen during the first three centuries of the Christian era ; for this was pre-eminently the period of martyrdom, that is to say, the period of witness. To suffer and die for the name of Christ is the sovereign profession of faith, it is that most perfect testimony which Christ foretold would be asked of his followers. It is the highest testimony that can be rendered to Christ both as being the supreme proof of devotion to his cause,¹ and also as being the most perfect reproduction of the suffering and dying Christ which the Christian can exhibit in himself.² The Apostles had led the way, setting the seal of their own blood upon their heroic witness, and that same Spirit of testimony which fortified them in their own ordeal, and which they had communicated to others by the imposition of hands, is passed on by the Sacrament to others in turn, raising up a numberless band of martyrs throughout the world : not only among bishops and priests, but also among men and women of the laity, of every condition and degree, and even among children of the tenderest age—until the very earth became saturated with that martyrs' blood which, in the words of Tertullian, is the seed of the Church.

*The rudi-
mentary age
of sacramen-
tal theology*

This fact, that the witness of the Church in the first three centuries of her existence is written so large in the blood of her children, may account to some extent for the relative scantiness of other contemporary records. It is further to be borne in mind, when searching for early allusions to the sacraments, that these are primarily things to be administered and received, not to be talked or written about ; and that, consequently, such written records as we possess of this period are found to deal, not so much with the rites and ceremonies of the Church with which the faithful might be presumed to be familiar through their daily practice, as rather with those particular doctrines of the faith which the rise of heresy or the conditions of the time brought into prominence. Add to this the fact that the precise theological language of to-day (including even such common words as "sacrament" and "confirmation" in the modern connotation) was only just beginning to be formed, and it will be appreciated that the sparse and often merely incidental allusions to the sacraments which we do find in early writings lack that fulness and lucidity to which our own books of instruction have accustomed us, and that, in consequence, the task which faces the student of early sacramental theology is by no means an easy one.

*Two distinct
questions*

It will be somewhat simplified in the present instance, however, if we carefully distinguish, and try to answer separately, what are really two quite different questions. It is one thing to ask whether the Church has consistently, from the earliest times of which we have

¹ John xv 13.

² *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxvi, art. 11.

sufficient record, observed a special sacramental rite, recognisably distinct from Baptism and complementary to it, and conceived as bestowing a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This is simply to ask whether the Church has always administered the Sacrament of Confirmation. But it is another thing to ask whether that sacramental rite has remained at all times and in all places entirely unaltered. This is to ask what constituted the essence of the Sacrament of Confirmation during the early centuries of the Church. The first question is easy, and all theologians are agreed upon the answer to be given to it. The second question is very complicated and difficult, and there is still much discussion among theologians as to its solution. Let us consider the easy question first.

I

Among the earliest descriptions we possess of what must certainly be recognised as the Sacrament of Confirmation is one which occurs, significantly enough, not in a work devoted to the study of this sacrament, but in a small treatise written by Tertullian about the year 200 in refutation of a certain woman who rejected the Sacrament of Baptism. We cannot reproduce it here in full; Tertullian's description of the rite of Christian initiation, as practised in Africa at the end of the second century, is interspersed with allegories and scriptural allusions which are not strictly relevant to our purpose. But enough of it must be cited to show the relation, and the distinction, between Baptism itself and the rite of Confirmation which immediately succeeds it; enough also to provide some material which will be of use when we come to deal with our second question.

The Sacrament of Confirmation in Tertullian

Through Baptism, he writes, "man receives anew that Spirit of God which he had first received when God breathed upon him, but had afterwards lost through sin. Not that we obtain the Holy Spirit in the waters (of Baptism), but being cleansed . . . in the water we are made ready for the Holy Spirit. . . . Thereafter, when we have come forth from the font, we are anointed thoroughly with a blessed unguent; this in accordance with the ancient practice, whereby men were anointed unto the priesthood from that very same horn from which Aaron was anointed by Moses. Since Christ takes his name from chrism, *i.e.* unguent, this unguent which gave the Lord his name has become spiritualised; for he was anointed with the Spirit by God the Father, as we are told in the Acts (iv 27). . . . So on us likewise, though it is upon the flesh that the oil streams, it confers a spiritual benefit; just as the physical act of Baptism, whereby we are immersed in the water, has the spiritual effect of delivering us from sin. *After this, the hand is laid upon us invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit by the (prayer of) blessing.* Human ingenuity can summon air (*spiritum*) into water, and by the application of hands thereon is able to animate the conjunction of the two

with a spirit of clear sound.¹ Shall not God, then, also be able on his own instrument (*i.e.* man) to play the sublime melody of the Spirit through the medium of consecrated hands ? ”²

Whatever be the significance of the rite of anointing upon which Tertullian comments at such length, it is impossible not to see in the words I have italicised a clear description of that same rite which is now familiar to us from our study of the Acts of the Apostles. “ Peter and John . . . prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost . . . for they had only been baptised. . . . Then they laid hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” A comparison of the words of Tertullian with those of St Luke leaves no doubt that both are referring to a rite additional to Baptism and distinct from it, a rite which conveys a grace of the Holy Ghost not conveyed by Baptism : the Holy Spirit, Tertullian tells us explicitly, is not obtained in the waters of Baptism ; but it *is* given by the imposition of hands.

St Cyprian

We have already quoted a passage from a letter of St Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, written some fifty years later than the above, in which he tells us that it was still the custom in Africa to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands,³ just as it had been conferred upon the Samaritans by the Apostles Peter and John. Having occasion in another circumstance to refer to this sacrament, he writes : “ It is not by the imposition of hands, when he receives the Holy Ghost, that a man is regenerated. He is regenerated in Baptism, in order that, being now born, he may receive the Holy Ghost. . . . He cannot receive the Spirit without first existing to receive him. But the birth of Christians is in Baptism.”⁴ Again the distinction is clearly made between two different rites, having two different effects : the Sacrament of Baptism which regenerates, and the sacrament which confers the Holy Spirit, and which is administered by the imposition of hands. It will be remarked also in this passage how St Cyprian, besides stressing the distinction between the two sacraments, points to the intimate connection between them.

St Jerome

It is interesting to compare with St Cyprian’s description of bishops imposing hands upon those who had previously received only the Sacrament of Baptism, the following statement of St Jerome, made more than a hundred years later : “ Know you not,” he writes, “ that it is the custom in all the churches that upon those who have been baptised hands should afterwards be imposed, that the Holy Spirit may thus be called down upon them ? Where is this written, you ask ? In the Acts of the Apostles. But even if there were no scriptural authority for it, the agreement of the whole world on this matter would have the force of a precept. . . . It is also the custom

¹ Tertullian alludes to the hydraulic organ.

² *De baptismo*, cc. 5, 6, 7, 8.

³ See p. 816.

⁴ *Ep.* 74.

that, in the case of those who have been baptised by priests or deacons in districts far away from the greater cities, the bishop should go out and lay hands upon them to invoke the Holy Spirit upon them.”¹

Turning now to the Church in the East, we find some interesting instructions on the Sacrament of Confirmation given by St Cyril of Jerusalem (about the year 348) to his neophytes. “In the time of Moses,” he writes, “the Spirit was given by the imposition of hands; St Peter also grants it by the imposition of hands; and upon you also who are to be baptised this grace will be bestowed. But I do not tell you how; for I do not want to anticipate the opportune time.”² When he comes to describe the ceremony in which the Spirit is conferred, however, he says nothing about the imposition of hands; he speaks only of an anointing with chrism: “To you, when you came up from the font of sacred water, an anointing was given, the antitype of that chrism with which Christ was anointed. . . . Christ, however, was not anointed by men with a physical oil or unguent; the Father, in constituting him the Saviour of the whole world, anointed him with the Holy Spirit. . . . But you are anointed with a real unguent, and so become sharers and fellows with Christ. See that you do not regard this as a mere material and common unguent. For just as the bread of the Eucharist is no longer ordinary bread after the invocation of the Holy Spirit, but the Body of Christ, so too this holy unguent is no longer a mere common unguent after the invocation. It is the treasury of the gifts of Christ and the Holy Ghost, causing its effect by the presence of the divinity within it. It is smeared as a symbol upon your forehead and the other senses. But while the body is being anointed with the visible unguent, the soul is quickened by the holy and life-giving Spirit. . . . It is a spiritual amulet for the body and a saving protection for the soul.”³

It would appear then that in the East, at any rate in the fourth century, the most prominent feature of Confirmation was an anointing with chrism, for the context of Cyril’s discourse makes it impossible to understand this anointing as anything else than the rite which confers the gift of the Spirit. The prevalence of this practice in the East is corroborated by the terms, strongly suggestive of Confirmation, which were used in the East for blessing the chrism about this time:

“O God . . . we beseech thee . . . to work a divine and heavenly operation in this oil, that the baptised who have been anointed therewith in the saving sign of the Cross of thine only-begotten Son—that Cross through which Satan with every hostile power has been cast down and overthrown—may, having been regenerated and renewed by the waters of regeneration, be made also partakers of the gift of the Holy Spirit and, being confirmed in

¹ *Adversus Lucif.*, n. 9.

² *Catech. myst.*, xvi.

³ *Catech. myst.*, iii.

*St Cyril of
Jerusalem*

*The Sacra-
mentary of
Serapion*

this seal, may remain 'steadfast and immovable,' unharmed and inviolate."¹

Innocent I

And here, finally, is an authoritative pronouncement of Pope Innocent I, at the beginning of the fifth century: "That only bishops have the power either to confer the sign of the Cross or to give the Holy Ghost, is shown not only by the custom of the Church, but also by that passage of the Acts of the Apostles where we read that Peter and John were sent to give the Holy Spirit to those who had been baptised. For priests . . . when they baptise may anoint the baptised with chrism (only however with chrism consecrated by the bishop) but they may not sign the forehead with the same oil, this being reserved to the bishops only, when they confer the Holy Spirit."²

Confirmation always administered in the history of the Church

This strictly limited selection of texts suffices to show that the early centuries of the Church were quite familiar with a special rite, distinct from Baptism, which conferred the Holy Ghost; and they could be multiplied with very much greater abundance from the writings of the fifth and succeeding centuries, from liturgical books, and from the decisions of councils. The net result of these is to prove clearly that, from the time of Tertullian at the very latest (and therefore by presumption from a much earlier date) until the present day, a sacrament which we cannot but recognise as the Sacrament of Confirmation has been regularly administered by the Church.

Heresies concerning Confirmation

And, in fact, if we except the Novatians of the third century, whose custom of not receiving this sacrament appears to have been due merely to the example of their founder and not to any theological conviction, no heresies seem clearly to have denied the sacramental status of Confirmation before that of the Reformers of the sixteenth century. These, generally speaking, admitted that it was a harmless but useless ceremony instituted by the Church. Calvin and others suggested that it was originally introduced into the Church as a public act by which Christians, when they reached adolescence, endorsed or "confirmed" the undertakings made formerly on their behalf by their sponsors in Baptism; a view which, besides finding no grounds whatever in historical documents, strangely overlooks the long-standing custom of administering Confirmation to infants.³ The Council of Trent, in its definitions on Confirmation, contented itself with condemning these various doctrines of the Reformers.⁴

II

History of the "proximate matter" of the Sacrament

We pass now to our second historical question which, although its complexity makes a complete survey quite impossible here, is so important that it cannot be entirely omitted. Briefly, it concerns

¹ *The Sacramentary of Serapion*, n. 25.

² *Ep. ad Decentium*.

³ See below, p. 833.

⁴ *Sess. vii, de Conf.*

the essentials of the rite of Confirmation as administered during the early centuries, and especially the gesture used in the sacrament, or what is technically called its proximate matter. It is quite certain that the anointing of the forehead with chrism forms an essential element in the Sacrament of Confirmation as administered to-day, whether in the Western or in the Eastern Church. Has it been so always and everywhere?

So far as the East is concerned there is abundant evidence that, at the latest from the fourth century, and probably also from an earlier time, anointing with chrism has been regarded as alone constituting the essential matter of the sacrament. In the West there is equally no question that, since the thirteenth century, theologians have commonly considered this anointing to be at least an essential part, if not the whole essence, of the sacramental matter; indeed this view seems to have begun to prevail even three centuries earlier. It is furthermore established, especially by the evidence of Innocent I's letter quoted above,¹ that an anointing—whether regarded as essential or not—accompanied the administration of Confirmation in the Church of Rome as early as the fourth century, and that this practice spread rapidly to the other churches of the West. Finally, in the West, unlike the East, the imposition of hands continued for a long time, and has continued even to the present day, to be mentioned, side by side with the anointing, as an element in the rite of this sacrament.

The controversy, then, turns chiefly on the practice of the Church, especially in the West, during the first three centuries. The very few texts which we have cited, whether from the Scriptures or from the writings of the Fathers, are of course totally inadequate as a basis for a considered judgement. But, precisely because they have been selected for that purpose, they do at any rate suffice to show why the controversy exists. The relevant passages of the Acts speak only of prayer and the imposition of hands as the means by which the gift of the Spirit was bestowed. It is likewise to the imposition of hands that Tertullian ascribes the giving of the Holy Ghost after Baptism. St Cyprian points to the bishops of his day as employing exactly the same rite, the imposition of hands, as had been used by Peter and John when they confirmed the Samaritans; and St Jerome, writing towards the end of the fourth century, assures us (though admittedly he may have in mind only the West) that the same custom existed all over the world. There is enough evidence here to make at least a *prima facie* case for the imposition of hands as having been the essential matter of Confirmation in the West from the time of Tertullian until the time of St Jerome.

But the evidence, as may be observed even from a reading of some of the passages cited above, is one-sided; and scholars who on theological grounds are loth to admit that a rite which the Church

¹ See p. 824.

of God has for so many centuries regarded as essential to Confirmation found no place in its primitive administration, are not slow to urge other grounds which appear to favour a confirmational anointing from the earliest times. They point to the post-baptismal anointing which Tertullian describes and which he explicitly associates with the interior anointing of the soul of Christ by the Holy Spirit, and they appeal to numerous passages of the early Fathers, showing beyond all doubt that Baptism was consistently followed by an anointing to which the giving of the Holy Spirit was attributed as its proper effect. They remind us of Tertullian's celebrated "*caro ungitur ut anima consecretur ; caro signatur ut et anima muniatur*"¹ ("the flesh is anointed that the soul may be consecrated, the flesh is marked with the sign of the cross that the soul may be fortified"), and of St Augustine's clear statement that "the sacrament of chrism . . . is sacred among the class of visible signs, as is Baptism itself."² As for the practice of the Apostles themselves, they urge that the fact that no anointing is mentioned does not prove that none took place,³ and they interpret certain scriptural texts which mention anointing⁴ as being likely allusions to the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The post-baptismal anointing

Both sides are thus seen to have their reasons, and it is clearly beyond the scope of this essay to attempt to adjudicate between them. But it is only fair, perhaps, to admit that the conclusions reached by the most recent scholars do not entirely favour the view which sees in the ancient post-baptismal anointing a part of the rite of Confirmation. It appears more likely to have belonged to the baptismal rite which precedes than to that of Confirmation which follows, and would thus correspond, not to the anointing now employed in Confirmation, but to another anointing of the head with chrism which, still in the ceremonies of Baptism as administered to-day, follows immediately after the essential rite of that sacrament. This ceremony, though not essential to the effect of Baptism, was regarded by the Fathers as extremely important, because it was the literal "christening." It was, indeed, as Tertullian explains,⁵ an external sign which symbolised the anointing of Christ by the Holy Spirit ; but it symbolised also the inner anointing of the Christian himself which took place in Baptism, and by reason of which he became another Christ. St Isidore of Seville sets forth the significance of this ceremony in the following words : " Since Our Lord, the true king and eternal priest, has been anointed by God the Father with the heavenly and mystic unguent, it is now not only priests and kings, but the whole Church that is anointed with chrism, for the whole Church is member of the eternal king and priest. It

¹ *De resurr. carnis*, c. 8.

² *Contra lit. Petilian.*, lib. 2, cap. 104.

³ Cf. St Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxxii, art. 4, ad 1.

⁴ E.g. 2 Cor. i 21 ; 1 John ii 20, 27.

⁵ See p. 821.

is for this reason, because we are a priestly and royal people, that after we have been washed in baptism we are anointed in order that we may bear the name of Christ.”¹ St Augustine expresses the same thought more briefly: “In the Acts of the Apostles we are told that God anointed our Lord Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit; not with visible oil, but with the gift of grace, which is signified by that visible unguent with which the Church anoints the baptised.”²

For it is important to remind ourselves that the sanctifying action and presence of the Holy Ghost is not restricted to the Sacrament of Confirmation. It is indeed here that he is poured out with special abundance, and with an effect which both the promise of Christ himself and the constant usage of the Scriptures authorised the Fathers in ascribing so particularly to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, that Confirmation came to be called *par excellence* “the gift of the Spirit.” This is why it became usual to say, after the example set by the Acts of the Apostles, that those who had only been baptised had not yet received the Spirit, or that in Baptism the Spirit is not given (*i.e.* is not received or given in the technical sense of Confirmation); and it is in this sense that we must understand Tertullian, for example, when he says that the Holy Spirit is not given in the waters of Baptism.³ But the same Fathers who extol the action of the Spirit in Confirmation are equally, and even more, lyrical in singing the praises of the Holy Spirit who, just as he once moved over the waters so that they brought forth living creatures, now moves over the waters of Baptism so that they bring forth living Christians; ⁴ and who, having once wrought the birth of the Son of God in the womb of Mary, now daily operates the birth of God’s adopted sons in the baptismal font.⁵ Quite certainly, the Fathers who said that we do not receive the Spirit in Baptism had no intention of denying that in this sacrament we receive the adoption of sons, and therefore also that Spirit of adoption in whom we call God our Father.⁶

Moreover, wherever there is question of the Holy Spirit, the thought and the mention of anointing are not far away. The prophets, Christ himself, and the Apostles have justified the conception of the Holy Spirit as a divine unguent, sanctifying, healing, strengthening; it thus soon became natural for the early Christians to speak of every outpouring of the Spirit as a spiritual unction, *A natural development*

¹ *De eccl. off.*, lib. ii, cap. 26, 1-2.

² *De Trin.*, xv, 46. St Augustine’s “sacramentum chrismatis” is therefore not a peremptory argument. He is accustomed to use the word *sacramentum* in a wide sense to mean any sacred sign, including what we should nowadays call a “sacramental.” In the passage quoted he may therefore well have been referring to the anointing which forms part of the baptismal ceremony, and which he might be comparing with the essential rite of Baptism: “sicut et ipse baptismus.”

³ See above, p. 821.

⁴ Tertullian, *De baptismo*, c. 4.

⁵ Leo the Great, *Serm.* 25, cap. 5.

⁶ *Cf.* Rom. viii 15.

and for the Church, guided by the same Spirit, to use oil or chrism in her sacramental rites to symbolise it.¹ In the ceremony of Baptism the use of chrism seems to have been introduced at an early stage: the thought that Christians are "born again of water and the Holy Ghost"² must soon have suggested the addition of an anointing to the essential rite of washing. Confirmation, pre-eminently the sacrament of the Holy Ghost, called even more clamorously for the use of chrism to symbolise the new anointing of the soul by the Spirit, and in the East we soon find this ceremony accompanying and even, at any rate to all appearance, supplanting the imposition of hands as the essential matter of the sacrament. And the historical evidence appears to indicate a similar, though more gradual, development of the sacramental rite in the West and throughout the Church.³

*The question
of "im-
mediate
institution"*

Such, I say, is the process which historical research would appear to suggest. Nevertheless the difference of opinion still existing among experts forbids any peremptory statement on the facts of the matter. It still remains possible that anointing was used in Confirmation universally and from the beginning. If this is so, the facts of history present no difficulty to those theologians who would apply a very rigid interpretation to the doctrine that Christ instituted all the sacraments "immediately."⁴ In this view, Christ would have instructed his Apostles to use chrism (and a certain form of words) as a means of conveying the gift of the Spirit, and this method of administration, admittedly with slight modifications, would have been followed perpetually throughout the Church until the present day.

*A less re-
stricted view*

But such a narrow and restricted understanding of the doctrine of "immediate institution" is by no means imposed by the teaching authority of the Church. Indeed, the progress of historical science and the closer acquaintance with Christian antiquity which is its result are causing a broader interpretation of it to find increasing favour with theologians. This version, while attributing to Christ alone the institution of the sacrament in its "substance" (*i.e.* while holding that Christ alone gave instructions that a suitable rite should be chosen by means of which he would bestow a particular grace), suggests that he left power to his Church to determine the essential details of some rites and to make such changes as the conditions of the time, the utility of the faithful, and reverence to the sacrament

¹ Cf. Isaias lxi 1; Luke iv 18; Acts x 38; Heb. i 9.

² John iii 5.

³ The development may have been assisted by the desirability of distinguishing the rite of Confirmation more clearly from that of Holy Order.

⁴ The Council of Trent defined only that Christ instituted all the sacraments (sess. vii, can. 1). But it is the common teaching of theologians that he instituted them all immediately, *i.e.* himself, and not by giving a mandate to his Apostles to do so. The extent to which the immediate institution of the sacraments implies the immediate determination of the elements of the sacramental rite is a matter of controversy among theologians. See Essay xxi, *The Sacramental System*, pp. 749-750; cf. pp. 1054-1055.

itself might render necessary or expedient.¹ It is obvious that, so understood, the doctrine that Christ alone is the author of the sacraments has nothing to fear from any purely material alteration in certain sacramental rites which historical evidence may authorise, and even oblige, us to admit.

For that Christ did in fact institute the Sacrament of Confirmation becomes certain when once we have shown that Confirmation is a *The institution of Confirmation* Sacrament. Our study of the promise of the Spirit, made by Christ to all who should believe in him, fulfilled in the Apostles and the first disciples at Pentecost, and fulfilled also in all the faithful when he was given to them by a special rite and as a normal part of their initiation, reveals the existence of a permanent sign which is a cause of grace. But of such a sanctifying rite we know that Christ alone, the source of all sanctification, can be the Author. In this sense we may say with St Thomas that he instituted Confirmation by the very fact that he promised it.²

§ V: THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

THE rite of Confirmation, as administered in the Western Church *The rite in the West to-day* to-day, consists of the following main elements: (a) The bishop, stretching forth his hands towards the candidates, prays that God may send forth his Holy Spirit with his sevenfold grace upon them. (b) Having moistened the thumb of his right hand with chrism, he confirms each one of them, saying: "I sign thee with the sign of the Cross" (saying which, he places his right hand on the head of the candidate, makes the sign of the Cross with his thumb on his forehead, and then proceeds): "and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." (c) He then gives the confirmed person a light blow on the cheek, saying, "Peace be with thee." (d) Then follow an antiphon, some versicles, a concluding prayer, and the bishop's blessing.

Theologians now commonly teach, and the doctrine must be regarded as certain, that the essential rite in this ceremony is that *Essential rite: the anointing with the accompanying words* which is described under *b*. The Council of Trent appears to have had no intention of defining what are the essential elements of the sacrament, but it is probable that in condemning the teaching of certain Protestants who regarded it as "an insult to the Holy Ghost to ascribe efficacy to the sacred chrism," the Fathers of the Council had in mind the accepted theological opinion that the anointing with chrism constituted the sacramental "matter."³ This doctrine, universally held by the scholastics of the Middle Ages, had already received what must be admitted to be at least a very high sanction

¹ Cf. Council of Trent, sess. xxi, *De communione*, cap. 2.

² Cf. *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxxii, art. 1, ad 1.

³ Sess. vii, can. 2 *de Conf.*

in Pope Eugenius IV's famous Decree for the Armenians at the Council of Florence, which declared (using the words of St Thomas) that "the matter of this sacrament is chrism composed of oil . . . and balsam . . . blessed by the bishop," and that "the form consists of the words, 'I sign thee, etc.'"¹ This pronouncement derives an added significance from the fact that the object of the Council of Florence was to settle certain differences of doctrine and practice between East and West; the mention of anointing alone as the matter of Confirmation would therefore seem to indicate that the practice of the Western Church on this point did not differ from that of the East, where the anointing had been considered as the essential action in the sacrament from time immemorial.

There have been theologians, even since the Council of Trent, who have seen the essential rite of Confirmation in the ceremony described under *a*, being influenced therein by some of the historical considerations mentioned above, according to which the imposition of hands would seem to have been the sole essential matter of the sacrament during the first three centuries. This opinion, however, has received little encouragement from certain official decisions which, in cases where Confirmation has been administered without this preliminary ceremony, have declared it unnecessary to repeat the rite even conditionally.²

Is the anointing also an imposition of hands?

But, granting that the essence of the sacrament consists in the anointing, together with the accompanying words, there remains a difference of opinion among theologians whether the act of anointing is to be considered as *merely an application of chrism*, or as simultaneously and virtually *an imposition of hands*; and the latter view, although hardly any trace of it is to be found among the scholastics of the thirteenth century, seems to be favoured by the majority of theologians to-day. Here, too, historical reasons are primarily invoked: the imposition of hands is so consistently associated with Confirmation in the early centuries, that it is not easy to suppose that it has entirely disappeared from the rite as used in the West to-day. And we must confess that the opinion which regards the anointing as also a virtual imposition of hands derives a certain support from the instructions given in the Code of canon law, where we read: "The Sacrament of Confirmation is to be conferred by the imposition of the hand together with the anointing with chrism on the forehead, and by the words prescribed . . ."; and also: "The anointing is not to be done with any instrument, but with the hand of the minister laid properly upon the head of the candidate."³ These injunctions certainly seem to imply that the contact of the minister's hand with the head of the candidate is an essential part of the sacra-

¹ Cf. Denzinger, 697; on the authority of this decree, see Essay xxix, *The Sacrament of Order*, pp. 1052, 1058.

² E.g. Holy Office, 22 March 1892.

³ Cnn. 780, 781, § 2.

ment: in other words, that the anointing is at the same time an imposition of hands.

It would be hard to imagine a rite more appropriate and more rich in significance than this. While oil alone is already the divinely revealed emblem of the fulness of the Holy Spirit and of the virile strength which this sacrament bestows, the addition of the fragrant balsam is an eloquent symbol of the purpose for which the Spirit comes in Confirmation: namely that we may become the good odour of Christ, spreading abroad the knowledge of the faith as a perfume diffuses its sweetness.¹ The anointing is made in the form of a Cross, to signify the standard under which the new soldier of Christ is to fight, the standard by which (as we have already read in an early Sacramentary) "Satan with every hostile power is cast down and conquered."² And it is upon his forehead that he bears the Cross, intimating that he must have no shame in professing the name of Christ, and be prepared to suffer any ignominy or persecution that the open confession of his faith may involve. The words of the bishop as he administers the sacrament summarise its meaning and effect with a truly inspired simplicity: "I sign thee with the sign of the Cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."³ There is an echo of mediæval chivalry, too, in the light blow on the cheek (a ceremony which appears to have been introduced into the rite in the twelfth century), dubbing the candidate a true knight of Christ.

The rich symbolism of this rite

As knighthood is conferred by the king, so enrolment in the army of Christ is appropriately reserved to the ordinary competence of its appointed leaders. And in fact the Church teaches that the bishop alone is the ordinary minister of Confirmation.⁴ The Acts of the Apostles show that Philip, a deacon, was not able to administer this sacrament; but whether it was in virtue of their priestly or their episcopal character that the Apostles conferred the Holy Ghost it is not easy to determine on scriptural grounds alone. At any rate there is no undisputed instance in the primitive Church of its being bestowed by any one of lower rank than an Apostle.⁵ However that may be, during the first three centuries the administration of this sacrament, both in the East and in the West, was certainly reserved

Ordinary minister: the Bishop

¹ Cf. 2 Cor. ii 14.

² See above, p. 823.

³ The use of this form can be traced back, at least in some parts of the West, to the seventh century. In the East the form consists simply of the words, "The seal of the Holy Spirit." This form, the legitimacy and validity of which have always been recognised, at least tacitly, by Rome, is of very great antiquity.

⁴ Council of Trent, sess. vii, can. 3 *de Conf.*

⁵ It has been suggested that Ananias conferred the gift of the Spirit on St Paul when he laid hands on him (Acts ix 17-18). But this passage of the Acts is by no means clear, and has occasioned much discussion among exegetes.

to the bishop. Perhaps this fact alone would not suffice to show that the reservation was *de jure*: the three Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist at that time formed successive stages in one solemn ceremony of initiation at which the bishop presided, and it was in fact to him that the neophyte, after being immersed in the baptismal font, was led to receive the Holy Spirit by the imposition of hands. What is more significant is that in those cases in which (whether for reasons of ill-health or other causes) the candidate had received Baptism from a deacon or a priest, he was always brought to the bishop to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.¹

*Difference of
practice
between East
and West*

When parishes came to be formed, however, and the spread of Christianity caused some of the functions hitherto performed by the bishop to be entrusted to priests, a difference of practice in regard to Confirmation begins to show itself between the Eastern and the Western Church. In the East it soon became the ordinary custom for priests to confirm immediately after Baptism. But in the West it was, and has remained until the present day, a privilege reserved to the bishop to be the ordinary minister of Confirmation. As early as the beginning of the fifth century we find Pope Innocent I speaking of the exclusive right of bishops to confirm as an established fact, and appealing in proof of it to the Acts of the Apostles ;² and again and again throughout the centuries instances recur in which ecclesiastical authority has had to resist the pretensions of priests in the West to usurp this function. The reason usually given is that assigned by Pope Innocent I: that priests do not possess the fulness of the priesthood.³

*Priests as
extraordinary
ministers*

On the other hand the Church also teaches that, as extraordinary minister, the priest can confer this sacrament. This is shown by several undoubted facts, in particular by a number of past and present instances of priests being empowered by the Holy See to confirm ; by the present discipline of the Church which, besides communicating this power to certain priests by special indult, allows it *ipso jure* to certain dignitaries enumerated in the Code of canon law ;⁴ and by the more significant fact that the Church recognises, subject to some exceptions, the validity of the Confirmation administered by priests of the Eastern communities, whether uniate or dissident. Clearly, then, by indult, delegation, or dispensation of the Holy See (the terms seem in this matter to be used indiscriminately in ecclesiastical documents) a priest becomes able to confirm validly.⁵

¹ See the statement of St Jerome above, pp. 822-823.

² See above, p. 824.

³ Cf. Denzinger, 98, where the relevant paragraph of Innocent's letter is given in full.

⁴ Can. 782, § 3. See *Additional Note* below, p. 838.

⁵ It is to be noted, however, that the chrism used must be that blessed by the bishop. See Council of Florence (Denzinger, 697).

This fact gives rise to a theological problem which cannot be fully discussed here. It is asked whether the inability of a priest to confirm validly without the commission of the Holy See is due to a lack of the power of order or to a lack of jurisdiction. Authors differ on this question, described by Pope Benedict XIV as one of "great difficulty and complexity."¹ We must be content to state briefly an answer, given by Billot, which appears to meet the difficulty in a satisfactory way. According to this theologian the character of the priesthood includes the power to confirm; but by divine ordinance the valid exercise of that power is made conditional upon a commission received from the Head of the Church. Thus the fact that the Church acknowledges as valid the Confirmation administered by priests in the East does not make them *ordinary* ministers of the sacrament; it implies only a tacit commission formerly granted to them by the Holy See.²

A theological problem

Turning our attention now to the recipient of Confirmation, we may say briefly that *only* the baptised, and *any* baptised person not already confirmed, can receive it validly. Previous Baptism is obviously necessary, because the baptismal character is required for the valid reception of any other sacrament, and it is especially manifest in the case of a sacrament which is exhibited to us in the sources of revelation as the complement of Baptism itself. Nor is its valid reception a privilege reserved to any class or section among the baptised, for it has been abundantly shown that the gift of the Spirit is intended by Christ to be given to all.

Recipient of Confirmation

That even infants are capable of receiving Confirmation is sufficiently proved by the custom, common in the Church in early times, of administering it to them immediately after Baptism, a custom which persisted in the West until the twelfth or thirteenth century, is allowed to continue to the present day in certain parts of it,³ and still prevails throughout the East. This sacrament is by no means useless to infants, for, as St Thomas remarks, "the age of the body is no prejudice to the development of the soul, and even children can attain the perfection of spiritual maturity. Thus many of these, through the strength of the Holy Spirit which they have received, have fought valiantly for Christ even to the shedding of their blood."⁴

Infant Confirmation valid

¹ *De syn. dioec.*, lib. 7, c. 8, n. 7.

² Billot, *De Sacramentis*, I (ed. 5), p. 309. A further indication of the importance which the Church attaches to the doctrine that the priest is not the ordinary minister of this sacrament, but that he administers it validly only in virtue of the delegation of the Holy See, may be seen in the latest edition (1925) of the Roman Ritual. It is here laid down that, in the event of a priest administering Confirmation by special indult, he shall preface the ceremony by publicly warning the faithful that only the bishop is the ordinary minister of this sacrament, and by reading aloud, in the vernacular, the decree of delegation in virtue of which he is about to administer it as extraordinary minister. Cf. *Congr. de Sacr.*, January 1934.

³ Especially in Spain and parts of South America.

⁴ *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxxii, art. 8, ad 2.

But the reasons for which the Church has seen fit to modify her practice in this matter, as well as certain other considerations affecting the reception of Confirmation, will be more conveniently set forth when we have given some account of the effects of the sacrament, for which we have reserved the following, which is also the concluding section of this essay.

§ VI: THE EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENT

The sacramental character

CONFIRMATION is one of those three sacraments concerning which the Council of Trent has defined that they "imprint a character on the soul, that is, a spiritual and indelible sign, by reason of which they cannot be repeated."¹ And this truth finds expression in the traditional name given to this sacrament, "the seal of the Holy Spirit," and preserved in the form of words with which it is still administered to-day in the East.²

The early Fathers were fond of using comparisons to illustrate the meaning of the sacramental character, and, although they commonly had in mind the Sacrament of Baptism (always more prominent in their thoughts than Confirmation, as indeed it still is in ours), yet they serve to show us what they conceived the function of this sacramental effect to be. Here, for example, is a striking illustration used by St Basil: "None will recognise whether you belong to us or to the enemy unless you prove by the mystic signs you wear that you are really one of us, unless the light of the Lord's countenance is sealed upon you. How will an angel come to your help, how will he deliver you from your enemies, unless he recognises the seal that is set upon you? How can you say, I belong to God, unless you bear marks to distinguish you?"³ And here is another, used by St John Chrysostom: "As a special mark is branded upon sheep, so the Spirit is set upon the faithful. It is thus that, if you desert your ranks, you become conspicuous in the sight of all."⁴

The character of Confirmation

The sacramental character thus appears as a spiritual modification of the soul, whereby the recipient is marked out officially and definitively for a particular status or condition in the Church of God. In the theology of St Augustine it gains prominence as an effect which is inevitably produced by the valid Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Order, and which no sin can subsequently obliterate; it is for this reason that the sacrament conferring it can be administered only once and for all. St Thomas Aquinas summarises the teaching of Tradition when he sees in the character a spiritual power, conferring on the recipient a particular official capacity or competence in the practice of the Christian religion.⁵ And with this general definition, applied to the Sacrament of Con-

¹ Sess. vii, *De sacr. in gen.*, can. 9.

² *Hom. in S. Bapt.*, n. 4.

³ *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxiii, art. 2.

⁴ Cf. above, p. 831, n. 3.

⁵ *In 2 Cor.*, hom., 3, n. 7.

firmation, we are brought back once more to the point at which our study of this sacrament began ; for the character of Confirmation, the first and direct effect of its administration, makes the Christian an official witness to the truth of the Christian faith.

Therefore, as the official donning of the military uniform confers upon the citizen the public right and duty to fight in defence of his country, so the reception of this character gives to the Christian the publicly recognised right and duty to defend the faith of Christ and the Church. "Analogy with the life of the body," writes St Thomas, "shows that the activity of an adult differs from that of the new-born child. Therefore in Confirmation we receive the spiritual power to perform certain sacred actions different from those for which we are empowered by Baptism. In Baptism a man receives power for those actions which concern his own salvation, in so far as he lives his own life. But in Confirmation he receives power for those actions which concern the spiritual combat against the enemies of the faith." ¹

But with the character of Confirmation is intimately connected that further and most precious gift, by reason of which this sacrament is called pre-eminently the gift of the Holy Spirit. When a soldier has been arrayed in his uniform he is given arms to fight with. And so the character of Confirmation brings with it that special outpouring of the Spirit, that most abundant increase of sanctifying grace, which endows the soul with the militant vigour of spiritual manhood. The soul is already in the state of grace, but the Holy Ghost comes now to fill up its measure, to pour out in greater fulness the virtues and the gifts of the Spirit : gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord ²—all those invaluable endowments, in short, which it had first begun to possess in Baptism—and conferring in addition that sacramental grace which, as St Thomas explains, adds to sanctifying grace in general a special help towards the particular effects for which the sacrament is intended : ³ in this case, therefore, a supernatural disposition for the courage and fortitude which will be demanded by the task of professing and defending the faith. "The effect of this sacrament," we read in the Council of Florence, "is that the Holy Spirit is given us *unto strength*, as he was given to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, that is to say, in order that the Christian may boldly confess the name of Christ." ⁴

The grace of Confirmation

¹ *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxxii, art. 2.

² The prayer which precedes the essential rite of Confirmation is to be understood, therefore, not as asking for the first infusion of the sevenfold grace of the Spirit, but as beseeching God to increase it. Cf. *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxxii, art. 11, ad 3. On the gifts of the Holy Ghost, see Essay xviii, *The Supernatural Virtues*, pp. 654-658.

³ *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxii, art. 2 ; Q. lxxii, art. 7, ad 3.

⁴ Cf. Denzinger, 697.

*The fruitful
reception of
the Sacra-
ment*

With so rich a store of grace available for him in this sacrament, it becomes a matter of the highest importance that the candidate should receive it worthily. This complement or consummation of Baptism presupposes that he who receives it is already in the state of grace; if he were not he would belie the meaning of a sacrament instituted by Christ for the purpose of bringing to maturity the life of grace already existing in the soul, and thus falsifying the sacred sign would obstruct its sanctifying effect. He would still receive the character, nevertheless, since nothing can prevent the seal of the Holy Spirit from being imprinted by the valid sacrament. He would thus be in the unhappy condition of a Christian soldier unarmed.¹ But the state of grace is only the very least that is required in the candidate in order that he may receive the grace of this sacrament; an appreciation of the great reverence which is due to the gift of the Holy Ghost will inspire him with the resolution to bring to its reception the best possible dispositions of mind and heart, so that he may receive its fruits in greater abundance.

*The age at
which Con-
firmation
should be ad-
ministered*

It is such considerations as these that have caused the Church to change her discipline in regard to the age at which Confirmation should be administered. That the sacrament confers its spiritual benefits even on those who receive it before they have attained the use of reason, the Church maintains now as she has always taught, and therefore she does not forbid its administration to infants if they are in danger of death;² for, as St Thomas points out, "children who die confirmed will receive on that account a greater glory in heaven, inasmuch as they have thus received a greater measure of grace on earth."³ Nevertheless, the urgent reason for which Baptism is regularly administered as soon as possible after birth does not hold in the case of Confirmation, since this sacrament is not an indispensable means of salvation. The Church therefore prescribes that as a rule Confirmation should not be administered until a child has reached the use of reason, that is, about the age of seven years.⁴ In this way greater reverence towards the sacrament is ensured, since the candidate is able to approach it as he should, fully instructed (so far as his age permits) in the faith which he is to profess and concerning the nature and effects of the sacred rite he is receiving, and capable, by means of his own enlightened dispositions, of deriving from it the greatest possible benefit to his soul. It is, moreover, in

¹ On the question of what constitutes an obstacle to grace in the case of sacraments of the living, and on the "revival" of the sacrament when such obstacle has been removed, see Essay xxi, *The Sacramental System*, p. 755.

² Can. 788. See also *Additional Note*, p. 838. Theologians admit also other urgent cases in which Confirmation may be anticipated.

³ *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxxii, art. 8, ad 4.

⁴ Can. 788. Even in those parts of the West where the ancient custom of Infant Confirmation is allowed to continue (see above, p. 833, n. 3) the Church requires the faithful to be instructed concerning the common law of the Church. Cf. *Congr. de Sacr.*, 30 June 1932.

keeping with the function of this sacrament, which confers the fulness of the Holy Spirit, that children should receive it before they make their first Communion.¹

CONCLUSION

All that we have seen concerning the history of this sacrament—the importance which Christ himself attached to the promise of the Holy Spirit, the marvellous effects of courage and fortitude which the gift of the Spirit produced in the Apostles and in the early community of Christians, the fruits of martyrdom which it bore during the first three centuries and has indeed continued to bear throughout the history of the Church, the vital function which it is destined to fulfil in the life of every Christian—all this more than suffices to show that no one can neglect it with impunity. Christ has imposed upon every one of his followers the high duty of bearing witness to him in the world, and because, as he himself has foretold, this duty will prove also to be a heavy burden he has provided the grace of Confirmation to form an integral part of our supernatural equipment.

Martyrs who bear witness to Christ by the shedding of their blood are never lacking in the Church; these are the finest fruits of the Spirit of testimony. But there is a wider sense in which we may say that the age of martyrdom is never past. The life of the Church and her members is a martyrdom that never ends. Our Lord's prophecy that the world would hate his disciples has been too manifestly fulfilled in history to leave any doubt whether it will find fulfilment also to-day. The world changes, for better or for worse. But the spirit of the world remains always the same, and it is against this spirit that the changeless Church of Christ, animated by the Holy Spirit of God, must wage endless war, and therein bear witness to her Founder.

The teaching of the Catholic Church runs counter to the spirit of the world, because it knows no compromise with error; and every Catholic is a martyr, a true witness to the faith of Christ, when he refuses to yield one iota of revealed truth for the sake of amity and peace. The moral law of the Catholic Church runs counter to the spirit of the world, because it knows no compromise with sin. Every Catholic is a martyr, a true witness to the law of Christ, when he refuses dalliance with evil. Here, in its simplest terms, is the conflict of Christians with the world, here is their abiding witness to Christ. The Master has told them: "If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world,

¹ *Cong. de Sac.*, 30 June 1932. Nevertheless the fact of not having been able to be confirmed previously must not be considered as debarring children from making their first Communion, if they have reached the years of discretion. Cf. *ibid.*

but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Their conflict with the spirit of the world is a proof that they are disciples of Christ; and so the soldier of Christ who fights, is at the same time the witness who bears testimony to his Master. Here is the public responsibility which Confirmation imposes, and for which it equips us. Clergy and laity, men and women of every rank, condition, or degree, will fulfil it in different ways, but in all it will be the same Spirit of testimony who speaks. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost and they spoke with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak." The manifold ways in which the Christian life can be lived in this world are so many divers tongues in which we can proclaim that we are the disciples of Christ.

ADDITIONAL NOTE

On the Extraordinary Minister of Confirmation

Since this essay was completed the Holy See has considerably extended the field in which a priest may act as extraordinary minister of Confirmation. In accordance with a Decree of the Congregation of the Sacraments, dated 14th September, 1946, and taking effect on 1st January, 1947,¹ parish priests or their equivalent (not, however, their curates or assistants) are empowered by a general indult of the Apostolic See to administer this Sacrament, as extraordinary ministers, to the faithful within their own territory when they are truly in danger of death by sickness, and when the bishop of the diocese, or other bishop in communion with the Holy See, is not available. The reason of this measure is to ensure that the grace of Confirmation, which, though not necessary for salvation, is yet of great spiritual profit to the soul and a means of greater glory in heaven, may not be denied to the many infants, children and adults who, being in danger of death by sickness, might never be able to obtain it if the Church insisted upon the exact observance of the common law in regard to the ordinary minister of this Sacrament.

G. D. SMITH.

¹ *A.A.S.* XXXVIII, 1946, pp. 349-358.

XXIV

THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

§ I: INTRODUCTORY

By sacrifice man offers himself and his life to God, his sovereign Lord and Creator ; by the sacraments God gives himself, he gives a participation of his own divine life, to man. In sacrifice a stream of homage flows from man to the eternal Source of all being ; by the sacraments grace, sanctification, descends in copious flood upon the souls of men. This twofold stream, from God to man and from man to God, flows swift and strong in the Eucharist, sacrament and sacrifice. As the culminating act in the life of Jesus Christ on earth was the sacrifice which he offered on Calvary to his eternal Father, so the central act of Catholic worship in the Church, the mystical body of Christ, is the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Mass, which he instituted to be a perpetual commemoration and renewal of it. Likewise, just as it was through the sacred humanity of Christ that God mercifully designed to transmit to us the divine life of grace, so the sacrament of the Eucharist, which truly contains that living and life-giving humanity, holds the principal place among the sacraments instituted by Christ for our sanctification.

*Sacrifice and
Sacrament*

Truly, really and substantially present upon the altar under the appearances of bread and wine, Christ our High Priest offers himself, the infinite Victim, to his Father through the ministry of his priests. This is indeed a sacrifice unto the odour of sweetness, in which Christ, God and man, offers to his Father an infinite adoration, a prayer of unbounded efficacy, propitiation and satisfaction superabundantly sufficient for the sins of all mankind, thanksgiving in a unique manner proportionate to God's unstinted generosity to men. And then, as if it were in munificent answer to this infinitely pleasing gift which through Christ man has made to God, there comes God's best gift to man : the all-holy Victim, divinely accepted and ratified, is set before men to be their heavenly food. Through Christ we have given ourselves to God. Through Christ God gives his own life to us, that we may be made partakers of his divinity. The victim of the Eucharistic sacrifice, offered to man under the form of food, is the august sacrament of the Eucharist.

" This sacrament," we read in the Catechism of the Council of Trent, " must be truly said to be the source of all graces, because it contains in a wonderful way Christ our Lord, the source of every heavenly gift and blessing and the author of all the sacraments ; this sacrament is the source from which the other sacraments derive whatever goodness and perfection they possess." The unique place

which the Eucharist occupies among the sacraments was clearly indicated in the early liturgy, and may still be seen even in the practice of the Church at the present day. It was the custom in the early centuries of the Church to administer the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation on the night of Holy Saturday just before the Easter Mass. The reconciliation of sinners with the Church by Penance took place on Maundy Thursday during the celebration of the Sacrifice. The sacrament of Matrimony—as well as Holy Order—has always been, and still is, solemnly administered during Mass; and it is during the Mass of Maundy Thursday that the oil used in Extreme Unction is consecrated. All the sacraments, therefore, in their administration are closely connected with the Eucharist, the source from which all derive their efficacy.

Hence hardly anything that we might say to stress the importance of the Eucharist would be an exaggeration. The Eucharist is the centre of the Christian life as Christ is the central figure of the Christian religion. The priests of the Church are ordained, not primarily to preach the gospel, not merely to comfort the sick with the consoling truths of religion, not merely to take the lead in works of social improvement, but to offer the sacrifice of the Mass, to consecrate the Eucharist. If Catholics in the past—and in the present, too—have thought nothing in art, riches, and architecture too beautiful to lavish upon their churches, it is because the Catholic Church is the house of the king of kings, the home of Christ, truly present in the sacrament of the Eucharist. If Catholics, even the poorest, are ready to deprive themselves even of the comforts of life in order to support their clergy, it is because they believe that at all costs the sacrifice of the Mass must continue to be offered, the sacrament of the Eucharist, the food of Christian souls, must ever be administered. Devotion to the Eucharist is not an incidental pious practice of Catholics; it is of the very essence of the Catholic life.

The fundamental doctrine of the Eucharist is that Christ is truly, really, and substantially present therein, and to the doctrine of the Real Presence much of this short essay will be devoted. When once this has been grasped, the rest follows as a matter of course; the effects of the sacrament, its necessity, its constitutive elements, the reverence due to it, the Eucharistic practice of the Church, all this is but a necessary consequence of the stupendous truth that as a result of the words of consecration the living body and blood of Christ are present in this sacrament under the appearances of bread and wine.

Since at the present day—and it has ever been so—non-Catholics commonly use Catholic terms, giving them a meaning which is entirely subversive of Catholic truth, it will be well, before examining its scriptural and traditional foundation, to explain what is meant by the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence. It will then be shown that this doctrine, as defined by the Council of Trent and

taught by the Church to-day, is none other than the teaching of Christ himself and his Apostles, none other than the Eucharistic dogma which has been handed down to us infallibly by the Tradition of the Catholic Church. Necessarily involved in the doctrine of the Real Presence is the dogma of Transubstantiation, to which special attention will be devoted, because here we reach the heart of the Eucharistic mystery, and in this unique and wonderful conversion of the substance of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is to be found the root of all that theologians tell us concerning the mysterious manner of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. The remaining sections will deal with the sacrament considered formally as such, with its reception and its effects.

§ II: THE EUCHARISTIC DOGMA

THE reader who has studied with attention the other essays of this work will have observed that, generally speaking, in the history of *The teaching of the Council of Trent summarised* the doctrines of the Catholic Church three stages may be distinguished. There is first a period during which the truth is in serene and undisputed possession; then follows a period of discussion when the truth is attacked by heretics, a period which usually culminates in a solemn definition of the Church by which the meaning of revelation is put beyond all possibility of misunderstanding. The doctrine of the real presence had indeed been attacked before the sixteenth century, but never had it been so fundamentally and categorically denied as it was by the heretics of the Reform. Already St Paul had pointed out that the Eucharist is the symbol and the cause of ecclesiastical unity; ¹ St Ignatius of Antioch appealed on the same grounds to the Docetists of the first century to avoid schisms, and "to use one Eucharist, for one is the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one the chalice unto the communion of his blood; one is the altar, and one its bishop together with the priests and deacons." ² It is not surprising, therefore, that the great schism of the Protestants should have been inaugurated by a vehement attack upon the sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood. The Council of Trent ³ in condemning the errors of the Reformers has given us a clear and unequivocal statement of the Eucharistic dogma, which we cannot do better than reproduce here, with appropriate commentary.

"In the first place the holy Synod teaches . . . that in the precious (*almo*) ⁴ sacrament of the holy Eucharist, after the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is truly, really and substantially contained under the species of those sensible things." The three words, "truly, really and substantially," are used by the Council with a definite purpose of rejecting three Protestant views concerning the presence of Christ in

¹ I Cor. x 17.

³ Session xiii.

² *Ad Philadelph.*, chap. iv.

⁴ Literally: nourishing.

the Eucharist. Zwingli held that his presence was only figurative : " Just as a man about to set out on a journey might give to his wife a most precious ring upon which his portrait is engraved, saying, ' Behold your husband ; thus you may keep him and delight in him even though he is absent,' so our Lord Jesus Christ, as he departed, left to his spouse the Church his own image in the sacrament of the supper." ¹ As opposed to this figurative presence, the Council describes the presence of Christ as *true*. Others taught that Christ is present by faith ; the sacraments, they held, have no other effect than that of arousing faith in Christ, especially, however, the Eucharist, since it is a memorial of what Christ did on the last night before his death. The Council excludes this view by calling the presence of Christ *real*, *i.e.* independent of the faith of the recipient of the sacrament. Finally Calvin taught that Christ is present in this sacrament virtually, that is, inasmuch as he exercises his sanctifying power in the Eucharist. As against this doctrine the Council teaches that Christ is *substantially* present in this sacrament.

The faith of the Church in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist rests upon the words which he used at the Last Supper, words which have ever been interpreted by Catholic Tradition in this sense. " For thus all our forefathers, as many as were in the true Church of Christ, who have treated of this most holy Sacrament, have most openly professed, that our Redeemer instituted this so admirable a sacrament at the Last Supper when, after the blessing of the bread and wine, he testified in express and clear words that he gave them his own very Body and his own Blood." From the words of Christ it follows not only that his presence in the Eucharist is real, but also that it is permanent. The body and blood of Christ are contained in this sacrament not only in the moment in which it is received by the faithful but independently of its administration. " The most holy Eucharist," we read in Chapter III of the Decree, " has indeed this in common with the rest of the sacraments, that it is a symbol of a sacred thing, and is a visible form of an invisible grace ; but there is found in the Eucharist this excellent and peculiar thing, that the other sacraments have then first the power of sanctifying when one uses them, whereas in the Eucharist, before it is used, there is contained the Author of sanctity. For the Apostles had not as yet received the Eucharist from the hand of the Lord, when nevertheless he himself affirmed with truth that what he presented to them was his own body." The permanence of the presence of Christ is thus asserted by the Council against the error of Luther who, although he admitted the real presence, held that it began and ended with the reception of the sacrament by the faithful.

But from the fact that the Eucharist is called the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ it should not be concluded that only

¹ *De vera et falsa religione.*

his body and blood are contained therein. In this sacrament are present the living body and blood of Christ ; therefore also his soul which gives them life, therefore also the divine nature which is indissolubly united with his sacred humanity. " This faith has ever been in the Church of God, that, immediately after the consecration, the veritable Body of our Lord and his veritable Blood, together with his soul and divinity, are under the species of bread and wine ; the Body indeed under the species of bread and the blood under the species of wine by the force of the words ; but the body itself under the species of wine and the blood under the species of bread, and the soul under each, by the force of that natural connection and concomitance by which the parts of our Lord ' who hath now risen from the dead, to die no more,' are united together ; and the divinity furthermore on account of the admirable hypostatic union thereof with his body and soul. Wherefore . . . Christ whole and entire is under the species of bread and under any part of that species ; likewise the whole Christ is under the species of wine and under the parts thereof."

What then has become of the bread, over which the words of consecration have been pronounced ? Has the body of Christ mysteriously united itself with the bread and the wine ? Has Christ permeated these substances with his own ? Is he present in the bread or with the bread ? The Council answers these questions in the negative. Luther taught the doctrine of consubstantiation or impanation, according to which the bread remains together with the body of Christ in the Eucharist. The Catholic doctrine—no less certain, no less a dogmatic truth than that of the real presence itself—is that the substances of bread and wine no longer remain after the words of consecration ; they have been converted into the substance of our Lord's body and blood. Of the bread and wine there remain only the appearances, the species. " And because Christ, our Redeemer, declared that which he offered under the species of bread to be truly his own Body, therefore it has ever been a firm belief in the Church of God, and this holy Synod now declares it anew, that by the consecration of the bread and wine a conversion is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood ; which conversion is suitably and properly called by the holy Catholic Church transubstantiation."

Hence wherever bread and wine are duly and validly consecrated, there is truly, really and substantially present the living Christ, the same Christ as was born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered and died for us, who now sits in Heaven at the right hand of the Father. " For these things are not mutually repugnant, that our Saviour himself always sits at the right hand of the Father in Heaven, according to his natural mode of existing, and that nevertheless he is in many other places sacramentally present, by a manner of existing

which, though we can hardly express it in words, we can yet conceive, our understanding being enlightened by faith, and ought most firmly to believe to be possible to God."

In these few sentences the Council sums up the whole essence of the Catholic teaching concerning the mystery of the Eucharist. By virtue of the words of consecration the bread and wine cease to be bread and wine and, while still retaining the appearances of these, are changed into the body and blood of Christ. All else that theologians tell us of the mysterious presence of Christ in this sacrament is but a consequence of these fundamental truths, that Christ is truly, really and substantially present, and that he becomes present by the conversion of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of his body and blood, a conversion which is called by the Church Transubstantiation.

§ III: THE EUCHARIST IN SCRIPTURE

*The
Promise of
the Eucharist*

THE sixth chapter of the gospel of St John relates a discourse of our Lord which we may well call the preparation of his disciples for their first communion. It was the day following the two miracles of the feeding of the five thousand and the walking of Christ upon the lake of Galilee, and the Jews, impressed by the wonders they had witnessed, had come in search of Jesus. Addressing his hearers in the synagogue at Capharnaum, Jesus began by upbraiding them for their unworthy motives in seeking him: "You seek me not because you have seen miracles but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled." The Jews had seen in the miracles of Christ, not a proof of his divine mission, but merely a source from which they might derive earthly profit and advantage. Christ would have them seek him for their spiritual nourishment, for "the meat which endureth unto life everlasting, which the son of man will give you." This is the theme which he then proceeds to elaborate throughout his discourse: a heavenly food which would give everlasting life.

The idea of receiving food from heaven was not unfamiliar to the Jews, who well remembered the story of the manna that their fathers had eaten in the desert. This, however, had been merely a type of the true bread that Christ himself had come to give. The manna had fed the Jews only; the bread of Christ would give life to the world. But it was useless for the Jews to ask for this food unless they had faith in Christ; like all the sacraments, the Eucharist could produce no effect, could not give the divine life which is its fruit, unless the recipient believed in what he was receiving. The Jews had seen many miracles worked by him and yet they did not believe that he was what he claimed to be. Did they not know his parents, Mary and Joseph? How could they believe that he had come down from heaven? But the knowledge that his hearers were so ill-disposed to believe him does not prevent Christ from explaining

still more definitely the nature of the heavenly food that he promises them. "The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." The food that was to give eternal life was nothing else than his own body which was to be offered in sacrifice for the sins of the world. At these words the scepticism of his hearers becomes open disbelief. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" But their incredulity only calls forth a reiterated and still more explicit statement; it is as if Christ were determined to leave no loophole for misunderstanding: "Amen, amen, I say unto you; unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me the same also shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever."

There could no longer be any doubt that Christ meant what he said; here was no metaphor, no parable; Christ intended to give his own flesh and blood as food and drink. "Many therefore of his disciples, hearing it, said, This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" Reading their thoughts, Jesus returns once more to the earlier subject of his discourse, the necessity of faith: "Therefore did I say to you, that no man can come to me unless it be given him by my Father." And his hearers then divided into two parties; some of them "went back, and walked no more with him"; the twelve Apostles remained, and, as at Caesarea Philippi, so here too it was Peter who made the great profession of faith: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." St Peter seems to have had in mind the profession of faith that he had made on the previous occasion; he had then acclaimed Jesus as the "Son of the living God"; now he proclaimed his faith in the sacrament by which chiefly the Son of God proposed to infuse into the souls of men that divine life which should make them the adoptive sons of God. It is not merely of immortality, not merely of the unending existence of the soul, or indeed of the immortality of the risen body that he is thinking when he says that Christ has the words of eternal life. St Peter's words are an answer to Christ's declaration: "As the living Father sent me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me the same also shall live by me. . . . The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." The life which is the fruit of this living bread is the life which the Son of God lives, the life of God himself, the life which, when shared by man, is called sanctifying grace.

Hence the discerning reader may find in this discourse of Christ

a complete treatise upon the aim and purpose of the Incarnation. God sent his only begotten Son into the world that he might offer in sacrifice his "flesh for the life of the world," and the life that he came to give—or rather to restore—to the world is none other than a finite participation of the divine life which he, the Son of God, lives in common with the Father, the divine life of grace which had been given originally to mankind in Adam and by him had been lost. The fruits of that sacrifice were to be communicated to us principally through the sacrament of the Eucharist, in which we should eat his flesh and drink his blood, receiving as food that same living body which was to be the Victim of the sacrifice.

*The Last
Supper*

The promise thus made was fulfilled at the Last Supper. The moment had arrived to which during the whole of his life he had been looking forward with loving anticipation, the moment in which, about to give himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, he would institute this sacrament as the great pledge of his love: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer."¹ The scene is described, with slight variations, by the three synoptic evangelists and by St Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians. This is the account given by St Paul: "The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread and giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye and eat; this is my body which shall be delivered for you; this do for the commemoration of me. In like manner also the chalice, after he had supped, saying: This chalice is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of me."²

As, just a year previously, in preparing his disciples for their first communion, he had left no room for doubt as to the meaning of his words—"my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed"—so here his words leave no possibility of misunderstanding. Wishing to indicate that he was giving his own flesh and blood to his Apostles under the form of food and drink, he could not have expressed himself more clearly. The sentence, "this is my body," is one upon which it is impossible to make any commentary without weakening its force. Searching in my mind for words more simple, more convincing, I can find nothing but circumlocutions, which would convey the same meaning only at the cost of long and involved explanations. Those who have related the incident have not thought it necessary to give any such explanation; feeling that any amplification of the words of Christ, far from clarifying, would only obscure their meaning, they have left them to speak for themselves. And if the writer of these lines consulted merely his own inclination he would do likewise. Nevertheless the attacks which have been made by Protestants consistently for the last three hundred years upon the literal interpretation of the words of Christ seem to call, if not for an express answer, at least for some remark.

¹ Luke xxii 15.

² 1 Cor. xi 23-25.

The language of the decrees of oecumenical councils is usually measured and calm. But the attempts of the Protestants to interpret the words of institution in a figurative sense seem to have aroused in the Tridentine Fathers a holy indignation: "(Christ) testified in express and clear words that he gave them his own very Body and his own Blood; words which—recorded by the holy Evangelists and afterwards repeated by St Paul, whereas they carry with them that proper and most manifest meaning in which they were understood by the Fathers—it is indeed a crime the most unworthy that they should be wrested, by certain contentious and wicked men, to fictitious and imaginary figures of speech."¹

And indeed it is difficult to see how the literal meaning of the words of Christ can be evaded. The solemnity of the occasion, the words used, the absence of any warning that a metaphor was intended, the very feebleness of the metaphor—if metaphor it was—all conspire to exclude the figurative sense of the words "this is my body." It is true that Christ had often used figures of speech, but they had either been so obviously such as to need no explanation, or else Christ had carefully explained them lest the Apostles, simple-minded men, should be misled.² Nor was the occasion one which called for ambiguity; on the contrary, it was precisely the moment for plain speaking. It had been necessary for him in the early days of his ministry to shroud his meaning under the form of parables, both to adapt himself to the minds of his hearers and in order to give an opportunity to men of good will to come and ask him to explain. But he was now at the last evening of his life on earth; he was surrounded, not by the suspicious Pharisees and Sadducees, but by his own faithful Apostles whom he trusted, to whom he spoke no more in parables, but plainly.³ If they failed to grasp his meaning now, they could not learn it from him on the morrow; for then he would be no more with them. He spoke plainly because he was instituting a new Testament, a new Law; and a testament, a covenant, is not formulated in figurative language. The Old Testament had been ratified by the blood of victims, and Moses had sprinkled the people with it; the New Testament was ratified by the blood of Christ, of whom those victims had been but a type. Was the reality

¹ As an example of the lengths to which certain Reformers were prepared to go, the following incident is instructive. Zwingli, the protagonist of the figurative interpretation, had been holding a public discussion with a Catholic on the question at Thuringen. That same night, he relates, "I dreamed that I was again disputing with him, when suddenly there appeared to me an adviser, whether he was white or black I do not remember, who said to me: 'Answer him, thou fool, that it is written in Exodus: It is the phrase, *i.e.* the passing of the Lord.' Immediately awaking I jumped from my bed, verified the passage, and later delivered a discourse before the assembly which effectively removed any doubts that had remained in the minds of pious men." *Subsidium Eucharistiae*.

² Cf. Matt. xvi 11; John iv 32.

³ Cf. John xvi 29.

to be less perfect than the figure, the shadow more real than the substance? It was therefore the real blood of Christ which the Apostles reverently drank, the blood which was shed for the remission of sins; it was the true body of Christ which they ate, the body which was given for them, the flesh that was given for the life of the world.

If this were a treatise of apologetics it would be my duty here to show that according to sound hermeneutical principles the words of Christ at the Last Supper cannot but be taken literally, and that the figurative interpretation put upon them by the Protestants is out of the question. This has been done exhaustively by Cardinal Wiseman in his well-known lectures on the Eucharist,¹ so fully indeed that authors who have dealt with the subject subsequently have been able to do little but repeat the unanswerable arguments which he there sets forth. But the theologian, as distinct from the apologist, has another method of discovering the meaning of the words of Scripture. It has been shown elsewhere in these essays that the Church is the custodian of Scripture, and not merely of its letter but also of its sense.² Hence the theologian as such does not treat the books of Scripture as a merely human document. If he wants to know the meaning of a particular passage he does not rely only upon his own understanding; he appeals to the living teaching of the Church; for him the sense of Scripture is the sense in which it has always been interpreted by the Catholic Church. We may therefore base our literal interpretation of the words of Christ upon the fact that the Fathers of the Church have always thus understood them, a fact which will become abundantly apparent in the following section.

The gospel of St John makes no reference to the institution of the Eucharist, and the epistles contain only brief and sparse indications of Eucharistic doctrine and practice. Nor is this surprising. St John seems to have had as one of his objects in writing his gospel to fill the lacunæ left by the other evangelists; hence, having related fully the promise of the Eucharist, he thinks it unnecessary to add another account of its institution to the four already existing, the more so as the story must have been so familiar to his readers because it was embodied in the celebration of the Eucharist itself.

*The teaching
of St Paul*

As for the epistles, these, as is well known, were never intended to be theological treatises but were written to meet the various demands of the moment, and thus are hortatory rather than expository both in style and content. Nevertheless it happened on two occasions that St Paul made incidental reference to the Eucharist; once in connection with idolatry and again in connection with the behaviour of certain of his converts at Corinth during the Eucharistic assemblies. The Christians of Corinth, surrounded as they were by pagans and idolaters, many of them their own friends and relatives, had many

¹ See especially Lectures v and vi.

² Essay i, *Faith and Revealed Truth*, pp. 30-1.

difficulties to contend with, and not the least among them was the question of meats which had been offered to idols. St Paul gives them some practical advice on the matter in the eighth and tenth chapters of his first epistle to them. Evidently they must not take part in the sacrificial banquets of the pagans; this would be equivalent to the sin of idolatry. Might they buy in the market meats which had been used in pagan sacrifices and eat them privately at home? St Paul answers in effect that they might do this so long as all danger of scandal was eliminated. But the interest of the matter from our point of view lies in the reason which St Paul gives for prohibiting their attendance at the sacrificial banquets of the pagans. It was the belief of the pagans that by partaking of the sacrificial gifts they were put in communion with the divinity—in truth, as St Paul rather sardonically remarks, “with devils.” How then, St Paul asks, can Christians dare to take part in these banquets, when in the Eucharist they have a sacrificial banquet wherein they are made partakers of the body and blood of Christ? It is to be remarked that he does not say simply that by drinking of the cup and partaking of the bread Christians are put into communion with *God* or with *Christ*; this is what we should have expected, to preserve the parallelism with the pagan sacrifices; to receive the Eucharist, according to the Apostle, is to be united with *the body and blood* of Christ. “The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord? . . . You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord and the chalice of devils; you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils.”¹ It need hardly be remarked that this passage, besides indicating the doctrine of the real presence, contains an evident proof of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist.²

St Paul makes another interesting, though again an incidental, reference to the Eucharist in reproving the Corinthians for certain abuses which had crept into the Eucharistic gatherings.³ He takes the opportunity of impressing upon them the reverence with which this most holy sacrament should be received, and of warning them of the dire penalties attending a sacrilegious reception. The solemnity of the terms in which this admonition is expressed can hardly be understood except in the light of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. Having reminded them, in the words above related, of the manner in which Christ had instituted the Eucharist, he goes on: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show forth the death of the Lord, until he come. Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat

¹ I Cor. x 16-21.

² See *The Eucharistic Sacrifice*, pp. 883-884.

³ I Cor. xi 18 seq.

of that bread and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgement to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord." Here, as in the passage previously quoted, it may be remarked that the sacrilegious communicant is not only said to be guilty of irreverence to the person of Christ who instituted this sacrament, but is said to be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord. He who receives unworthily will be punished because he fails to discern in this sacrament the body of the Lord. If the Eucharist is nothing else but a symbol of the body and blood of Christ surely the words of St Paul are excessively severe.

We may sum up the teaching of Scripture regarding the sacrament of the Eucharist quite briefly and simply. Christ, having previously promised his disciples to give them his own flesh as food and his own blood as drink, at the Last Supper took bread and gave it to his disciples telling them that it was his body, and took wine and gave it to them telling them that it was his blood. Neither in the account of the promise nor in that of the institution of the sacrament is there anything to indicate that Christ spoke figuratively; on the contrary, the circumstances, the power and the wisdom of Christ himself, the manner in which his words were understood by his hearers, all point to the literal meaning of those words as the only possible interpretation, an interpretation which is confirmed by the manner in which St Paul speaks of the Eucharist, and which appears in the constant teaching of the Church from the earliest times. "When the Lord," writes St Cyril of Jerusalem, "has said of the bread 'This is my body,' who shall dare to doubt? And when he has asserted and said, 'This is my blood,' who shall ever doubt that it is indeed his blood?"¹

§ IV: THE EUCHARIST IN TRADITION

NOT the least noteworthy feature of the Eucharistic literature of the early centuries is its extraordinary abundance; so that it is impossible to convey in this small space any but a very inadequate idea of the complete teaching of the Fathers of the first three or four centuries on this all-important dogma. Yet the very familiarity of Catholics with the Eucharist prevented them from giving us in their writings the clear and explicit testimony to their belief which to-day—from a controversial point of view, at any rate—would be so valuable and interesting. References to the Eucharist we find in great abundance; but set treatises on the subject are very rare. In fact, with the exception of the Catechetical instructions of St Cyril of Jerusalem—and to a certain extent the Apology of St Justin—I know of no writings in the very early centuries professedly devoted to a doctrinal exposition of Eucharistic belief. Nevertheless those numerous passages in which the Fathers refer incidentally to Eucharistic

¹ *Catech.* xxii 1.

doctrine, treating it as well known and not requiring explanation, by the very absence of the intention to instruct become all the more instructive. So accustomed were the early Christians to frequenting the Holy Sacrifice and to receiving Communion, so intimately did the Eucharist enter into their daily lives, that their pastors did not deem it necessary to write books to teach them what must have been so familiar to them from their daily practice.

Already in the sub-apostolic age we find St Ignatius of Antioch *St Ignatius of Antioch* arguing from the Eucharist to the necessity of unity in the Church. "See that you use one Eucharist," he writes,¹ "for one is the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one is the chalice unto the communion of his blood; one is the altar, and one the bishop together with the priests and deacons." The argument is that of St Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians: ² in the Eucharist you all partake of the one body of Christ and of his blood, you all assist at one and the same sacrifice; hence you should be one among yourselves. But here, as also in St Paul, the argument loses all its force unless the Eucharist is really and truly the one body and blood of Christ. Still more clearly is belief in the real presence implied in the martyr's epistle to the Smyrnæans ³ where, writing of the Docetists who denied the reality of the human nature of Christ, he says: "They abstain from the Eucharist and the prayer [*i.e.* probably the Eucharistic prayer or the Canon of the Mass] because they do not believe that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ which suffered for our sins and which the Father in his bounty raised up again." Clearly then, Catholics, as opposed to the Docetists, did believe that the Eucharist is the very body and blood of Christ.

Still more explicitly does St. Justin state the doctrine of the Real *St Justin* Presence when in his account of the celebration of the Eucharist he writes: "We do not receive these as ordinary food or ordinary drink; but, as by the Word of God Jesus our Saviour was made flesh, and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so also the food which has been blessed (lit., over which thanks have been given) by the word of prayer instituted by him, and from which our flesh and blood by assimilation are nourished, is, we are taught, both the flesh and blood of that Jesus incarnate. For the Apostles in the accounts which they wrote, and which are called gospels, have declared that Jesus commanded them to do as follows: 'He took bread and gave thanks and said: This do in commemoration of me; this is my body. And in like manner he took the chalice and blessed it and said: This is my blood, and gave it to them alone.'"⁴ There can be no doubt of St Justin's meaning. He is explaining the doctrine of the Eucharist to pagans, not to Christians who might be presumed to have some previous knowledge of the subject, and therefore if the Eucharist

¹ *Ad Philadelph.*, chap. iv.

² x 16.

³ vii 1.

⁴ St Justin's account is quoted more fully in Essay xxv, *The Eucharistic Sacrifice*, pp. 890-892.

were deemed to be nothing more than a mere symbol of the body and blood of Christ, the writer would certainly have made this clear. But of the symbolic meaning there is no indication whatever. St Justin says quite simply that the Eucharistic bread and wine are not mere bread and wine ("ordinary food"); they are the body and blood of Jesus Christ who became man for our salvation. In fact we may find more than a hint of the doctrine of Transubstantiation in the comparison made between the Incarnation and the Eucharist. Just as the Word of God is so mighty that he could unite a human nature to the divinity, so the words that he instituted at the Last Supper have the virtue of making the bread and the wine his own flesh and blood.

St Irenaeus

Many pertinent passages might be quoted from the *Adversus Hæreses* of St Irenaeus in which this great controversialist uses the Eucharistic dogma to refute the tenets of the Gnostics. These held that matter was essentially evil. How could this be so, asked St. Irenaeus, if Christ used bread and wine in the Eucharist, elements which, "perceiving the word of God (*i.e.* through the power of God's word) become the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ?"¹ But the references to the Eucharist are so scattered that it would be impossible to quote them here at all adequately. One passage, however, is especially remarkable because of its similarity with that of St. Justin above quoted: "The bread that is taken from the earth, perceiving the invocation of God, is no longer ordinary bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two things, an earthly and a heavenly."²

Tertullian

The temptation to idolatry which was a constant menace to Christians by reason of their close contact with pagans caused the Fathers of the third century to reiterate the warning already given by St. Paul³ against desecrating the Eucharist. So Tertullian has some very strong remarks about those Christians who engaged in the manufacture of idols; he speaks of the scandal caused by the sight of a Christian "passing from the idols to the church, from the shop of the enemy to the house of God, raising up to God the Father the hands that are mothers of idols . . . , applying to the Lord's body those hands that give bodies to demons. Nor is this enough. Grant that it be a small matter that from other hands they receive what they contaminate, but those very hands even deliver to others what they have contaminated: idol-makers are admitted even into the ecclesiastical order. O wickedness! Once did the Jews lay hands upon Christ; these mangle his body daily. O hands to be cut off! Now let them see if it is merely by similitude that it was said: 'If thy hand scandalise thee, cut it off.' What hands deserve

¹ v 2, 3.

² iv 18, 5. The earthly element seems to be the appearances of bread which remain, and the heavenly element the body of Christ present under those appearances.

³ 1 Cor. ch. viii and ch. x.

more to be cut off than those in which scandal is done to the body of the Lord!"¹

St Cyprian is no less vehement about the Christians who had fallen into idolatry during the fierce persecution of Decius (251). While he praises the fortitude of the many confessors of the faith, saying that "the noble hands that had been accustomed only to perform the works of God had resisted the sacrilegious sacrifices of pagans, the lips which had been sanctified with heavenly food, after the body and blood of the Lord, turned in disgust from the touch of things profane and the leavings of idols," he laments at the same time that many of those who had fallen into idolatry expected immediately, without having done penance, to be allowed to receive Communion: "Returning from the altars of the devil they approach the sacred thing of the Lord (*sanctum Domini*) with filthy and stinking hands; still belching the deadly food of idols, with their very breath still giving evidence of their crime . . . they assail (*invadunt*) the body of the Lord. . . . Violence is done to the body and blood of the Lord, and greater violence now with their hands and with their lips than when they denied the Lord."²

Evidence of early belief in the dogma of the Real Presence may be seen also in the outward reverence with which the sacrament was received. Origen thus impresses upon the faithful the need of reverence for the word of God: "You who are accustomed to assist at the divine mysteries know how, when you receive the body of the Lord, you hold it with every precaution and veneration lest any of the consecrated gift should fall. For you believe, and rightly believe, yourselves guilty if through your negligence any of it should be dropped. If you—justly—use such care to preserve his body, do you consider it a lesser sin to neglect his word?"³ A detailed description of the manner in which the Eucharist was received in the fourth century is given us by St Cyril of Jerusalem: "In approaching, therefore, come not with thy wrists extended or thy fingers spread, but make thy left hand a throne for the right, as for that which is to receive a King. And having hollowed thy palm, receive the body of Christ, saying over it 'Amen.' Then having carefully sanctified thine eyes with the touch of the holy body, partake of it, taking heed lest thou lose any portion thereof; for whatever thou lovest is evidently a loss to thee as it were from one of thine own members. For tell me, if any one gave thee grains of gold, wouldst not thou hold them with all carefulness, being on thy guard against losing any of them and suffering loss? Wilt thou not then much more carefully keep watch that not a crumb fall from thee of what is more precious than gold and precious stones? Then after thou hast partaken of

¹ *De Idololatria*, 7.

² *De lapsis*, chap. xv. Chapters xxv and xxvi contain other striking passages concerning the Eucharist.

³ *In Ex.*, hom. xiii, 3.

the body of Christ draw near also to the chalice of his blood ; not stretching forth thine hands, but bending, and saying with worship and reverence ‘ Amen,’ hallow thyself by partaking also of the blood of Christ. And while the moisture is still on thy lips, touch it with thy hands and hallow thine eyes and brow and the other organs of sense. Then wait for the prayer and give thanks to God who has accounted thee worthy of so great mysteries.”¹

With the Catechetical Instructions of St Cyril, from which this passage is taken, we enter into a new category of Eucharistic literature. In the works which have been quoted hitherto reference is made to the Eucharist only incidentally and indirectly ; but St Cyril intends expressly to instruct his catechumens on the great sacrament which they are shortly to receive for the first time, and hence his teaching is much more clear and explicit. So striking is the similarity between his words and the terms in which at the present day we are accustomed to prepare children for their first Communion that, at the risk of overstepping the limits set for this section, I cannot refrain from quoting a few extracts : “ Since he has said of the bread ‘ This is my body,’ who shall venture to doubt ? Since he has said and asserted ‘ This is my blood,’ who shall ever doubt that it is his blood ? He once changed water into wine, which is akin to blood ; shall we not therefore believe when he changed wine into blood ? When called to a bodily marriage he miraculously wrought that wonderful work ; and on the ‘ children of the bridechamber ’ shall he not much more be acknowledged to have bestowed the enjoyment of his body and blood ? . . . Consider therefore the bread and the wine not as bare elements, for according to the Lord’s declaration they are the body and blood of Christ ; for even though sense suggest this to thee (*i.e.* that they are merely bread and wine), yet let faith give thee firm certainty. Judge not the matter from the taste, but by faith be fully assured without doubt that the body and blood of Christ have been vouchsafed to thee. . . . The seeming bread is not bread, though sensible to taste, but the body of Christ ; and the seeming wine is not wine, though the taste will have it so, but the blood of Christ.”²

The need of faith in the Real Presence in order to overcome the apparently contrary suggestion of the senses is emphasised in almost identical terms by St John Chrysostom : “ Let us then in everything believe God and gainsay him in nothing, though what is said may seem to be contrary to our thoughts and senses, but let his word be of higher authority than both reasonings and sight. Thus let us do in the Mysteries also, not looking at the things set before us, but keeping in mind his sayings. For his word cannot deceive, but our senses are easily beguiled. That hath never failed, but this in most

¹ *Catech.* xxiii 21, 22.

² *Catech.* xxii 1, 2, 6, 9 and *passim*. Cf. St Thomas’s hymn :

*Visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur,
Sed auditu solo tuto creditur.*

things goes astray. Since the Word saith, 'This is my body,' let us both be persuaded and believe, and look at it with the eyes of the mind." ¹

I conclude this brief selection of texts from the Fathers with two more passages from St John Chrysostom: "How many now say, I would wish to see his form, his shape, his clothes, his shoes. Lo! thou seest him, thou touchest him, thou eatest him. And thou indeed desirest to see his clothes, but he gives himself to thee, not to see only, but also to touch and eat and receive within thee. . . . Look therefore, lest thou also thyself become guilty of the body and blood of Christ. They (*i.e.* the Jews who crucified him) slaughtered the all-holy body, but thou receivest it in a filthy soul after so great benefits. For neither was it enough for him to be made man, to be smitten and slaughtered, but he also commingleth himself with us, and not by faith only, but also in deed maketh us his body. . . . There are often mothers that after the travail of birth send out their children to other women to be nursed; but he endures not to do this, but himself feeds us with his own blood, and by all means entwines us with himself." A similar passage occurs in his 46th homily (on St John): "We become one body, and members of his flesh and of his bones. Let the initiated follow what I say. In order then that we may become this not by love only but in very deed, let us be blended into that flesh. This is brought about by the food which he has freely given us, desiring to show the love that he bears us. On this account he has mingled himself with us; he has kneaded his body with ours that we might become one thing, like a body joined to the head. . . . He has given to those who desire him not only to see him, but even to touch and eat him, to fix their teeth in his flesh and to embrace him and satisfy all their love. Parents often entrust their offspring to others to feed; 'But I,' he says, 'do not so. I feed you with my own flesh, desiring that you all be nobly born. . . . For he that gives himself to you here much more will do so hereafter. I have willed to become your brother, for your sake I shared in flesh and blood, and in turn I give to you that same flesh and blood by which I became your kinsman.'"

These extracts from the writings of the Fathers of the first four centuries, though representative, are of course far from exhaustive. Moreover, passages have been selected in which the Fathers speak quite clearly of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in this sacrament. It would be a mistake to suppose that they always speak so plainly; in fact passages may be found in the writings even of those whom we have seen emphasising the Real Presence, which at first sight would seem to favour the view of the Zwinglians, that the Eucharist is merely a figure of the body of Christ. An exhaustive treatment of their teaching would require all these texts to be

General considerations on the Fathers

¹ Hom. 82 in *Matt.*, n. 4.

² *Ibid.*

considered individually in their context, so that their complete meaning might be made clear. Obviously such a procedure is out of the question in this short essay. But for those who desire to devote some time—and it would be most profitably spent—to the study of the early Fathers on the Eucharist the following considerations may serve as some guide in the interpretation of their thought. In the first place it should be remembered that the Eucharist is a sacrament, *i.e.* a sacred sign. There is an external element in the Eucharist, the appearances of bread and wine, the proper function of which is to signify; and these are rightly called the sign of the body and blood of Christ. If, therefore, a writer who clearly believes in the Real Presence refers to the Eucharist as the sign of the body and blood of Christ, evidently he must be understood to mean that the appearances of bread and wine are the sign of the body and blood of Christ which are really, though invisibly, present beneath them. This consideration is of particular use in the interpretation of many texts in the works of St. Augustine.¹

Moreover, the body and blood of Christ, although they are truly, really and substantially present in this sacrament, are nevertheless present with an extraordinary mode of existence, which we can only—for want of a better word—call sacramental. They are present invisibly, intangibly, so that our senses cannot reach them. Hence it need not surprise us to find some of the Fathers referring to a “spiritual eating” of Christ, in order to differentiate the sacramental eating of the flesh of Christ from the gross and materialistic sense in which the people of Capharnaum had understood his words. So St Cyril of Jerusalem, in the very same discourse from which we have selected the striking passages above quoted, laments the unbelief of the people of Capharnaum in that “they, not having heard his saying in a spiritual sense, were offended, and went back, supposing that he was inviting them to eat flesh.” And yet in the previous paragraph he had said that “his body and blood are distributed through our members.”

Finally, it is well known that the early Fathers delighted in symbolism. This is especially true of the great theologians of Alexandria, and also of St Augustine. Now the doctrine of the Eucharist lends itself in a special way to symbolical treatment. The connection between the mystical body of Christ and his physical body present in the Eucharist, already noticed by St Paul,² was a frequent subject of allegorical speculation and caused some of the Fathers to use phrases concerning the Eucharist from which we should carefully abstain at the present day. Not that statements which were true fifteen hundred years ago have now become false. It is not the truth that changes, but the manner of expressing it that varies according to the exigencies of popular devotion and of controversy. In days when

¹ Cf. *e.g.* Ep. 98; *Contr. Adimant.* xii, 3; *Enarr.* in Ps. iii 1.

² 1 Cor. x 17.

the Real Presence was not impugned by heretics but was tranquilly believed by all Catholics there was no danger of such symbolical phrases being misunderstood. But since the denial of the Real Presence by the heretics of the Reform we should hesitate to use any expression concerning the Eucharist which might seem, in the changed circumstances, to exclude the reality by excessive emphasis upon the symbolism that surrounds it.

Of the numerous liturgical documents of antiquity and of the frequent references to the Eucharist in Christian epigraphy we have made no mention, nor does space allow us even to outline the evidence of early belief in the Real Presence which may be found in these sources. But even the little that we have seen of patristic teaching suffices to make it abundantly clear that the Church from the beginning has taught that the body and blood of Christ are truly, really and substantially present in this Sacrament.

§ V: TRANSUBSTANTIATION

No less essential to the doctrine of the Eucharist than the dogma of the Real Presence is that of Transubstantiation. The decree of the Council of Trent presents them as logically connected with each other: "And *because* Christ declared that which he offered under the species of bread to be truly his own body, *therefore* has it ever been a firm belief in the Church of God, and this holy Synod doth now declare it anew, that by the consecration of the bread and of the wine a conversion is made of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood; which conversion is by the holy Catholic Church suitably and properly called Transubstantiation."¹ In other words, it is only by such a total conversion of the substance of the bread and wine into the substance of our Lord's body and blood that his words, "This is my body; this is my blood," can be verified. Hence when the Jansenists at the synod of Pistoia laid down that it was sufficient to teach that Christ is truly, really and substantially present in this sacrament, and that the substance of bread and wine ceases, only their appearances remaining, omitting all mention of transubstantiation, Pius VI condemned this view. Transubstantiation, he added, must not be passed over in silence as if it were a mere scholastic question; it has been defined by the Council of Trent as an article of faith, and the word has been consecrated by the Church to defend her faith against heresies.

The subject may perhaps be best approached by considering the plain signification of the words of our Lord at the Last Supper: "This is my body." He held in his hands something which to all appearances was bread, but in reality was not bread; in consequence of the words he had uttered it was his own body. "The seeming

¹ Session xiii, c. 4.

bread," says St Cyril of Jerusalem, "is not bread, though sensible to taste, but the body of Christ; and the seeming wine is not wine, though the taste will have it so, but the blood of Christ."¹ What, then, had happened? All the indications of sense pointed to the presence of bread as before; all that in the bread which is perceptible to the senses—what we call for the sake of convenience the "appearances" of bread—remained unchanged. Yet something was changed, something which lies deeper than the appearances, the "thing" which normally has those appearances, which through those appearances normally manifests its presence, which is the subject of the qualities and activities, the chemical and physical properties and reactions which we associate with bread, this "thing"—which we call the substance—had been changed into another substance, that of the body of Christ, the appearances alone of the bread remaining. This is what is meant by Transubstantiation. No other conclusion is consonant with the words of Christ. That he did not speak figuratively is abundantly clear from what has been said; nor is the theory of Luther reconcilable with the truth of the words "This is my body." If, as Luther claimed, the effect of the words of consecration is to render the substance of the body of Christ present in the bread (impanation) or side by side with the bread (consubstantiation), it is no longer true that *this* is the body of Christ; rather, in such an hypothesis, Christ should have said "*here* is the body of Christ." Rightly, therefore, does the Council of Trent present Transubstantiation as the logical outcome of the words of Christ at the Last Supper.

The Fathers, likewise, do not conceive of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in this sacrament apart from the conversion of the bread and the wine into them. The word transubstantiation did not come till much later, when theologians had had the leisure and opportunity to realise all that was involved in the Eucharistic miracle. But the essential truth that the bread, while still appearing to be bread, was changed into the body of Christ was seen by the early Fathers to be formally implied in the truth of the Real Presence. Thus they say that after the words of consecration the bread is no longer bread but the body of Christ; they speak of the bread and wine being changed, converted, transmuted into the body of Christ; they compare this change with creation: "If the word of God," says St John Damascene,² "is living and efficacious . . . if the earth, the sea, the fire and the air . . . were made by the word of God . . . why should that word, then, not be able to make wine and water his blood?" They compare the Eucharistic conversion with the substantial change whereby the food a man eats is assimilated and changed into his own substance.³ We have seen, too, how St Cyril of Jerusalem compares it with the miraculous change of

¹ Cf. above, p. 850.

² *De fide orthod.* iv, 13.

³ John Damasc., *loc. cit.*

water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana.¹ Clearly, then, the traditional teaching of the Church is that by virtue of the words of consecration the bread and the wine, although their appearances remain, undergo an intrinsic change, as a result of which they are no longer bread and wine, but become the true body and blood of Christ. Transubstantiation means nothing more than this.

In considering the dogma of transubstantiation it is well to remember what has been said more than once in the course of these essays, that the Church does not define any philosophical system as being of faith. The objection has been made against the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist that this is necessarily bound up with the scholastic view concerning substance and accidents, a view which is by no means universally accepted, and that the Council of Trent in defining the doctrine of transubstantiation exceeded its powers by making excursions into the field of philosophy. This, however, is not the case. It is true that the term "transubstantiation" is a philosophical one and is associated with the system of the Schoolmen; it is true that the scholastic view of the relation between substance and accidents has provided the basis of a wonderful synthesis of Eucharistic theology, brought to its perfection by St Thomas Aquinas. But the revealed doctrine which the term transubstantiation is intended to express is in no way conditioned by the scholastic system of philosophy. It is merely an expression in philosophical terms of the truth enunciated by St Cyril: "The seeming bread is not bread but the body of Christ." The inner reality of a thing, as opposed to what the senses perceive, was called by the scholastics "substance"; and therefore the change of the substance of the bread into the body of Christ was called transubstantiation.

Evidently, therefore, any philosophy may be reconciled with the dogma of transubstantiation which safeguards the distinction between "the appearances" of a thing and the thing in itself; and this is a distinction which any system of philosophy must safeguard if it is not to run counter to right thinking. It is a commonplace of experience that realities are either "things in themselves" or else modifications or qualities of things that exist in themselves. A man, a tree, copper, zinc, these are substances; they exist in themselves. On the other hand, thought, extension, colour, physical and chemical actions and reactions, are called in philosophical language accidents, because they require a subject, or a substance, in which to "inhere." Thought does not exist except in a thinking subject; there is no extension, colour, chemical activity, except in a corporeal substance. Substance and accidents, therefore, form a composite unity which is naturally indissoluble; yet, in reality as well as in thought, they are distinct from each other as that which exists in itself must be distinct from that which, in order to exist, requires a subject of inherence. Thus a bodily substance is not its size, its shape, its colour, its chemical

¹ See above, p. 854.

or physical properties, nor is it the sum of these ; it is that which possesses these properties, is located, acts and reacts by means of them, and through them manifests itself to the senses. The substance *as such* is impervious to the senses ; if a body had no extension we could not touch it, if it had no colour we could not see it. Hence we commonly give to the accidents of material substances the name of appearances, since it is through these accidents, perceived by the senses, that the mind arrives at the knowledge of the substance.

*Unique
character of
this change*

The Eucharistic change, then, is one which transcends sense-perception, because what is changed is not the appearances but the substance. The senses of sight, touch, taste and smell reveal in the consecrated elements those properties which are naturally associated with bread and wine ; subjected to physical or chemical analysis they will present the features of bread and wine ; but the substance which is the natural subject of those properties and activities is no longer there : instead there is present the substance of the body and blood of Christ. We have seen how the Fathers use various analogies to explain the Eucharistic conversion ; but it should be remembered that they are analogies and nothing more. There is no change, whether natural or miraculous, to which transubstantiation can properly be likened ; this conversion, according to the Council of Trent, is not only miraculous (*mirabilis*) but unique (*singularis*). In the substantial changes with which we are familiar in the order of nature there is always a substantial element which remains common to either term ;¹ and this is true even of the miraculous conversion of water into wine which Christ operated at the marriage feast of Cana. Moreover, such changes always issue in a reality which is at any rate partially new ; thus the food which we eat adds new tissue to our bodies, the wine into which Christ changed the water did not exist previously. But in transubstantiation the whole substance of the bread and wine is changed into the whole substance of the body and blood of Christ ; and not into a new body and blood of Christ, but into that same which was born of the Virgin Mary, which suffered and died for us, and which now reigns glorious in heaven. Rightly, then, does the liturgy call this " the mystery of faith," for, more than any other miracle, it calls for the unhesitating belief of the human mind in the omnipotence of the Creator, whose hand, having made all things out of nothing, reaches to the very roots of being, and therefore can change his creatures at will.

*" Concomi-
tance "*

From this fundamental truth, that by virtue of the words of consecration the substance of the bread and wine is converted into the substance of our Lord's body and blood, the rest of Eucharistic theology follows as a logical consequence. But with two points of that doctrine, since their immediate connection with transubstantiation is most evident, I must deal before concluding this section :

¹ According to the scholastic view, the " prime matter," which is successively determined by different substantial forms.

they are "concomitance," and the permanence of the Eucharistic accidents without a subject. Transubstantiation is the conversion of substance into substance, and therefore the formal effect of the words of consecration pronounced over the bread is to convert the *substance* of the bread into the *substance* of the body of Christ. Now the principle of "concomitance" is that whereas the words by their sacramental virtue render present only the substance of our Lord's body, yet because that body is the real body of Christ therefore the substance (as such) of his body must be accompanied (*concomitari*) by all that is really united with it at the moment in which the words are pronounced. Hence under the appearances of bread by real concomitance together with the substance of our Lord's body are present also its accidents (its extension, colour and other properties), his blood, his soul and the divinity which is hypostatically united with his humanity. Likewise by real concomitance under the appearances of wine are present together with the substance of his blood its accidents, the body of Christ, his soul and his divinity. Two important consequences of this doctrine may be noted here. The first is that the separate consecration of the bread and the wine, although—as is shown in the essay on the Eucharistic sacrifice—it symbolises the death of Christ, does not operate any real separation of Christ's body and blood. The second, and practical, consequence is that, the whole Christ being truly, really and substantially present under the appearances either of bread or of wine, the faithful who communicate only under the appearances of bread truly receive the whole Christ, no less than the priest who also partakes of the chalice.

There remains the question of the accidents of the bread and wine, *The appearances that remain* which, in order to distinguish them from the accidents of the body and blood of Christ, we shall call the Eucharistic accidents. Experience testifies that, so far as sense-perception is concerned, the words of consecration have brought about no change: the appearance, the taste, all the properties of bread and wine remain as before. Are we to say that these are nothing more than subjective impressions to which no objective reality corresponds, so that the poetic expression of St Thomas: "*visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur*," is to be understood quite literally? Are our senses deceived when they register the presence of a real quantity, a real taste of bread and wine? The traditional teaching of theologians—unchallenged until the end of the seventeenth century—leaves no room for doubt. Our senses are not deceived concerning what is within their competence, and the normal reaction of our sense organs is evidence of the presence of an external reality which stimulates them. After the consecration there is no longer present the substance of the bread or the wine, but there remains some objective element belonging to those substances which produces the sensory perception which we associate with bread and wine; and this sensible element is the sign of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ. That this is the teaching

of the Church may be seen in the distinction constantly made by the Fathers, and applied in particular to the Eucharist, between the external or sensible element in the sacrament and the internal element, or the thing signified ; in fact, in speaking of the Eucharist they refer explicitly to the earthly or sensible thing (or nature) therein contained, as opposed to the heavenly reality which underlies it.¹ It was only with the philosophical system of Descartes that a school of theologians arose suggesting that "the appearances" of bread and wine were nothing else than subjective impressions produced by God in the senses of the observer, to the exclusion of any objective reality belonging to the bread and wine which should be their cause. In the view of Descartes there is no real distinction between a substance and its quantity ; and hence he was constrained by the doctrine of transubstantiation to postulate the total disappearance of the accidents of the bread and wine together with their substance.

This view is rejected by all theologians, who, while they hesitate to stigmatise it as heretical, uniformly maintain as a certain theological conclusion that the accidents of the bread and wine remain really and objectively. But although all theologians are on common ground in admitting the real permanence of these accidents, not all are agreed as to the manner in which this comes about. Without entering into a discussion of the various views held by orthodox theologians on this matter, it will be sufficient for our present purpose to set out the explanation given by St Thomas² and now generally accepted. It may be stated quite briefly in these terms : the substances of bread and wine having been converted into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, the accidents of bread and wine, since they no longer have a substance in which they may inhere, remain without a subject, God miraculously giving to the quantity—or mass—of the bread and wine respectively the power of sustaining the other accidents and of acting precisely in the same way as the said substances would have acted were they still present. That these accidents have no subject, St Thomas argues, is the inevitable consequence of transubstantiation. They cannot inhere in the substances of bread and wine, for they are no longer there ; nor, clearly, can they belong to the substance of the body and blood of Christ, which is not susceptible of the accidents of another substance, nor, for a similar reason, can they inhere in the surrounding air or in the ether. Since no subject is assignable for them, they have no subject. Nevertheless, he goes on to point out, among the accidents of a corporeal substance quantity stands alone as having peculiar properties. It is in the mass or extension of a body that all its qualities, all its active and passive powers immediately reside. Thus quantity alone, says St Thomas, remains in the Eucharist without a subject, and in the quantity all the other accidents of the bread and wine inhere. After the consecration, therefore, quantity plays the role of substance with regard to the other accidents ;

¹ See above, p. 852, n. 2.

² *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxxvii.

it does not actually become a substance, but God miraculously exerts through quantity the activities which normally would be exercised by the substance. This principle provides the explanation how the Eucharistic accidents can nourish the body of the recipient, can act upon and be acted upon by other bodies, can be substantially changed—thus the host may become corrupt, the accidents of wine may turn to vinegar; this finally is the reason why physical or chemical analysis of the species—were any so blasphemous as to attempt it—would give only the normal reactions of bread and wine.

We must now turn our attention to the mysterious manner in which the body and blood of Christ are present in this sacrament, a subject which, by reason of its special difficulty and complexity, must be treated in a separate section.

§ VI: THE EUCHARISTIC PRESENCE

THE Council of Trent, referring to the manner of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, says that "whereas our Saviour always sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven according to his natural mode of existing, yet he is also in many other places sacramentally present to us in his own substance, by a manner of existing which, though we can scarcely express it in words, yet we can conceive with the understanding illuminated by faith, and ought most firmly to believe to be possible to God." To try to explain how this mysterious mode of presence is to be conceived according to the principles of scholastic theology is the purpose of the present section.¹

The beauty of the Thomistic synthesis of Eucharistic theology is *The Thomistic synthesis* what a French theologian has called its "economy in the miraculous." Not that the Angelic doctor attempts in any way to attenuate the stupendous marvels of the Eucharistic miracle; but according to St Thomas the Eucharistic miracle is one, and one only, namely transubstantiation; all else happens as a necessary consequence of this. The basic principle of his explanation of the manner of Christ's presence in the Eucharist is that, since Christ becomes present in this sacrament by transubstantiation, that is by the conversion of "substance into substance," this same miracle conditions the mode of his Eucharistic presence. Having become present by the conversion of substance into substance, he *is* present after the manner of a substance. Let us see, as far as we are able to conceive it, what is involved in this substantial mode of presence.

It is essential to the proper understanding of this difficult matter *Substantial presence* to bear in mind first of all the real distinction between corporeal substance *as such* and the accidents—quantity, qualities and various activities—through which the substance as such manifests itself to our senses, acts upon, and is acted upon by, other substances. The substance as such is not perceptible to the senses; it is only through

¹ St Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxxvi.

its extension or its quantity that it is tangible and occupies space, only as extended and coloured that it is visible, only through its various chemical and physical properties that it acts and thus manifests its distinctive nature to the observer. Precisely as such the substance is discernible only to the intellect. In this matter the imagination is apt to lead us astray; for, every thought being accompanied by a sense-image, we are inclined to confuse the substance, formally and intellectually considered, with the properties and activities which are the object of our sense-experience. If in addition to this important distinction the reader will also remember the principle of real concomitance which has been explained in the previous section, the following statements, though difficult to conceive, will be seen to be the logical consequence of the miracle of transubstantiation.

*Christ whole
and entire
under every
part of
either species*

In the first place, then, the whole Christ—his body, blood, soul and divinity—is present, not only under either species, but under every part of them. Thus when Christ, having consecrated the wine in the chalice, gave it to his disciples to drink, each of them received the whole Christ truly present under the appearances of wine, although the quantity of wine consecrated had been divided. The same truth may be seen implied in the ancient practice of breaking the host after consecration in order to give communion to the faithful. The reason is that Christ is present under the species after the manner of a substance, that is, in the same manner in which, before consecration, the substances of bread or wine were present under their respective accidents. Now, before consecration the whole substance of bread formally considered was present in the whole of its mass, or quantity, and also under every particle thereof. When bread is divided, it is not the substance as such which is divided, but the substance as modified by the accident of quantity; the substance formally as such is indivisible; it abstracts from dimensions or extension. Hence the body of Christ, into which the substance of the bread has been converted, is indivisible and undivided, notwithstanding the division of the species under which it is present.¹

*The presence
of the di-
mensions of
Christ*

But it must not be thought, because the body of Christ is present in this sacrament after the manner of a substance, that it is on that account deprived of its own dimensions. It is here that our imagination is likely to play us false. When we are told that the body of Christ is present under the dimensions of a small host we are tempted to think of that sacred body as reduced to infinitesimal proportions or even as devoid of extension altogether. This would be an error. It has been seen that the *whole* Christ is present under the appearances of bread and wine. It is true that only the substance of his body becomes present in virtue of the Eucharistic conversion formally

¹ This truth is defined as of faith by the Council of Trent (Sess. xiii, can. 3) as regards the species after division. Evidently the same is true also before division, for the reason given above.

considered, but by real concomitance there is present also all that is actually and really united with that substance, and therefore the natural dimensions of his body. As St Thomas puts it, the dimensions—and the other accidents—of our Lord's body are present in this sacrament *quasi per accidens*, i.e. not as the formal effect of transubstantiation, but by reason of their real union with that which is formally present. They are present, if we may say so, because the substance has brought them with it. And here follows a rather attractive piece of reasoning on the part of St Thomas: because the dimensions of the body of Christ are present in the Eucharist only by reason of their real concomitance with the substance, those dimensions have, so to speak, to accommodate themselves to the manner of existence of the substance as such. One thinks of the courtiers of a prince, forced by their attachment to his royal person to content themselves with any lodging that their master may choose. Thus the dimensions of Christ's body, being present by reason of their real concomitance with the substance, exist in this sacrament, not in their natural manner, but after the manner of the substance which they accompany.

To try to picture to oneself such a mysterious mode of presence is fatal to the understanding of it. We always think of quantity as that by which a substance occupies a particular portion of space; and this is indeed one of the normal effects of quantity. But actual extension in a place is not of its very essence. The essential effect of quantity in a corporeal substance is to give it parts, to make it intrinsically divisible.¹ Now the body of Christ has all its natural parts and dimensions; each part of his body is situationally distinct and relatively to the other parts has its proper and normal position; but those dimensions are not extended relatively to the surrounding body, or place; they are not circumscribed by the place in which they are present. Briefly, in the normal course of events a corporeal substance occupies a place by means of its quantity; in the Eucharist the contrary is the case: the quantity of the body of Christ is present by means of, and therefore in the manner of, the substance.

Some theologians have found it convenient to explain this very difficult point by saying that the body of Christ is present in this sacrament after the manner of a spirit, as the soul is present in the human body. The analogy is useful inasmuch as it enables one to conceive a presence which is not conditioned by quantitative dimensions; but I have purposely refrained from using it because it may so easily be misunderstood. The presence of a spirit is not conditioned by quantity precisely because it has no quantity: it is immaterial. But the body of Christ—I repeat at the risk of being wearisome—has its own natural dimensions. It is not present in its normal way; but this is not because the body of Christ has been dematerialised, spiritualised, but because its dimensions exist in this sacrament after the manner of a substance *as such*; and a substance

An imperfect analogy

¹ Aristotle, *Metaph.* iv, c. 13.

considered formally as such abstracts from dimensions and extension.¹

Hence when we say that the body of Christ is present in a particular place, in the ciborium, in the tabernacle, in the mouth of the recipient, we mean that in the place occupied by the dimensions of bread (or wine) there is really and truly present the body of Christ, with its dimensions and other accidents, with his blood, his soul and his divinity, present, however, after the manner of a substance as such. It follows that there is no intrinsic impossibility in the simultaneous presence of Christ in heaven and in many places on earth. The multilocation of a body is shown in philosophy to be impossible only because of the limitations imposed by quantitative dimensions; these, however, as we have seen, do not condition the presence of Christ in this sacrament. There is no multiplication of the body of Christ, no division, because these again are associated with quantity; it is one and the same body of Christ, present in heaven according to his natural mode of existence, and present upon innumerable altars throughout the world after the manner of a substance.

*Consequences
of this mode
of presence*

It is a further logical consequence of the Eucharistic presence that the body of Christ in this sacrament—apart from a further miracle, of which we have no evidence in revelation—cannot do or undergo any action which requires quantitative contact with external bodies; hence he cannot be seen, felt or heard. Nor, apparently, apart from a special miracle, has Christ the exercise of his senses in this sacrament, because his body has not that contact with external bodies which is required for it. St Thomas, so far as I know, does not raise the question; but the strict application of his principles would lead one to deny that any such special miracle takes place. Nevertheless, many theologians maintain as a pious opinion that Christ miraculously assumes a power which the sacramental presence would normally not permit.² Moreover, no violence can be done to the body of Christ in this sacrament; external agencies, be they natural or artificial, wilful or innocent, cannot result in any harm to the sacred humanity of Christ in the Eucharist; these can reach only the appearances of bread and wine, beneath which the body and blood of Christ, present in the manner of a substance, remain undisturbed and inviolate.

The same principles govern the permanence of the body of Christ beneath the sacramental species. The Real Presence lasts as long as the substance of bread or wine would have remained if transubstantiation had not taken place, that is, as long as the accidents and

¹ A further reason for abstaining from such locutions as "Christ is spiritually present in the Eucharist" is that many non-Catholic writers use similar phrases concerning the Eucharist, without implying any true belief in the Real Presence. They mean by the spiritual presence of Christ merely that Christ is present in the Eucharist by reason of the faith of the recipient.

² Evidently Christ has perfect knowledge of all that happens in the Eucharist, at least through his infused and beatific knowledge.

properties of bread or wine remain. As soon as such a change has been brought about—whether quantitatively or qualitatively—in the sacramental species as would normally be evidence of a substantial change, then the body of Christ ceases to be present. The reason may be put quite simply in this way: the Sacrament of the Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ really present under the appearances of bread and wine; if the appearances of bread and wine cease to be present, then the sacrament no longer exists, and so the Real Presence ceases.¹

Such, in brief outline, is the Thomistic explanation of the Eucharistic presence. More, perhaps, than any other abstract truth of our religion, this requires the resolute banishing of pictures suggested by the imagination and the complete concentration of the mind upon intellectual concepts. If in treating this subject some of the greatest of saints and theologians have failed to attain the ideal, then perhaps we need feel no surprise that our minds are at a loss before the contemplation of this mystery of faith. But if we lament the impotence of our minds, let us also adore the omnipotence of God.

§ VII: THE SACRAMENT AND ITS USE

THE intimate connection of the Sacrament of the Eucharist with the Eucharistic sacrifice has been sufficiently explained in the introductory section; the sacrament which we receive is none other than the all-holy victim which through the priest we have offered to God. We must here consider the essential elements of the sacrament, and also certain important matters relating to its use and administration.

That the Eucharist merits the name of sacrament—that it is a *The* sign permanently instituted by Christ and an instrumental cause of *Eucharist a* man's sanctification—that indeed, by reason of the sacred Body of *“permanent”* Christ which it really contains, it is the greatest of all the sacraments, *sacrament* is apparent in all that has hitherto been said. But it is not only in its super-eminent dignity that the Eucharist differs from the other sacraments; it is unique in that it is permanent. The other sacraments exist only in the moment of their performance and administration; in fact, they are performed when they are administered. When the two elements of the sacramental sign—*e.g.* the pouring of

¹ With regard to qualitative and quantitative change in the sacramental species, it may be noted in the first place that the length of time during which the Real Presence lasts after reception will depend upon physiological conditions; as a general rule ten minutes is given as the normal period. At what point of quantitative division in the species does the Real Presence cease? From the point of view of dogmatic theology it must, it seems, be admitted that even the most minute particles of the species of bread or wine, though naturally imperceptible to the senses, if they present the characteristics of bread or wine, truly harbour the sacred Presence. In practice, however, such particles must be treated as non-existent, because Christ, who has deigned to give himself to us in this sacrament, wills to be treated as present only when the sign of his presence is perceptible.

water and the saying of the words—are joined together and applied to the recipient, in that moment the sacrament exists, produces its effect—and ceases. The Eucharist, on the contrary, exists as a sacrament independently of its administration; when the form—the words of consecration—has been pronounced over the matter—bread and wine—the sacrament of the Eucharist exists in its complete perfection, even though none may ever receive it; and it continues to exist as long as the sacramental species remain incorrupt.

In consequence of the peculiar nature of this sacrament it is necessary to proceed somewhat differently when we seek to designate its essential elements. We must distinguish two stages: the sacrament, so to speak, in the making, and the sacrament in its completed state; and it is only in the first of these stages that we are able properly to discern the two parts that constitute the sacramental sign. The matter of the sacrament is bread and wine, the form consists of the words of consecration; but these are present only in the moment of the confection of the sacrament. After the consecration, of the bread and wine there remain only the appearances, while the form remains only virtually, that is to say, in the permanent effect of transubstantiation. An accurate treatment, therefore, of the sacrament requires that we consider it separately under these two aspects, in the moment of its confection and in its state of completion.

The matter

Little needs to be said here of the matter and the form of the Eucharist. The matter consists of bread and wine. With regard to the bread, the dispute between East and West as to the use of leavened or unleavened bread is well known. In all probability Christ himself used unleavened bread in instituting the Eucharist;¹ but it cannot be established with any degree of certainty that in apostolic or sub-apostolic times there was uniformity of usage. It was not until the eleventh century that the question was raised by the Eastern dissidents, led by Michael Cerularius, as to the validity of the use of unleavened bread; having raised it they answered it in the negative, thus asserting the invalidity of the consecration in the Roman rite. The attitude which the Catholic Church had maintained since the beginning is embodied in the statement of the Council of Florence—the *Decretum pro Armenis*—that “the body of Christ is truly conformed in wheaten bread, whether it be leavened or not, and priests of the Eastern or Western Church are bound to consecrate in either according to the respective custom of each rite.” The wine used in the Eucharist must be wine of the grape,² though in certain circumstances a little alcohol may be artificially added for purposes of preservation. The ritual of adding a few drops of water to the wine at

¹ Matt. xxvi 17.

² The suggestion of Harnack (*Brot und Wasser*, Leipzig, 1891), based on a passage of St Cyprian's letter to Caecilius, that the primitive Church used water in the Eucharist instead of wine, has met with so little encouragement that it deserves to be mentioned only as a curiosity.

the Offertory has probably an historical basis in the act of Christ himself at the Last Supper, and its symbolism is beautifully expressed in the prayer which the priest recites as he adds them: "O God who in creating human nature hast wonderfully dignified it and still more wonderfully formed it again; grant that by the mystery of this water and wine we may be made partakers of the divine nature of him who vouchsafed to become partaker of our humanity, namely, Jesus Christ our Lord, thy Son." ¹

The form of the sacrament consists of the words used by Christ himself in instituting the Eucharist: over the bread, "This is my body"; and over the wine, "This is the chalice of my blood of the new and eternal testament—mystery of faith—which shall be shed for you and for many unto the remission of sins." What words may be omitted without affecting the validity of the consecration is a question discussed by moral theologians, and as not being of general interest may be disregarded here. It is held by the Eastern dissidents that the prayer called the Epiclesis, which in certain liturgies follows the consecration, is essential to the effect of transubstantiation. A more detailed treatment of this matter will be found elsewhere; ² suffice it to state here that according to Catholic teaching transubstantiation is operated solely by the words of institution.

Turning now to consider the sacrament in its completed state we are confronted by the preliminary question of what constitutes the "sacrament" properly so called. Is the sacrament of the Eucharist the body of Christ only, or is it merely the species of bread and wine, or is it both together? Subtle theological discussion as to the precise meaning to be attached to the word "sacrament" has caused various answers to be given to this question. If, however, we abstract from such subtleties, we may reply quite simply that the sacrament of the Eucharist is the body and blood of Christ really present, after the manner of a substance, under the appearances of bread and wine, and destined to be our spiritual and supernatural food. Hence not only the body of Christ really present constitutes the sacrament, not only the consecrated species, but both the body of Christ and the species together; for the former without the latter is not a visible sign, and the species without the body of Christ present under them are not the cause of grace.

The Eucharist, being a sacrament, is destined to be received by the faithful. But, as the fathers of the Council of Trent point out, "it is not the less on this account to be adored by them." ³ The practice of the Church of paying to the Eucharist the worship which is due to God alone is but a logical consequence of her belief that

¹ Evidently this small quantity of water does not change the nature of the wine, but it is absorbed into the water naturally contained therein, and thus at the consecration is changed into the blood of Christ.

² *The Eucharistic Sacrifice*, pp. 917-918.

³ Session xiii, c. 5.

therein is permanently present the living Christ, true God and true man. The Feast of Corpus Christi, processions of the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction, are merely the devotional expression, sanctioned or even commanded by the Church, of this traditional faith in the Real Presence. Likewise connected with that belief, and with the sacramental character of the Eucharist, is the custom of reserving the Blessed Sacrament with a view to its administration to the sick. Hence the Council of Trent anathematizes those who "say that it is not allowed to reserve the Eucharist in the tabernacle, but that it must be administered to those present immediately after the consecration, or that it may not be carried with honour to the sick."¹ A providential aspect of the practice of reservation is the opportunity thus afforded to the devout faithful of paying those private visits to the Blessed Sacrament which are so fruitful a source of grace and so edifying a feature of Catholic devotional life.

*Conditions
of lawful
reception—
state of grace*

For the proper reception of the sacrament two conditions are necessary, the state of grace and the natural fast from the preceding midnight. We have seen how vehemently St Paul insists upon the worthy reception of the Eucharist² and throughout Tradition we hear the echo of his words. Suffice it to quote two well-known passages: "This food," writes St Justin,³ "is called the Eucharist, of which none is allowed to partake unless he believes our teaching to be true and has been washed in the laver which is unto the remission of sins and regeneration, and so lives as Christ has commanded." And the Eucharistic prayer of the *Didache* (a document of the second half of the first century) concludes with the solemn warning: "If anyone be holy let him approach; otherwise let him do penance." The reason why the state of grace is necessary in the recipient of this sacrament is to be sought not only in the reverence due to the body and blood of Christ, but in the purpose for which this sacrament was instituted. The Eucharist is the divinely appointed food whereby the supernatural life of grace is to be sustained in our souls; and food is not given to the dead but to the living. Those who are dead in sin must rise to newness of life in baptism, the sacrament of regeneration, those who have allowed themselves again to become subject to the captivity of Satan must be loosed from their sins in the sacrament of Penance,⁴ before they can partake of the food of life.

*The natural
fast*

Of the second disposition required for the reception of the Eucharist—the natural fast—St Augustine gives the following explanation: "It is clear," he writes,⁵ "that when the disciples first received the

¹ Session xiii, c. 7.

² 1 Cor. xi 27.

³ *Apol.* I, c. 66.

⁴ In this connection the following precept of the Council of Trent is important: "For fear lest so great a sacrament should be received unworthily, and so unto death and condemnation, this holy Synod ordains and declares that sacramental confession, when a confessor may be had, is of necessity to be made beforehand by those whose conscience is burdened with mortal sin, however contrite they may think themselves" (Sess. xiii, c. 11).

⁵ *Ep.* 54, c. 6.

body and blood of the Lord they did not receive fasting. . . . Later, however, it pleased the Holy Spirit that, for the honour due to so great a sacrament, the body of Christ should enter the mouth of a Christian before any other food ; and therefore throughout the whole world this custom is observed." An earlier trace of this law is to be found in Tertullian's *Ad uxorem*,¹ where he refers to the custom of receiving the Eucharist privately at home "before taking any food."

It was the ordinary rule in the early Church that the faithful, as well as the priest who offered the sacrifice, should receive communion under both species. But that on occasion, when convenience or necessity required it, the faithful partook only of one species is evident from numerous documents of early Christian times. Tertullian, in the passage to which reference has just been made, witnesses to the custom of receiving the Eucharist at home under the species of bread only, and it was fairly common to give communion under one species—either of bread or of wine only—to the sick. Young children, to whom the Eucharist was then generally administered, received under the species of wine only, and an indication of the early belief that one species was sufficient for the proper reception of the sacrament may be seen in the very ancient liturgy of the Mass of the Pre-sanctified, where the priest receives under the species of bread alone. Evidently, therefore, the use of both species by the faithful is not of divine precept or institution, since otherwise the above-mentioned practices could never have been introduced without arousing comment and opposition. It was only in the fifteenth century that the Hussites—followed in this by many of the Reformers of the succeeding century—insisted upon the necessity of communion under both species. The whole matter cannot be better summarised than in the words of the Council of Trent : "Holy Mother Church, knowing her authority in the administration of the sacraments, although the use of both species has from the beginning of the Christian religion not been infrequent, yet, that custom having in the progress of time been widely changed, induced by weighty and just reasons,² has approved of this custom of communicating under one species, and decreed that it was to be held as a law. . . . This synod moreover declares that although, as has already been said, our Redeemer at the Last Supper instituted and delivered to the Apostles this sacrament in two species, yet it is to be acknowledged that Christ whole and entire, and a true sacrament, are received under either species alone ; and that therefore, as regards the fruit, they who receive one species alone are not defrauded of any grace necessary for salvation."³

¹ ii 5.

² Among these reasons the following may be enumerated : the difficulty of reserving the species of wine ; the danger of spilling and other inconveniences attending distribution ; the rarity of wine in certain districts ; and finally the practical profession of faith in the presence of Christ whole and entire under either species alone, which such custom involves.

³ Session xxi, c. 2 and c. 3.

One further question, that of the necessity of the Eucharist for salvation, remains to be treated. But as the elements for its solution are provided by the consideration of the effects of the sacrament it will find place more conveniently in the succeeding section.

§ VIII: THE EFFECTS OF THE SACRAMENT

The Sacrament of the divine life

As the Eucharist is the greatest of all the sacraments, so it is particularly fitting that the words in which Christ himself has described its effects should have been preserved for us in the Scriptures with the greatest completeness and detail. In an earlier section reference has been made to the discourse, related by St. John,¹ in which our Saviour prepared his disciples for their first communion. From the beginning of this discourse to the end it is clear that the effect of the Eucharist is life. The Eucharist is "the bread of God . . . that giveth life to the world"; it is "the bread of life . . . the living bread that came down from heaven . . . the bread . . . that if any man eat of it he may not die . . . if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever"; in fact it is the food which is indispensable for life, for "except you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you shall not have life in you; he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day. . . . He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me. . . . He that eateth this bread shall live for ever." St Peter could not have expressed more appropriately his faith in his Master's teaching than by saying: "Thou hast the words of eternal life."

And what is this life which is so evidently the proper effect of the Eucharist? The words of Christ leave no room for doubt. It is the divine life, the life of God himself; the life which the Son, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, lives in common with the Father, and of which he, through this ineffable sacrament, communicates to us a finite participation. It is the same life to which we are "born again of water and the Holy Ghost," in virtue of which, being made partakers of the divine nature and receiving the Spirit of adoption, we become the adopted sons of God. It is this community of the divine life which makes all Christians to be one; as the Father is in Christ, and he in the Father, so all who partake of this life are one in them; "I in them," says Christ after the Last Supper, "and thou in me; that they may be made perfect in one."² This is the reason why Christ promises that he who receives the Eucharist will abide in Christ as Christ abides in him. By receiving this sacrament we become members of his mystical body, and thus are vivified by the vital principle of that body, which is none other than the divine life of sanctifying grace, the life to which Christ is referring when he

¹ vi 27 ff.

² John xvii 23.

says, at the Last Supper, "I am the vine; you the branches; he that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing."

"The effect of this sacrament," says St Thomas, "is union with the mystical body of Christ,"¹ union with Christ by sanctifying grace and union with all the members of his mystical body. "We being many," says St Paul, "are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread."² "Just as this bread," prayed the Christians of the first century,³ "was once dispersed upon the hills and has been gathered into one substance, so may thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy Kingdom." None of the Fathers has so clearly expressed this fundamental Eucharistic truth as St Augustine. "The faithful," he writes,⁴ "know the body of Christ if they do not neglect to be the body of Christ. Let them become the body of Christ if they wish to live by the Spirit of Christ. Only the body of Christ lives by the Spirit of Christ; and therefore it is that St Paul, explaining to us the nature of this bread, says: 'We being many are one bread, one body.' O sacrament of piety! O symbol of unity! O bond of charity! He who wills to live has here the place to live, has here the source of his life. Let him approach and believe, let him be incorporated, that he may receive life."⁵

In order to understand what is meant by this union with Christ which is the proper effect of the Eucharist it is important to distinguish between the actual reception of the Sacrament and the effect of the reception. The very act of receiving Holy Communion involves a union between the body of Christ and ourselves, inasmuch as that Sacred Body, under the appearances of bread and wine, is truly, really and substantially present within our own bodies until the species have become corrupt. But this is not the union with Christ of which we speak as the effect of the Eucharist. The union which the Eucharist effects is a spiritual, supernatural union with Christ by means of sanctifying grace and charity, a union which may appropriately be described as "vital," since it consists in the communication to our souls of the supernatural life of grace, the life of the mystical body of Christ. Just as during his life on earth the healing touch of his body gave sight to the blind and healed all manner of bodily diseases, so his life-giving humanity, sacramentally received by us, gives to our souls the life which makes us members of him and partakers of the divine nature.

The attentive reader will have observed that this effect—union with Christ by sanctifying grace and charity—which the sources of revelation represent as the proper effect of the Eucharist, is none other than the effect which is common to all the sacraments of the New Law; for all these produce sanctifying grace in our souls. And it is

¹ *Summa Theol.*, Q. lxxiii, art. 3.

² 1 Cor. x 17.

³ *Didache*, c. 9, § 4.

⁴ In *Joan.*, tr. xxvi, 13.

⁵ See also the passage of St John Chrysostom quoted on p. 855.

this fact, more than any other, that enables us to understand the unique place which the Eucharist holds among the sacraments. For the Eucharist, says St Thomas, "has of itself the power of giving grace." "This sacrament," says the Catechism of the Council of Trent, "is the source from which the other sacraments derive whatever perfection and goodness they possess."

While it is true, then, that all the sacraments produce sanctifying grace, yet the Eucharist alone produces it as its own proper effect—*ex seipso*, says St Thomas. The other sacraments produce grace only in virtue of their essential relation to the Eucharist. And if we consider each of the sacraments we shall see the truth of the words of St Thomas: "The Eucharist is the end of all the sacraments, for the sanctification given in all the sacraments constitutes a preparation either for the reception or for the consecration of the Eucharist." By Baptism, according to the well-known teaching of St Paul,¹ we die to sin in order that we may live to Christ; the mystical death that we undergo in this sacrament is but the preparation for the mystical life that we live in Christ through the Eucharist. By Confirmation we are armed against the dangers which threaten the unity of Christ's mystical body, a unity which, as we have seen, is the proper effect of the Eucharist. Penance removes the actual sins committed after baptism, sins which are an obstacle to union with Christ by charity, while Extreme Unction removes those last relics of sin, that spiritual weakness which results from sin and handicaps the soul in its endeavour to live for God alone. The relation of the Sacrament of Order to the Eucharist is too obvious to need explanation; while Matrimony, as signifying the union of Christ with his spouse the Church, is a type of that intimate union of the faithful with Christ which is the proper effect of the greatest of all the sacraments.

The sacramental grace of the Eucharist

The Catechism of the Council of Trent, in the passage already quoted more than once, compares the Eucharist to the source or fountain-head; and the similitude may be found useful in order to explain more fully the effect of the sacrament. The water that flows at the source has a characteristically stimulating effect. So too, although all the sacraments produce sanctifying grace, yet the grace which is given in the Eucharist has that especially stimulating and invigorating quality which we associate with water that flows fresh from the source. Each sacrament, as is well known, besides giving sanctifying grace, produces an effect—called sacramental grace—which is peculiar to itself. This sacramental grace, says St Thomas,² "adds to grace commonly so called and to the virtues and gifts a certain divine help to attain the end of the sacrament." Now the end of the sacrament of the Eucharist is union with Christ by charity; the sacramental grace of the Eucharist, therefore, is a special help for the attainment of that union which St Paul calls "the bond of perfection"; theologians call it "the fervour of charity."

¹ Rom. vi 2-10.

² *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxii, art. 2.

The matter is so important that no apology need be made for *The fervour of charity* devoting some little space to the explanation of this effect of the Eucharist. The virtue of charity is that supernatural habit ¹ infused together with sanctifying grace, which enables us to love God for his own sake above all things. One who has the virtue of charity has such a habit of mind that he regards God as the last end to which he must direct all his actions, to which his whole life must be subordinated. It is true that he is not always thinking of God; he does not, as theologians say, always "actually" direct all his actions to God's glory; but he is "habitually" so constituted in regard to God that if any action presented itself to his mind as incompatible with God's friendship he would reject it, because he loves God above all things. Such a state is called "habitual charity." But there are times in our lives when the thought of God is strong within us, when we realise more fully that God is the sovereign Good, that all that we have is ours only because it comes from God, and therefore must be given back to him. In such moments we live "actually" for God; all that is ours we actually refer to him, the source of all good; then we have some small understanding of what St Paul meant when he said: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me," and perhaps we feel "our heart burning within us" as did the disciples on the way to Emmaus, so that to God we cry with the Psalmist: "How sweet are thy words to my palate! more than honey to my mouth."²

This actual and conscious referring of our actions to God is called the "fervour of charity." Some of the saints have reached the stage of perfection in which this fervour of devotion is alive constantly within them; but with the majority of mankind such moments are comparatively rare. In time of retreat, perhaps, during prayer and as a result of humble and unremitting effort, in the church, and above all after Holy Communion, we may be filled with that actual realisation of all that God is and of the little that we are in his sight, and we may be fired with that zeal for the service of God, with that fervour of charity that makes us say with St Paul: "The charity of Christ presseth us on."³

This, then, is the special fruit of the Eucharist. Just as daily contact with Christ during his life on earth must have aroused in the hearts of his disciples an ardent and enthusiastic love for his divine Person, so he who drinks living waters of the fountains of the Saviour, deriving grace from the intimate touch of his life-giving humanity, breaks into fervent acts of divine love, acts which increase⁴ and establish more firmly in him the virtue by which he adheres to God the Sovereign Good. And so it is seen how truly this sacrament is called the food of the soul, and how appropriately the body and blood of

¹ See Essay xviii, *The Supernatural Virtues*, pp. 645 ff.

² Ps. cxviii 103.

³ 2 Cor. v 14.

⁴ I.e. not effectively but meritoriously. See Essay xviii, *The Supernatural Virtues*, pp. 629-630.

Christ are given to mankind under the outward form of bodily food. For "all those effects which material food and drink produce in regard to bodily life are produced in respect of the spiritual life by this sacrament; it sustains, it gives increase, it repairs (the ravages of disease) and it gives delight."¹

Other effects
of the sacra-
ment

That this sacramental food sustains and invigorates the life of the soul is clear from what has been said. But it does not give that life in the first instance; before the soul may be nourished with the heavenly food of the Eucharist it must first have been born to the supernatural life through the sacrament of regeneration; the life-giving virtue of the Eucharist must first have been applied to the soul through the intermediary of baptism, by which man dies to sin that he "may walk in newness of life";² and if by mortal sin he should have become a dead member of Christ's mystical body, that same life-giving power must be applied to him through the sacrament of reconciliation before he can be nourished again by the sacrament of unity.³ But, just as bodily food repairs the effects of a disease which is not mortal, although it cannot give life to a dead body, so the Eucharist has the effect of remitting venial sin, inasmuch as it arouses in the soul the fervour of charity, to which alone venial sin is opposed.⁴ Indirectly, too, such fervour remits the temporal punishment due to sin.

In strengthening the supernatural life of the soul the Eucharist also preserves it from future sin, because the fervour of charity which is the special fruit of this sacrament renders the soul less susceptible to the attractions of the devil, the world, and the flesh, and more prompt in its obedience to the will of God.

A final analogy between the food of the body and the Eucharist, the spiritual food of the soul, is to be found in the pleasure or delight which accompanies its reception. This effect in the case of the Eucharist takes the form of a certain alacrity and spiritual joy in the fulfilment of the divine will, which is characteristic of the fervour of charity. But it is to be noted that, just as one who, being in indifferent health, approaches his meal listlessly and without appetite, will fail to relish his food, so he who approaches this divine sacrament with his mind distracted, with his will not fully detached from the things of earth, will not perceive that spiritual sweetness to which the Psalmist invites us with the words: "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet."⁵ On the other hand this spiritual responsiveness to the will of God, which is the normal effect of Holy Communion received

¹ *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxxix, art. 1.

² Rom. vi 4.

³ It is commonly held, however, that one who receives Holy Communion being unconscious or oblivious of his mortal sin and implicitly sorry for it (with attrition at least) is not deprived of the grace of the Sacrament, since he does not wilfully obstruct its effect.

⁴ It should be noted that venial sin does not diminish the habit of sanctifying grace nor the virtue of charity. See Essay xxvi, *Sin and Repentance*, pp. 948-951; cf. p. 575, n. 1.

⁵ Ps. xxxiii 9.

with good dispositions, should not be confused with that sensible devotion and feeling of religious exhilaration which God sometimes grants as a special and extraordinary grace, but which is by no means an essential accompaniment to the fervour of charity.

It would be a neglect of the express words of Christ himself, as well as of the constant teaching of the Fathers, to omit all mention of the effect of the Eucharist on our bodies. Christ promises the glorious resurrection as one of the fruits of the Eucharist: "He who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." So St Ignatius of Antioch calls the Eucharist the "medicine of immortality,"¹ and St Irenaeus defends the doctrine of the resurrection against the Gnostics on the ground that our bodies have been nourished with the body and blood of Christ: "How can they assert that our flesh will be corrupted and never again be revived, when it has been nourished with the body and blood of Christ? . . . Our bodies having received the Eucharist are no longer corruptible, but have the hope of the resurrection."² This is not to be understood as if the Eucharist produced any physical quality in the body by reason of which it will rise in glory,³ but rather in the sense that it is supremely appropriate that the body, which has been sanctified by contact with this most blessed Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, should be a partaker of Christ's glorious resurrection. The Eucharist, in the words of St Thomas, is "a pledge of glory to come." Hardly less general among the Fathers is the attribution to the Eucharist of a virtue protective against the attacks of concupiscence. This, likewise, is probably not to be interpreted in any physical sense, except so far as the fervour of charity produced by the sacrament enables the soul more efficaciously to resist the temptations of the flesh.

In the light of what has been said concerning the effects of the Eucharist it may be possible now to answer the question as to how far the Eucharist is necessary for salvation. A proper understanding of the matter requires a preliminary definition of terms. In the first place, a thing may be necessary for salvation either as an indispensable means or merely because it is a precept which must be observed. In the former case even the inculpable omission of it would prejudice salvation, whereas if it is a matter of precept evidently only wilful disobedience is imputable. Moreover, a thing may be necessary for salvation either in actual fact, or it may be that the desire of it only is necessary for salvation. Thus Baptism, at least by desire, is necessary as an indispensable means for salvation. It is asked, then, is the Eucharist necessary for salvation?

Of the divine precept to receive Holy Communion there can be little doubt in view of the words of Christ at the Last Supper: "Do this in commemoration of me," and of his express warning, "except

¹ *Ad Eph.*, n. 20.

² *Adv. hæc.*, lib. iv, c. 18.

³ Some few theologians have held this view.

you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you shall not have life in you.”¹ The command of the Church, rendering more definite the precept of Christ himself, that the faithful shall receive the Eucharist at least once a year at Paschal time² is no less indubitable and emphatic. Moreover, it is admitted by all that the divine precept does not oblige those who, being either infants or otherwise ignorant of the precept, are incapable of obeying it, and further that the commandment of the Church binds only those children who have arrived at the age at which they are able to distinguish the Eucharist from ordinary food.

But may one go further, and assert that the Eucharist is necessary, not only because its reception is commanded, but as an indispensable means for salvation? It is quite certain, in view of the condemnation by the Council of Trent³ of the contrary opinion, that the *actual reception* of the Eucharist is not necessary for the salvation of infants; it is certain also that an adult who, through no fault of his own, died without ever receiving the sacrament, would not on that account be lost. Clearly, then, the actual reception of the Eucharist is not necessary as an indispensable means for salvation. Is the *desire* of it necessary? The majority of theologians at the present day content themselves with asserting the divine and ecclesiastical precept, denying that even the desire of the Eucharist is in any proper sense indispensable for salvation; the only sacrament, they say, of which at least the desire is indispensable, is Baptism. This position is undoubtedly the simpler and, if the word “desire” is understood in its ordinary sense, unassailable. Nevertheless, the view of St Thomas is that the desire of the Eucharist, in a certain sense at any rate, is indispensable for salvation; and since his teaching helps much to the understanding of the central position which the Eucharist holds among the sacraments, it deserves to be briefly expounded here.

We must distinguish, says St Thomas,⁴ between the sacrament itself and the effect of the sacrament. The effect of the Eucharist is union with the mystical body of Christ, and without such union it is impossible to be saved, because outside the Church there is no salvation. Clearly, then, that which is the proper effect of the Eucharist is indispensable for salvation. Nevertheless, it is possible to have the effect of a sacrament without receiving the sacrament itself, namely, through a desire of the sacrament. Thus one may receive the effect of Baptism through desiring the sacrament of Baptism. In like manner, to receive the proper effect of the Eucharist, namely, union with the mystical body of Christ, it is sufficient to have the desire of the Eucharist. Now the desire of the Eucharist is implicitly contained in Baptism, because “by Baptism a man is destined for the

¹ John vi 54.

² IV Lateran Council (1215) and Council of Trent (Sess. 13, c. 9).

³ Session 21, c. 4.

⁴ *Summa Theol.*, III, Q. lxxiii, art. 3.

Eucharist, and therefore by the very fact that children are baptised they are destined by the Church for the reception of the Eucharist ; and just as it is by the faith of the Church that they believe, so it is by the intention of the Church that they desire the Eucharist, and consequently receive its effect." The desire of the Eucharist, then, is necessary for salvation inasmuch as Baptism, the sacrament of regeneration, by reason of its essential subordination to the Eucharist—for we die to sin that we may live to Christ—implicitly destines the soul to partake of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.¹

Whatever may be the solution of what is, after all, perhaps, an *Frequent Communion* academic question, it is certainly the desire of the Church that the faithful—as long as they are in the state of grace and have the right intention—should approach Holy Communion frequently and even daily. Hence this section—and the essay—may conveniently conclude with the following extract from the decree of Pope Pius X on the reception of daily Communion :

"The Council of Trent, bearing in mind the immeasurable treasures of divine grace which are obtained by the faithful who receive the most holy Eucharist, says : 'The Sacred Synod desires that the faithful assisting at daily Mass should communicate not only by spiritual affection but also by the sacramental reception of the Eucharist.' These words clearly indicate the desire of the Church that all the faithful should be daily refreshed at this celestial banquet, and draw therefrom more abundant fruits of sanctification. This wish is in evident harmony with the desire by which Christ our Lord was moved when he instituted the Divine Sacrament. For not once nor obscurely, but by frequent repetition, he inculcates the necessity of eating his flesh and drinking his blood ; particularly in the words : 'This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever.'"

G. D. SMITH.

¹ St Thomas is careful, however, in the same article to point out the difference between Baptism and the Eucharist in the matter of necessity. Baptism is the sacrament of initiation into the Christian life, and since there is no preceding sacrament in which the desire of baptism can be involved, infants can be saved only by its actual reception.

XXV

THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE

§ I: INTRODUCTORY

*A general
notion of
Sacrifice.*

ALTHOUGH it might not be quite accurate to say that some kind of sacrificial rite forms, or has formed, an element in every one of the great religions without exception, yet it would not be far from the truth. Almost universally man has felt the need of entering into close communication with the divinity, and nearly everywhere he has found that the best way of satisfying this need was by means of sacrifice, whether he wished to appease his god, to offer him the highest kind of worship, to ask him for his protection, or to thank him for his favours.

The offering of sacrifice corresponds with a natural prompting of man's heart under the influence of religion, it satisfies an appetite that is deep and urgent. It would seem strange, therefore, if the perfect religion, the religion that is the fulfilment of the law, the religion that is intrinsically Catholic, that is, universal, and capable of offering the full satisfaction to all man's needs, everywhere and always, were a religion without a sacrifice. Such a deficiency would need a lot of explaining away before it could be looked upon as other than a defect. Even though it be granted that the Founder and High Priest of this religion offered the perfect sacrifice once for all, it would still seem strange, human nature being what it is, if he had left his followers without any means of renewing this sacrifice, or if he had made no provision whatever for its perpetuation or its constant reiteration.

Happily the suggested deficiency is simply hypothetical. We have the Mass, the proper and perfect sacrifice of the New Law, wherein, in every place, from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof is offered a clean oblation to the Lord, the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of these pages is to justify this assertion by setting forth, as simply as possible, the dogmatic arguments on which it rests, and that done, to add a few theological considerations which may help to a better understanding and realisation of the meaning of the Mass and of its value as the central act of Catholic worship. Readers must not expect to find here any discussion of the many problems connected with the history of the Mass. Nor is it my intention to enter into any of the controversies that have raged around the Mass, be they controversies between Catholics and those who reject the Mass, or be they domestic disputes between different

schools or parties of Catholic theologians. Again, this is not meant to be a devotional essay, though, of course, since all true devotion springs from and rests upon knowledge of the truth, every exposition of Catholic dogma must be fundamentally and potentially devotional. My aim is simply expository, to show that the Mass is a sacrifice, and to set forth what that assertion means and implies.

It might be thought that the first thing necessary in such an essay as this is a rigorous definition of terms ; that we ought to determine exactly what constitutes a sacrifice, and then go on to show that the Mass verifies all the conditions required. That is the usual method in any theological treatise, the method consecrated by generations of scholastic theologians. Unfortunately in the present case, if it is a question of an exact definition, it is impossible to find agreement among theologians. To attempt such a definition would be regarded, inevitably and rightly, as begging the question. We must content ourselves, therefore, with a looser notion of sacrifice, for the present, leaving until later a more rigorous determination of the idea, and for our purpose it will be enough to transcribe what the Rev. M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., has written in his essay, *Christ, Priest and Redeemer* : " And so now we can enlarge the idea of sacrifice by saying that it is an act of homage which furthers union with God, one's Maker and Last End ; and the way that this is done is through the offering of a gift which symbolises interior oblation, and perhaps repentance as well. The gift is sanctified and made holy with God's holiness, since it passes into his possession, if it is accepted by God. His acceptance passes, so to speak, through the gift to the offerer, and the alliance or friendship is ratified by the eating, not by God, but by the worshipper, of what is holy with God's holiness. Sacrifice has thus shown itself as a mode of mediation between God and man."

§ II: THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

WHATEVER else the Mass may be, it is the commemoration and the repetition of the Last Supper. It is the perpetual fulfilment of the command given by Jesus Christ to his Apostles, and through them, to all his priests until the end of time : " Do this in commemoration of me." As to this, there is agreement, I think, among practically all who claim to be Christians. Hence, it is with the Last Supper that we must begin, and if it prove that this has a sacrificial character it will at once follow that the Mass also must be looked upon as a sacrifice.

Only one thing needs to be noted by way of introduction, namely that the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence and all that it implies, must here be taken for granted. All this may be found in the essay on *The Sacrament of the Eucharist*, wherein also it is made clear that

the passages from the Scriptures now to be considered must be understood in their obvious, literal, and realistic sense.

In the accounts of the Last Supper left us by the Evangelists and St Paul two or three things stand out clearly.

In the first place we cannot but be struck by the sacrificial nature and connotations of the language used. Jesus and his Apostles were Jews; all the circumstances accompanying the solemn institution of the covenant between God and the Hebrew people were well known to them, the words in which it is recorded were often read by them or heard in their worship in synagogue and temple. In the Book of Exodus it is written; "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord: and rising in the morning he built an altar at the foot of the mount, and twelve tables according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, and they offered holocausts, and sacrificed pacific victims of calves to the Lord. Then Moses took half of the blood, and put it into bowls; and the rest he poured upon the altar. And taking the book of the covenant, he read it in the hearing of the people . . . and he took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people, and he said: This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."¹ When, therefore, Jesus, giving his Disciples the chalice, said: "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the new testament"² (or "covenant" as the Greek word may equally well be rendered), it is impossible to doubt that the Disciples must have recalled the scene described in Exodus, and realised that Jesus was instituting and sealing the new covenant between God and his people of which the old had been but the type and the promise. And as the old covenant had been sealed in the blood of victims offered in sacrifice, so it is clear that the sealing blood of the new is that of the victim who is the sacrifice of the new covenant. The sacrificial character of this blood is still further emphasised by the added words: "which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins," which proclaim the propitiatory effect of Christ's death. Even if it be granted that Jesus, in these words, was alluding directly and primarily to his approaching death upon the Cross, as to which commentators have disputed endlessly, it still remains true that the Supper itself partook of the nature of a sacrifice since Christ's true body and blood were there really present and really given, and were the immediate subject of his sacrificial words.

Another point to be noticed is the connection or relation set up between the Supper and the Cross. The simplest and most direct way of showing this is to transcribe the texts as they stand. They speak for themselves.

The Body: "This is my body which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of me."³ St Paul⁴ has, "broken for you."

¹ xxiv 4-8.

³ Luke xxii 19.

² Matt. xxvi 27, 28.

⁴ 1 Cor. xi 24.

The Blood : " This is my blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins." ¹ St Mark ² leaves out the words, " unto remission of sins." St Luke ³ puts the same thing in a slightly different form : " This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you," and St Paul : " This chalice is the new testament in my blood : this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of me," ⁴ and he adds his own comment, embracing both body and blood in one sweeping phrase : " For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall shew (*i.e.* proclaim or celebrate, as his word really means) the death of the Lord, until he come." ⁵

Nothing could be plainer. In a few hours Jesus was to be delivered to death and was to shed his blood for men unto the forgiveness of their sins ; and now in this last solemn and loving meal with his Disciples, he wishes, by an act of divinely conceived anticipation, to give them his body and blood, and to make them partakers in the sacrifice so close at hand.

We must not leave this point without noting that, according to the Greek text, the phrase " which shall be shed " would run " which is shed," for the verbal form used is the present participle. This reading, while possibly rendering the allusion to the Cross less direct, would, on the other hand, only emphasise and strengthen the actual and present sacrificial meaning and implication of Christ's words.

Lastly, in the Supper there is found that element which was an integral, if not an essential part of nearly all the ancient sacrifices of Jews and Gentiles alike, to wit, the sacrificial meal, of which, after the oblation was made, all those who had assisted at the sacred rite partook, eating and drinking of the gifts that had been offered. We need not now enquire into the various ideas that lay behind and prompted this custom. It is enough to remark that it existed almost universally, and that it has its place in the Last Supper : " Take ye and eat, this is my body ; take ye and drink, this is my blood of the new testament." It is St Paul who gives the clearest expression to this sacrificial element in the Last Supper, or rather, to its repetition in the Eucharistic celebration in the Church : " The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord ? . . . Behold Israel according to the flesh ; are not they that eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar ? What then ? Do I say that what is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything ? Or that the idol is anything ? But the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God. And I would not that you should be made partakers with devils. You

¹ Matt. xxvi 28.

² xiv 24.

³ xxii 20.

⁴ I Cor. xi 25.

⁵ *Ibid.* 26.

cannot drink the chalice of the Lord, and the chalice of devils ; you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils.”¹ His argument is clear, and its implication manifest. The Jews partake of the altar, and the heathens partake with devils, when they eat of the things which have been sacrificed on the altar or sacrificed to devils. Similarly if the Christians are partakers of the blood of Christ and of his body, as St Paul says they are, this can only be so because, in drinking and eating of them, they share in the sacrifice in which they are offered upon the table of the Lord. Exclude this idea of sharing in the sacrificial gifts, and his words have no application to the case under consideration, and his argument, which he puts forward as conclusive, loses all its force.

We have then these three points or elements in the Last Supper as celebrated by Jesus Christ, and in its Eucharistic repetition in the Church ; firstly, it is the setting up of a new covenant with God’s people, expressed in terms that are clearly sacrificial ; secondly, it is the commemoration or memorial of Christ’s sacrificial death on the Cross ; thirdly, it provides a sacrificial meal wherein we partake of the gifts that have been offered in sacrifice. The conclusion is inevitable that it is a real sacrifice, and, given the truth of the doctrine of the Real Presence, that it is the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

*The prophecy
of Malachy*

Passing over Hebrews xiii, 10, which, if it refers to the Eucharist (which is a disputed point), is decisive as to its sacrificial character, we must not omit some consideration of the well-known prophecy of Malachy, which, from the earliest times, has been understood by Christian writers to be a clear foretelling of the sacrifice of the Mass. A full discussion of this passage must be sought elsewhere ; here only an outline of the argument can be given.

The Prophet begins, after a short exordium, by reproving the priests of Israel for their neglect of God’s commands in the matter of divine worship, by offering unclean and defective gifts upon the altar of sacrifice. God, through the Prophet’s mouth, declares that he will no longer look with favour upon their sacrifices, and announces that the time is coming when, instead of these defective sacrifices offered at Jerusalem only, a clean oblation will be offered constantly and in every place unto his name. “ For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation ; for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts.”²

This clean oblation that is to be offered everywhere among the Gentiles is evidently something different from the Jewish sacrifices, which could be offered nowhere but in the Temple at Jerusalem, and which, since this was destroyed, have not been offered anywhere.

¹ 1 Cor. x 16-21.

² Mal. i 11.

Nor can it be understood simply of the sacrifices of prayer and praise and thanksgiving which all worshippers of God offer continually to the Lord. This sense is incompatible both with the context, which throughout refers to real, material sacrifices only, and with the meaning of the words used. The Hebrew word *mincha*, which is translated *oblation*, nearly always has in the Old Testament the specific signification of unbloody sacrifice, and, though occasionally meaning any sort of real sacrifice, is never used to signify interior acts of worship or such exterior oblations as are not real sacrifices; ¹ and this may be said also of the other terms employed.

The Prophet announces the coming abrogation of the old rites and the institution of a new and universal sacrifice. His hearers, of course, could not understand the full meaning of his words, but ever since the days of the Apostles, Christian writers have been unanimous in interpreting them as a reference to the sacrifice of the Mass. The Council of Trent authoritatively confirmed this interpretation in its decree upon the sacrifice of the Mass: "And this indeed is that clean oblation which cannot be defiled by any unworthiness or wickedness in those who offer; the clean oblation which the Lord, speaking by Malachy, foretold would be offered in every place to his name, which would be great among the Gentiles." ²

Finally, something must be said of the argument to be drawn *The order of* from Christ's priesthood "according to the order of Melchisedech." ³ *Melchisedech* The argument, as repeated in dozens of theological textbooks, may be thus briefly set down. Priesthood and sacrifice are correlative; priests of the same order must offer sacrifice according to the same rite. Melchisedech offered sacrifice in bread and wine, therefore so did Christ. But the only time he can possibly be said to have done this was at the Last Supper, and therefore the Eucharist is a sacrifice.

Intrinsically and as a purely scriptural argument this may seem to be defective. The Greek word translated "order" refers rather to rank, quality, manner, than to the sacrificial rite. To this no reference seems to be made either in the Psalm or in the Epistle; in the latter the writer is wholly occupied with the eternity and superiority of Christ's priesthood as compared with that of Aaron. This he illustrates and explains by saying that Christ is "a priest according to the order of Melchisedech." The King of Salem is shown to be Abraham's superior by receiving from him the tribute of tenths; he is the type of the eternity of Christ's priesthood by his manner of appearing in the pages of Scripture, "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life," and therefore he is "likened unto the Son of God (and) continueth a priest for ever." ⁴ Hence those who are content with the purely objective and apparently obvious interpretation

¹ Cf. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew Lexicon*, s.v.

² Session xxii, chap. i.

³ Ps. cix; Heb. vii.

⁴ Heb. vii 3.

of Scripture may reject this argument. But the Catholic has another criterion; for him the Church is the only authoritative interpreter of Holy Writ, and her voice speaks in the constant tradition of her Fathers and Doctors. Looked at in this light the words under review appear as a convincing proof of the sacrificial character of the Last Supper, for, from the beginning of the second century onwards, hardly a Christian writer quotes them without seeing in them a reference to Christ's institution of the Eucharist and a demonstration of the sacrificial character of the Mass. As Petavius puts it: "On this point the ancient writers agree to such an incredible extent, that there can be no room for legitimate doubt in the mind of any Christian." ¹

§ III: THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS IN CATHOLIC TRADITION

JUST as the religious life of the Jews had its centre in the Temple at Jerusalem, because there alone were offered the sacrifices that commemorated the institution of the Covenant and the deliverance from bondage, so the religious life of Christians revolves about the Mass, because it is the commemoration and the perpetual reiteration of Christ's death on the Cross, their deliverance and redemption. It would, then, be remarkable if the Mass had not left a deep impress on the whole of Christian literature, especially on those parts of it that bear upon the practical life of the Church. It must, however, be borne in mind that we possess to-day but comparatively scanty remains of what must have been the abundant output of Christian writers who lived before the middle of the third century, and much of what we have is of such a character as to make any allusion to the details of worship most improbable. Enough, however, is left to enable us to ascertain with certainty the mind and teaching of the primitive Church. From towards the end of the third century the extant testimony of Christian writers is both abundant and detailed. It would be impossible for us to give a hundredth part of the harvest to be garnered from the patristic writers of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries; nor would it serve any useful purpose, for all competent scholars are agreed that from the end of the third century the Catholic theology of the Mass was fixed as regards its substantial elements, and that, on all sides, it was held to be the true and real sacrifice of Christ's body and blood.

Yet it is maintained by many that this is a perversion of the primitive doctrine, and the principal author of the innovation and of the change in the current of theological tradition is said to be St Cyprian. Until his time, we are told, the eucharistic sacrifice was considered to be simply a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, containing no real and objective offering; or at the most, the

St Cyprian

¹ *De Incarnatione*, Bk. 12, Chap. xii.

offering was merely one of bread and wine. He introduced the idea of the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood, and his influence was so powerful that, in a comparatively short time, the old teaching was forgotten and the Church was definitely committed to the new line of eucharistic speculation. We shall begin, therefore, with an examination of St Cyprian's teaching. Then, working backwards, we hope to be able to make it clear that, instead of being an innovator, he was a continuator, that he added nothing to the accepted doctrine and did not change the current of theological teaching, but only stated clearly some things that others had said obscurely, and made some things explicit that had always been implicitly believed.

St Cyprian's writings are full of references to the eucharistic sacrifice, but as a rule they are incidental allusions only or passing references which, though couched in most realistic language, might possibly be interpreted in a metaphorical sense or are not sufficiently clear to enable us to discover with certainty their full significance. We have, however, one of his letters wherein he sets out his teaching in considerable detail.¹ A certain bishop, Caecilius, had informed him that, in some places in Africa, the custom had grown up of using water only in the chalice in the celebration of the Eucharist, and sought his opinion and advice in the matter. From St Cyprian's lengthy answer we extract a few of the more telling passages. "Jesus Christ our Lord and God, who instituted this sacrifice." ■ "Nor can his blood, which is our redemption and our life, be discerned in the chalice, when the chalice lacks wine." ■ "For who is more truly the priest of the most high God than our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered sacrifice to God the Father, and offered the same as Melchisedech had offered, that is bread and wine, to wit his body and blood?"⁴ "Whence it appears that the blood of Christ is not offered if there be not wine in the chalice, nor is the Lord's sacrifice celebrated rightly and holily unless our oblation and sacrifice correspond with Christ's passion."⁵ "Therefore, dearest brother, let no one think that he ought to follow the custom of those who have thought that water alone should be offered in the chalice of the Lord. The question is, whom have these followed? For if in the sacrifice that Christ offered, Christ alone is to be followed, then indeed we must do what Christ did, and obey his command as to what should be done. . . . And if we are not allowed to depart from the least of the Lord's commands, so much the less is it allowable to infringe his commands in things so high and great, in a matter so closely touching the very sacrament of the Lord's passion and our redemption. . . . For if Jesus . . . himself is the high priest of God the Father, and if he, in the first place, offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father, and then commanded this to be done in commemoration of him, then, in truth, that priest truly acts as Christ's

¹ Epistola LXIII, *Ad Caecilium*; Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, IV, 383 ff.

² Chap. i.

³ Chap. ii.

⁴ Chap. iv.

⁵ Chap. ix.

minister who imitates what Christ did, and he then offers a true and full sacrifice in the church to God the Father, when he offers according as he sees Christ to have offered." ¹ "And since we make mention of his passion whenever we offer sacrifice (for the sacrifice we offer is the Lord's passion), we must do nothing else but what he did." ²

St Cyprian, then, holds that the Eucharist is a true and real sacrifice, that it was instituted and first offered by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper, and that in it we truly offer to God Christ's body and blood under the appearances of bread and wine, and that it is the passion or the commemoration of the passion of Christ. Such was the doctrine taught in Carthage in the middle of the third century, and no theologian of the present day teaches anything different. But was it new doctrine in St Cyprian's day?

Tertullian

Let us interrogate Tertullian, the fiery Christian apologist who flourished in Carthage forty years or so before St Cyprian, and who, after having been the foremost champion of the Church, drifted into the heresy of Montanism, and died no one knows how or when. In his writings, whether Catholic or Montanist, there is no such formal and direct treatment of the eucharistic sacrifice as is provided by St Cyprian, but allusions both to the sacrament and the sacrifice abound, and are nearly always couched in realistic terms that can leave no doubt in the impartial reader's mind as to the writer's underlying belief.

Here is his approving estimate of the conduct of pious Christian women: "You do not make the round of the temples, or frequent the games, or take part in the festival days of the Gentiles. For it is because of these assemblies and the wish to see and be seen that all kinds of vanities are publicly paraded; . . . but you go abroad only for some serious (or holy, *tetrica*) reason; either because some sick person among the brethren is to be visited, or because sacrifice is offered, or the word of God administered." ³ Here is the word: "sacrifice is offered"; there is no explanation; the Christian woman would understand.

But the modern non-Catholic scholar often does not or will not see what Tertullian means. To show that the African apologist had no notion of an objective and real eucharistic sacrifice, he seizes on the following few words from the treatise *Against Marcion*, III, 22: "In every place a sacrifice is offered to my name, a clean sacrifice ⁴ that is the proclaiming of his glory and blessings, and praises and hymns." ⁵ But the conclusion is unwarranted. Tertullian's interpretation of this prophecy is not meant to be either exclusive or comprehensive. He is making a particular point against Marcion and, as is his wont, gathers together all the texts he can find that can

¹ Chap. xiv.

² Chap. xvii.

³ *De cultu feminarum*, II, 11 (*Patr. Lat.*, I, 1444-5).

⁴ *Mal.* i 11.

⁵ *Patr. Lat.*, II, 381.

be brought to bear on it. That the eucharistic sacrifice consisted in something more than the singing of hymns and the praises of God is clear from what he says about the things that women were not allowed to do in church. "Let us see whether those things that ecclesiastical discipline prescribes concerning women are applicable to virgins. It is not allowed to a woman to speak in church, but neither to teach, nor to baptise, nor to offer (*i.e.* sacrifice), nor to claim a part in any man's duty, much less to share the duty of the priestly office."¹ But they were certainly allowed to join in the prayers and hymns. To offer (*offerre*), then, is something more than the giving of thanks and singing of hymns; it was a function strictly reserved to priests, whose duty it was to preside at the meetings where the Eucharist was celebrated.

We find many allusions to the traditional custom of celebrating the Eucharist for the dead and in honour of the martyrs, on their anniversaries, and always Tertullian's language is most definitely sacrificial. Passing over these, we must consider in some detail an illuminating passage from the *De Pudicitia*: "And so the apostate will recover his former garment, being clothed again in the Holy Ghost, he will receive again the ring, the seal of baptism, and once more Christ will be slain for him." These are the relevant words and, if the allusion is really to the eucharistic sacrifice, they are clear evidence that Tertullian regarded it as, in some way, the reiteration of Christ's death. This allusion is, however, disputed, it being alleged that the reference is to Hebrews vi, 6, "crucifying again to themselves the Son of God."

This treatise is one of Tertullian's violent Montanist writings, in which he attacks the Pope for having made it known that all sorts of sinners, even those who had apostatised, might be reconciled to the Church after doing penance. Catholics, supporting the Pope, appealed to the parable of the prodigal son as a supreme and unanswerable argument. The question now in dispute is, therefore, the interpretation of the parable, for Tertullian recognises that, if it be understood to refer to the fallen Christian, his own case is hopeless. So he uses all his power as a rhetorical debater to show that it can only be applied to the heathen who, having wandered far from God, and spent his substance in riotous living in the darkness and corruption of paganism, comes back to the Father and is received by him in Baptism. "He remembers God his Father, having made satisfaction he returns, he receives his former garment, namely that state which Adam lost by his transgression; likewise then he receives the first ring, by which, after being interrogated, he seals the compact of faith,³ and so finally is feasted with the fatness of the Body of the Lord, namely, the Eucharist."

¹ *De virginibus velandis* (*Patr. Lat.*, II, 950).

² Chap. ix, *Patr. Lat.*, II, 1049.

³ This refers to the questions put to the catechumen at baptism.

Here we have the key to the meaning of the words in dispute. Tertullian understands the welcome given by the prodigal's father to his son as being realised in the two sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, but will not allow that the parable can apply to the penitent apostate, for, if it does, the consequences will be absurd, because "not only adulterers and fornicators, but idolaters and blasphemers and deniers of Christ, and every kind of apostate will be able to make satisfaction to the Father if the parable be so interpreted. And in this way the whole substance of religion is really destroyed. For who will fear to waste what he can afterwards get back? Who will take the trouble to keep for ever what he cannot lose for ever? Safety in sinning means to lust after sin. And so the apostate will recover his former garment, being clothed again in the Holy Ghost; he will receive again the ring, the seal of Baptism, and again Christ will be slain for him, and he will once more sit upon that seat from which those who are unworthily garbed, to say nothing of the naked, are taken by the torturers and cast out into darkness."

It is clear that, in this passage also, which runs on the same lines as the former, Tertullian is referring to the same two sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist, and that he envisages the latter both as a sacrifice and a banquet. He regarded the Eucharist, therefore, as a sacrifice, which was offered upon the altar (*altare, ara*) of the Lord, by priests (*sacerdotes*), the victim being Christ, and the faithful partaking of his body.

St Irenaeus

St Irenaeus, who witnesses to the tradition of both East and West, sets forth the same teaching at the end of the second century. He even takes the reality of the eucharistic sacrifice as the starting-point of his argument against the heretics, that is, as common ground between himself and them. As we have not the space to quote him at any length, and any other sort of quotation is unsatisfactory, we may refer the reader to his *Adversus Haereses*, book IV, chapters xvii and xviii, and pass on at once to St Justin.

St Justin

His testimony is interesting chiefly by reason of the account he gives of the way the Christians carried out their liturgical worship at Rome in the middle of the second century. This is the earliest description we have of the Mass, for before this time Christian literature contains nothing but passing, and often obscure references. Though St Justin's account be well known, it will bear quotation here, for in it we can discover many of the elements of the liturgy which have remained substantially the same from his day until now. It is to be found in chapters lxxv to lxxvii of his first Apology, and runs thus:

"We salute one another with a kiss when we have concluded the prayers. Then is brought to the president of the brethren bread, and a cup of water and wine, which he receives; and offers up praise and glory to the Father of all things, through the name of His Son and of the Holy Ghost; and he returns thanks at length, for our

being vouchsafed these things by him. When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgiving, all the people who are present express their assent by saying *Amen*. This word *Amen* in the Aramaic language means 'so be it'; and when the president has celebrated the Eucharist, and all the people have assented, they whom we call deacons give to each of those who are present a portion of the eucharistic bread and wine and water; and carry them to those who are absent. And this food is called by us the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake unless he believes the truth of our doctrines; and unless he has been washed in the laver for the forgiveness of sins, and unto regeneration; and so lives as Christ has directed. For we do not receive them as ordinary food, or ordinary drink; but as by the Word of God Jesus our Saviour was made flesh, and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so also the food which was blessed by the prayer of the Word which proceeded from him, and from which our flesh and blood, by assimilation, receives nourishment, is, we are taught, both the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the Apostles in the records which they made, and which are called gospels, have declared that Jesus commanded them to do as follows: 'He took bread and gave thanks, and said, "This do in remembrance of me: this is my body." And in like manner he took the cup, and blessed it, and said, "This is my blood," and gave it to them alone.'

This is Justin's account of the celebration of the Eucharist on the occasion of the baptism of neophytes. A little further on he speaks in a similar way but more briefly of the ordinary Sunday celebration in town or country. But as this introduces no new element, beyond the mention of the sermon, we need not quote it.

The reader will have noticed that in the passage quoted there is not a word about sacrifice, and may, therefore, wonder why it has been given. Apart from its historical and liturgical interest as the first account of the Mass, it has two points of dogmatic importance. The first is the evident connection between the Christian Eucharist and the Last Supper, since St Justin explains the one by the other and by Christ's command to his Apostles to repeat what he did. The second point is the witness to the Christian belief in the Real Presence. The eucharistic bread and wine were, for St Justin and his fellow-Christians, not common food and drink, but, quite simply, the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. Even though many have written much to prove that Justin could not possibly have believed in Transubstantiation, his simple, straightforward profession of faith in the Real Presence cannot be gainsaid. We must bear this in mind in reading the following passages from his other work, the *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*.

The most notable and important is in chapter lxi, where we can clearly discern the theme of the thanksgivings offered by the celebrant, referred to in the Apology, which are now fixed in our

present Prefaces. "And the offering of meal which it was prescribed to make for lepers who had been cleansed, was the type of the bread of the Eucharist, which Jesus Christ our Lord taught us to offer in memory of the sufferings he underwent for the cleansing of men's souls from all iniquity ; so that we may give thanks to God for having created the world for us, and all things in it, for having delivered us from the evils that oppressed us, for having completely destroyed the principalities and powers, by him who was made the Suffering One according to his will.

"Also concerning the sacrifices which you were wont to offer to him, God says, as I have mentioned already, by the mouth of Malachy, one of the twelve : ' My will is not in you, saith the Lord, and your sacrifices I shall not accept from your hands. Therefore from the sun's rising unto its going down, my name is glorified among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, a clean sacrifice, for great is my name among the nations, says the Lord, while you profane it.' But of the sacrifices offered to him in every place by us, the nations, the sacrifices, that is to say, of the bread of the Eucharist, and likewise of the cup of the Eucharist, of these he foretells when he says that we glorify his name, but you profane it."

Similar passages occur in chapters lxx and cxvii of the same book, and also elsewhere, which, taken together, make it clear that Justin looked upon the celebration of the Holy Eucharist as a real sacrifice, wherein are offered bread and wine which, however, are not common bread and wine, but the Body and Blood of Christ, of whose sufferings and death this sacrifice is a memorial or commemoration.

Still earlier references

Previous to St Justin we find but brief and, generally, casual allusions to the Eucharist as for example, in St Clement's *Letter to the Corinthians*¹ and the Letters of St. Ignatius to the *Ephesians*² and the *Philadelphians*,³ and finally, in the very early document, of uncertain authorship and date, known as *The Teaching of the Apostles*.⁴ Though nothing very definite is to be gathered from these scattered allusions, they yet all point the same way. There is not only no sign of any purely commemorative and non-sacrificial conception of the Eucharist, but there are positive indications that its celebration was always looked upon as a sacrificial act fulfilling the prophecy of Malachy. We know also that, from the first, the Christians believed the consecrated bread and wine to be Christ's real Body and Blood.⁵ But we cannot separate these two ideas ; they are the two indivisible elements of the one doctrine that the Mass is the true sacrifice of Jesus Christ's real Body and Blood. We may allow that there has been some development from Clement through Justin to Cyprian,

¹ Chaps. xl and xlv.

² Chap. v.

³ Chap. iv.

⁴ Chaps. xiv-xv.

⁵ See *The Sacrament of the Eucharist*, pp. 848-857.

but it has been logical and inevitable, and consisting rather in the clearer explication and co-ordination of these two primitive elements than in the addition of anything new, or the introduction of anything from without.

§ IV: THE ATTACK UPON THE MASS

THERE has never been a time when the Church has been untroubled by heresies. They began to spring up before the Apostles were dead, and, in one place or another, new ones have been constantly arising ever since. And just as heresy has been universal from the point of view of time, so it has been impartial in the doctrines chosen for attack, though it is true that some periods have been specially noteworthy for heresies concerning Christ, others for false teachings about the Trinity, others, again, for attacks upon the Papacy, or the Sacraments, or the nature and attributes of God. We have seen some indications of a eucharistic heresy in St Cyprian's time; the Mass was the object of attack by the Albigenses in the twelfth century and again by some of Wyclif's followers two hundred years later. But the great onslaught upon it was launched by the Protestant sects in the sixteenth century. Although the Mass was not singled out as a thing to be destroyed from the first, it was soon seen that there was no room for it in Protestantism, and that, if the religious revolt were to make headway and have any logical justification at all, the sacrifice of the Mass must be utterly abolished. No heresy can be logical all through, from beginning to end. That is the exclusive privilege of the true faith. But no heresy can be altogether illogical and have any chance of life, especially in an age, such as was the sixteenth century, when the power of clean, straight thinking is still both strong and common. Therefore, when once the Protestant leaders had adopted the doctrine of justification by faith only, and had thrown over the reality of sanctifying grace as the supernatural life of the soul, there was nothing for it except to give up belief in operative and grace-producing sacraments. So the Real Presence and Transubstantiation had to go, and the Eucharist had to lose altogether its sacrificial character and be retained simply as a memorial of the Last Supper whereby the soul is moved to prayer and enabled in some way to enter into communion with and to receive Jesus Christ. There were also other reasons, less respectable than the claims of logical consistency, but into which we need not go, which prompted the Reformers to abolish the Mass. Hence it is not surprising that, to a great extent, belief in the Mass became the touchstone of Catholic orthodoxy and that, all through the subsequent centuries of controversy with Protestantism, Catholic theologians should have used all their powers of argument and all their resources of learning in its defence. It was natural too that the Council of Trent should give to this question the most careful and minute

*The
Protestant
attack on the
Mass*

consideration, focusing upon it the attention of the most brilliant gathering of theologians the world has seen, and debating every point with the greatest possible thoroughness and acuteness. The decrees and definitions drawn up as the outcome of the Council's deliberations not only form the Catholic's rule of faith in this matter, but may be taken as the foundation and starting-point of all subsequent theological speculation. They are the test by which any theory must be tried, and they are so important, so full and so carefully drawn that they deserve to be quoted at length.

*The Council
of Trent*

The translation here given is taken from *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent, translated by the Rev. J. Waterworth*, published in 1848. If it cannot lay claim to elegance it has the great merit of being faithful to the original, and, indeed, is as near to being a literal rendering as is possible in readable English. These decrees and definitions were approved during the twenty-second session of the Council held in September 1532.

“Chapter I.—On the institution of the most holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Forasmuch as, under the former Testament, according to the testimony of the Apostle Paul, there was no perfection, because of the weakness of the Levitical priesthood; there was need, God, the Father of mercies, so ordaining, that another priest should rise, according to the order of Melchisedech, our Lord Jesus Christ, who might consummate, and lead to what is perfect as many as were to be sanctified. He, therefore, our God and Lord, though he was about to offer himself once on the altar of the cross unto God the Father, by means of his death, there to operate an eternal redemption; nevertheless, because that his priesthood was not to be extinguished by his death, in the Last Supper, on the night in which he was betrayed—that he might leave to his own beloved spouse the Church, a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of man requires, whereby that bloody sacrifice, once to be accomplished on the cross, might be represented, and the memory thereof remain even unto the end of the world, and its salutary virtue be applied to the remission of these sins which we daily commit—declaring himself constituted a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech, he offered up to God the Father his own body and blood under the species of bread and wine; and, under the symbols of those same things, he delivered (his own body and blood) to be received by his Apostles, whom he then constituted priests of the New Testament; and by those words, ‘Do this in commemoration of me,’ he commanded them and their successors in the priesthood, to offer (them); even as the Catholic Church has always understood and taught. For, having celebrated the ancient Passover, which the multitude of the children of Israel immolated in memory of their going out of Egypt, he instituted the new Passover (to wit), himself to be immolated, under visible signs, by the Church through (the ministry of) priests, in memory of his own passage from this world unto the Father, when by the effusion

of his own blood he redeemed us, and delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into his kingdom. And this is indeed that clean oblation, which cannot be defiled by any unworthiness, or malice of those that offer (it); which the Lord foretold by Malachias was to be offered in every place, clean to his name, which was to be great among the Gentiles; and which the Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, has not obscurely indicated, when he says, that they who are defiled by the participation of the table of devils, cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord; by the table, meaning in both places the altar. This, in fine, is that oblation which was prefigured by various types of sacrifices, during the period of nature, and of the law; inasmuch as it comprises all the good things signified by those sacrifices, as being the consummation and perfection of them all.

“Chapter II.—That the sacrifice of the Mass is propitiatory both for the living and the dead.

“And forasmuch as, in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, that same Christ is contained and immolated in an unbloody manner, who once offered himself in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross; the holy Synod teaches, that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory and that by means thereof this is effected, that we obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid, if we draw nigh unto God, contrite and penitent, with a sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence. For the Lord, appeased by the oblation thereof, and granting the grace and gift of penitence, forgives even heinous crimes and sins. For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross, the manner alone of offering being different. The fruits indeed of which oblation, of that bloody one to wit, are received most plentifully through this unbloody one; so far is this (latter) from derogating in any way from that (former oblation). Wherefore, not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those who are departed in Christ, and who are not as yet fully purified, is it rightly offered, agreeably to a tradition of the Apostles.”

Passing over the other chapters as less important to our present purpose, we transcribe the following canons wherein the Protestant errors are condemned.

“Canon i.—If any one saith, that in the Mass a true and proper sacrifice is not offered to God; or, that to be offered is nothing else but that Christ is given us to eat; let him be anathema.

“Canon ii.—If any one saith, that by those words, Do this for a commemoration of me, Christ did not institute the Apostles priests; or did not ordain that they and other priests should offer his own body and blood; let him be anathema.

“Canon iii.—If any one saith, that the sacrifice of the Mass is only a sacrifice of praise and of thanksgiving; or that it is a bare

commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross, but not a propitiatory sacrifice ; or, that it profits him only who receives ; and that it ought not to be offered for the living and the dead for sins, pains, satisfactions and other necessities ; let him be anathema.

“ Canon iv.—If any one saith, that, by the sacrifice of the Mass a blasphemy is cast upon the most holy sacrifice of Christ consummated on the cross ; or, that it is thereby derogated from ; let him be anathema.”

*Matters of
debate*

These decrees and canons contain the whole of the Church's defined, dogmatic teaching on the sacrifice of the Mass. No one can be a Catholic who knowingly denies any of the doctrinal points here made, and in later sections we shall have something to say of each of them. But a careful reading will at once show that they do not answer all the questions that occur to the mind, and that they by no means shut the door upon theological speculation. Indeed, the centuries that have passed since the Council was held have been remarkable for the amount, the variety, the intensity and the liveliness of Catholic theological speculation upon the Mass. From this point of view we may divide the time roughly into two periods. In the first, immediately succeeding the Council, the theologians were moved mainly by defensive and controversial reasons, and had their eyes always fixed upon the necessities of the anti-Protestant campaign ; whereas in the second and present period, which has begun only in comparatively recent years, the interest of the theologians has coincided with the wonderful modern revival of Eucharistic devotion, and the mainspring of their speculations is their desire to increase and more solidly to establish that devotion by giving the faithful a better and deeper knowledge of and insight into the mystery of the Mass.

Yet in both periods, the chief matter of debate is the same, in spite of the diversity of motive. For the Council of Trent, while clear and definite in its statement that the Mass is a true and real and propitiatory sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, makes no attempt to prove it except by arguments drawn directly from authority and revelation. This mode of procedure is traditional with the Councils of the Church which are, as regards their authoritative decrees, teaching bodies and not theological debating societies. The lengthy and minute debates that precede the final casting and conciliar approval of the decrees are in the nature of private discussions, having no authority beyond that of the theologians taking part in them. Hence it is left to the theologians to find a rational justification of the dogmas defined, to give exact definitions of the terms employed and to work out scientific proofs of the doctrines, in so far as these are capable of being thus proved. In the present case the question to be settled is, how exactly is the Mass a sacrifice, in what way and in what particular action does the Mass verify the definition and fulfil all the necessary conditions of a real, propitiatory sacrifice ?

In the next section we shall set forth briefly some few of the many ways in which theologians have tried to answer this question.

§ V: THEOLOGICAL THEORIES AND SPECULATIONS

It is impossible to give more than a sketch of three or four of the principal theories about the way in which the Mass verifies the definition of a sacrifice, which have at various times found favour with Catholic theologians of repute. Moreover, in a subject of such difficulty, which is the subject of such lively debate, it would not be seemly in such an essay as this, for the writer to put forward any theory as definitely preferable to all others, whatever may be his own opinions or convictions in the matter. He may, however, be allowed to state the objections which seem fatal to some theories, and which, in the course of time, have caused them to be abandoned by practically all theologians to-day.

The first difference of opinion to be noted refers to the part of *The essential* the Mass wherein lies the essential element of sacrifice. According *part of the* to some it is contained wholly within the consecration, others have *Mass* thought that it consists in the consecration together with the communion, while a few have gone so far as to look upon the communion alone as the sacrificial act. It is hardly necessary to discuss this last point, since it is agreed by practically all theologians to-day that, although the communion belongs to the integrity or completeness of the sacrificial rite, it does not form part of the essential sacrificial act. In other words, although Christ's body and blood are offered in sacrifice, in order that they may be afterwards partaken of by the faithful, or by the priest alone, in a sacrificial banquet of communion with God, and although sacrifice and banquet are two parts of one liturgical rite, yet they are two separate acts, differing from one another, not only by the separation of time, but also by a difference of nature.

Without going further into this, and taking it as settled that, in the Mass, it is the twofold consecration and transubstantiation of the bread and wine which alone constitute the essential act of the sacrifice, we go on to look at some of the theories put forward to show how this is so.

The line of argument adopted by many theologians runs some- *The theory of* what in this way. In any real sacrifice the victim or thing offered *"destruction"* suffers some kind of destruction. So the animals offered under the Jewish law were killed, the libations of wine were poured out upon the ground, thus being rendered unfit for consumption and undergoing practical destruction, the fruits of the earth were either burned or set aside and not devoted to common use, thus being given over to what may be said to be equivalent to destruction. But in the Mass there is a real sacrifice of Christ's body and blood. Therefore there

must be some kind of destruction of Christ's body and blood. It is abundantly clear that Christ cannot suffer any real death or destruction in the Mass, and so the theologians' efforts were wholly given to showing that he undergoes something more or less equivalent to a sort of destruction.

It was pointed out, for example, that transubstantiation puts him upon the altar in the form of food and drink destined for consumption, which almost amounts to destruction. Again, the suggestion was made that, in the consecrated elements, Jesus Christ, though indeed really and wholly present as living man and God, is yet living a special kind of life which is on a lower plane than his glorious life in heaven, and in which he is deprived of the natural exercise of his human, physical faculties; and this condition of reduced existence may be said to be equivalent to destruction, since it is the utmost limit to which he can go in this direction.

Although these theories are quite orthodox and may be defended, there are few to uphold them to-day. The first great objection against them springs from a common-sense idea of the value of words. It is seen and recognised that the processes or conditions mentioned cannot be said to constitute a destruction or anything equivalent thereto, except by an abuse of terms which robs them of any real value and is dangerous to true thinking.

A second objection goes deeper. These explanations rest upon the presupposition that transubstantiation is an action that, somehow or other, affects Christ, does something to him. But the best theological thought of the Church, the "classical theology" of St Thomas Aquinas, will not allow this, holding, instead, that the process or action of transubstantiation touches and affects only the substances of bread and wine, Christ's body and blood being simply the finishing point of the process, and remaining in themselves wholly unchanged and unaffected.

Under the force of these objections and others which we need not set down, a more refined and subtle variant of the "destructionist" theory has been worked out. This starts from the fact that a sacrifice, just as a sacrament, comes under the category of signs, and draws much of its strength from the Catholic doctrine of eucharistic natural concomitance, which is fully explained in the essay on the *Sacrament of the Eucharist*.

Here is a brief exposition of the theory. In the consecration of the bread, though Christ is made present in his integrity as man and God, yet, so far as the words of consecration—"This is my body"—are operative of themselves, only his body is made present on the altar. The presence of his blood, soul, and divinity, is the effect, not of the words of consecration, but of natural concomitance, the result, that is, of his being a living Person, no longer subject to death or mutilation. Likewise, in the consecration of the wine, the words used are operative of themselves to the extent of making his

blood alone to be present, the presence of the other elements of the living Christ being again due to concomitance. The sacramental effect of the twofold consecration, therefore, that is, its effect in so far as it is a sign seen and heard, is the separation of the body from the blood. This, it must be most carefully noted, is not a real separation. It is only a sacramental or symbolical separation. But, it is contended, in the case of a victim who cannot possibly be really immolated or killed, and who is offered in sacrifice, not under his own human form and appearance, but only under the forms and appearances of bread and wine, such a sacramental separation of body and blood, such a symbolical immolation or killing, is quite enough to constitute a real sacrifice of that victim. It is a real sacramental representation and symbolical re-enactment, in which the same victim is actually present, of the immolation consummated on Calvary, and this fully entitles it to be regarded as a real sacrifice.

There is much to be said for this theory, which has many supporters at the present day. Of all the theories involving some kind of destruction of the victim as a necessary condition, it is certainly the most spiritual in its conception, and the most closely in accord with the theological teaching of St Thomas on Transubstantiation.

As the reader will have noticed, all these theories look upon the Last Supper, and therefore upon the Mass, as a sacrifice complete in itself, though subordinated and relative to the sacrifice of Calvary. But of recent years another opinion has been put forward, and as warmly supported in some quarters as it has been strongly opposed in others, which considers the Last Supper and Calvary as the two component and complementary parts of but one and the same complete sacrifice. At the Last Supper, so this opinion has it, Christ as Priest made to God the offering of himself as the victim destined for immolation on Calvary. Thus the sacrifice was begun. This act of oblation continued in being, active and operative, throughout his Passion. The shedding of his blood and his death on the cross sealed and crowned this act of his will, and the sacrifice was thus consummated by this actual and physical immolation of the victim. Now, the only difference between the Mass and the Last Supper is that, while the latter was the offering of the victim who was about to be immolated, the former is the offering of the same victim who has already been immolated. The Last Supper was the ritual oblation looking forward to the future real immolation, the Mass is the ritual oblation looking backwards to the real immolation once for all completed. The Last Supper was the consecration to God of the victim about to suffer, the Mass is the continued presentation to God of the victim who has suffered.

The theory that the Supper and Calvary form numerically one Sacrifice

This is an attractive explanation which solves many difficulties and has gained many friends. But it has been hotly attacked,

mainly on the ground that it does not fully satisfy all the implications of the Tridentine decrees. As, however, we have no intention of entering into these domestic theological controversies, we cannot discuss the pros and cons of this question.

A further theory

In common with the other explanations previously advanced, this one also requires the immolation of the divine victim as a condition for the complete sacrifice, though, differing from them, it does not find any such immolation in the Mass, which it regards as the oblation of the victim already immolated. At the risk of wearying my readers, I must now speak of yet another theory which differs from all these, in that, while recognising the value of the victim's immolation, it does not look upon it as essential to sacrifice. This explanation considers sacrifice to consist essentially in the ceremonial offering of a gift to God, as an expression or symbol of homage, petition, thanksgiving, repentance and so forth. By offering a gift to God is meant handing it over wholly to him, for his possession, use, and service, while the word *ceremonial* implies that the complete handing over of the gift must be outwardly and suitably expressed. Hence arises the common, though not universal, element of destruction or immolation, since ordinarily nothing expresses so suitably as this, the fact that the gift has passed altogether from man's possession and service into God's.

Now, from the first moment of his Incarnation, Jesus Christ consecrated his manhood to God, giving it wholly into his possession, for his use and service, to do his will in all things, by an act of his human will that was perfect from the first and irrevocable. Here was the offering of a gift to God, but not yet a sacrifice because not yet a ceremonial offering. He first gave outward and suitable ritual expression to the offering at the Last Supper, when he took bread and wine and spoke the words, This is my body given for you, This is the chalice of my blood shed for you. And so he then offered sacrifice. Again on Calvary, by delivering himself into his enemies' hands and allowing them to shed his blood and take his life, he gave outward and suitable expression to the continuing act of perfect offering, and therefore offered sacrifice. Not another sacrifice, since it is the same offering differently expressed, and the Last Supper and Calvary have a unity of signification. But when he began his glorious life in heaven he did not give up his priesthood, nor did he retract or alter the act by which he consecrated his manhood wholly to God's service; his manhood is still offered and given to God to do his will in all things, it is God's possession. And in every Mass he again gives ceremonial expression to this continuing act in the presentation of his body and blood under the forms of bread and wine, and the words of consecration. Thus the Mass fulfils all the conditions and contains all the elements of a true and real sacrifice. There is no intention of discussing the merits of this theory, but it may be pointed out that it seems to escape the inconveniences

attaching to the view mentioned in *Christ as Priest and Redeemer*,¹ and to satisfy all that is implied in the decrees of Trent as set out above.

Some readers may be surprised and even disturbed by the existence of such a wide diversity of conflicting views on a matter of great importance. It may seem to them that the oneness of faith claimed by the Church as her exclusive possession is not the perfect thing it should be. But, in truth, there is no ground for concern. Examination of the various theories shows that all are based upon the same universally accepted truths. When the Church, in her definitions of doctrine, uses such terms as substance, person, sacrifice, and so forth, she does not, as a rule, intend to give them a strictly determined scientific meaning, but only the meaning they have in the current speech of men of good education. The same word may mean something a little more definite and exact to a philosopher than to the educated man who has not made a special study of philosophy, but in a definition of doctrine the philosopher's extra exactness and definiteness is not included.

So in the present instance, not only do all Catholic theologians accept whole-heartedly the Tridentine definitions and decrees, but all understand them in the same way as the Council meant them to be understood. Oneness of faith is thus fully safeguarded. Differences begin to show themselves only when theologians, in a legitimate and, generally, praiseworthy endeavour to probe deeper into the recesses of revealed truth, or with the object of showing how one truth exactly fits in with another, or again, with the laudable motive of defending the faith against attack or making it more attractive to the believer and stronger in its appeal to his mind, embark upon the scientific search after and explanation of the how and why of the doctrine. But these differences do not touch the faith. Moreover, every truly Catholic theologian, as soon as he sets out upon these speculations, fully recognises his constant liability to error; he speaks under correction and in a spirit of humble diffidence, and though he may defend with ardour his own opinions against those of other theologians, he is always ready to give them up should it be proved that their logical outcome would be inconsistent with revealed truth, or should competent authority decide that it is dangerous or imprudent to hold them.

We have now to examine some further questions of importance contained in the Tridentine decrees or arising therefrom.

§ VI: THOSE WHO OFFER THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

THE Council of Trent in the second chapter of the decree set out above states that, in the Mass "the victim is one and the same, the same (person) now offering by the ministry of priests, who then *Christ offers*

¹ Essay xiv, pp. 486-489.

offered himself on the cross." At every Mass, then, Jesus Christ is the High Priest who offers the sacrifice. This is clear from the fact that, as the Fathers are never tired of pointing out, the priest, when he comes to the consecration, the very act of sacrifice, no longer uses his own words, or a prayer composed by men, or even the words of the Evangelist, but Christ's own words, spoken in the first person, "This is my body, this is the chalice of my blood." He speaks these words in the person and power of Christ, and through him Christ speaks and offers the sacrifice. It is not necessary to postulate that, at every Mass that is offered daily, Jesus Christ makes a fresh act of self-oblation, though this is maintained by some theologians. It is quite enough that he should have made this act once, since, made definitely for once and always, never retracted, it remains for ever operative and effective throughout all time. The practical value and application of this truth will appear later.

*The Church
and its
members
offer*

But Jesus Christ is not the only one who offers this sacrifice. The Council of Trent says, in the same place, that the Church offers it, through the ministry of priests. Here is a great truth, the consequences of which are often but little understood or realised by the faithful, much to the detriment of their spiritual life. It is the direct outcome of that other great truth that Jesus Christ and all the members of his Church form but one body, of which he is the head. For a full exposition of this teaching readers are referred to *The Mystical Body of Christ*.¹ All that needs now to be said is that the sacrament of Baptism effects a real incorporation with Christ, and in him a real brotherhood with one another; that all thus incorporated, unless separated by mortal sin, are animated and vivified by the same principle of supernatural life, which is his Spirit, the Spirit of charity, the living soul of the Church; and that all, therefore, being in him, and he in them, being branches springing from and attached to the same trunk, share necessarily in the life of the Head, and are united with him in all his priestly work and functions.

Hence when Christ exercises his priestly ministry, and renewing the oblation of his sacrifice, offers it once again in homage to the adorable Trinity, he does not and cannot act alone, but we act with him, all the members of his Church, each according to his own degree of participation in Christ's life and priestly office. Hence the individual priest who celebrates the Mass does not offer the sacrifice as an individual, nor even simply as the minister of Jesus Christ, God and Man, but rather as the minister of Christ, eternal High Priest and inseparable head of his mystical body, the Church, which he wedded to himself through and in the sacrifice of Calvary to be the partner in his eternal priesthood.

The liturgical prayers recited during Mass make it quite clear that it is the whole Church that offers the sacrifice. So, for example, just before the consecration the priest says: "We therefore beseech

¹ Essay xix.

thee, O Lord, to be appeased, and to receive this offering which we, thy servants, and thy whole household do make unto thee," and then, "This our offering, do thou, O God, vouchsafe in all things to bless, consecrate, approve, make reasonable and acceptable, that it may become for us the body and blood of thy most beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ." And as a last example take the prayer said immediately after the consecration, when Jesus Christ is now present upon the altar: "Wherefore, O Lord, we, thy servants, as also thy holy people, calling to mind the blessed passion of the same Christ, thy Son, our Lord, and also his rising up from hell, and his glorious ascension into heaven, do offer unto thy most excellent majesty of thine own gifts bestowed upon us, a clean victim, a holy victim, a spotless victim, the holy bread of life everlasting, and the chalice of eternal salvation."

In the light of this truth we can understand those words of St Peter: "Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ . . . but you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people."¹ The Apostle is not using the language of pious hyperbole, or even of metaphor, but of strict and literal truth; all the members of the Church do form a holy and kingly priesthood because they are a purchased people, purchased with the blood that the royal victim shed and the kingly priest offered, and by baptism raised to membership in his body and participation in his priesthood; and, therefore, taking their part with him in the continual offering of his sacrifice. So also St John speaks of "Jesus Christ who . . . hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us a kingdom and priests to God and his Father."² Whence also it follows that every Mass is pleasing to God and an acceptable sacrifice, not only because it is offered by the spotless High Priest, Jesus Christ, but also because it is offered by the whole Church, in whom the Spirit of holiness always dwells. The unworthiness, even possibly the rank wickedness of the individual priest who celebrates, can neither pollute the victim he offers, nor sully the pure intention and the holy disposition of the sacrificing Church whose minister he is.

But, although the sacrifice is offered by the whole Church in common, it by no means follows that every individual member of the Church has the same part in the offering, or an equal participation in the ministerial office, with regard to every, or indeed, to any Mass that is celebrated, or, we may add (though of this something must be said later), an equal share in the fruits of the Mass.

The priest naturally holds the first place. We are speaking, of course, of the dignity of his office and of his official position, not of his personal character or merit, of his personal holiness or the opposite.

¹ 1 Peter ii 5 and 9.

² Apoc. i 5-6.

Whether he be far advanced in sanctity, or but a very ordinary good man, or even if his soul be stained with many grievous sins, his official character and dignity are not affected, nor is his official closeness to Christ, as his immediate minister, lessened. It is through his mouth that Christ speaks, through his actions that Christ becomes present on the altar, in his hands that he is lifted up, through him that the sacrifice and offering of Calvary are re-enacted. Moreover, he has been specially chosen, set aside and consecrated to represent the Church, and has been given thereby a very special share in Christ's royal priesthood. Hence many of the prayers at Mass are said by him in the first person, and often he asks God to purify his heart that the offering may be made more worthily. "Brethren," he says, turning to the people, "pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty"; to which the answer comes, "May the Lord receive the sacrifice at thy hands, to the praise and glory of his own name, to our own benefit and to that of all his holy Church." And again at the end he prays, "May my worship and bounden duty be pleasing to thee, O holy Trinity; and grant that the sacrifice which I have offered all unworthy in the sight of thy majesty may be received by thee and win forgiveness from thy mercy for me and for all those for whom I have offered it up."

*Those who
provide the
stipend*

Next in order to the priest comes the person (or persons) who by providing the material elements of the sacrifice and making provision for the support of the clergy who offer it, enables it to be offered.

For many centuries it was the custom for the faithful to supply the clergy in kind with all that was necessary for their support and for the exercise of worship. They brought the bread and wine that were used in the sacrifice of the Mass, and other gifts also which were needed by those who, being consecrated to the service of the altar, were forbidden by the Church's law to support themselves by trade and commerce. What was left, after the needs of the clergy were satisfied, was applied to the support of the poor, of whom some were to be found attached to and dependent upon every church. Gradually, as the circumstances of life changed, offerings in money took the place of gifts in kind. Now, in order that Mass may be offered, it is not only necessary that bread and wine should be available, but also that there should be a priest who, as much as anyone else, needs to be fed and clothed and housed. All therefore who contribute to his support and to the upkeep of the church wherein he ministers, and the sacred vessels and vestments which he uses, and which are necessary for the celebration of Mass, or for its splendour and beauty, or at least its decent and reverent celebration, have a special part in the Masses offered by him.

But with regard to any particular Mass the foremost place among all who share in the offering of it is taken by the one who most directly and immediately provides for its celebration by giving the

stipend fixed by custom or law, which is to be reckoned as taking the place of the gifts that used formerly to be made. That they who make these gifts or contribute an equivalent sum, are to be considered as having a real part in the offering of the sacrifice, as being truly co-offerers with the priest, is attested from the earliest times. So we find St Cyprian upbraiding a wealthy but mean woman who came to Mass on Sundays, bringing no offering but receiving Communion. "You come to Mass without a sacrifice, when you take part of the sacrifice which a poor man has offered,"¹ referring in the final words, not to the priest, but to the poor man who had supplied the necessary elements for the sacrifice; while St Gregory the Great speaks of a man "for whom on certain days his wife was accustomed to offer sacrifice."²

The provision of the necessary elements for the sacrifice confers on the giver a right to the disposal of some part of the fruits of the sacrifice, of which, however, we shall speak later on.

Little more needs to be said on this point. It is evident that those who are present at a Mass, following its action and prayers and uniting their intention with that of the priest, and that of the person who has given the stipend, enter into its offering more closely and nearly than the absent, while if there be among these latter any who actually advert to a Mass that is being celebrated and, in spirit, take their stand before the altar, they, of course, take a higher place as co-offerers than others who give no thought to it. Those, therefore, who, through illness or some other cause, are prevented from going to Mass on Sundays and holy days, or are excused from attendance, ought to try to be present in spirit, and, if possible, follow the course of the Mass at home so as to have as great a share as possible in its offering and to suffer as little loss as may be from their enforced absence.

Before going on to speak of the fruits of the Mass and of the ends for which it is offered, we may say something here of another matter which, though not unimportant, is too often neglected, even by devout and instructed Catholics.

This also, just as the foregoing, is a truth that follows directly upon the fact of our incorporation with Jesus Christ, of our being one with him in his mystical body the Church, of which he is the head. As, through this oneness with him, we share in his priesthood and in its exercise, so likewise we are one with him in his rôle of victim, and therefore, in the Mass, when he offers himself and we, sharing his priesthood, offer him, so also he offers us as partners in his victimhood, and we likewise offer ourselves with him. It is well worth while to examine this truth a little more closely and to note some of its consequences and implications.

It is St Paul who, in a phrase as startling as any he ever penned, reveals to us this truth. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for

¹ *De opere et eleemosyna*, chap. xv.

² *Dialog.*, bk. IV, chap. lviii.

you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the Church.”¹ Were Christ’s sufferings, then, incomplete or insufficient? Is it not the constant teaching of the sacred Scriptures, repeated by all the Fathers and by all theologians, that his sufferings were superabundant, and that the least of them would have been more than enough to make full satisfaction for all the sins of the whole human race? Assuredly, but in saying that we have only touched the fringe of the mystery. To stop here is to leave out of account the great truth underlying St Paul’s words, the truth of which he never tires, the oneness of Christ the head, and his body the Church, whereby in all things there must be unity and correspondence between his life and hers.

Hence although he paid in full the debt of satisfaction due to the divine Majesty, his members have still to suffer in order that Christ’s body may be in harmony with the Head. The Church must live the life of her Head, sharing in his sufferings in order to share in his glory. He has been offered as a victim, and every day he reiterates the offering so that we, his members, may make it with him, and therefore we must also bear our measure of suffering with him, if we wish to be united with him and collaborate in his sacrifice. To live a true Christian and Catholic life involves necessarily some suffering and mortification, such as prayer, fasting, abstinence, purity, the sanctification of Sunday, the avoidance of occasions of sin, without speaking of such special sufferings as sickness, poverty, bereavements and so forth. They who refuse to accept these mortifications refuse to suffer with Christ, refuse to offer sacrifice with his mystical body, and shirk their participation with him in his rôle as victim. On the other hand, they who accept them gladly and generously, thereby fill up in their flesh “those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ.” “And if one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it,”² so since Christ and the Church are one body, when we his members suffer, he suffers with us. Not of course in the sense that he can experience or feel our sufferings, but in so far as he reckons them as his own, since he lives in his members—“I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me”³—so that it can truly be said that his Passion will continue until the end of time, so long as there is still one suffering member of his mystical body.

Hanging on the Cross, he looked down the ages and embracing in his outstretched arms all who were to be his brethren, he offered them with himself, their sufferings with his own in full and consummated homage to his Father. And as his prophetic vision is fulfilled in the unrolling of the years, we, his members, offering ourselves with him in the Mass, “fill up those things that are wanting in the sufferings of Christ.” “As the church is the body of this

¹ Col. i 24.² I Cor. xii 26.³ Gal. ii 20.

head" (Christ), says St Augustine, "through him she learns to offer herself."¹ His mystical body forms the "universal sacrifice," to use St Augustine's phrase, which the whole Church offers through the High Priest, therefore St Paul beseeches his readers to offer their bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God."² The same truth is enshrined in the prayers of the liturgy, wherein the Secret for St Paul of the Cross (April 28th) runs, "May these mysteries of thy passion and death, O Lord, bring upon us that heavenly fervour with which holy Paul, when he offered them up, presented his body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to thee."

The practical consequences of this truth are clear. We need do no more than point out how important it is that the faithful should join all their sufferings with those of Jesus Christ, in order that, being offered with his, they may become truly sacrifices, being incorporated in and absorbed by the one infinite sacrifice offered by him in praise and satisfaction to God. And so we see again that the Mass is the centre of the Christian life, because in it the whole Church and every individual member share with Christ in the exercise of his two highest human activities and offices, in his royal priesthood, and in his victimhood, whereby he redeemed the world.

§ VII: THE ENDS FOR WHICH THE MASS IS OFFERED

TURNING back once more to the decrees of the Council of Trent, we find it laid down in the third Canon that the Mass is not only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, but also a propitiatory sacrifice, and that it is rightly offered for the living and the dead, for sins, pains, satisfactions and other necessities. And in the second chapter we read that "the holy synod teaches that this sacrifice is truly propitiatory, and that by means thereof this is effected, that we obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid, if we draw nigh unto God, contrite and penitent, with a sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence. For the Lord, appeased by the oblation thereof, and granting the grace and gift of penitence, forgives even heinous crimes and sins. . . . Wherefore, not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those who are departed in Christ, and who are not as yet fully purified, it is rightly offered, agreeably to a tradition of the Apostles."

It will be noticed that the Council in its decrees lays but little stress upon the Mass as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, but gives nearly all its attention to its quality and its effects as a sacrifice of propitiation. The reason of this is wholly in the circumstances of the time. The Reformers rejected the Mass but kept a ceremonial

¹ *City of God*, Bk. X, chap. xx; cf. *ibid.*, chap. vi.

² Rom. xii 1.

celebration of the Lord's Supper, which they were quite ready to call a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. On this point there was no quarrel between them and the Church, and therefore the Council, concerned almost wholly with dogmas that were denied or disputed, made but passing mention of it.

But we cannot pass it by so lightly. Praise or adoration of God and thanksgiving to him are man's first and fundamental duty, apart from all question of sin and satisfaction. Adam before he fell was bound to adore God and thank him, and the all-holy Jesus Christ was not, in so far as his human nature is concerned, exempt from this duty. It is an essential condition of the relation between the creature and the Creator, a condition that can never fail or be removed. "The heavens and the earth are full of thy glory," and the life of the angels and saints in heaven is one never-ending act of adoration and praise and thanks.

Also it is clear that we are bound to offer God the highest adoration and the best thanksgiving of which we are capable and to express them in the most perfect manner possible. "And for this end nothing is so well adapted as the offering of sacrifice. As St Thomas puts it: "Since it is natural to man to attain to knowledge through the medium of his senses, and most difficult for him to rise superior to the things of sense, God has provided him with a way of using these things for the commemoration of the things of God, so that, the human mind being incapable of the immediate contemplation of God, his attention may be the better directed towards divine things. For this reason God instituted visible sacrifices, which man offers to him, not because God has any need of them, but so that it may be made manifest to man that he must direct himself and all that he has to God as to his last end, and the creator and ruler and lord of all things." ¹ And again, "Among those things that appertain to worship sacrifice holds a place apart . . . for the outward sacrifice is the manifestation of the true inward sacrifice whereby man offers himself to God, as the first cause of his being, as the principle of his activity, and the object of his beatitude." ²

But no outward or inward sacrifice that mere man can offer is worthy of God, none can give to him the homage that is his right; even were man sinless, the abyss between the finite and the infinite, the creature and the Creator, is too wide for him to bridge. God, indeed, might condescend to accept man's offering, but that would not increase its intrinsic value, or bring it, by a single span, nearer to the infinite standard, which, alone, is the measure of what is owing to him.

But the Mass bridges the gulf. Just as the Incarnation spans the chasm between the human and the divine by uniting manhood with Godhead in oneness of Person, so Christ, by taking us into fellowship with himself in his mystical body, the Church, through Baptism,

¹ *Cont. Gentes*, iii, 119.

² *Ibid.*, iii, 120.

and by sharing with us his priesthood, and making us his co-offerers of himself in the Mass, enables us to reach from earth to the highest heavens, to give to God a gift that is worthy of him, and to offer him adoration and thanks that, since they are Christ's and not merely ours, are fully equal to the infinite claims of the divine Majesty. The liturgy gives beautiful expression to this truth when the priest, holding the Blessed Sacrament over the chalice, and making with it a triple sign of the cross, says, "By him, and with him, and in him, is to thee, God the Father almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory." All honour and glory, that is, perfect adoration and praise, because it is his act whose every act, since he is God, is infinite in its moral dignity and worth. Yet it is our act too, for we have our part in his priesthood.

It is for this reason that every Catholic is bound, under pain of mortal sin, unless there be legitimate excuse, to sanctify the Lord's holy day, Sunday, by assisting at Mass. There is no other way in which he can worship God as he should be worshipped, no other way of giving God what is his due, "all honour and glory." Hence wilfully to neglect Mass is not only to fail in duty to God, but is also to rob God, as far as lies in our power, of that perfect homage which is his right.

We have spoken of the Mass mainly as a sacrifice of adoration, but all that has been said applies to it equally in so far as it is a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and there is no need, therefore, to say more on this aspect of it, and we go on to consider it from the point of view of its propitiatory and impetrative character and effects.

Fundamental to the idea of propitiation is the reality of sin, and *Propitiation* with this, the realisation of guilt. The sinner realises that he has trespassed upon God's sovereign rights and overturned the due and proper order of things, by refusing submission to God and trying to be his own god; for the sinner, in reality, tries to put himself in God's place by making himself his own last end. As long as this subversion of the right moral relation of man to God continues, the divine sovereignty can only be maintained by God's exclusion of man from that intimacy of friendship which, in this life, is called the state of grace, and in the next, the state of glory and happiness in the beatific vision.

We express, imperfectly, this state of things by saying that God is offended with the sinner, or even angry, and that he must be placated or propitiated before he will take him back into friendship. That this way of speaking, which is both scriptural and natural, does not express the whole truth is evident when we remember the continual insistence of Jesus Christ upon God's fatherly love for sinners and his unwearying efforts to win them back. But it does, nevertheless, express a reality. Sin is a subversion of the right moral relation of the creature to his Creator; something real is wrong

that must be put right, and until it is put right, the effect upon man, so far as his final destiny is concerned, is the same as if God were really moved by indignation and anger. For there is opposition of man's will to God's, and where there is not oneness of will there cannot be the intimacy of mutual friendship, there cannot be a life lived in common ; and, since God's will must prevail, the effect upon man is exile from him, a life apart and deprivation of the end for which he was made, that is, final failure and consequent eternal misery.

As it is man who, by sin, overthrows the order set up by God, so it is he who must, as far as possible, restore it. By his rebellion he refuses to submit to God, to give himself and all he has and is to God. Therefore, in order to put things right, he must give back what he has withheld, he must make to God the offering of his whole self, mind, will, even life. Being man he feels the need of giving outward expression to this inward act of self-surrender, and this he does by the offering of a gift or victim in sacrifice. God, accepting the penitent sinner's surrender and sacrifice, is said to be thereby propitiated and placated, and receives him again into friendship ; and in truth, the subverted order has been really restored, what was wrong has been put right, union of wills has again taken the place of opposition and discord.

This is the merest outline of what is meant by propitiation. For a more adequate explanation we refer the reader to *Christ as Priest and Redeemer*.¹ Herein also it is set forth how, after man had sinned, it was Christ alone, the God-Man, who could make to God the satisfaction and propitiation necessary for the restitution of the order that had been completely overthrown ; that he did this by the sacrifice of himself which was consummated on Calvary ; and that in virtue of the solidarity that makes of mankind one family in the supernatural order, Christ's personal act is valid for all men, and his merits available for the pardon of all their sins.

But, though available for all, Christ's merits have to be applied to the individual before they can actually profit him, and this application is effected in many ways ; firstly, through God's sheer benevolence and mercy whereby he gives man numberless uncovenanted graces, without any action on man's part, and secondly, as an answer to prayer, through the agency of the sacraments, and through the Mass. The Mass, as we have already seen, is a prayer, the highest possible prayer of adoration and thanksgiving, but we are now looking at it from another point of view, we are considering it as a way of bringing God's grace to man by the process of propitiation. That is, we are looking at it not as the act of the person or persons offering it, but as a thing which, in itself, has the power of moving God to shower his graces upon us. We are looking at it not as something that we do, but as something that we give to God,

¹ Essay xiv, pp. 490 ff.

by way of compensation or satisfaction for our sins, and for which he gives us something in return. And although it is this point of Catholic teaching that the Protestant Reformers and their later followers professed to find so unscriptural and even so shocking, as derogating from the infinite value of the sacrifice of Calvary, it is easy to see that, rightly understood, it contains nothing to offend.

May we, without irreverence, put it thus? Jesus Christ, by his death, opened an account in the bank of heaven into which he poured the infinite riches of his merits, to be used for the relief of all men's needs. Every Mass is a cheque signed by him as Priest and Victim, signed with his own blood, stamped with the Cross, ranking therefore as the presentation anew of his sacrificial death, and therefore entitling the bearer to a share in the riches stored in heaven's treasury. Entitling him, because God, in accepting the High Priest's sacrifice, thereby agreed, and, as it were, bound himself to pay out from the account thus opened whenever it should be presented to him afresh. So far, then, from derogating from the infinite value of Christ's death, the Catholic teaching, in reality, proclaims and emphasises it by insisting on the fact that the propitiatory effect of the Mass lies simply in its power of moving God to dispense to men the treasures laid up for them by Christ.

Closely bound up with the propitiatory power of the Mass is its *Impetration* power of impetration or pleading. Here the same principles apply. Jesus Christ "hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby he is able also to save for ever them that come to God by him, always living to make intercession for us,"¹ by presenting himself ever as the immolated victim, and letting his glorious wounds plead that the price he paid may be dispensed with divine generosity to help men in their needs. In every Mass that is offered the divine victim thus stands in sacrificial intercession, and quite apart from the prayers that are sent up by those who surround the altar on earth, the divine victim pleads and is "heard for his reverence."²

We have now to ask what is the actual effect produced by the Mass as a sacrifice of propitiation and impetration. What fruits does it produce in men, how and in what measure are they distributed among various classes of recipients, and who, if any, are debarred from sharing in them?

§ VIII: THE FRUITS OF THE SACRIFICE

As the Council of Trent puts it, by means of this sacrifice "we obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid . . . for the Lord, appeased by the oblation thereof, and granting the grace and gift of penitence, forgives even heinous crimes and sins . . . wherefore is it rightly offered, not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions

¹ Heb. vii 24-25.

² *Ibid.* v 7.

and other necessities of the faithful who are living, but also for those who are departed in Christ, and who are not as yet fully purified.”

We shall deal first with the fruits received by the living.

What must be noticed before anything else is that the propitiatory action of the sacrifice is very different from the sanctifying action of a sacrament. This acts upon the soul directly and is an efficient cause producing grace in the soul. It is something that we receive, God's instrument or tool, which he uses to engrave his image upon the soul, or if it be already there, to cut its lines deeper and more clearly. Not so the sacrifice. This is something that we give to God, in exchange for which he gives us a return, grace or the remission of the debt of punishment. Sacrifice acts, not upon the soul, but rather, though the expression be not strictly accurate, upon God; not as an efficient cause, but by way of moral causation, in so far as God, looking upon the gift, his own Son's self-oblation, is thereupon moved to give in return.

What does he give? To answer this question we must begin by pointing out that he does not give directly or immediately forgiveness of sins. As far as mortal sins are concerned, we do not think that any theologian of repute has ever taught that they can be remitted as the direct result of the propitiatory power of the Mass. This effect is produced by the sacraments of Baptism and Penance, and extra-sacramentally, by an act of perfect contrition; and, by divine ordinance, cannot be produced otherwise. Yet all are agreed, in accordance with the age-long tradition of the Church, and the teaching of the Tridentine decrees, that the propitiatory power of the Mass is a most efficacious agent for obtaining pardon of sin. The Missal is full of allusions to this. Here are but a few examples. “May these sacrifices, O Lord . . . cleanse away our sins”; “Grant . . . that the oblation of this sacrifice may ever purify and protect our frailty from all evil”; “Regard the sacrifices which we offer thee . . . and by this holy intercourse loosen the bonds of our sins”; “May these offerings . . . unloose the bonds of our wickedness.”¹

These prayers must be understood to mean what they say, and therefore we cannot follow those theologians who restrict the propitiatory efficacy of the Mass to the obtaining of actual graces by which the sinner is led to true penance and sincere conversion. Before the giving of grace for the sinner's conversion, there is something else to be done. However much we may try to avoid anthropomorphic ways of speaking of God, and however much modern sentimentality may dislike the notion of an angry and irritated God, we must realise and recognise that, at least, the effects of what we call God's anger are real, and we must insist that, in his dealings with man, his justice must be given as prominent a place as his love

¹ Secret, 3rd Sunday after Epiph., 4th Sunday after Epiph., Wednesday, 2nd week of Lent, Passion Sunday.

*Difference
between
sacrifice and
sacrament*

*How sins are
forgiven
through the
Mass*

and mercy. For God is justice as truly as he is love. Now sin is an insult to God, an attempt to dethrone him, a refusal to give him what is his, and divine justice demands that, unless compensation be made or satisfaction given, the sinner be left unbefriended and finally cast off for ever. Jesus Christ made the necessary satisfaction ; it is offered to God anew in every Mass, and thereby his justice is vindicated, his anger appeased, and instead of punishing the sinner as he deserves, instead of leaving him without help, instead of withholding from him the grace without which return to God is impossible, he looks on him with mercy and showers upon him all those graces which make true penance and conversion not only possible but easy.

A moment's thought will show that the worst punishment that could befall the sinner, in this life, would be God's refusal to give him the grace necessary for repentance. To leave him to himself is tantamount to issuing a sentence of final damnation. But until God's justice be vindicated by some sort of satisfaction offered by that individual sinner, or on his behalf, there can be no positive assurance that the divine mercy will assert itself in his favour and give him the help he so sorely needs. It is here that the propitiatory power of the Mass is exerted ; the sacrifice offered for the sinner is the compensation needed, he is brought again within the ambit of God's effective mercy, grace is given to him, repentance becomes possible, and his conversion is now only a matter of his free co-operation with God.

Although we must distinguish in the Mass between propitiation and impetration, we cannot separate these two effects. They run together. As a sacrifice of propitiation the Mass, by making satisfaction for sin, appeases God's outraged majesty, as a sacrifice of impetration it moves his clemency ; by propitiation it ranks the sinner among those who are to be helped, by impetration it causes him to become the actual recipient of help. The formal notions are different, the effect is ultimately and actually one and indivisible.

What has been said of mortal sin applies also, as far as the principles are concerned, to venial sins, to our daily faults, infidelities and negligences. The common opinion of theologians is that these also are forgiven only indirectly by the Mass, just as mortal sins. The reasons are the same, for although these sins do not put the soul into a state of enmity with God, yet they do put obstacles in the way of the free flow of his grace. These obstacles must first be removed before divine grace can work unhindered to lead the soul to that state of penitence and devotion necessary for the remission even of venial sins.

Besides the power of obtaining in this indirect way the pardon *Remission of* of sins, the Mass, as a sacrifice of propitiation, has also the effect of *punishment* satisfying for temporal punishments which have to be suffered, either in this world or the next, even after the sins have been forgiven.

Hence the Council of Trent says that it is offered for "punishments and satisfactions." The consideration of this effect brings into our survey not only the living, but also the dead, those who have departed "in Christ but are not yet fully purified." But this effect is produced directly. Here we may usefully call again upon the analogy of Jesus Christ's heavenly deposit of treasure, paid over by him in satisfaction for the penal debts of men. In every Mass he now hands in upon the altar a cheque to draw upon this treasure and to use it for the actual remission of punishment justly merited by sinners.

For the faithful departed

So it is that, from the earliest times, while the Mass has never been offered for martyrs, since it was realised that they were in no need of help, it has always been the custom to offer the holy sacrifice for the rest of the faithful departed, for "it must not be doubted that the departed receive help by the prayers of the Church and the life-giving sacrifice."¹ St Augustine's moving description of his mother Monica's death is well known, and his testimony that her only request to her family was that "everywhere, wherever they might be, they would remember her at the altar,"² is a witness both to the antiquity of the practice of offering the Mass for the souls of the dead, and to the firm hold it had upon the minds of the faithful.

Here arises a question of considerable interest, of practical importance and of some difficulty. There can be no doubt that, if we consider the Mass in itself, that is, not as our action who offer it, but as Christ's own body and blood, and sufferings and death, offered and presented anew by him to the Father, its value in the way of propitiation for sins and punishments and satisfactions is truly infinite. This point needs no proof; to anyone who realises what the Mass is, it is obvious. On the other hand, it is equally clear that the actual effect produced by any one Mass is limited. Otherwise the Church could not allow hundreds of Masses to be offered for one soul in Purgatory. She could not, indeed, allow more than one Mass to be offered for one soul, or in satisfaction for one sin. Whence, therefore, is the limitation?

Limitation of fruits

On this question theologians are divided. Some attribute it to a positive ordinance of God, holding that, for his own good reasons, among which is his desire to encourage the devotion of the faithful, he definitely restricts the effect produced. Little, if any, real support can be found for this opinion, which seems also to be intrinsically improbable when we consider God's loving desire to give all possible help to men; such an arbitrary limitation would seem to contradict all we know of his mercy and clemency.

Most theologians take another line, with St Thomas, and hold that the propitiatory effect of the Mass is proportioned to the devotion of those who offer it. This seems to be not only good theology, but also sound psychology, not to say common sense. For a sacrifice is a gift, and the acceptability of a gift and the recipient's readiness to

¹ St Augustine, Sermon 172.

² *Conf.*, Bk. IX, chap. xi.

give in return, although not independent of the intrinsic value of the gift, are more closely related to the giver's dispositions. The widow's mite stands for proof. So with the Mass. Its intrinsic value is infinite and invariable, but the dispositions of those who offer it, their zeal, love, hope, faith, confidence, are capable of almost infinite variations in degree, from the burning ardour of the saint to the grudging coldness of him who gives from motives of formality, routine or human respect. It is only natural, then, that the effect produced by the Mass, whether by way of propitiation or impetration, should fall far below its own objective worth, and have some proportion to the reality and intensity of the dispositions prompting the gift. This is not to say that the fruit produced is merely on a level with those dispositions; there are good reasons, chief among them the worth of the gift itself, for holding that it far exceeds them, but that there is some true proportion seems to be well established, although it is impossible to say what it is and how exactly it is to be measured. This is God's secret.

When the reader recalls what was said in the previous section about Christ being the first and principal offerer of every Mass, he may urge in objection against this teaching the perfection of his dispositions, and conclude therefrom that the Mass must always produce its maximum effect. It must, however, be borne in mind that a gift or sacrifice offered in propitiation or satisfaction must be offered for a particular person or offence. Its efficacy must be directed by an act of the offerer's will towards the special object for which it is offered. Now, as Jesus Christ has given us this sacrifice for our use and benefit, so he leaves to us the power of directing its propitiatory virtue whithersoever we will. Though, therefore, the Mass is offered by Christ its special application comes from us, and, hence, its actual propitiatory and satisfactory effect is limited and conditioned by the dispositions of him who makes this application, who gives the gift for this or that special object.

It is hardly necessary to add that, as regards this special fruit of satisfaction and propitiation, the privilege of applying the Mass for any particular object belongs to the person who provides for its celebration, that is, nowadays, who gives the priest a stipend with the request to offer the sacrifice for his intention, and therefore, the priest, having accepted the contract, is bound in strict justice to fulfil it by conforming his intention with that of him who gave.

On one further point there is but little to be said. It is clear that the effect or fruit of the Mass, either as propitiation or satisfaction, is produced with infallible certainty. But, on the other hand, experience shows that the result wished for, as for example, a sinner's conversion, does not always follow. The reason for the failure is, of course, solely in the sinner's refusal to co-operate with the grace God gives him. Man must do his part, and if he will not, even a million Masses cannot convert him. This lack of dispositions

Are they produced infallibly?

cannot exist in the case of the suffering souls in Purgatory, and with them, therefore, the desired effect, whether it be the alleviation of their sufferings, or the shortening of their time of purgation, must infallibly be produced, limited, however, by the conditions already laid down, and also, perhaps, as many theologians think, by the degree and ardour of charity existing in the soul for whom the Mass is offered. Further speculation on this matter is profitless, for it has no sound foundation in knowledge. All we can do is to rest content with the practice of the Church, and sure that no fraction of the fruits of a Mass offered for a soul in Purgatory can possibly be wasted. God's mercy is our guarantee.

When we ask who, if any, are excluded from receiving the fruits of the Mass, we must first of all make a distinction between the living and the dead. To take the former first, it is clear that as Christ died for all men, and wishes all to be saved, so all can be helped by his sacrifice which, whether as impetration or propitiation, can be offered for all. But the application of this general principle is conditioned by the fact that Jesus Christ instituted the Mass for the Church, to whom alone he gave the right and power of regulating and controlling the application of its fruits. She, therefore, has in the course of time made such rules as seemed necessary, both to ensure that the benefits of the Mass should be as widely diffused as possible, and also, on the other hand, to guard it against any risk of profanation or irreverence, and to avoid the danger of throwing her pearls before swine. This is not the place to examine these rules in detail; let it be enough to say that the Church encourages her children to be generous in offering the holy sacrifice for the highest needs of all men, whether or no they belong to Christ's body, the visible Church, that they may be saved from the consequences of their sins, and be converted to the true shepherd of their souls.

As far as regards the dead, the lost in hell are, of course, beyond all help. For the same fundamental reason, the blessed in heaven are beyond the need of help. The blessed have reached their last end, the damned have finally failed to reach it; in neither case is any advance possible, any growth in the happiness of the blessed, any lessening of the misery of the lost. We have, therefore, to consider only the suffering souls in purgatory. All need help, all can be helped. But, here again, the practical question is governed rather by positive ecclesiastical law than by general principles. The only point on which there is nowadays any dispute among theologians and canonists, is as to whether a Mass may be offered for an individual soul, who, during life, was not a member of the visible Church. But even those who maintain that this is still forbidden by the Church's law, yet hold that there is good reason for thinking that God, in his mercy, does not withhold from such a soul any part of the help it would have received if the Mass had been offered for it individually.

Among theologians many other points are disputed concerning

Who are excluded from the fruits of Mass?

the distribution of the fruits of the Mass, and matters of contract and justice arising from the giving of stipends for Masses ; but these and other things, being hardly suitable for discussion in such an essay as this, intended for the reader unversed in theological niceties, must be passed over.

§ IX: SUPPLEMENTARY

APART from the few lines given to the matter in the fifth section, *Communion* nothing has been said about the Communion, although, without a doubt, it is a most important element in the Mass, both in itself, and in its relation to the sacrificial character of the Mass. Nor is it our intention to speak of it at any length now. It is safe to say that the theory advanced, some years ago, by a few theologians, to the effect that the Communion contained the central and essential element of the sacrifice, has met with the fate it deserved, and cannot be seriously entertained. It is now almost universally conceded that the function of the Communion, considered as an integrating element of the sacrifice, is to express man's approach to God and union with him, by becoming a guest at his table, to symbolise the glories and joys of the future life, of which the sacrificial banquet is a figure and anticipation, and to express, likewise, the close union and charity that should unite, as in one family, all who eat of the same table. This symbolism is common to the sacrificial banquets of all religions. When applied to the Eucharistic Communion it becomes, of course, something very much more than mere and empty symbolism because of the Real Presence, but to deal with this would be to consider the sacramental effects of the Eucharist, which are outside our province and are treated in another essay.

One or two other points call for brief mention before we close.

In many of the ancient liturgies there is to be found a prayer *The Epiclesis* known as the *epiclesis* or invocation which, on account of its form and its position, has been a difficulty to many and has led some astray. For whereas it is regularly placed after the words of institution, "This is my body," and the rest, it takes the form of a petition to the Holy Trinity, or in many cases, to the Holy Ghost, that by the power of God the bread may become the body of Christ and the wine his blood. Hence arises the question, which are the effective words that act as the instrument of God's power to change the bread into Christ's body, the wine into his blood? The Catholic Church holds definitely that transubstantiation is effected by Christ's words, the words of institution, as is clear from the fact that in the Roman Mass there is no true *epiclesis*, and from her rubric directing the priest to kneel and adore the consecrated host as soon as the words of consecration, "This is my body," have been said; and consequently, Catholic theologians teach, as we have already said, that the sacrifice in all essentials is complete as soon as the words of institution have

been pronounced over the chalice, that is, as soon as the twofold consecration of the bread and wine has taken place.

Yet it must be added that, although the words of institution alone are operative in effecting transubstantiation and they alone, therefore, contain and embrace the essential elements of the sacrifice, it must not be inferred that the invocation, or indeed any of the prayers that make up the Canon of the Mass are superfluous or unnecessary. The whole of the Canon is the expression in words and actions of various aspects of the one sacrificial act which takes but a moment of time. But, owing to the very nature of words and gestures, dramatic expression must be extended through time, and the proper time relationship of the momentary act to its outward expression must inevitably be obscured, or even seem to be inverted. What has not yet happened must be spoken of as present, what is past must be expressed as still to come.

The foregoing pages contain but little more than an outline of a subject about which there is an immense and ever-growing volume of literature. Saints, fathers, doctors, theologians, spiritual writers, liturgists, historians have all found, and are continually finding, something new to say about the Mass, for in truth the subject is inexhaustible. We have, on the other hand, simply kept to the old, well-worn tracks. After all the highways must be known before the byways can be explored with safety, and indeed, for many, the highways must suffice for all the needs and adventures of life. To those who are still unacquainted with the highways of theology this little essay may be useful; to some others it may appeal as a reminder of the days when they first began to set out upon this journey of labours and delights.

B. V. MILLER.

XXVI

SIN AND REPENTANCE

§ I: INTRODUCTION

It is characteristic of our modern civilisation and a result of the ceaseless activity and speed of our lives that men think very little, if at all, about the purpose of their existence. They expect everything else to justify its existence, for the elementary notion of good and bad expresses the attainment or non-attainment of a due measure of perfection ; they call a horse good if it is sound in wind and limb, or the roof of a house bad if the rain enters in. But to the end or purpose of man himself many do not give a passing thought. He is in the universe, not knowing why nor whence, and out of it again " as wind along the waste." *The purpose of human existence*

Those who do not base their lives on a principle of religion attempt, perhaps, in a more reflective mood to erect a standard of conduct based on the attainment of some purpose in life : wealth, domestic happiness, scientific discovery, social service, philanthropy, or any other worthy object. It is not the immediate object of this essay to show the essential inadequacy of these things, nor to establish the supreme truth that in the possession of God alone is human happiness and perfection to be found.¹ But it is worth while insisting at the outset that a false idea of the purpose of human existence, by which we understand that which constitutes the final perfection and happiness of man, must inevitably lead to a false idea of the meaning of human evil or sin. It will be conceived by the humanitarian as an offence against humanity, by the materialist as a kind of disease, by the cynic as a breach of established conventions. The very worst thing one might say about it would be that it is inconsistent with the dignity of a rational being. But once granted that God is the end or purpose of human life, the true idea of sin becomes apparent. It is an offence against God.

The Catholic doctrine on sin and repentance has, for this reason, a more immediate and personal application to the individual than any other doctrine. For the sinner does not hurt the immutable God ; he hurts only himself by turning away from his Creator to things created. He introduces into his own being disorder and discord, and, unless he repents, he will remain for ever separated from God. Having failed to attain the only purpose of his existence, he is like a barren tree that is fit for nothing but to be burnt.

¹ Cf. Essay ix, *Man and his Destiny*, pp. 303 ff.

Cardinal Newman tells us, in one place, how the doctrine of final perseverance brought home to his mind the existence of two luminously self-evident beings : himself and his Creator. It is uniquely from the point of view of the relation between God and the individual soul that we are going to think about sin, not regarding it as something which brings poverty and misery into the world in general, but as a supreme evil which impoverishes a human soul by averting it from God.

There is a further reason why it is impossible to understand sin except in terms of the destiny of the individual soul. We have been created by God for himself, and in nothing short of the possession of God will the desires of our immortal souls find their ultimate satisfaction. What exactly this union between our souls and God would have been, had we not been raised to the supernatural state, is a matter of pure conjecture. A state of natural beatitude would doubtless have implied some intimate knowledge of God's perfections, mirrored in his creatures, and some corresponding degree of natural felicity, but the unaided powers of our human nature could never possibly see God as he sees himself, face to face. Such knowledge of God is altogether above the capabilities of any created nature, even the nature of the highest angel, for it is the life of God himself. Yet it is to this sublime and supernatural vision of God, not "through a glass in a dark manner, but face to face,"¹ that God has destined us. He has adopted us into his family, given us a share in his own life, made us partakers of the divine nature.²

The super-natural state

God, being omnipotent, could have effected this plan of his divine goodness in many conceivable ways, but he has revealed to us the way he chose to work this mystery which has been hidden in God from all eternity. The real Son of God by nature became man in order that men might become sons of God by adoption ; he deigned to become a sharer in our humanity in order that we might become sharers in his divinity. In the supernatural order Christ our Lord is the link between God and man, the only mediator, the firstborn among many brethren.³ Through our union with him, branches of one vine, members of one body, our souls are supernaturalised by sanctifying grace, a beginning of the final consummation in the vision of God : "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity. Who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ."⁴

In the supernatural order in which we are placed sin has this effect : it deprives the soul of sanctifying grace and charity, banishes God who dwells there as in a temple,⁵ and leaves the soul empty and desolate, deprived of its supernatural character as an adopted son of

¹ 1 Cor. xiii 12.

³ Rom. viii 29.

⁵ 1 Cor. iii 16.

² 2 Peter i 4.

⁴ Eph. i 4.

God. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock."¹ If, in God's infinite mercy, this ruined habitation is once again rebuilt and becomes once more the dwelling-place of God, it will be due to the divine initiative freely holding out the grace of repentance and converting the rebellious sinner again to himself.²

To complete an initial understanding of sin and repentance, one more reflection is necessary. We shall attain our last end and happiness as sons of God in being made conformable to the image of his Son,³ Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose hands the Father has given all things.⁴ Whether the Son of God would have become incarnate if sin had not entered the world by the fall of our first parents, is a matter of theological speculation. But the fact of sin is certain, and it is equally certain that no created being could atone for the insult thus offered to the infinite majesty of God. If divine justice required a satisfaction equal to the offence, it was necessary for it to be offered by a divine person. From the first moment of Adam's sin a Redeemer was promised, whose office and dignity became more and more clear throughout the ages waiting his coming. When, in the fulness of time, God appeared in Christ reconciling the world to himself,⁵ the prophet and priest, the model and king of all men, he had one supreme work to perform which so predominated in his sacred life on earth that his name was taken from it: "Thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins."⁶ We should not even think of sin and its disastrous effects on our own souls without thinking at the same time of Christ, bearing our infirmities, stricken like a leper and afflicted, wounded for our iniquities, bruised for our sins,⁷ offering to his Father the fullest possible satisfaction for the sins of the world by dying on the Cross.

And if we should not think of sin apart from Christ's satisfaction, still less can we even conceive the grace of repentance, converting the soul again to God, apart from the merits of Christ, "for there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved."⁸ When a sinner is turned again to God, every step leading up to the infusion of grace is due to the merits of Christ, "in whom we have redemption, through his blood, the remission of sins."⁹

These essential notions concerning the purpose of life, the supernatural state to which we have been raised by grace, and above all the redeeming office of Christ, are, as it were, the background or setting upon which a more detailed description of sin and repentance can be placed.

On these vital premisses we can now proceed a step further. The *Summa Theologica* of St Thomas treats in the first part of God, in the second part of the movement of the rational creature towards God,

¹ Apoc. iii 20.

² Rom. viii 29.

³ 2 Cor. v 19.

⁴ Isa. liii 4.

⁵ Cf. Essay xvii, *Actual Grace*, pp. 604-605.

⁶ John iii 35.

⁷ Matt. i 21.

⁸ Acts iv 12.

⁹ Col. i 14.

and in the third part of Christ who is the way by which the rational creature reaches God. Man's movement towards God, his last end and beatitude, is progressive, stretching over the whole journey of his earthly life, and on this journey he is assisted and directed in two ways by his Creator. He is moved internally by divine grace, for, as we have already recalled, his last end being a supernatural one, he is unable to attain to it by his own natural power. He is also directed externally by divine laws which are like signposts on the way. We must examine more closely this notion of law, because sin is intimately connected with it. No human being, not even the greatest sinner, directly and explicitly turns away from God his last end and highest good. He turns from his last end by turning towards something forbidden by the law of God. It is a point which is vital to the proper understanding of mortal sin, and we shall return to it in the next section.

Law is an ordinance of reason made for the common good and promulgated by the person who has care of a community. Whatever category of law we may consider, it is always a reasonable scheme or plan devising means to an end, but the will of the legislator must "ordain" and impose it on his subjects before the plan can be called law: the Budget is merely a scheme before it is passed by Parliament. Law is a plan designed for the good of the whole community, not merely for the benefit of an individual; in fact, laws frequently require the individual interest to be sacrificed to the common good. Moreover, since law gives rise to the obligation of observing it, it must be promulgated by being brought to the notice of the subject, and cannot bind unless it is known.

Now, it will be seen at once that this concept of law refers primarily to God who has care of the whole universe, and the authority of other legislators, no matter what the scope of their "community" may be, is derived ultimately from God. The plan of divine wisdom directing all actions and movements in the whole universe, including physical laws and animal instincts, is called the *eternal law*, and it is the fount and origin of the order in the universe.

We are concerned now only with the laws of God governing and directing human beings. How are they promulgated and brought to our notice? We think at once of the Mosaic law, of the law of the Gospel instituted and promulgated by Christ "Rex et Legifer Noster," of the laws of the Church made by Councils and Popes under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, of the just laws of States, of the regulations of religious Orders and other smaller communities.

But, as a matter of fact, there is a law of God governing human beings, which is antecedent to any of those we have mentioned and of far greater obligation, which was binding on the Gentiles, who had never heard of the law of Moses,¹ and to which all men are subject even though they recognise neither the law of the Gospel, nor the

¹ Rom. ii 14,

authority of the Church, nor the ruling of the State. It is called the *natural law*, the participation and reflection in a rational creature of the eternal law of God, and therefore an expression in man of the very essence of God. God was free not to create human nature at all, but having created it he could not but assign to it the moral or natural law. Every created thing has certain well-defined tendencies proper to its nature, and man is no exception to this rule. Unlike the instincts and tendencies of irrational things, the law which governs human nature is law in the strict sense of the word, for the individual is able to obey or disobey, and is not driven along by blind inherent force. The endowment of free will, necessarily accompanying a rational nature, is man's peril as well as his chief glory, for in freely disregarding the laws of his own nature he is responsible for the resulting ruin and disorder.

This law of his being is called the natural law because it can be perceived by the light of reason alone, and because its precepts can be deduced by reason from the data of human nature. To analyse and explain the natural moral law is the purpose of the science of ethics, and we cannot do more than indicate the broad lines of the process. We find from the experience of our own nature that a human being is a complicated organism having many faculties and tendencies and needs. In the interplay of these various parts a certain subordination of the lower to the higher, of the parts to the whole, and of the whole to God, is clearly observed. Let us take a few examples. It is morally wrong to satisfy the desire for food and drink in a way which causes grave harm to the whole body or which obscures the use of reason. Certain faculties, as the power of procreation, having a natural purpose and natural organs for that purpose, it is morally wrong to pervert this purpose by sexual vice. Human nature is social and needs the society of other human beings; all those things are therefore morally wrong which would make the maintenance of human society impossible; for example, anarchy or theft. Lastly, human reason can establish the existence of God the Creator and ruler of the universe, a good and beneficent and sapient Being: that blasphemy and hatred of God are morally wrong is a necessary consequence.

In a word, the substance of the Decalogue, with the exception of the third commandment, is nothing more than a written expression of the natural law. If I tell a man to live according to his nature, to develop his faculties harmoniously in accordance with their natural objects, and to live in a manner befitting the dignity of a human being, I am merely telling him to obey the natural law which is a reflection in his nature of the eternal law of God. In telling a man to do good and avoid evil, I am telling him not to break the commandments of God. The two sets of ideas are mutually inclusive.

All this is the natural law. But man is raised to a supernatural state, and in everything which concerns the attainment of his

supernatural end, human reason alone is powerless to discover the laws which God has devised for his guidance. He needs to be taught by God. Christ our Lord, who taught the way of God in truth,¹ has brought to our knowledge the necessity of Baptism and of faith and all the other precepts of the Gospel, and the Church continues to teach in his name.

But there is this further important observation to make : even with regard to the natural obligations of the moral law it is necessary for the majority of men to be taught by God ; for human reason left to itself will discover the truth, at least in the less obvious precepts of the natural law, only with such labour and difficulty that very few men would come to the knowledge of it. Therefore, the Catholic is taught by the Church his natural duties, and in matters of great moment and difficulty the teaching authority of the Church defines the moral obligations of the faithful ; for example, in the use of marriage. That teaching imposed on the whole Church is infallibly true, for it bears the stamp of divine authority.

Sufficient has been said to show the meaning of divine law, the breach of which is sin. Inasmuch as every species of just law is reduced to the eternal law of God as its fount and origin, the aptness of the classical Augustinian definition of sin is apparent : " Sin is any thought, word, or deed against the eternal law, which is the divine ordinance of reason commanding order to be observed and forbidding its disturbance." ² It is against this majestic ordinance of God that man dares to act in setting aside the natural law, or the law of the Church, or any other just law. But he cannot evade altogether the eternal law of God " commanding order to be observed," and it is of Catholic faith that the order of divine justice may require the eternal punishment of the sinner.

We may now make a closer examination of mortal sin. In order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding, we must remember that the word " sin " may be employed in various senses : we speak of " original " sin, of " mortal " sin, and of " venial " sin. Confusion will arise if we allow ourselves to think of these three terms as if they denoted three kinds or species of one genus, in rather the same way as we speak of any three sacraments sharing in the generic notion of external signs causing grace. The full nature of sin, in the sense employed throughout this essay, with the exception of the last section, is found only in *personal mortal sin* ; *original sin* and *venial sin* share in that nature only incompletely and analogously. The complete malice and disastrous effects of sin are proper to personal mortal sin and to nothing else. It is the action by which a man knowingly and freely turns from God by fixing his will on creatures. How it is that an offence against the law of God necessarily entails the rejection of God will be explained more fully in the following section.

¹ Matt. xxii 16.

² Migne, *P. L.*, xlii 48.

§ II: MORTAL SIN

THE eternal law directs rational creatures towards their last end and perfection in God. It is a union which will reach its final consummation in the vision of God face to face, and in this life consists in the mutual love between God and the soul, *charity*, the bond of perfection.¹ The end of the law, therefore, is God, to be loved by the rational creature as his sovereign good, to whom every created good must be subordinated. Hence follows this important consequence: wilfully to disobey that law is to prefer some created finite satisfaction to the infinite uncreated good which is God. To disobey God's law is to show by one's actions that God's will and good pleasure are not the predominant motive of one's life. He who sins grievously implicitly declares: "I know that by this action I am forfeiting God's friendship; nevertheless I do it." What else is this than to prefer the creature to the Creator, one's own gratification to the express will of God, self-love to the love of God? "The end of the commandment is charity." ■

This might appear, at first sight, an exaggeration. It might be objected that the sinner does not weigh up the relative merits of the Creator and the creature, and decide in favour of the creature. He desires, indeed, to do something which he knows to be forbidden, but he does not regard it as his sovereign good and the sole end of his existence. No sinner directly intends to turn away from God. Such an act would be, in fact, impossible, for the human will necessarily turns towards its highest good and happiness: even a sin like the hatred of God is an aversion not from man's last end, but from God considered under some such aspect as the avenger of evil, and therefore conceived as harmful.

The answer to this objection is that the twofold element in every mortal sin, namely, the rejection of God and adherence to creatures, inevitably coincides in one act of the human will. Self-love and self-gratification in the forbidden enjoyment of creatures is the direct and immediate object of the will. The rejection of God is willed indirectly as involved in the choice of a sinful object. Theoretically the sinner may admit that the self-indulgence which he contemplates is shameful, that it is unworthy of a rational creature's desire, and that God's friendship is the only good infinitely desirable. Yet, in practice, he *acts as though* he regarded that self-indulgence as more desirable than God's friendship, since, in order to enjoy the creature, he is willing to forfeit the love of the Creator. By directly choosing the enjoyment of some created good known to be mortally sinful, the sinner elects to disturb the moral order of God to the extent of losing the divine friendship. He does not want to turn from God, you will say. He does so in turning to a creature, and he does so as deliberately and as inevitably as he who desiring to turn his face

¹ Col. iii 14.² 1 Tim. i 5.

to the east thereby turns his back to the west. "They said, reasoning with themselves: The time of our life is short and tedious . . . and no man hath been known to return from hell. . . . Come therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present . . . let us fill ourselves with costly wine . . . let us oppress the poor just man, and not spare the widow . . . let our strength be the law of justice. . . . These things they thought, and were deceived: for their own malice blinded them, and they knew not the secrets of God."¹

It is because of this double aspect in every mortal sin that its nature can be described in a twofold way. The essential element which makes sin the greatest possible evil in the world is the rejection of God, the love of self carried to the extent of treating God with contempt, the averting of the will from God by a voluntary recourse to creatures. In this respect all mortal sins are alike. But if we desire to discuss the relative gravity of different mortal sins, or to discover some process by which sins may be grouped into different categories or species, we must turn our attention to the positive aspect of sin, and consider the various finite objects for the sake of which God may have been rejected.

*Distinction
of sins*

It is in this sense that the familiar Augustinian definition, given in the previous section, is to be understood. The difference between one mortal sin and another can only turn on the degree and nature of the subversion of the moral order, on the variety of thought, word, or deed against the eternal law of God. In each case the sinful act carries with it the forfeiture of God's friendship, loss of grace, spiritual death. A man is dead whether he has been dead a day, a week, or a year, whether he died by violence or disease, in youth or in old age; but in each case the cause of death may be differently reckoned and determined. So it is possible for a human being wilfully to forsake God in various ways, according to the manner in which he departs from his law. Theft is an injury done to my neighbour, suicide is an injury done to myself, but each is an offence against God, because each is forbidden, though for different reasons, by the divine law.

We shall see in a later section that the act of repentance reflects this double aspect of sin. Just as sin is the averting of the will from God by a voluntary recourse to creatures, so repentance implies conversion to God accompanied by an act of the will detesting the sin committed. It is because this detestation of sin is an absolutely necessary condition for reconciliation to God's friendship that the Church requires us to confess, in number and species, every mortal sin of which we are conscious.

But are we to suppose that every breach of God's law is so serious as to deprive us of God's friendship? Not so. We have already insisted that the full nature of sin is verified in mortal sin alone. There is a type of sin which is called "venial," and in a later section

¹ Wisd. ii. .

a fuller analysis of its nature will be given. For the present we are speaking only of mortal sin, an act so grievously subversive of the moral order as to destroy the friendship existing between the soul and God, and to frustrate the end of the moral law, which is the due subordination of all created good to God, the infinite and sovereign good.

Before we can say with any degree of certainty that mortal sin has been committed, the action must *objectively* constitute a serious breach of the law of God. Is there any method whereby this may be determined? A Catholic, of course, accepts the authority of the Church in defining the moral law, and the Church, in fact, has frequently settled disputes among the faithful by an authoritative decision: for example, Innocent XI declared that the voluntary omission of Mass on days of obligation was a grave sin. There is also the very clear teaching contained in certain texts of Holy Scripture to the effect that certain evil actions exclude the doer from the kingdom of God,¹ or are worthy of eternal punishment,² or cry to heaven for vengeance.³

Human reason alone, granted the nature of mortal sin as destructive of the moral order and disruptive of the love of God, can establish that certain disordered actions are of this nature. Charity is the friendship existing between God and man. Even in human intercourse there are actions which merely ruffle the surface of friendship, and there are others which are calculated to destroy it altogether. So also on the plane of divine charity, it is clear that a man cannot remain the friend of God while blaspheming him, or refusing to believe his revelation, or declining to trust in his promises. And because the order of divine charity requires us to love others for God's sake as we love ourselves, it is equally clear that this order of fraternal charity cannot exist among men in the face of certain grave injuries committed by one man against another. On this double precept of charity the whole moral law depends.⁴

Mortal sins will also differ in gravity as compared with one another. Inasmuch as our whole lives are directed by the eternal law in order to bring us to the possession of God, a sin such as blasphemy must be extremely grave, because it is a much greater disturbance of the established order to insult the Creator than to offend his creatures. Similarly, if we consider the moral order imposed on man as a social being, the more precious my neighbour's rights are, the more grievous is their violation; taking an innocent life is a graver injury than stealing property.

It is on this basis of reason applied to the data of revelation that the exponents of moral theology argue that certain actions are to be considered as grave sin, and when there is substantial agreement between them on points which may be a little difficult to determine,

¹ I Cor. vi 10.

³ Deut. xxiv 15.

² Matt. xxv 41.

⁴ Matt. xxii 40.

the faithful can accept their teaching as certain. For the common theological teaching, owing to its practical influence on the use of the sacrament of Penance, is, in effect, the common teaching of the Church. But even the most careful enquiry often fails to secure certainty, owing to the complexity of the matter and the divergent views tolerated by the Church.

*Advertence
and consent*

So far we have examined the subject, so to speak, objectively. But before any action can be considered as gravely sinful, not merely considered abstractly, but *subjectively* on the part of any particular individual, it is necessary for the individual conscience to appreciate that the action is morally wrong.

Conscience is a judgement of the mind, based on habitual knowledge, that an action is in conformity with the law of God or not. We cannot, in this place, discuss the many important questions concerning judgements of conscience which may be based on erroneous premisses, or be the result of invincible ignorance or scrupulosity. It would take us too far afield, and is not really necessary for a proper understanding of the act of sin. We will assume that the mind has formed a judgement that a proposed action is gravely sinful, in the sense that a serious obligation is involved, and that this decision is not warped by inculpable ignorance or by an abnormal mental condition.

Now, in order that a person may commit a grave sin, that is, an act for which the individual sinner must be held responsible, it is clearly requisite that the will should give consent to the evil, for without free consent there can be no responsibility. It is precisely on this point that doubts and difficulties often arise, especially in sins of thought. The matter is essentially one for the individual to settle for himself, though a prudent confessor can be of great assistance in removing erroneous notions and irrelevant issues, and in helping a person to resolve the doubts which may have arisen on the score of consent, by steering a safe path between scrupulosity and laxity. We can at least see this : the consent of the will is necessarily bound up with, and measured by, the degree of mental awareness or advertence existing at the moment. In a practical issue of such vital importance as mortal sin, the consent must be reckoned insufficient unless it is accompanied by that degree of advertence which is required for any other serious matter in human life. No one could be held bound, at least in conscience, to the terms of a contract which he had signed when half asleep, or when his mind was wandering, or when his judgement was unbalanced by the stress of a strong emotion which he had neither desired nor caused. Similarly no one can commit a mortal sin in these circumstances.

Temptation

We will suppose, then, that the requisite knowledge and advertence are present ; in other words, that a person knows a proposed action to be gravely forbidden by the law of God, even though the reasons for the prohibition are only vaguely perceived ; and, secondly, that he adverts to this knowledge, even though the consequent effects

of mortal sin are not fully appreciated at the moment. The human will is now, as we say, being "tempted" to commit sin, and the temptation may arise either from the attractions of the world, or from the desires of our own bodies—the law in our members always fighting against the law of God ¹—or from the instigation of the enemy of mankind.

Faced with the temptation to commit sin, the will may take one of two courses. The evil suggestion may be rejected and repudiated. It may return again and again, even daily, throughout the course of our earthly life, and be rejected again and again. In this there is no sin, but heroic virtue. God allows it, "that it may appear whether you love him with all your heart and all your soul." ² These temptations are the blows of the hammer and chisel forming in our souls the image of Christ, the measure of our ultimate enjoyment of the vision of God: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for, when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life which God hath promised to them that love him." ³

Or, on the other hand, with the mind fully adverting to the evil of the suggestion, the will may elect to adopt it. At that moment mortal sin is committed. The cause of this disaster is not God, ⁴ nor the devil, whom we are able to resist "strong in faith," ⁵ but the human will, which has freely chosen to transgress the divine law, and by that action has turned away from God its last end and happiness.

The sinful action has been committed and, perhaps, completely forgotten by the sinner. But, until he co-operates with the grace of repentance, the effects of that mortal sin remain in his soul, disfiguring its supernatural beauty and perfection, and making it worthy of eternal punishment. "How is the gold become dim, the finest colour changed, . . . the noble sons of Sion esteemed as earthen vessels." ⁶ We have now to examine the state of the soul which has so lamentably fallen.

§ III: THE STATE OF SIN

In the present section we shall examine a little more closely the effects caused in the soul by mortal sin, for we can obtain a fuller idea of the nature of any cause by considering its effects. Mortal sin is a free act of the will by which we discard the love of God and cease to be united to him as our sovereign good. Within this idea of freely rejecting the friendship of God is contained everything we can say about the subsequent state of sin. These consequences are, doubtless, not always fully realised by the person who sins, but a little reflection on the data of revelation will bring them more clearly before

¹ Rom. vii 23.

² Deut. xiii 3.

³ Jas. i 12.

⁴ Ps. v 5; Jas. i 13. Cf. Essay vii, *Divine Providence*, pp. 240-241.

⁵ 1 Peter v 9.

⁶ Lam. iv 1.

the mind : " Know thou and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God." ¹

Guilt and stain

The rejection of God, which is sin, is an act performed by a free and responsible agent. The act once committed, the sinner remains in a permanent or habitual state of guilt or responsibility for the evil he has done in offending God, and, inasmuch as sin is a breach of the divine law, he incurs also the liability of being punished in order to repair the moral order violated by sin.

Passing over, for the moment, the question of punishment, we must explain in more detail all that is implied in the state of a soul guilty of mortal sin. For, in the language of Holy Scripture, the word " sinner " is applied to men not only at the moment in which the offence was committed, but afterwards, as a description of their condition of soul, a state which remains until the offence has been forgiven. It is a consequence of sin which is perfectly intelligible, and is evident even in the offences committed by one man against another. The offence and the insult offered to God remain as something imputed to the sinner until reparation has been made. Mortal sin is the turning away from God, and this state must remain until the sinner turns once more to him.

Now, to appreciate what this condition of imputability or guilt entails, we must bear in mind that God has raised us to a supernatural state, endowing our souls with sanctifying grace, making us adopted sons of God, temples of the Holy Spirit, and sharers of the divine nature. Accompanying this free gift of God are the infused virtues and, above all, the virtue of charity, through which we are united to God by supernatural love. Had man not been raised to this supernatural state, grievous sin would not have caused in his soul any kind of privation. But in the present supernatural order the soul is not united to God unless it is in a state of grace and friendship with him, and, therefore, the state of enmity with God means the loss of sanctifying grace and charity.

It is a deprivation often referred to in Holy Scripture as a stain on the soul,² filthiness,³ uncleanness,⁴ from which we must be washed by God in clean water⁵ and in the blood of Christ.⁶ The phrases are used metaphorically, but they convey an accurate idea of the state of a soul in mortal sin. " *Corruptio optimi pessima* " : the better a thing is, the worse is its state of corruption. A corrupted animal is worse than a corrupted plant ; a dead human body is more unpleasant to look upon than the body of an animal ; a corrupted human soul must be the most ghastly thing in creation except a fallen angel. Uncleanness is a term which applies strictly only to material things, and it is caused by a pure and clean object coming into contact with something that defiles it. The beauty of a human soul

¹ Jer. ii 19.

² Isa. iv 4.

³ Ezech. xxxvi 25.

⁴ Jos. xxii 17.

⁵ Zach. iii 3.

⁶ Apoc. i 5.

consists in the natural light of reason, and, still more, in the supernatural light of divine grace. By mortal sin it is brought into contact with created things forbidden by the law of God, and by this contact becomes stained and defiled. It is a state of soul which can be considered as the darkness or shadow caused by an object, personal guilt, which is obscuring the light; the light of grace is restored to the soul by God's forgiveness of the personal offence which has caused the loss of his friendship. Hence, owing to the intimate connection between the loss of grace and the habitual guilt consequent on personal mortal sin, it is absolutely impossible for one mortal sin to be forgiven unless the guilt of every mortal sin which a sinner may have committed is also removed.

Closely allied to the permanent state of guilt consequent on mortal sin is the debt of undergoing punishment for the sin committed. It is a debt, indeed, which the sinner may not be called upon actually to pay, since both sin and punishment may be remitted in this life through the mercy and goodness of God; but every sin infallibly carries with it the liability of paying a penalty proportionate to the offence.

Every law must have a sanction attached to its non-observance, and it is in the nature of things that anyone who acts against an established order is repressed by the principle of the order against which he acts. An offence against the military law is punished by military authority; non-observance of the law of the State is punished by the civil power; a sin against the moral order of God must necessarily be punished by God.¹ The punishment of mortal sin is twofold, thus corresponding to the two elements involved in mortal sin. To the rejection of God corresponds the *pain of loss*, and to the inordinate recourse to creatures corresponds the *pain of sense*. "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire."² The eternity of hell, so clearly taught in Holy Scripture, arises from the fact that the loss of grace is irreparable, as far as the sinner is concerned, and also from the doctrine that there can be no repentance after death.³ The debt of punishment, therefore, remains as long as the will is turned away from God. The sinner has indulged his own will in seeking a created good, and justice demands that the violated order should be satisfied by his suffering something against his will in punishment. In breaking the eternal law of God he does not, and cannot, escape from it.

¹ The loss of grace being the immediate effect of mortal sin necessarily involves eternal separation from God, should the sinner die unrepentant. In this sense mortal sin is its own punishment. But it is essential to keep well in the foreground the idea of punishment as a penalty exacted and inflicted by God in vindication of the moral order which has been violated. Grace is a free gift of God, and, if a soul is deprived of it, the consequence of that deprivation is a punishment inflicted by the author of grace.

² Matt. xxv 41.

³ Cf. Essay xxxiii, *Eternal Punishment*.

Temporal punishment

The liability to eternal punishment is an inevitable accompaniment of the act of sin, and the knowledge of it helps the mind to understand, not only the malice of sin, but the mercy of God, who shows his omnipotence in sparing us. Let us for a moment anticipate the doctrine to be explained in the next section, and assume that by repentance the sinner is again converted to God's friendship. The guilt is forgiven and the stain of sin removed from his soul by the infusion of sanctifying grace. As a consequence the liability to *eternal* punishment, contracted by the *guilt* of sin, is completely removed, but it does not follow that the repentant sinner is freed from the debt of some *temporal* punishment. By mortal sin both justice and friendship have been violated. With the infusion of divine grace and charity the soul is restored to God's love and friendship, but the debt of punishment due to the divine justice remains to be paid, not in eternity—for eternal separation from God is inconsistent with being in a state of friendship with him—but in time. The same is true of human friendship which has been broken off by some act of injustice on the part of one man against another. The offence may be forgiven by the injured person and friendship restored, but there remains the obligation of making adequate reparation for the injustice, by restoring, for example, stolen property.

The sinner may escape the actual infliction of temporal punishment, but the debt is infallibly contracted by the sinner, and it is for this reason that an undertaking to make satisfaction to God is an integral part of the act of repentance. It is important to remember that when we speak of temporal punishment as an obligation infallibly and, as it were, automatically incurred, the statement is strictly true only with reference to punishment, at least, in a future state. The word "temporal" is not to be understood necessarily of this life, for it is a fact of experience that the wicked in this world often live in great happiness: "their houses are secure and peaceable, their children dance and play, they spend their days in wealth";¹ so much so that the rest of us who, rightly or wrongly, conceive ourselves as just, may be disturbed at the prosperity of sinners.²

The inevitable nature of the penalty exacted for sin arises from a consideration of the divine justice. In his mercy God may accept the vicarious satisfaction of others, and has given to the Church power to remit temporal punishment by applying to individuals the merits of Christ and the saints as satisfaction for their sins.³ We can be absolutely certain that the obligation of undergoing eternal punishment is entirely remitted when grace is infused into the soul of a repentant sinner, but to what extent our debt of temporal punishment is also remitted we do not, and cannot, know with certainty. As for the sufferings of this life, a Christian tries to bear them patiently as

¹ Job xxi 9-13.² Ps. lxxii 3.³ Cf. Essay xxvii, *The Sacrament of Penance*, pp. 976-980.

making him more conformable to the image of Christ,¹ and he asks God to accept them as part of the satisfaction due to his sins.

These two things, the state of guilt and the liability to punishment, are the chief effects of sin in the sinner. The state of soul we have described would follow upon one mortal sin, and it is called by theologians *habitual sin* in order to distinguish it, as something lasting and permanent, from "actual sin" which is the sinful act. We have not used the term because it is liable to be confused with the "habit of sinning," or the inclination to fall into repeated sins from the force of habit.

But we cannot examine the effects of sin without including *Human nature wounded* amongst them the "wounds" suffered by our human nature, primarily as a result of original sin, but also, with due proportion, in consequence of every actual sin committed.² The essential principles of our human nature remain intact, but our natural inclination to virtue becomes weakened by sin. That inclination itself will never be entirely uprooted, but we are so constituted that repeated acts of vice form in us an increasing facility or habit in respect of those acts. This is, indeed, an evident and a most lamentable effect of sin upon the sinner, and man knows from experience that after repeated sins the understanding becomes blind to its evil, the will is hardened in malice, resistance is weakened, and passion becomes more unruly. But no matter to what extent the sinner may be "wounded" in this way, whether by his own sins, or by hereditary tendencies due to the sins of his fathers, the essential principles of his nature are not corrupted, and he is able, with God's grace, to surmount these obstacles and lead a life of heroic sanctity.

Such are the effects of sin on the sinner. But in our journey *Other consequences* towards God we are not walking alone, we are members of one body of which Christ is the head. We must remember the effect of sin on the passion and death of Christ our Lord, a reflection which can easily lead to perfect contrition. The sins of the world, including our own sins, were the cause of all the sufferings of Christ. One act of God made man would have been sufficient to satisfy the justice of God, but Christ was not content with anything short of a perfect expression of love for men, and there is no more complete sign of love for others than laying down one's life for them. So St Paul speaks of the sin of apostasy as "crucifying again the son of God, making him a mockery."³

Closely connected with this aspect of sin, on which every Christian loves to dwell, is the affront which sin offers to the mystical body of Christ, the organic union of all the faithful united to Christ their head by sanctifying grace. For, sin being the deprivation of grace,

¹ Rom. viii 29.

² Cf. Essay x, *The Fall of Man and Original Sin*, pp. 332-335, 352-353.

³ Heb. vi 6.

the sinner is a dead and useless member of this body, a withered branch of this vine. It is for this reason, perhaps, that in the *Confiteor* we acknowledge our guilt not only to God, but to our Lady, the Apostles, and all the saints. For the sinner has disfigured the body of Christ, the Church, which God desires to be pure and glorious, "not having in it spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."¹

Enough has been said about the state of sin and its effects to enable the mind to understand that it is the greatest of all evils in a human being. Just as honour is measured by the dignity of the person who gives honour, so is an insult measured by the dignity of the person insulted. In this sense sin is an infinite offence against the majesty of God.

If the knowledge we possess, from reason and from revelation, concerning the evil of sin, is to be a living force in regulating our own lives, we must, by continual meditation and reflection, bring it home to our minds. It is one thing to understand the meaning of sin, and view it with abhorrence in general, and say with David, "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing is a child of death."² It is another thing to hear the accusing voice of the prophet saying to us individually, "thou art the man," and to see our own sins passing before our eyes, each an object of our own creation and belonging to us more intimately than any other of our possessions. The personal realisation of sin is the first preliminary to repentance. Before the prodigal son in a far country was inspired to rise again and return to his father, he had first to realise his want and hunger, and to discover that his sins had degraded him to the level of swine.³

§ IV: REPENTANCE

THE vital element in every movement of man towards God is its supernatural character. Our final perfection and happiness in the vision of God is beyond the capabilities of any created nature, unless raised and assisted by divine grace. A sinful action which averts our souls from God entails the loss of sanctifying grace, and the return to God's friendship implies a reinstatement, a reinfusion of that same grace which makes us sons of God and joint heirs with Christ.

It is not our purpose, in this place, to study the Catholic doctrine on grace,⁴ but, in order to understand the meaning of repentance, we must at least realise that although the human will is the cause of the loss of grace by mortal sin, yet the human will cannot, of its own power, repair the disaster and restore the intimate friendship with God which sin has forfeited. Such would be contrary to the whole concept of "grace" as something freely bestowed upon us by God.

¹ Eph. v 27.

³ Luke xv 11.

² 2 Kings xii 5-7.

⁴ Cf. Essays xvi and xvii.

The first movement of repentance comes not from the sinner, but from God: "If anyone says that without the previous inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and without his help, man . . . can repent as he ought, so that the grace of justification may be bestowed upon him, let him be anathema."¹ The mercy of God anticipates our own human action in returning to him: "Convert us, O Lord, to thee, and we shall be converted."² Illuminated by this divine action, we make an act of faith in God,³ even though it be merely an act of faith in the existence of hell. Then, realising that we are sinners and hoping to obtain the divine mercy, we begin to have some initial love of God as the fountain of all justice, and because our sins have offended God we hate and detest them.⁴

The hatred and detestation of sin, the meaning of which is to be explained in this present section, is a necessary disposition in the sinner before he can possibly obtain forgiveness of his sins and be restored to the grace and friendship of God. For, although it is of Catholic faith that the first movement of repentance comes from God, it is equally of Catholic faith that the human will must freely co-operate with the divine action. "If anyone saith that man's free will, moved and excited by God, by assenting to the divine movement and inspiration does not co-operate towards disposing and preparing itself for the grace of justification . . . let him be anathema."⁵ The actual grace of God, given to us solely through the merits of Christ our Lord, is necessary for disposing the soul to be received again into the friendship of God as an adopted son; the free movement of the human will hating and detesting sin is also indispensable.

In the present section we have to examine all that is involved in this act of detesting sin, which, from whatever motive it may arise, and whether made in sacramental confession or not, is called "repentance." It is an act which disposes the sinner to receive complete forgiveness, and it is simply as a predisposing condition to the infusion of grace that we now consider it. In the next section we shall see how this act of repentance leads to complete forgiveness and the infusion of grace, either through sacramental absolution or as a result of what is known as an act of perfect contrition, carrying with it at least an implicit desire for the sacrament.

If repentance is to have any value as a salutary act, that is to say, as contributing to the restoration of grace in the soul, it must consist of sorrow and detestation for our past sins as offences against the law of God, accompanied by the resolution to amend our lives and make satisfaction. Its chief characteristic, and one upon which all the others turn, is the voluntary detestation of, or aversion from, the sin

*Detestation
of sin*

¹ Council of Trent, sess. vi, can. 3.

² Lam. v 21.

³ Heb. xi 6.

⁴ Cf. Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part II, chap. v, q. 8; Council of Trent, sess. vi, chap. 6.

⁵ Council of Trent, sess. vi, can. 4.

committed. The doctrine of the early Protestant reformers, which is doubtless held by many non-Catholics at the present day, placed the chief element of repentance, not in the act of the will deliberately detesting sin, but rather in the change of mind by which a sinner, from being in a state of terror and remorse, now believes or trusts that his sins have been remitted through the mediation of Christ.¹ They regarded dwelling on the sins of the past, in order to detest them, and especially reflection on the state of sin with its liability to eternal punishment, as useless sorrow and hypocrisy.² Consequently the whole stress in the idea of repentance was placed on leading a new life, to the exclusion of making satisfaction, whether voluntarily undertaken or imposed by the Church, for the sins of the past.³

Quite apart from any consideration of the teaching of Holy Scripture, it will be seen that the Catholic doctrine is a logical and necessary deduction from the nature of sin, as we have already explained it, and it is evident also from an analogy with human friendship which has been broken off by a grave and deliberate offence. The sinner, having rejected God to find satisfaction in created things, cannot hope for forgiveness unless he first detests that which has been the cause of his separation from God, or is at least prepared to detest it as soon as it is recalled to his memory. If the evil of sin is understood, detestation of it is accompanied by sorrow when once we recognise either that the evil is actually present, or that it has been present at some time or other in our lives. The resolution to change one's life is excellent, and is necessarily involved in the act of repentance; but how is it possible to elect to change one's life, in the sense of avoiding sin, without at the same time realising that our former life was evil, and, if evil, a matter for detestation and sorrow?

So the great penitents in Holy Scripture are shown to us sorrowing and detesting their sins as a necessary prelude to the resolution of leading a new life and of making satisfaction. "I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me . . . a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."⁴ "The soul that is sorrowful for the greatness of the evil she hath done . . . giveth glory and justice to thee."⁵ "I am confounded and ashamed because I have borne the reproach of my youth."⁶ In the New Testament, the tears of Peter⁷ and of Magdalen⁸ and the grief of the prodigal son,⁹ are familiar examples of true repentance.

Into this act of detestation and sorrow for sin there necessarily enters a resolution to amend one's life in the future, and to make whatever satisfaction the justice of God may require. We must not conceive the detestation of sin and the purpose of amendment and of making satisfaction as three entirely separate elements in repentance;

¹ Cf. Council of Trent, sess. xiv, can. 4.

² Cf. Council of Trent, sess. vi, can. 13.

³ Baruch ii 18.

⁷ Luke xxii 62.

⁸ Luke vii 44.

² *Ibid.*, can. 5.

⁴ Ps. l 5, 19.

⁵ Jer. xxxi 19.

⁹ Luke xv 21.

they are so joined and connected that one is not present unless the others enter, at least implicitly, into the act ; that is to say, if a person is truly sorry for his past sins, he necessarily undertakes to amend his life and make satisfaction, even though he does not at the moment directly advert to these obligations. For it is impossible for the sinner really to detest sin unless at the same time he undertakes to avoid it in future. Similarly detestation of sin implies a realisation of responsibility in deliberately breaking the law of God. In sinning against God we are sinning against a legislator who has attached a sanction to his laws, both as a deterrent from future sin, and as part of the order of his eternal justice. In the previous section sufficient has been said about this liability to punishment incurred by the sinner, and there is no need to refer to the subject again. But, concerning the true sorrow and the true purpose of amendment which are involved in repentance, there still remain some necessary observations to make.

In the first place, the reason for which sin is detested must be in some way concerned with God against whom sin has been committed. It would be therefore altogether inadequate for a person to detest sin because it results in such consequences as the loss of reputation, or bodily disease ; but any salutary motive suffices. Reflections on the disorder of the state of sin, the fear of God's punishment, even on the temporal punishments of this world, provided they are conceived in the light of faith as being inflicted by God in vindication of his justice, are adequate motives. Still more, such considerations as the effect of sin on the passion of Christ, the contempt and ingratitude and rebellion against God, and all the deformity involved in acting against his eternal law, are excellent motives for detesting sin. The supreme motive is to base our repentance on the love of God for his own sake, the act known as perfect contrition, which is the subject of the next section.

*Qualities of
true repentance
and
amendment*

It is necessary, in addition, that the sinner should detest sin "above all things," as we say in the act of contrition. This does not mean that we must have *feelings* of sorrow and repulsion regarding sin greater than our feelings with regard to any other evil ; for repentance proceeds essentially from the intellect and will, although it generally happens that our emotions share in the sorrow elicited, and there is a prayer in the liturgy asking for the gift of tears to bewail our sins. The phrase "above all things" means that in the judgement of the intellect we estimate sin to be greater than any other evil, and as a consequence of this intellectual judgement the will detests sin more than any other evil. Such a judgement and consequent detestation must necessarily follow from all that has been said about sin and its effects.

It is not only unnecessary, but altogether imprudent and unwise, to attempt to test the sincerity of this judgement by making comparisons between the evil of sin and the evil of undergoing some terrible torture, and asking whether the torture would be chosen

rather than the sin. For an imminent sensible evil causes more vehement feelings of fear at the moment, and may interfere with the judgement of the mind. It is sufficient to prefer any evil in general to the evil of sin, without descending to particular comparisons. "The contrite sinner," says St Thomas, "must in general be prepared to suffer any pain rather than commit sin, but he is not bound to make a particular comparison between this pain or that pain. On the contrary, it is foolish to question oneself or other persons on the choice that would be made if confronted with any particular suffering." ¹

The detestation of which we are speaking must extend to each and every mortal sin we have committed. For each of them, taken singly, has grievously offended God ; each one is sufficient of itself to cause the loss of grace and divine friendship. We have already seen that it is impossible for one mortal sin to be forgiven without the others, since in the supernatural order the remission of sin is equivalent to the infusion of grace into the soul. If the soul remains unrepentant of one mortal sin, it is not yet disposed for the infusion of grace. One must be careful not to misunderstand the meaning of this doctrine. God does not expect us to do what is morally impossible. Our sorrow is held to extend to all the mortal sins we have committed, even if, after a reasonable examination of conscience, some sins may have escaped our memory. Moreover, as will be explained in the next section, the act of perfect charity, by which the soul loves God above all things and for his own sake, so disposes the soul with regard to its last end, that it would at once detest any sin which is recalled to the memory, even though, when the act of perfect charity was made, the sinner did not explicitly think of any particular past sin. Detestation of sin is implicitly contained in the act of perfect charity.

To turn now to the purpose of amendment, it will be perceived at once that, if sorrow for past sin really has all the fulness which we have attempted to analyse, it must necessarily follow that the will at the same time undertakes to avoid that sin in the future. In very many cases of true repentance the mind does not advert explicitly to the purpose of amendment : it is contained implicitly within the act of sorrow and detestation, and it would be unnecessarily rigorous to require it to be made explicitly in each case. Why, then, must we subject the matter to a still further examination ? Because the detestation of past sin and the purpose of amendment are so closely connected that, especially in cases of repeated sin, the purpose of amendment may be an indication of the sincerity of our sorrow.

For this reason it is advisable always to make it explicitly as we find it in the formula of the act of contrition. Moreover, whenever a repentant sinner, looking into the future, foresees the possibility

¹ *Quodlibet.*, I, art. ix ; Parma, vol. ix, p. 465.

of repeating the offence, the omission of an explicit resolution to avoid it might argue an insufficient detestation of his sin.

Let us try to see more exactly all that is implied in this resolution. The will must firmly elect to suffer any evil in general rather than offend God again, either by the same offence or in any other way. At the time of repentance it is possible by an act of the will to make this firm resolution, even though the intellect, from past experience, foresees the possibility of sinning again. The knowledge that the same sin has been committed so often in the past need not exclude from the act of repentance a firm purpose for the future, especially when it is united to a strong trust in the mercy of God, who will not suffer us to be tempted more than we are able.¹ It must also be an efficacious resolution ; that is to say, the will must elect to adopt the necessary means for avoiding future sin, especially by keeping away from the occasions which lead to it.

Hence the practical value of a most careful consideration of all that is meant by the purpose of amendment. Repeated falls even into the same sin do not necessarily argue a defective purpose or a defective sorrow ; it may have been a good act of repentance at the time, though subsequent temptation, human infirmity, and the force of habit have induced the will once more to consent to sin. But, in a given instance, the lack of purpose in avoiding an unnecessary occasion of sin, which could easily be put aside, must sooner or later bring the repentant sinner to review his supposed sorrow, and to ask himself whether his alleged detestation of sin is an illusion. It is a momentous question to answer, for repentance, as we have described it, is a condition which is absolutely necessary for salvation in an adult who has committed mortal sin.

Whether God, of his absolute power, could forgive sin and infuse *Necessity of* grace into the soul of a person who has not repented, is extremely *repentance* doubtful. But the question is not what God could do, but what he actually does in the present order of his providence, as revealed to us in Holy Scripture and defined by the Church. For while, on the one hand, it is certain that man could not, of his own power, attain to his supernatural end without the assistance of God's grace, it is equally certain that an adult who has come to the use of reason must reach his last end in a manner which is in accordance with his nature, by freely co-operating with divine grace. He must, that is to say, dispose himself for justification by doing what is possible for a human being to do. For a person who is in a state of mortal sin, the only part of the process of justification that is possible is to detest the sin he has committed. If he were relieved of the necessity of making at least this act of repentance, and so disposing his soul for the reception of grace, he would then perfect his being and realise the purpose of his existence without contributing anything whatever to the process. This would probably be intrinsically impossible, for it would

¹ 1 Cor. x 13.

not be in keeping with the order of things, as we know them, in which everything attains the purpose for which it was created by acting in accordance with its nature. The movement of God, in the order of supernatural grace, anticipates every human action: "No one can come to me except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him";¹ but it is a movement perfecting, not destroying, the free will of our nature, which must co-operate with divine grace.

The doctrine is evident in the pages of Holy Scripture, and from the lives of the great penitents. "You have said: The way of the Lord is not right. . . . Is it my way that is not right, and are not rather your ways perverse? For when the just turneth himself away from his justice, and committeth iniquity, he shall die therein . . . and when the wicked turneth himself away from his wickedness . . . he shall save his soul alive."² Therefore Christ warned all sinners that unless they repent they will all perish.³ The necessity of repentance as a condition for the remission of sin is absolute: "Repentance was at all times necessary, in order to obtain grace and justification, for all men who have defiled themselves by mortal sin. . . ."⁴

But if actual grace is necessary for repentance, it is a grace which is never refused to one who asks. "Converte nos, Deus," is a prayer continually found throughout the Divine Office, and there is a very striking prayer in the Missal which asks God in his mercy to compel our stubborn wills to turn again to him.⁵

Sin is disruptive of divine charity. By repentance the sinner detests the cause of so great a disaster. But of all the various motives which give rise to this detestation there is one which is the highest and noblest that the human mind can conceive. It is the love of God for his own sake.

§ V: PERFECT CONTRITION

A PERSON tied to a post cannot reach another position until he is freed from his bonds. By mortal sin we are bound in a state of slavery until we break those bonds by repentance,⁶ and are free to be united again in friendship with God. There is no middle state in which we can rest, as it were, in a condition of neutrality, neither in a state of grace nor in a state of sin. A sinner who has detested his sin and promised amendment and satisfaction has disposed his soul for justification, but he is not yet restored to a state of grace. With the effects of sin still remaining in his soul he still awaits the divine forgiveness which will effect complete reconciliation by the infusion of sanctifying grace. This grace is given solely through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord, and the channel by which it reaches us is

¹ John vi 44.

³ Luke xiii 3.

⁵ Secret, Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

² Ezech. xviii 25-27.

⁴ Council of Trent, sess. xiv, chap. 4.

⁶ Rom. vi.

the sacrament of Penance instituted by Christ for the purpose. In this sacrament a priest, authorised by the Church, and acting in the name and person of Christ, absolves the sinner from his sins.

We need not be concerned with discussing all the possible ways in which God could forgive sin ; we know from God's revelation that the sins of the whole world, even before Christ's coming, are forgiven through Christ, " in whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins." ¹ Nor need we try to imagine other ways in which the merits of Christ might have been applied to those who have committed mortal sin after Baptism ; we know that Christ, " who did all things well," ² has left with his Church the power of loosing from sin. ³ By mortal sin grace, which unites us all as one body in Christ, is lost, and the soul becomes a dead and useless member of that mystical body. It was altogether fitting, if one may so speak of the actions of him " in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," ⁴ that a sinner should be reunited to the body of Christ through the authority of that body on earth, exercised by men who, in spite of their own sins and unworthiness, are ambassadors of Christ ⁵ and dispensers of the mysteries of God. ⁶ And if we reflect more deeply upon all that it means to be a member of the body of Christ, we shall begin to see why it is that our sins will not be forgiven unless we forgive others their trespasses against us. Christ, therefore, has determined that the repentant sinner will find forgiveness in the sacrament of Penance, and unless sorrow for sin has *some* relation to the sacrament it will not issue in the infusion of sanctifying grace. But what this connection and relation is will differ according to a person's knowledge and opportunities.

Every Catholic is aware that perfect contrition remits sin even before the sin has been confessed. But this emphatically does not mean that it is forgiven apart from all connection with the sacrament. A Catholic, who knows of his obligation to submit all mortal sins to the power of the keys, does not make an act of perfect contrition unless he intends to confess his sins at a convenient opportunity. For since the sacrament of Penance is the method instituted by Christ for the remission of sin, no sinner could be called contrite who declined to do what God has laid down as the way to forgiveness : such an attitude would at least argue a lack of the proper undertaking to make satisfaction, which is a necessary condition of repentance. A non-Catholic, whom we will assume to be in good faith and inculpably ignorant of the obligation of confession, nevertheless establishes some implicit connection between his repentance and the sacrament of Penance. For in repenting of his sins, on a motive of perfect contrition, he must necessarily undertake, as part of his satisfaction, to do whatever Christ has determined to be necessary for forgiveness.

¹ Col. i 14.

³ Cf. Essay xxvii.

⁵ 2 Cor. v 20.

² Mark vii 37.

⁴ Col. ii 3.

⁶ 1 Cor. iv 1.

Implied in this purpose, did he but know it, is the resolution to confess his sins as soon as his conscience appreciates the obligation.

It would be quite erroneous, therefore, to suppose that there are various ways open to sinners in obtaining forgiveness, of which the sacrament of Penance is one ; for the Church teaches clearly and definitely that although perfect contrition reconciles man to God before the sacrament has been received, yet it does so only by virtue of the desire for the sacrament, which is included, at least implicitly, in the act of contrition itself.¹

*Perfect love
of God*

Contrition is called perfect when the motive which causes the will to detest sin is the love of God for his own sake : it is called imperfect, or "attrition," when the motive is something quite distinct from this love of God ; for example, the deformity of sin or the fear of hell. Any attempt, therefore, to understand more closely what is meant by perfect contrition, is equivalent to enquiring what is meant by the love of God or charity.

Any love—for example, the love of a son for his parents—can be of a twofold character. As a small child he loves them solely because they are good to him, a comfort in pain, a protection in the troubles of life, a never-failing source from which he draws everything necessary for his life and happiness. But gradually and imperceptibly this selfish kind of love should yield to a love which is more generous and is concerned more with giving than receiving, more with doing them some good than in self-seeking. The love existing between two persons who discover that they are mutually an advantage to each other is an excellent thing, but if the basis of mutual love turns on each person desiring and trying to do the highest amount of good to the other, generously, unselfishly, and constantly, there exists a perfect friendship, than which there is nothing more beautiful in human intercourse. Such love existing between the soul and God is so priceless and dear that we give it the special name of "charity."

Passing over, for the moment, any discussions that might arise, and confining ourselves to what is completely certain, we may say that contrition is perfect when its motive is a love of God, not of the mercenary kind, based on the consideration that he is good to us, but an unselfish love which we conceive for him because he is good and lovable for his own sake, a love whereby we rejoice in his infinite perfections, wishing him well, and desiring him to be known and loved by all men. When we speak of perfect contrition we mean repentance and sorrow for sin based on this motive : the repentance, for example, of the woman to whom many sins were forgiven because she loved much.²

In a less strict sense, although identical effects result in the soul, an act of perfect *love* of God in which there is no explicit reference to past sin may also be called an act of perfect contrition ; for it is

¹ Council of Trent, sess. xiv, chap. 4.

² Luke vii 47.

impossible for a sinner to elicit this perfect love for God without also repenting of his sins, did he but advert to them.¹

In both cases, according to Catholic doctrine, the act of perfect contrition results in immediate justification of the sinner, it being presumed that all the requisite qualities of true repentance, as explained in the last section, are at least implicitly present. By the infusion of grace and charity the soul becomes once more a friend of God, a member of Christ's mystical body, and an heir with Christ to life eternal.

It must not be supposed that an act of perfect contrition is in itself the cause of effecting reconciliation with God, for this, since it entails the infusion of grace, is in God's free disposition and beyond the capabilities of any creature. But since God never refuses grace to any man who does all that he is able to do, it is altogether in accordance with his infinite mercy and goodness that grace should not be withheld from one who has made the highest possible endeavour to reach God that any creature can make. Perfect contrition, therefore, though not the cause of justification, is nevertheless so perfect a disposition in the sinner as to call infallibly for the restoration of God's friendship. God's love, it is true, has never faltered, for it is extended to all, even to sinners ;² yet friendship does not exist until love is mutual, and charity is nothing else than friendship between God and man. "If any man love me, my Father will love him : and we will come to him and make our abode with him."³

The Council of Trent, in expressing the constant teaching and tradition of the Church, takes it for granted that contrition, which is perfect through charity, reconciles man with God before the sacrament of Penance is actually received.⁴ The doctrine is certain if by charity is meant the love of God because he is good in himself, not merely because he is good to us. It is only contrition elicited on this motive which is properly called "perfect," and which, in the teaching of the Church, certainly leads to justification.⁵

¹ It is doubtful, however, whether the sorrow for past sin implicitly contained in an act of perfect love of God suffices for the effect of the sacrament of Penance, since, as is explained in Essay xxvii, the sorrow of the penitent is part of the "matter" of this sacrament.

² Rom. v 8 ; 1 John iv 10.

³ John xiv 23.

⁴ Sess. xiv, chap. iv.

⁵ Some writers, wishing to render an act of perfect contrition as easy as possible, allow the possibility of perfect contrition in the love of God for selfish motives, *i.e.*, because union with him constitutes eternal happiness for us, or because our souls are even now thirsting for the living God like the hart panting after the fountains of water (Ps. xli 1). But this cannot be regarded with certainty as sufficient for an act of perfect contrition, and in a matter of such grave moment we cannot be satisfied with anything less than certainty. Such lesser motives are excellent : they help the sinner to detest sin above all things, and they lead to perfect contrition. But we cannot help seeing on reflection that there is very little difference between love of God, conceived for a selfish motive, and the fear of hell. It is salutary sorrow for sin, but is imperfect, not perfect.

*Imperfect
love of God*

For the word "perfect" implies that nothing is wanting in the action, and that its fulness is complete and entire. But if the motive of contrition is anything short of God's own self, it is evidently not as perfect as it might be.¹ Thus an imperfect motive of contrition might easily be the desire to render to God something due to him, on a title of justice, obedience, or gratitude. It can be understood, from an analogy with purely human relations, that a man might be ready to make reparation to another because he is in his debt or subject to his authority, or because he has received favours from his hands. Yet, while doing this, he might feel wholly unable to regret his offence out of regard for the personal qualities and excellence of the other person.

Still more easily can it be seen that to seek reconciliation with an injured friend, because the loss of his friendship is a grave inconvenience, is a motive which leaves an enormous amount to be desired. Nevertheless, as will be shown more fully in the essay on *The Sacrament of Penance*,² the fear of hell, or any other less noble motive leading us to detest sin, suffices, provided the sacrament is not merely desired but actually received. The only point necessary to notice here is that the justification of the sinner, whether in the case of perfect contrition or in the reception of the sacrament of Penance, is brought about in both cases by the infusion of sanctifying grace. But the means by which that grace is given is in one case the reception of a sacrament of the New Law, one of the seven signs instituted by Christ as channels of divine grace, external signs which by virtue of their own action as instruments in the hands of Christ convey grace from the head to the members of his body. In the other case the grace of justification is given to a man who by his own activity, under the divine inspiration, has so disposed his soul by doing all that it is possible for him to do, that God immediately gives the grace of his friendship.

The more perfect our contrition is, in receiving the sacrament, the more pleasing it is to God and the more grace is received. For a soul already justified by perfect contrition, in receiving the sacrament receives still more grace, and becomes more deeply rooted and grounded in charity.

*How to make
an act of
perfect
contrition*

It should therefore be our constant care to make more and more perfect the motive of our sorrow for sin. It is difficult in the sense that perfect contrition requires complete detachment from our sins, and careful reflection on divine things, which in the modern rush of life is not always easy to secure; it is difficult, too, because it is not

¹ It is, of course, possible to elicit perfect contrition by a consideration of any one *attribute* of God—his benignity or his mercy, for example—provided it is considered as a divine perfection, and not merely as something very advantageous to ourselves. The reason for this is that the attributes of God, which the human mind regards separately, are not really distinct in God. Cf. Essay iii, *The One God*, p. 92.

² P. 971.

easy to break away from selfish and excessive preoccupation with our own advantage and happiness, even in matters religious. But, granted a certain degree of generosity towards God, it should be comparatively easy gradually to purify our motives and arrive almost imperceptibly at perfect contrition.

In a matter that concerns so intimately the internal dispositions of each soul it is not possible to suggest any definite rule : each person must follow the line of thought which is most suitable in leading him to perfect contrition. The fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom, and the thought of eternal separation from God would usually be the starting-point. A further step would be to think of the pain of loss as being inflicted by one who loves us with infinite love. Sin is an offence and an insult against God, for whom we should have nothing but gratitude in return for all his favours, both spiritual and temporal, and above all for his unspeakable gift of grace by which we are made his adopted sons in Christ.¹ "How hath he not also with him given us all things?"² Have we made any return for these gifts, or are all our prayers invariably petitions for further favours? God has been good to us, but why? Not because there is anything beautiful or lovable about us apart from our union with Christ, for whose sake God loves us.³ No matter how we look at it, there is nothing in us that we have not received from God,⁴ nothing intrinsic to our own deeds to cause God to treat us with such benignity. Why, then, is God good to us? For no other reason than because he is good in himself.

Nor is this divine goodness something abstract which we can get to know and understand only by a process of philosophic thought. He was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, grew weary in seeking us, shed tears for us, suffered and died for us. Yet this infinite goodness we have insulted and offended by mortal sin. . . . By such gradual and easy steps as these it is possible to develop the motive of contrition from the notion of fear to that of love of God for his own sake. It is only on elevated motives of this kind that we can gradually perfect our lives, not only by avoiding mortal sin, but by gradually eliminating all trace even of deliberate venial sin. Most of all, it is on this motive alone that we shall begin to understand the infinite mercy of God in granting the gift of repentance, from its first stirring in our souls to its completion in the infusion of divine grace. For it is chiefly by sparing and having mercy upon us that God manifests his almighty power.⁵

§ VI: VENIAL SIN

WE have already recalled the fact that the word "sin" is used only analogously of venial offences.⁶ That is to say, there is a certain resemblance between mortal sin and venial sin, inasmuch as each is an *A sin consistent with grace and charity*

¹ 2 Cor. ix 15.

² Rom. viii 32.

³ John xvi 27.

⁴ 1 Cor. iv 7.

⁵ Collect, Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

⁶ Above, p. 924.

offence against the law of God. There is, however, a vital difference between them, and that difference it is our object here to explain.

Christ our Lord in his parables often likened the life of our souls to the growth of plants or trees. In the case of these it is often possible to detect some radical defect or disease which will prevent them from ever reaching maturity. Sometimes, on the other hand, one may find minor blemishes—say in a rose-tree, which will not hinder its ultimate blossoming, but which make it less lovely and beautiful in the eyes of an expert. It would be true to say that the law of the plant's growth requires the absence not only of radical disease, but of minor defects also. But it would be much more accurate to regard as, strictly speaking, *against* the law of its nature only those defects which prevent its growth to maturity. No one could refuse to call it a rose-tree simply because the scent and colour of its blossoms were not up to the desired standard.

It is rather similar with the individual soul. It would be true to say that the slightest transgression is against the law of God, but it would be much more accurate to say that only those breaches of the law are to be regarded, in the strict sense of the words, as against the law of God which prevent a man from attaining his last end; that is to say, only those sins which are disruptive of divine charity, and which entail the loss of grace and the liability to eternal separation from God.

Like all examples taken to illustrate doctrines, the example of a plant's growth is necessarily imperfect, but it serves to explain the difference between mortal and venial sin. There are many minor offences, forbidden indeed by the law of God, but which do not so radically upset the established moral order as to make the attainment of man's last end impossible. They offend God, but do not offend him to the extent of breaking off the union of charity existing between our souls and him; and since union with God is the end of our existence, they are not strictly against the law of God.

If it is asked why this is so, one can only answer by asking why it is that the germs of certain diseases will utterly prevent a plant from growing to maturity, while other noxious germs are not so destructive. God has so fashioned human nature, and so raised it to a supernatural state, that certain culpable departures from the law which governs man's being have the effect of preventing his end and purpose in life from being realised. "Thy hands have made me and formed me: give me understanding, and I will learn thy commandments."¹

Man may wilfully transgress the divine law in various ways, but, provided the principle of his supernatural life is not destroyed, he still remains properly disposed towards God, his last end and happiness, and the effects of such actions are not of their nature irreparable,

¹ Ps. cxviii 73.

precisely because the principle of divine grace and charity is not lost. Thus a mathematician engaged in the solution of a difficult problem may make small errors, but, if the principles on which his calculations rest are sound, he can easily retrace his steps and correct the mistakes he has made. Even the healthiest persons suffer some disease or illness at some time or other, but their own strength and vitality suffice to enable them to recover from the ill effects; if, however, the disease is one which has destroyed the life of some vital organ, then nothing short of a miracle will restore them to health.

Those sins, therefore, which do not involve the loss of grace, and whose effects can be repaired by the supernatural principle of grace and charity, which still remain in the soul, are called "venial." The word itself, which is derived from *venia*, "pardon," could equally be used, and was so used by early writers, with reference to repented mortal sin, for there is no sin which God will not forgive. But, inasmuch as the liability to eternal punishment, the necessary effect of mortal sin, is not incurred except by the loss of grace, any sin which does not merit eternal punishment is of its nature worthy of pardon, and the term "venial" is properly applied to it. For no matter how long or how grievous the temporal punishment due to such sins may be, the soul must inevitably reach its last end, as long as it does not suffer the loss of sanctifying grace. He who sins venially is retarded on his journey towards God, but, unlike a person in mortal sin who is averted from his last end, he remains on the way which leads to God and will eventually possess him. "For although, during this mortal life, men, no matter how holy and just they may be, fall daily into small sins, which are called venial, they do not thereby cease to be just." ¹

If, therefore, we compare venial and mortal sin from the point of view of their effects on the soul, the complete difference between the two is apparent. But when we examine venial sin from the angle of the person sinning, it appears, at first sight, that in electing to turn inordinately to creatures in a manner forbidden by the divine law, the sinner shows that, in putting his own will above the will of God, he is choosing some creature instead of God.

If this conclusion were true and necessary it would be difficult to see how venial sin differs from mortal sin. The phrase "the will of God" means, however, in this connection, something which God has forbidden, and we cannot draw any conclusions at all until we have determined whether a thing is forbidden by God under the pain of forfeiting the divine friendship or not. Acts forbidden as venial sins are of such character that they do not forfeit the divine friendship, and it is because the sinner is aware of this that it is possible for him to offend God and at the same time remain united to him.

The same is true of human friendships. A person might easily displease his friend in many minor matters, but would never run

¹ Council of Trent, sess. vi, chap. 9.

the risk of destroying the friendship altogether by doing things which he foresaw would have this result. So also in the case of a person committing venial sin. He is so disposed towards God that if he thought that a breach of the divine law would result in the loss of divine grace and charity, he would not commit it for any reason whatever.

From such considerations as these it will be evident that an erroneous conscience has a most important influence in determining the existence of mortal sin. If a person is so invincibly ignorant that he is in good faith in thinking that an action which is objectively grave is no more than venial sin, then venial sin is actually committed owing to the error. Similarly the persuasion that an action is mortally sinful constitutes mortal sin in the person who commits it, even though his mind was in error in making the judgement.

Also it is most important to recall the necessity of advertence and consent for mortal sin even when there is no sort of error concerning the objective malice of the offence. It can be said with certainty that many offences fall short of the complete malice of mortal sin owing to the consent being, on various counts, defective. We talk of "falling into" mortal sin, but no one can fall into it in the sense of doing it accidentally and unawares. It can be said with equal certainty that the real issue is known to God alone, the searcher of hearts. Unless the venial or mortal nature of a sin is abundantly evident, it is a dangerous procedure for the human mind to attempt to diagnose the guilt, even in one's own sins; and still more dangerous regarding the sins of other people. There are numerous cases in which the border-line cannot be accurately determined; for example, in deciding on the consent given to evil thoughts, or in determining the gravity of theft. The only safe rule is expressly to repent of any sin which might conceivably be grave, and to confess it as such.

Effects

Let us now examine more closely the effects of venial sin upon the soul. In the first place, sanctifying grace is not lost by any offence short of mortal sin, and, inasmuch as the "stain" of sin is nothing else than the privation of grace, it follows that venial sin does not, strictly speaking, cause a stain, which we have already seen to be the consequence of mortal sin.¹

Venial sin is opposed to the charity which should exist between the soul and God, not in the sense that it is inconsistent with the habitual state of grace by which we are united to God's love through a vivifying union with Christ, but in the sense that the acts prompted by the virtue of charity are rendered by venial sin less fervent in their expression.

The distinction turns on the difference between habitual grace with the attendant virtue of charity, which every soul well ordered towards its last end possesses, and the fervour of the acts elicited by the soul in that state. The effect of mortal sin is to destroy habitual

¹ Above, pp. 930 ff.

grace and charity, a privation which is called in the Scriptures the stain of sin; the effect of venial sin is to impede the fervour of the acts of a person, who, while possessing the intrinsic state of friendship with God, nevertheless directs his actions to the attainment of his last end only remissly and tardily.

Just as the word "sin" applies strictly to mortal sin and only analogously to venial sin, so also, if we prefer to use the word "stain" in order to express the effect of venial sin on the soul, it can be used only analogously and imperfectly. There is all the difference in the world between a child who cannot leap and jump owing to a crippled state of limb, and one who is merely suffering from languor and disinclination. In the one case it is due to a permanent and habitual disorder, in the other case the lassitude can be overcome with a little effort. We must therefore remove altogether from our consideration of venial sin and its effects the notion of stain resulting from the privation of grace, and, as a consequence, the liability to eternal punishment incurred by a soul in that state. We can see that from venial sin there results in the sinner the obligation of acknowledging his guilt and the debt of punishment. There is guilt because venial sin is a breach of the divine law and displeases God, though not to the extent of destroying his friendship. There is also the debt of punishment, for the divine order has been disturbed and the sinner must restore that order by undergoing a penalty proportionate to the offence, even though the punishment is of a temporal nature.

These two things, guilt and punishment, are the two immediate effects of venial sin. But before we discuss repentance as applied to these offences we must be aware of certain possibilities arising from deliberate venial sin. It is very necessary to establish a clear and definite division between mortal and venial sin, but in doing so we must beware lest the mind imperceptibly and almost unconsciously should form a judgement that venial sin is a trifling matter of no consequence whatever.

The remarks we have to make apply only to deliberate offences. We have already seen ¹ that venial sin may arise from insufficient advertence and consent, fleeting thoughts, sudden access of passion, unthinking and indeliberate movements which are rejected almost as soon as they are experienced. With regard to venial sins of this kind it is the accepted teaching of the Church that not even the holiest person can altogether avoid them. But with deliberate venial sin—a small theft, for example—our judgement must be altogether different.

It follows from the nature of venial sin that no number of such offences will ever be equivalent to one mortal sin. But indirectly, and as a consequence, deliberate venial sin will lead to mortal sin. *Nemo fit repente pessimus*—nobody becomes evil all at once. It is a slow and gradual process which leads the will eventually to commit mortal sin. Deliberate transgression of the law of God in small

¹ Pp. 928-929.

matters causes a habit of mind which grows accustomed to deflections from the moral order, and gradually disposes the sinner to depart from it in a serious matter. Imperceptibly a state of mind is generated which is set on discovering to what extent the law of God can be broken without committing grave sin. It is betrayed by a certain theological dexterity in trying to discover the least obligation consistent with remaining in a state of grace. Is it necessary to point out that a person walking on the edge of a precipice is in danger of falling over? "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is greater: and he that is unjust in that which is little is unjust also in that which is greater."¹ It is because we are creatures of habit, and because each deliberate sin paves the way to one slightly graver, that spiritual writers often refer to venial sin in terms which to the unthinking appear exaggerated. There is no need of warning from spiritual writers. Everyone knows from his own experience, and from the experience of others, that the commission of mortal sin is the result of a series of deliberate transgressions in smaller matters.

The important thing is to purge the soul from what St. Francis de Sales calls the "affection" for venial sin, which he describes as the chief obstacle to that devotion which consists in a ready and willing service of God. "They weaken the strength of the spirit, hinder the divine consolations, open the door to temptations, and, although they do not kill the soul, make it excessively ill."²

Remission

Perhaps there is nothing which so completely illustrates the essential difference between mortal and venial sin as an enquiry into the various ways by which venial sin can be remitted. The Catholic doctrine regarding the remission of mortal sin turns, as we have seen, on the sacrament of Penance, which in the present order is the way determined by God for reconciliation with him. If the sinner repents of mortal sin, in the sense explained above, even though it be only through fear of God's punishment, he is in the salutary disposition for justification. By the divine mercy the absolution of a priest authorised by the Church restores the repentant sinner to a state of grace and friendship with God, and if the motive of contrition is the love of God above all things, the soul is immediately justified, even before the sacrament is received, provided it is at least implicitly desired.³

Inasmuch as the state of mortal sin is equivalent to the loss of sanctifying grace, and the infusion of grace is identical with the remission of mortal sin, the doctrine concerning the remission of mortal sin can be easily understood and clearly formulated. But it is not possible to state with quite the same directness the method by which the guilt of venial sin is remitted, for venial sin is not accompanied by the loss or diminution of habitual grace and charity; it causes the

¹ Luke xvi 10.

² *Devout Life*, Bk. I, chap. xxii.

³ See above, pp. 941 ff.

acts elicited by a person in the state of grace to be lessened in fervour ; it does not destroy charity, but merely impedes its exercise. It is because the effects of venial sin are of this character that it is difficult to state the doctrine concerning their remission, for the effects must necessarily differ with the individual, and will depend very largely on the degree of virtue and sanctity which has been attained ; whereas the effects of mortal sin, as far as the loss of grace is concerned, are identical in all sinners. Nevertheless, on the data already examined, it is possible to outline the ordinary theological teaching.

It is needless to say that venial sin is adequate and sufficient matter for sacramental absolution. This is the simplest and most obvious way of securing forgiveness from God, and is universally practised by the faithful throughout the whole Church. But, inasmuch as venial sins can be remitted in other ways, there exists no obligation to confess them in the tribunal of penance. Furthermore, and as a consequence of this certain doctrine, an act of perfect contrition remits venial sin without any sort of clause or condition referring to the future reception of the sacrament of penance.

We have seen that the sinner, in repenting of mortal sin, is bound to use sufficient diligence to recall the mortal sins that he has committed, in order to repent of each one that he remembers. But, since venial sins need not necessarily be confessed—there being various other ways in which they may be remitted—they need not each be recalled to mind. This does not mean that repentance is unnecessary for venial sin. It means only that the repentance need not be explicit in respect of each venial sin that we have committed. Such explicit repentance is indeed desirable ; but it is sufficient that we be prepared explicitly to repent should such venial sins be recalled to mind. A further difference between repentance for mortal sin and repentance for venial sin should be noted : it is possible to repent of one venial sin without repenting of the others, whereas in the case of mortal sin this is not possible.¹ Apart from these differences, repentance for venial sin should include all the essentials of repentance already explained.

It follows, therefore, that various movements of the soul towards God, especially when they are accompanied by the reception of a sacrament or by some public rite of the Church, will have the effect of remitting venial sin, even though there is no formal and explicit repentance. For since we have seen the effect of venial sin to consist in a diminution of the fervour of our actions, it follows that some act of devotion or piety deliberately performed will have the effect of restoring the balance, always provided that an explicit act of repentance would be made did we but advert to the sin. This is especially the case when the act is not merely a private one, such as almsgiving or other works of charity, but is accompanied by some special

¹ See above, pp. 931, 938.

intervention of the Church, as in the use of various sacramentals, blessings, or other sacred rites with which Catholics are familiar.

Most of all is the remission of venial sin obtained by the reception of the sacraments, especially of the Holy Eucharist. It is not only the antidote which preserves us from mortal sin, as the Council of Trent teaches,¹ but it frees us from daily faults. "Just as by bodily food the daily waste and loss is repaired, so also the Holy Eucharist repairs what has been lost through our falls into lesser sins, by remitting them."²

In all these ways of securing the remission of venial sin, it must be clearly understood that repentance is necessary, either actually and explicitly, as when venial sins are confessed, or at least implicitly to the extent that the recollection of such sins would be attended by repentance did we but advert to them or recall them to our minds. In this sense all the qualities of true repentance must be present, and in particular the purpose of amendment, if we are to obtain remission of venial sin.

It will be perceived, therefore, that in some ways it is difficult to repent of lesser sins, for it requires very considerable reflection and determination in order to detest a venial sin above all evils. Accordingly, since remission of punishment only follows remission of guilt, we cannot form an exact estimate concerning the extent of our debt of punishment. That debt may be exacted to the last farthing. We may gain plenary indulgences, but the penalty of unrepented venial sin is not included in the remission. A proper appreciation of the nature of venial sin helps us not only to perceive how utterly different it is from mortal sin, but to understand more perfectly the necessity of a cleansing purgation after death, since nothing defiled can enter heaven.³ Above all, it brings home to our minds something of the meaning of holiness, without which no man can see God.⁴

§ VII: REPARATION

GOD incarnate suffered and died in order to repair the ruin caused by sin, by offering to his eternal Father adequate satisfaction for the affront to God's majesty. The Redeemer of mankind is spoken of in the Holy Scriptures as "bearing our infirmities, bruised for our sins"⁵ "made sin for us."⁶ But, inasmuch as Christ himself was sinless, he could not make an act of repentance in the sense explained above; hence the Church has strictly forbidden such phrases as "Christ the Penitent" even in a devotional use. He did not repent for the sinners of the world: he offered satisfaction for their sins. The same is true, proportionately, of the many instances in

¹ Sess. xiii, chap. 2.

² Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part II, chap. iv, q. 50.

³ Apoc. xxi 27.

⁴ Heb. xii 14.

⁵ Isa. liii 4.

⁶ 2 Cor. v 21.

the lives of the saints, in which we are told that they undertook penance for the sins of others. Only the sinner can repent in the strict sense of the word ; but that part of repentance which is concerned with offering satisfaction to God can be undertaken vicariously by others.

For it has pleased God to redeem all men, who fell corporately in Adam, by incorporating them in Christ the second Adam. From the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ ¹ many profound truths of deep significance are drawn. In particular the familiar idea of Reparation, included in Catholic devotion towards the Sacred Heart of Jesus, has its doctrinal basis in the fact that all Christians are members of one body whose head is Christ. On this solidarity of the whole human race in Christ rests, not only the justification but the necessity of the Christian practice of offering reparation to God, in various ways, for the sins of the world. For the notion of reparation, while including our own personal offences, is chiefly concerned with satisfaction for the sins of others.

In the plenitude of his desire to expiate for the sins of the world, Christ chose the way of suffering. It is chiefly by suffering, therefore, that the members of his mystical body share in Christ's expiatory sacrifice. Not only do they share in it, but it is the will of Christ that their sufferings should be necessary for the completion of his own. In "filling up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ," ² St Paul rejoiced in his own sufferings and besought his brethren "to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God." ³

Deliberately to choose suffering requires an unusual degree of sanctity, as well as a finer appreciation of all that it means to be a follower of Christ. The illustrious examples drawn from the lives of saints, whether in the ranks of the priesthood, or of religious Orders, or of the laity, are imitated in our own times also. But every Christian is expected to suffer with Christ by patience and resignation in adversity, in the pains of illness, in poverty, in subjection to authority, and in performing the duties of his state of life.

The value of our reparation consists, of course, not in suffering as such, but in freely and deliberately offering it to God in union with the passion of Christ. This may be done during times of prayer, but the moment above all others when such reparation should be offered to God is while assisting at the sacrifice of the Mass, which is one with that of Calvary. The priest offers that sacrifice in the name of the whole Church and "of all here present, whose faith and devotion are known unto thee ; for whom we offer, or who offer up to thee, this sacrifice . . . this oblation of our service as also of thy whole family." ⁴ "Even as I willingly offered myself to God for thy

¹ Cf. Essay xix.

³ Rom. xii 1.

² Col. i 24.

⁴ Canon of the Mass.

sins upon the Cross . . . even so must thou willingly offer thyself daily to me in the Mass.”¹ *Per ipsum et cum ipso et in ipso.*

Thus in commending to the faithful the necessity of making reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pius XI speaks as follows in the Encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor*: “Although the plentiful redemption of Christ abundantly forgives all our offences, yet by that wonderful disposition of the divine Wisdom whereby we have to fill up in our own flesh those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, for his body which is the Church,² we can, nay, we must, add our own praise and satisfaction to the praise and satisfaction which Christ gave to God in the name of sinners. It should be remembered, however, that the expiatory value of our acts depends solely upon the bloody sacrifice of Christ, a sacrifice which is renewed unceasingly, in an unbloody manner, on our altars. . . . For this reason, with the august sacrifice of the Eucharist must be united the immolation of the ministers and also of the rest of the faithful, so that they too may offer themselves ‘a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God.’³ Christ, then, as he still suffers in his mystical body, rightly desires to have us as his companions in the work of expiation. In this manner he desires us to be united with him because, since we are ‘the body of Christ and members of member,’⁴ what the head suffers the members should suffer with it.”⁵

E. J. MAHONEY.

¹ *Imitation*, Bk. IV, chap. 8.

² Col. i 24.

³ Rom. xii 1.

⁴ I Cor. xii 27.

⁵ *Ibid.* 26. Pius XI, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*, May 8, 1928, Eng. trans., Burns Oates and Washbourne.

XXVII

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

§ I: INTRODUCTORY—

PENANCE AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

“EVEN though, after you have been accepted by him, you should have gone astray, even though you return to him naked, yet God will receive you again as his son, because you have returned to him.”¹ In these words the early Christian writer Tertullian expounds the lesson to be learnt from the parable of the Prodigal Son—that God is always ready to forgive the repentant sinner. The same lesson can be drawn from other parables, notably that of the Good Shepherd, and from the general tenor of Christ’s teaching and actions. It is impossible to think that God would spurn the sinner who turns to him for pardon.

Since this is so, those who have sinned have surely only to seek for the means of forgiveness. It is with this quest that this essay is concerned. When we consider the effects of sin, and the consequent meaning of forgiveness, we can conjecture at once that sin will be remitted sacramentally. Revelation, coming from God, must be a consistent body of doctrine. Since grace is conferred and strengthened by sacraments, we may well expect that when lost it is by a sacrament that it will be restored.

Moreover, since sanctifying grace is so immensely important, and its loss so great a disaster, it is in keeping with our desires and God’s great goodness that some clear sign of forgiveness perceptible to the senses should exist. Otherwise we should be doubtful of pardon, and our very faith, our very repentance, would be sources of misery. The more fully we realised the evil of sin, the more earnestly we lamented our fall, the greater would be our anxiety and fear, the more should we dread the inevitable final judgement.

Thus, even *a priori* reasoning leads us to hope that that final judgement may be anticipated by an earthly judgement, which will give us yet another chance of winning salvation. We should, then, be ready to believe gratefully that such a sacrament has indeed been instituted.

Our knowledge of the sacramental system enables us to make reasonable inferences as to the form such a sacrament would take, and these should guide us in our inquiry. The sacraments are external signs of inward grace; and, since they are signs, they must accord with the nature of the grace conferred. A sacrament of pardon would confer the grace of remission of sins. But sins are culpable

¹ *De Poenitentia*, viii.

acts—crimes. The natural sign of the remission of a crime is a judicial decision, necessarily preceded by an investigation of the accusation. We should expect to find, then, if Christ did institute a sacrament for the remission of sins, that this sacrament would be a judgement, and would necessitate an inquiry into the sins to be remitted.

Further, sin and its guilt are, at least partially, secret. Hence an inquiry into a sinner's guilt can be made only through his own voluntary admissions—*i.e.*, by means of confession. Such confession must be accompanied by sorrow, for we know from Christian doctrine on grace, that without sorrow sin cannot be forgiven. But our sorrow would be merely fictitious if we were not ready to atone as far as we can for the insult we have offered to God. Therefore, if there be a sacrament by which our sins are forgiven, we should expect it to include confession, contrition, and satisfaction, as the necessary acts of the penitent sinner. And these acts, being part of the sacrament, would have to be expressed externally.

Since the judicial decision that is to follow is also part of the sacrament, this too must be external. It must therefore be uttered by some man. But clearly if a man is to be judge over our souls, then to help him to use that authority rightly, our manifestations of guilt, of sorrow, and of readiness to atone must be made to him. Moreover, mere general avowal of guilt will not help him to judge prudently and justly : our confession then must be a full statement of all that he needs to know before he can give a sound decision.

But if this judicial remission of sin is to be of use, if it is to be sacramental, it must be really effective. The sacraments actually confer grace. Hence this sacramental judgement must be effective, and not a mere declaration of pardon already otherwise secured. The man to whom so immense a power is given must clearly receive it from God, and that such a commission has been given must in some way be evident externally, for we cannot submit to an unknown judge. Hence it is probable that if there be a sacrament of pardon only the officials of the Church, the priests, would be capable of receiving the authority to administer it.

Some sacrament, therefore, whereby sins can be forgiven, is desirable, is in accordance with God's goodness, and is consistent with Christian Revelation. Such a sacrament would be suitably a judgement and would fittingly include confession, contrition, and satisfaction from the penitent, and a sentence from the judge. This judge would probably be one of the priests of the Church, authorised by the Church to pass sentence.

It remains now to see whether Christ did in fact institute such a sacrament.

§ II: THE SACRAMENT IN SCRIPTURE

IN our endeavour to ascertain whether Christ instituted a Sacrament of Penance we must distinguish essentials from non-essential details. Many modern customs that surround the administration of the Sacrament are incidental. The one thing that matters is to show that Christ instituted a sacrament which consists essentially in an effective judgement over sinners. If he gave to his Church power to forgive sins or to refuse to forgive them, then he did institute this Sacrament. The ceremonial with which such a power is exercised is not relevant to our inquiry.

Apart from the general teaching of the Gospels that Christ came *The power of the keys* to call sinners to repentance, certain texts explicitly declare that he gave to the Church this power to judge sinners effectively in God's name. To St Peter he made the promise first. "And I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven."¹ Using the same words, save for the necessary change in the number of the pronoun, he later gave the same promise to all the Apostles.² Finally, after his Resurrection, he carried out his promise and conferred this authority on them. "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." When he had said this he breathed on them, and he said to them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain they are retained."³

We can summarise the information to be drawn from these texts: Our Lord gave his Church wide discretionary powers, so that she can impose her obligations or remit them, and her action will be ratified by God; in particular, she can forgive sins, or refuse to forgive; her authority in this matter is to be exercised judicially; this involves voluntary avowal of guilt, of sorrow and of readiness to atone, on the part of the penitent; there is no limitation to this power, granted that the penitent is in the requisite condition; it is given not to the Apostles alone, but also to their successors; only the officials of the Church, the priests, are able to exercise it; finally, subjection to the Church's tribunal is necessary for a sinful Christian who desires pardon.

It is clear from his very words that our Lord gave the Church *Power of forgiving sin* power to impose burdens or to remove them, and that this includes the power to forgive sins. The metaphor of the keys, the general words used in all three texts, the explicit mention of the forgiveness or retention of sins, can have no other meaning. Isaias uses this same metaphor of the keys, "And I will lay the key of the house of David upon his shoulders; and he shall open and none shall shut;

¹ Matt. xvi 19.² Matt. xviii 18.³ John xx 21-23.

and he shall shut and none shall open.”¹ This is the obvious meaning of the metaphor, that to St Peter is given supreme power as God’s representative to exclude from or admit into heaven. As St John Chrysostom says :

“ Those who are living on earth are given the control of heavenly affairs, and have a power which God has given neither to angels nor to archangels ; for it was not said to them, ‘ Whatsoever,’ etc. Earthly rulers have indeed the power of binding but only over the body ; this power of binding, however, concerns the soul itself, and controls heaven ; whatever priests do below, God ratifies above, and the Lord confirms the decision of the servant. For what else did he give them than complete heavenly power ? For he said, ‘ What sins you shall remit they are remitted, and what sins you shall retain they are retained.’ What power could be greater than that ? ‘ The Father has given all judgement to the Son.’ And I see them entrusted with all this by the Son.”²

This is so clearly a fair summary of the meaning of these texts that we can leave the saint’s explanation without further discussion. The Church, then, has power to bind and to loose, and this power includes that of forgiving sin.

This power over sin is judicial, and necessitates confession from the penitent. If the Church’s ministers are to forgive or to refuse to forgive, they must be adequately informed about the sinner’s state of soul. Otherwise they could not use this power rightly. As St Jerome wrote about the clergy, “ Having the power of the keys, in a certain manner they judge before the day of judgement.”³ But no man can judge even earthly offences without a full knowledge of the crime ; still less can we suppose that the Church is to exercise her dread power arbitrarily, with insufficient knowledge. Therefore it is that St Jerome also writes that priests should not bind or loose according to their moods, but only when, having heard the kinds of sin, they know whom to bind and whom to loose.⁴ St Gregory the Great sums up this inference from our Lord’s words :

“ Great is the honour, but terrible the responsibility of the honour. . . . The cases must therefore be considered, and then the power to bind and to loose exercised. The fault that has been committed, the repentance that has followed the fault, must both be known, so that those whom Almighty God has visited with the grace of repentance, the judgement of the pastor may absolve.”⁵

Our Lord’s words, therefore, give the Church power to absolve judicially from sin, and this power necessitates full confession from the penitent.

It is so obvious that the sinner must be repentant, and must avow

¹ Isa. xxii 22.

² St John Chrysostom (344-407), *De Sacerdotio*, iii.

³ St Jerome (c. 342-420), Letter to Heliodorus, Ep. xiv 8.

⁴ *Commentary on St Matthew’s Gospel*, iii (in chap. xvi, ver. 19).

⁵ St Gregory the Great (540-604), *Homilies on the Gospel*, xxvi.

his sorrow, that we need do no more than mention it. Moreover, this repentance must clearly include readiness to atone. These truths follow from the Christian teaching on Sin and on Repentance.¹

Some have interpreted this power as the commission to baptise and to preach the gospel of Redemption. But this is against the plain meaning of the words ; it overlooks the fact that the commission to baptise was given on another occasion ; and it limits the Church's power to remitting by baptism the sins of the unbaptised, whereas our Lord said in entirely general terms, "Whose sins," and "Whatsoever you shall bind." A Christian who has sinned may well insist that when our Lord gave the Church power to forgive, he did not withdraw her subjects from her control.

Moreover, no sin is excluded, for our Lord's words are as wide as possible in their reference. As St Augustine tersely wrote : *Universal power* "There are some who said that penance was not to be allowed to certain sins ; and they were excluded from the Church, being heretics." ² St Pacian also thus answers the Novatians who attempted to except some sins from the Church's power to forgive : ³ "He excepted nothing at all. He said, 'Whatsoever.'" These quotations are short, but to the point. To deny the universality of the Church's power to forgive is to deny the words of Christ.

St Pacian also proves that this power was not given to the Apostles alone, but was to be passed on to their successors : *Permanent power*

"But perhaps this power was only given to the Apostles ? Then to them alone was it permitted to baptise, to them alone was it permitted to give the Holy Ghost, and to them alone was it granted to remove the sins of the world. For all these were ordered to no others but to the Apostles. . . . If, therefore, the power to baptise and to confirm has come to the bishops from the Apostles, so too have they the power to bind and to loose."⁴

He states here the principle by which we know that this power was given to the Church permanently : whatever powers are needed for the Church's work, even though the words conferring them were necessarily spoken to the Apostles alone, are also given to their successors. The power of forgiveness is obviously necessary for the salvation of men. Our Lord indeed makes it clear that he gave it to the Church that she might continue his work ; he introduces its bestowal by saying, "As the Father has sent me, I also send you."

This power, therefore, is one that the Church must wield for all time, for it is given to her to enable her to accomplish her mission.

It is also at least suggested by our Lord's words that only priests can forgive sins. It is, as we have seen, a judicial power. But no judge can exercise his authority without a definite commission, a commission which in any society is given only to qualified officials. *Granted only to priests*

¹ Cf. Essay xxvi.

² St Augustine (354-430), *Sermons*, ccclii 3.

³ St Pacian (c. 390), *Epistles*, iii 12.

⁴ Ep. i 7.

The Church is a perfect society, with her own officials, and normally these alone can exercise authority in matters concerning the purpose of the society ; therefore these alone can validly exercise this judicial power.

“ This right is granted only to priests.” “ Christ granted this right to his Apostles, and it was transmitted by the Apostles to the priests.”¹ In these two sentences St Ambrose sums up for us Christian tradition and the implication of our Lord’s words.

Necessary
power

Finally, these words show that if we desire pardon we must submit to this tribunal of the Church. To bestow authority over subjects and not to enforce subjection on the subjects is an inconsistency we dare not attribute to God. If, when the Church refuses forgiveness, pardon can be nevertheless secured, then our Lord was jesting with his Apostles, and has failed to carry out his promise. Thus St Gregory VII asserted boldly his authority over all Christians. “ Who, I ask, thinks himself excluded from the jurisdiction of Peter in this universal grant of the power to bind and to loose ? Unless, indeed, it be some unhappy man who, refusing to bear the yoke of the Lord, subjects himself to the burden of the devil, and wishes not to be numbered among Christ’s sheep.”²

Though St Gregory is here speaking particularly of the claim that kings were above the power of the Church, his words show us how futile would be the gift of authority if the subjects could with impunity withdraw themselves from its control. We must therefore recognise that, apart from submission to the Church’s forgiving power, there is no pardon for grave sins.

This, then, is the plain meaning of our Lord’s words, these are the necessary implications. It has been suggested that our Lord did not mean what his words say, but merely authorised his Apostles to declare that sins are pardoned which have been already forgiven apart from their decision. But thus to reduce the power of absolution to a barren declaration is not only to distort Christ’s words but also to make them, especially in so solemn a setting, an absurd anticlimax. Our Lord has sent the Apostles to carry on the work of redemption ; to help them in this onerous task he has given them the Holy Ghost ; it is inconceivable that he should then proceed to tell them in very misleading language that they would be able to declare sins forgiven after they had been forgiven independently of their action. These words, to fit the solemnity of the occasion, must bear their obvious meaning, that the Apostles are empowered by divine commission to judge sinners and to pass on them effective sentence.

Nor may we limit the power of remission to the remission of punishment alone. Eternal punishment cannot be remitted apart from the guilt, for the two are inseparably joined. Punishment is the

¹ St Ambrose (c. 333-397), *De Poenitentia*, i 2 ; ii 2.

² St Gregory VII (c. 1020-1085), Letter to Heriman of Metz, 1081.

inevitable consequence of guilt. If the punishment is remitted, then the guilt also must be remitted. On the other hand, the temporal punishment due to sin can be lessened or remitted in so many other ways that any Christian can secure this by his own actions. It is unthinkable that our Lord's solemn injunction, and his gift of the Holy Ghost, could issue in so trivial a conclusion as the bestowal of a power already enjoyed by all Christians. It would be unsound exegesis to accept an interpretation of our Lord's words so unsuited to the context, and at the same time so remote from the plain meaning of the words themselves. We must then conclude that Christ gave to the Apostles and to their successors a power so great as to seem almost incredible—the power effectively to forgive the sins of men or, equally effectively, to refuse forgiveness.

“What is impossible for men is possible to God, and God is able to grant pardon for sins. . . . It seemed impossible that sins should be forgiven through penance; yet Christ granted this to his Apostles and by the Apostles it was handed on to the ministry of the priests. Hence what seemed impossible has been made possible.”¹

“But God who promised mercy to all makes no distinction (between forgiving slight and grave sins), and concedes to his priests the power of forgiveness with no exceptions.”²

“In baptism surely there is remission of all sins; what does it matter whether priests exercise this power granted to them, at baptism or through penance? In both there is the one mystery.”³

These sayings of St Ambrose sum up the plain meaning of our Lord's words as always understood by the Church. We may therefore conclude with St Leo: “And then did the Apostles receive power to forgive sins, when after his Resurrection the Lord breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven.’”⁴

Other scriptural evidence is in itself not so clear. But if we remember our Lord's words it becomes clearer, and affords at least indications that the Apostolic Church claimed and exercised this power to forgive sins. The Apostles knew well that Christians sinned seriously, and yet did not write of such sinners as though they were finally lost. They even write of them as though they could still enjoy effective membership of the Church.⁵ It is true we have no detailed narrative of the actual exercise of the power of absolution; there are at best some possible references.⁶ But knowing our Lord's words to the Apostles, knowing, too, the Christian teaching on salvation and on the Church, we can justifiably see in this treatment of sinful Christians evidence that the Church was using the power to forgive that had been conferred upon her.

¹ St Ambrose, *De Poenitentia*, ii 2.

² *Ibid.*, i 3.

³ *Ibid.*, i 8.

⁴ St Leo, Sermon lxxvi, *De Pentecoste*, ii 4.

⁵ Cf. 1 Peter, 2 Corinthians, Titus, Apocalypse, *passim*.

⁶ Cf. Acts xix 18 *sqq.*; Jas. v 16, and 19-20, etc.

*Some
objections*

Certain difficulties have been raised and must be resolved. The comparative silence concerning the use of the forgiving power is best treated when we encounter the same difficulty in later history. There are also texts which seem at first to suggest either that a sinful Christian had no hope of salvation or that there was a limit to the Church's power to forgive.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews (vi 4-6) St Paul writes: "For it is impossible for those who were once illuminated, have tasted also the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, have moreover tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance, crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, making him a mockery."

Taken out of its context, this passage does seem to imply that if a Christian sinned he was finally lost. But in its context the meaning is clear. The Epistle is written for Jewish Christians to stress the fact that Christ is the Messiah and that they can look for no other; if they desert Christ then they cannot expect salvation, for God's promises have been fulfilled, and to expect another Messiah is to wish to crucify the Son of God again and to make him a mockery. This is therefore no difficulty to the doctrine of Penance; it is, indeed, a part of that doctrine: the sacramental power comes from Christ's sacrifice alone.

Again, both our Lord and St John speak of a sin that shall not be forgiven. Our Lord calls it blasphemy against the Holy Ghost,¹ and St John writes of the sin unto death.² The explanation of these statements removes all difficulty. This sin has been identified by some as final impenitence, which manifestly is not forgiven. A fuller explanation is that this sin is the hardening of the heart against grace, which makes a man refuse to seek pardon. Such a sinner certainly is not forgiven, for he will not ask. This is the age-long explanation of the Church's writers, and is consistent with the scriptural statements. Neither our Lord nor St John says that the sin *cannot* be forgiven, but that it *will not* be forgiven.

Scriptural evidence therefore shows us clearly that Christ did indeed institute this Sacrament of Reconciliation which we so deeply need, and that its nature is what we might have anticipated.

§ III: THE SACRAMENT IN TRADITION

IN discussing this doctrine we cannot neglect its history; by its development it has become better understood, errors have been averted, and we have learnt to practise it more frequently and with greater profit.

We must first treat of the difficulty we met in Scripture and find again in later history, that references to the Sacrament are so vague

¹ Matt. xii 31.

² 1 John v 16.

*Comparative
silence of
early
centuries*

and so comparatively rare that some misguided scholars have even denied its Apostolic origin.

Many reasons account for this comparative silence. Of course, we must not expect modern phrases, such as "going to confession," or "saying one's penance." These phrases are merely our way of describing the practice.

We are somewhat disappointed in the early references to Penance because we too often do what early Christian writers did not: we are apt to concentrate on one belief at a time and to forget the Christian Revelation as one united system. If we remember Christian teaching on the Church, on salvation, and on membership of the Church, much apparently vague language of early writers becomes very definite, teaching that Penance after sin avails for sanctification and procures for us pardon by authoritative reunion with the Church.

Also the first Christians used Penance less than we do. It was used mainly for the pardon of grave sins. Consequently, as it did not figure so frequently in their lives, it did not come into their minds so readily. The majority of them had been converted from the horrors of paganism, and their great act of Penance was their conversion, the passage from vice to virtue. Therefore when they thought of Penance they thought most readily of their baptism, which had meant so great a change in their lives.

Again, as the doctrine was not as yet fully developed, the rites varied considerably from place to place. Consequently the evidence is not only slight but often confusing. Even on doctrinal points there were discussions which authority had to settle before we could hope for uniform evidence.

Two writers at least give us another reason for primitive silence on this doctrine. Tertullian and the author of the *Pastor* both tell us that they were reluctant to mention Penance lest they should thereby lead converts to minimise the change that ought to have taken place at Baptism, lest they should even be encouraging Christians to sin, by showing that after Baptism pardon could still be secured.

We can now turn to the actual evidence. Space forbids a full survey; we must be content to record the most telling testimony.

St. Clement, Bishop of Rome in the first century, wrote to the Corinthians about a schism. He stresses the duty of submission to lawful authority and exhorts sinners to repent. *Clement of Rome*

"You therefore who are responsible for this sedition, be subject in obedience to the priests, and bending your knees in spirit receive correction unto penance. . . . It is better for you to be insignificant and of good fame in the flock of Christ, than to be rejected for excessive pride from all hope of him."¹

It is difficult to see in this anything other than a statement that after sin submission to the priests unto penance can secure membership of the Church again, and with it hope of salvation, whereas a

¹ St. Clement (Pope 92-101), First Epistle to the Corinthians.

refusal to submit involves the loss of salvation. This is the Catholic teaching on Penance.

Though second-century authors seem at times to imply that there is no hope for the sinful Christian, they are in reality merely repeating St Paul's teaching to the Hebrews. St Irenaeus, moreover, tells of heretics pardoned,¹ and divides Christians into those who persevered from the beginning and those who were restored after a fall by repentance.² Finally, these writers stress the Christian doctrine of the connection between membership of the Church and salvation ;³ hence we know that for them a restoration of membership involved pardon of sin.

Pastor of
Hermas

The two chief witnesses before the controversies of the third century are the author of the book known as *Pastor* of Hermas and Tertullian. The controversies make it certain that the Church of the third century taught our doctrine of to-day ; Tertullian and the *Pastor* show the same for the earlier period.

The *Pastor* is difficult, for its allegory obscures its teaching. But the use made of it during the later controversies, and the very meaning of the allegory show that it teaches a belief in sacramental absolution for sin. Written in the middle of the second century at Rome, it is divided into Visions, Commandments, and Parables. The allegories teach that the Church is an organised society, membership of which is necessary for salvation. The book itself is mainly an exhortation to penance, and certain doctrines are plain. Repentance is open to all and can secure forgiveness ; but it is only to be used once ; however, if a man fall again after this his state is not entirely desperate ; Penance is an external rite and results in formal, external reunion with the Church, and therefore in internal freedom from guilt ; this last point is made abundantly clear by the close parallel instituted between the unquestionably sacramental baptism and the second Penitence.

That this interesting allegory may relieve the tedium of exposition we give short extracts from it.

When the author is shown in vision a tower built upon water, and the rejection of many stones from the building, he speaks to the lady who is his guide : “ ‘ And what, Lady, is the use of my seeing this if I do not understand it ? ’ Replying she said to me, ‘ You are a cunning man, wanting to know all about the tower. ’ ‘ Yes, Lady, ’ I said, ‘ that I may tell the brethren, and they may be gladdened. ’ . . . She, however, said : ‘ Many indeed will hear, and some will rejoice, but others will mourn. But even they who mourn will rejoice when they have done penance. . . . The tower you saw being built is myself, the Church ’ . . . I asked her : ‘ Why is the

¹ St Irenaeus (c. 140-200), *Adversus Hæreses*, i and iii.

² *Ibid.* i.

³ Cf. St Ignatius (martyred 107), Letter to the Philadelphians ; Second Clementine Epistle to Corinthians, c. 150 ; St Irenæus, *Adversus Hæreses*, iv, v. (Note especially the importance of Christ, and the gravity of apostasy.)

tower built upon the water, Lady?' She said: '. . . because your life is saved and will be saved through water. . . . Hear now about the stones. . . . Those square white stones which fitted so well are the Apostles, bishops, doctors and deacons, who have lived holy lives in God. . . . Those which were cast away . . . are those who have sinned and wish to do penance. And therefore they are not thrown far outside the tower, for if they do penance they will be useful in building. . . ' So she ended her exposition of the tower. . . . I asked still more, whether all the stones which were rejected were unsuitable for the building, or whether there was yet repentance for them, and they might have a place in the tower. 'They have,' she said, 'an opportunity for penance, but they cannot be put into this tower; they will be put into another and much lesser place, after they have suffered and accomplished the days of their penance.'"¹

Later in the Commandments:

"'Yet still, Sir,' I said, 'I wish to ask questions.' He replied, 'Speak.' 'I have heard,' I said, '. . . that there is no other penance save that one when we descend into the water and receive remission of our earlier sins.' He answered, 'You have heard rightly . . . for he who receives remission of sins ought not to sin again, but should remain chaste. Since, however, you ask about everything carefully, I shall disclose this also to you—not, indeed, to give temptation thereby to those who . . . have just come to faith in the Lord. . . . But for those who were called before these days the Lord has provided penance . . . and to me the power of this penance has been given. But I say to you that after that great and holy calling (*i.e.*, baptism) if anyone . . . should sin, he has one chance of penance. If, however, he sin again, and does penance, it is useless, for with difficulty he will have life.'"²

This last sentence needs comment. In the early Church, as we shall see, sins due to malice were treated more severely than those due to weakness. Public penance was, as a rule, imposed on grave, malicious sins, especially if they were public, though there were exceptions; this public penance could be used once only. There was a tendency evidently to feel that sin renewed again and again indicated a lack of sincerity in the repentance, which rendered forgiveness difficult. Sinners who, after once doing public penance, relapsed into sins that normally deserved this public penance, were usually not re-admitted to communion; but they were allowed to assist at worship within the Church, and their case was not considered desperate. Occasionally, perhaps, individual bishops would re-admit these sinners privately, or possibly even publicly; our evidence is, after all, imperfect. But certainly they were not considered finally lost, and equally certainly there was no salvation apart from membership of the Church. This severe practice, however, though perfectly lawful, was ill-suited to Christian teaching, which gradually

¹ Vision III.

² Commandment iv 3.

reacted against it; in doctrine it is certain that the Church never taught that a grave sin after penance was irremissible. This is really the tenor of the *Pastor's* teaching here. He is apt to make a sweeping statement that requires modification, and to add almost at once the modification needed. We have an example of this at the opening of this quotation. Here at the end is another. We must therefore understand the word "useless" in the light of the subsequent phrase, "with difficulty."

In the Parables penance is often mentioned. Thus, the angel of penance shows Hermas a field. "And he showed me a young shepherd. . . . And there were many sheep grazing, enjoying themselves luxuriously and in their joy leaping hither and thither; and the shepherd was joyful with his flock, . . . and he ran about among his sheep. . . . 'This,' he said, 'is the angel of luxury and pleasure. He destroys the souls of the servants of God, turning them from truth, deceiving them with evil desires in which they perish. . . . For these therefore there is no penance leading to life; they have added to their sins and have blasphemed the name of God. Death is the fate of such sinners. The sheep which you saw standing still are those who have given themselves indeed to luxuries and to pleasure, but have not blasphemed against God; . . . for them there is the hope of penance by which they may live. . . .' He showed me a tall shepherd, rough in appearance, with a knapsack on his shoulder and holding a knotted rod and a great whip. His appearance was so savage that I was afraid of him. . . . This shepherd received those sheep who enjoyed themselves in luxury but did not skip about. And he drove them into a steep and thorny place full of thistles, so that they were caught by the thorns and thistles. These . . . being beaten by the shepherd suffered cruel torments. . . . And when I saw them thus flogged and tortured, I was sorry for them and said: ' . . . Sir, who is this savage and cruel shepherd so pitiless of his sheep?' 'This,' he said, 'is the angel of punishment. . . . When they have suffered every kind of torture they are handed over to me for admonition, and are confirmed in the faith, and for the rest of their lives they serve God with pure hearts.'"¹

Tertullian

Tertullian's evidence is similar. Before his fall into heresy he wrote *De Pœnitentia*. In this he treats first of the virtue of repentance, then of that virtue at baptism. He then explicitly declares that there is a second penitence which is also the last. He mentions it reluctantly, "lest by treating of the help of repentance yet left to us, we may seem to afford opportunity of sinning again."² However, he does mention it, and compares it with Baptism, thus indicating its sacramental nature. Though he says that penance can be used only once, he suggests that this was not universally held. "Let nobody

¹ Parable VI.

² It is difficult to give precise references. The book is comparatively short, and I have summarised long passages with occasional citations.

therefore become worse, because God is so good, renewing his sin as often as he is pardoned. Otherwise he will come to the end of his opportunities for pardon before coming to an end of his sins." This certainly suggests a frequently renewed pardon, and in the context a formal pardon.

He asserts even more clearly the existence of this second repentance. He tells us that having been once saved from shipwreck we should avoid further danger. But lest Christians should fall before the devil's attack God has provided other means of salvation. "God therefore knowing these poisons,¹ although the gate of innocence is closed and bolted by baptism, has yet left somewhere an opening. He has placed in the vestibule a second penance which will open to those who knock. But this is once only, for it is the second time. . . . Let the soul be weary of sinning again, but not of repenting again. . . . Let no one be ashamed; for renewed ill-health there must be renewed medicine."

After this he describes the second penance. "Confession of sin is as much a relief as concealment is an aggravation of the burden." The second penance "commands to lie in sackcloth and ashes, to hide the body in squalor, to abase the mind with sorrow, to accept hard treatment for the sins committed, to abstain from food and drink, . . . to throw yourself before the priests, to kneel to those dear to God, to join the petition of the brethren to his own prayer. All this penance does . . . that it may, I will not say frustrate eternal punishment by temporal sorrow, but that it may wipe it out. When, therefore, it abases a man it raises him up the more; when it accuses him it excuses him; when it condemns him it absolves him."²

This is clearly an external ceremony. Indeed, Tertullian continues by expressing regret that some from shame avoid confession. He compares them, as so many other early writers do, to patients ashamed to disclose secret illnesses to doctors. Then he asks why sinners should fear to manifest their sins to the brethren who, united in one Spirit from one Lord and Father, will welcome their sorrow, not mock their shame.

"In each member is the Church, but the Church is Christ. When, therefore, you throw yourself at the brethren's knees, you are touching Christ, you are imploring Christ; and when they shed tears over you it is Christ who suffers, Christ who prays to the Father. . . . Is it better to be damned in secret than to be absolved in public?"

To encourage confession he insists upon its effectiveness.

"If you shrink from confession think of hell, which confession will extinguish for you." "Therefore since you know that after the first protection against hell given by the Lord's baptism, there is still in confession a second help, why do you defer your salvation?"

¹ *I.e.*, the poisons of the devil.

² The confusion of pronouns is in the original.

From this we must infer that Tertullian knew of the existence of the power to forgive sins. He doubted, indeed, whether it could be used for one person more than once, but he implies that this doubt was not shared by all Christians. Especially he teaches that second penance, like baptism, is an external ecclesiastical rite, and therefore effective before God. Finally, he expounds the doctrine in its right setting: the Christian is saved by union with Christ in the Church; this union is broken by sin, penance restores it, and that restoration therefore involves absolution, and is indeed effected by it.

Thus Tertullian and the *Pastor* teach the same doctrine. It is clear from their testimony that Christians in the second century believed in the Church's sacramental power to forgive sin. But they also show that this power was used chiefly for grave sins and that there was dispute as to its extent, a dispute as yet not authoritatively settled. In the third century this led to serious controversies, for which Tertullian himself is one of our main authorities.

After being so great a Christian champion he was unhappily misled by the Montanist heresy. This, like so many of the great heresies, was Puritan and Manichæan in its doctrines. The frequency with which this Puritan, Manichæan spirit rises against the Church is in itself an interesting exposition of Catholic belief. Puritanism, which over-stresses human wickedness, distrusts the goodness of God's creation, and is therefore excessively hard on the sinner, and even on innocent worldly pleasures, is inevitably opposed to Christianity. All Catholic doctrine, being God's revelation, is consistent; knowing its basic doctrines of the goodness of God, and the union of Justice and Mercy in the Incarnation and Redemption, we must expect that the Church would reject any doctrine too harsh towards the sinner. She is a forgiving Church, because she is the body of the forgiving Christ, our Saviour.

Consequently the Popes of the third century, notably St Callixtus, rejected the incipient tendency to severity, and asserted that pardon of any sin would be given to all who repented. Tertullian, then a Montanist, attacked him bitterly. He declared that the power to forgive could be wielded only by spiritual men, and that homicide, adultery, and idolatry, could not be forgiven at all.

However, the Montanists in their severity were the innovators, not the Catholics in their lenience. He boasts that he has advanced and has put away the things of a child. "Even in Christ knowledge has different ages."¹ This statement again displays a tendency of most heresies, to think that Christ's Revelation can be altered to suit the times, a tendency to-day called strangely "Modernism."

In his *De Pudicitia* he tries to demolish the arguments whereby he had formerly defended Catholic clemency. His effort shows us the true meaning of those arguments. It becomes clear that the Church claimed to forgive sins by the ministry of her hierarchical

¹ *De Pudicitia*, i.

officials, and that she claimed to forgive all sins. The Catholic tradition and development was in favour of lenience and against excessive severity. Its greatest opponent then proves that the authority of Rome was conservative, ecclesiastical, and clement.

Another attack on St Callixtus, however, implies that he was innovating.¹ This was delivered by that strange St Hippolytus, saint, schismatic, even materially heretic, ultimately martyr, and the first anti-Pope of history. He had been opposed to St Callixtus, and afterwards reviled his memory. But his very bitterness invalidates his testimony. He accuses Callixtus of having encouraged all sins, even concubinage and infanticide, thus making him responsible for the misuse that some made of his gentleness. This is the bitterness of a defeated rival, whose anger has obscured his judgement. He himself mourns that Callixtus had his followers and drew even good men after him; and we know that the papal teaching prevailed, even in conservative Rome. We are forced, then, to conclude, on the evidence of Tertullian, of earlier and of later history, that the supposed innovation was merely the rejection of an excessive Puritanism that misguided zealots were trying to introduce.

Shortly afterwards Novatian, also a schismatic, tried to revive this severity at least against the sin of apostasy. Though before his fall he had written to St Cyprian of Carthage, maintaining the Catholic tradition, he later reacted against the growing lenience. But though he succeeded in establishing a party temporarily, the truth was too strong, and Novatianism failed as had Montanism.

With this defeat the existence of the Church's power to forgive all sins to repentant sinners was clearly established. Whatever discussions were still possible, whatever rites were actually used, the existence of the Sacrament of Penance is beyond doubt from the third century onwards. Gradually lenience increased, the use of the Sacrament became more frequent, venial sins were more often submitted to the tribunal, and forgiveness was accorded more easily, and repeated again and again as often as a sinner repented. But all this development involved no new doctrine. From now to the Protestant rebellion, the fundamental doctrine of Penance was not seriously attacked.

Even before the third century it is clear that the Church's teaching was the same. The very controversies of that century lose all point if the Church were not then making the claim to forgive all sins. Of what use also Tertullian's earlier exhortations, of what use the severity described both in the *Pastor* and by Tertullian, of what use to question lenience, if sinners could secure forgiveness without submission to the Church, or if the Church were not claiming to forgive?

The evidence of the first three centuries shows that heresy doubted or minimised the Church's power to forgive sin; Catholic truth

¹ St Hippolytus (*fl. c. 200*). *Philosophumena* is the work here used.

maintained this power in its fulness. As Lactantius at the opening of the fourth century wrote :

“That is the true Church, in which there is confession and repentance, which cures effectively the sins and wounds to which carnal weakness is subject.”¹

§ IV: THE MATTER OF THE SACRAMENT

*The acts of
the penitent*

In discussing the sacraments it is convenient to follow the usual division into Matter and Form. The Matter of a sacrament is that part of the external sign, which of itself is not fully significant, but is capable, when defined by the Form, of being a constituent of the sign.

Usually the “matter” of a sacrament is actually material. But in Penance this is not so ; it is a sacrament that concerns human acts, and there is no tangible thing in its composition. The Council of Trent, therefore, using the language of St Thomas Aquinas, declared that the acts of the penitent—confession, contrition and satisfaction—are the quasi-matter of this Sacrament.

The use of this term, which reflects the fact that Penance has no tangible “matter,” has left the way open to dispute. Some theologians say that the essence of the Sacrament, comprising both matter and form, is the Absolution, the acts of the penitent being conditions necessary for validity. The majority, however, hold that the acts of the penitent are the actual matter of the Sacrament. The dispute has little importance, for it is certain that the acts of the penitent are necessary for the validity of the Sacrament.²

Before we discuss these acts severally, there are some general considerations to be made which apply to them all.

Though the acts of the penitent are normally taken to be the matter, the very sins confessed are clearly connected materially with the Sacrament, and are essential to it. They are not indeed part of the sign of forgiveness, but they are indispensable to the sign. They are therefore usually called the remote matter.

Essential matter must be distinguished from integral. Essential matter is that without which the Sacrament cannot exist. Integral matter, though necessary for the perfection of the Sacrament, and therefore normally even for its validity, is not essential, and may therefore, provided there are adequate reasons, be lacking without destroying the Sacrament.

Further, since this is a sacrament—*i.e.*, an outward sign—the acts of the penitent must have some external expression. Full external manifestation is integral though not essential. Thus normally there

¹ Lactantius, writing *c.* 305, *Divinae Institutiones*, iv, 30-36.

² The chief importance of the dispute in practice is in connection with the absolution given to an unconscious man, unable to give external signs of his penitence.

must be full confession, clear expression of sorrow and of the readiness to atone. Where circumstances render these impossible, there must be such external manifestation as is possible.

These general points concern all the acts of the penitent equally. We must now discuss them severally.

Contrition is, obviously necessary. It is shown in another essay ¹ *Contrition* that without sorrow we cannot expect forgiveness; also that perfect contrition, arising solely from love of God's goodness offended by sin, of itself secures pardon, though it necessarily includes a will to submit to the tribunal of Penance if this be possible. We need not repeat what has been said there concerning the qualities necessary for true sorrow.

It is enough here to observe that the imperfect sorrow called "attrition" is adequate for the purposes of this Sacrament. That this is a good thing in itself and useful for salvation no Catholic can doubt, for it has been defined by the Council of Trent. That attrition is also adequate for Penance is assumed by the Council, and is now universally held by Christians. If it were not adequate we should be forced to conclude that the Sacrament never actually produces the effect—the remission of sin—for which Christ instituted it. For perfect contrition, as soon as it occurs in the soul, cleanses it from sin. Though it includes the desire to submit to the Sacrament, it frees from sin even before that submission. Consequently, if perfect contrition were the only sorrow adequate for Penance, then absolution would always be given to souls already pardoned. Thus some other form of sorrow must be adequate.

Again, the insistence of the Church upon the need for absolution and the traditional Christian horror of dying without it, show that absolution can give pardon which could not otherwise be obtained—*i.e.*, can give pardon even to those who are not capable of perfect contrition. Thus St Celestine, writing of refusal to absolve the dying, says: "What is that practice other than to slay the dying and to kill the soul most cruelly, if it be not absolved?" ² In the words of Duns Scotus, if attrition be not adequate, "then the Sacrament cannot be the second plank of safety after shipwreck, since it never frees the shipwrecked from the peril of drowning." ³ Attrition, in short, is able to do all that is required for the sacramental effect—to remove the continued attachment to sin which is an obstacle to pardon. Therefore, since the sacraments when administered secure their effect, provided there is no obstacle to the presence of grace in the soul, attrition is adequate for this Sacrament.

The second act of the penitent is confession. Here we are con- *Confession* ² fronted with certain historical problems, which we have not the

¹ Essay xxvi, *Sin and Repentance*.

² St Celestine (Pope 422-432), *Epistle*, iv.

³ John Duns Scotus (c. 1270-1308), *Comm. in Sent.*, in iv dist. 14, q. 4,

space to treat fully. They are not, however, of such doctrinal importance as to make this matter for serious regret.

Secret confession in history

The problems can be summarised :

It is sometimes stated that secret confession is seldom explicitly mentioned before the fourth century ; that in the early Church public sins were publicly confessed, publicly punished, and publicly pardoned ; that gradually the clergy usurped authority over men's souls and instituted private confession ; that this is unnecessary and therefore wrong.

Even if the supposed facts behind this false statement were true, they would not be incompatible with Catholic doctrine. Our Lord did, as we have seen, give the Church power to forgive sins by a judicial process. This makes confession in some way necessary. Even if at first this confession had been usually public, this would merely mean that at first the Church used her power in a different manner. Even if secret sins had not been confessed at all, this would mean that secret sinners did not avail themselves of that power. Christian doctrine develops, and the development is sound since it does not destroy what was formerly believed, nor add new dogmas to those revealed by Christ. All that development does is to make the Christian Revelation more fully understood in all its implications, to give to it clearer expression in order to avert error, and finally to introduce new practical applications.

Even if the Church had at first used public confession as a rule, she would be within her rights, as experience showed the value of private confession, to decide in the interests of penitents themselves that cases should be heard *in camera*. Secrecy would secure candour of confession, and make the use of the Sacrament easier for Christians. Such a development would not affect Christian doctrine itself. In fact, it would merely illustrate one Christian belief : that the sacraments are given to men in their own interests.

Thus the Council of Trent anathematises anyone who says " that secret confession to the priest alone, which the Church from the beginning has always observed and observes, is alien from the institution and command of Christ and is a human invention." ¹ Christ's words do not indeed mention secrecy, but they involve confession of sins, and therefore suggest secrecy. For, as Christ did not impose public confession, it is manifest that if confession is to be made at all, the Sacrament will be more widely used, Christ's gift will be the more valuable, if secrecy is preserved. Consequently the Council does not question the existence of public confessions, but merely asserts that the Church did make use of private confession, and that this is consistent with Christ's institution, and even arises from it.

But although we could therefore admit the supposed fact of the wide use of public confession in early days, to do so would be

¹ Sess. XIV, Canon 6.

historically unsound. The documents do not show that private confession was rare, and there are even indications that it was the usual practice.

Certain preliminary considerations help us to interpret the documents more accurately than is often done.

The word used by early writers which is translated "confession" usually refers to the whole penitential rite, without specific reference to the actual confession. This rite certainly was public when considered as a whole, but that fact tells us nothing of the actual avowal of sins, which may have been, and probably was, private. To remember this wide connotation of the word translated "confession" will help us to interpret many of the apparent references to public confession more cautiously.

Again, the interest of early writers on Penance is nearly always about the extent of the power to forgive. Hence they rarely give us more than a very vague account of the actual rites. These, moreover, were in their details very varied in the different churches, and it is therefore difficult to acquire precise knowledge of them.

Finally, these very controversies on the extent of the power show us that the Church claimed to forgive all sins. But some sins of their very nature it would be undesirable, and even almost impossible, to confess publicly. Apart from sins the public avowal of which might cause grave social difficulties within the particular Christian community affected, there are, as St Basil pointed out later, sins which could hardly be confessed publicly for fear of the secular law. One of these, be it noted, was a sin which certain heretics declared the Church could not forgive—homicide. The existence of the controversy indicates that the Church did forgive this sin, yet it is difficult to think that it would often be confessed publicly.

When we turn to the documents we find that they do not force us to set aside this reasoning and accept the theory that confession was always or even normally public. Even such a description of the penitential rite as that given by Tertullian and quoted already does not show that confession as such was public, but merely that the penitential rite involved public shame. Public penance, and public absolution, especially in days when penance was normally only used for grave sins, would certainly do this. The other quotations already given are capable of the same interpretation, and this interpretation, as we have seen, is the natural one.

Moreover, there are certain texts that are definitely more consistent with the practice of private confession than with that of public detailed avowal of sins. Thus Origen recommends Christians to consider their choice of confessor carefully, "so that if he should judge your sin to be such that it ought to be declared and pardoned by the whole Church,"¹ the penitent should be willing to submit

¹ Origen (185-254), *Homily on Psalm 37*, ii 6.

to his ruling. He also says that "if we have revealed our sins not only to God but also to those who can heal our wounds and our sins, then these are remitted."¹ Both these texts, especially the first, imply a confession, with a view to absolution, made to a priest alone. Certainly they are more consistent with such a secret confession.

St Methodius, commenting on the Jewish precept that lepers should show themselves to the priests, says: "As the ancients showed themselves to the priests, so do we to the priest."² This saying also is surely more compatible with private consultation than with public confession.

St Cyprian, when treating of the sin of apostasy, recommends those who have sinned only in thought to confess with sorrow to the priests.³ The same saint and the Council of Carthage insist, in view of the different degrees of guilt, on the examination of each case.⁴ Again, such an investigation and the confession even of thoughts are more suggestive of a private tribunal, especially as the investigation seems to have had for its purpose to settle whether there was need of public penance. This we can see at a later period in a remark of St Augustine's that some are sinners through weakness, others through malice; that the first should not be compelled to endure the grievous and mournful penance, but the others should be made to submit to it.⁵ It is clear from this that in the fifth century, certainly some sinners were absolved without any publicity; but it also shows us that there was always private confession first, and then for some people public penance. In the absence of any evidence of change, and in view of Origen's advice, this surely illustrates the practice of the third century, where there was also this preliminary private consultation.

Thus, though the actual documentary evidence is slight, it does not prove that public confession was the rule, but actually suggests that a private confession preceded the penitential rites, and that sometimes, if the judge so decided, a penitent was not subjected to this grave trial. It would be impossible to maintain that there was an optional private tribunal for those penitents who did not like the public shame; it is equally impossible to assert that there was no private element in early penitential discipline. There was certainly a practice of consulting priests secretly about sin. This practice, taken in conjunction with the existence of the power to absolve, and the facts of human nature, forces us to hold, since no evidence contradicts, that there was confession, and that not all confession was public.

That this preliminary avowal was a sacramental confession it seems impossible to deny. The existence of the Sacrament demands

¹ *Homily on St Luke* xvii.

² St Methodius (died c. 311), *De Lepra*, vi.

³ St Cyprian (c. 200-258), *De Lapsis*, xxviii.

⁴ *Epistles*, lv, lvii.

⁵ St Augustine; *De Diversis Quaestionibus*, lxxxiii: xxvi, *De differentia peccatorum*.

such an avowal ; we have it here and it is connected with the subsequent judgement : absolution or refusal to absolve.

As St Leo said when condemning a local practice of enforcing public confession, that practice was against Apostolic tradition. " It suffices to expose one's guilt to priests alone in secret confession." ¹

The difficulty that if secret confession were normal it would be more frequently mentioned, especially by such preachers as St John Chrysostom, who devoted much eloquence to the praise of penance, is a negative argument. As such it cannot stand against positive evidence, however slight this may be. Moreover, the difficulty is not so great as it appears. When public penance was the rule, that would be the most striking feature of the Sacrament ; private confession would be comparatively easy. Consequently, attention was naturally focussed on the severe public discipline. Moreover, Christian writers, to insist upon the sacramental nature of absolution, usually wrote of the confession as made to God, in whose name the priest was acting. That St John is silent is indeed an example of how faulty such negative arguments are. For by this time there can be no doubt that private confession existed. We can only conclude that his silence affords us no evidence at all of the non-existence of private confession.

We must now treat of the nature and extent of the obligation to confess. Obviously, from what has been said, all those in mortal sin, if they desire pardon, must confess their sins to a priest. There is also the positive precept of Easter-Duties. This was first issued by the Lateran Council, 1215. Strictly there is no time assigned for the fulfilment of the obligation. But, as Easter is appointed for the obligatory annual communion, the confession is conveniently joined to it. This practice, moreover, the Council of Trent declared, ought to continue. Since only mortal sins must be submitted to the sacramental tribunal, this precept does not bind those who are not in mortal sin. We might add that it is at least more in keeping with Christian duty to confess any mortal sins as soon as possible after they have been committed. Only thus can they be remitted, and it is not consistent with Christian duty voluntarily to remain in mortal sin for any length of time.

*The nature
and extent of
the obligation*

Certain characteristics that confession must have should be mentioned. It must normally be vocal, and not in writing nor by signs. This is a positive precept of the Church due to the greater security vocal confession gives. Also confession must be secret. The validity of public confession in earlier days is not questioned. But the practice of the Church, confirmed by experience, has decided against publicity with its dangers and difficulties.

The most important characteristic of confession is the need for integrity. This means that mortal sins are necessary matter for the Sacrament. All must therefore be confessed. In addition, they

¹ St Leo, *Epistle* clxviii 2.

must be so confessed that the priest knows exactly what kind of sin has been committed. Therefore all circumstances which alter the kind of sin must also be told. Finally, the number of times that each sin has been committed must be mentioned as far as possible. Venial sins, though not necessary matter, are sufficient matter. There is therefore no obligation to confess venial sins, but they can be confessed. Some sin must be mentioned if the Sacrament is to be conferred. Hence a penitent who wishes to secure an increase of grace by keeping to his regular confession, but who has committed no sin that he can remember since his last confession, must repeat in general terms some sin of his past already forgiven. Material integrity, however, is not essential; in some cases this is impossible; the confession must be as complete as circumstances allow.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction is the last of the penitent's acts. At one time, as is evident from what has been written, the penances imposed were very severe. There has been a practical development toward lenience, and to-day, as all Catholics know, the penances given are very slight. Still, as no act of a creature in itself can atone for an offence against the Creator, the expiatory value of the penance imposed is not wholly judged by its severity. All satisfactory acts depend for their value on their union with Christ's atonement. But whereas ordinary acts depend on the fervour of the agent for the degree of their union with Christ's merits, the penance given in confession has a sacramental value which is independent of the devotion of the penitent. Nevertheless, as modern penances are so slight, it is desirable that penitents should increase their value by earnestness in their accomplishment, by other works, and by gaining indulgences.¹

§ V: INDULGENCES

It is convenient to append here a treatment of Indulgences, since these concern penance chiefly in that they complement the sacramental satisfaction.

Meaning

As few Catholic doctrines are so misunderstood, sometimes even by Catholics, we must begin with a clear definition. According to the Catechism, "An Indulgence is a remission, granted by the Church, of the temporal punishment which often remains due to sin after its guilt has been forgiven." This, of course, is to be understood as meaning that the remission avails before God.

Thus an indulgence can never be considered a permission to commit sin, nor even an encouragement. Anyone who sinned the more readily because he could so easily get all punishment remitted would be defeating his own ends: he would not gain the indulgence

¹ The actual performance of the penance imposed is not necessary for the validity of the Sacrament; it is sufficient that at the time of absolution the will to do the penance be present. But the performance of the penance is an integral part of the Sacrament, and therefore any penitent who culpably omitted it would commit a sin.

because of that very presumption. Finally, an indulgence is not a pardon of sin; that can be obtained only by the Sacrament of Penance.

Before discussing Indulgences further, we must expound shortly the doctrinal bases of the system. Three doctrines are involved, the Communion of Saints, the existence of a spiritual treasury, and the power of the keys enjoyed by the Church. *Doctrinal bases*

For a full treatment of the first we can refer to the essay on *The Mystical Body of Christ*. Here we must be content with a short summary. The Church is not merely a number of individuals joined by belief in the same truths, by the practice of the same worship, and by submission to the same authority. It is this, indeed, but it is more. It is the Mystical Body of Christ. By his death Christ made it possible for us to gain that supernatural life of sanctifying grace whereby "we are made partakers of the Divine Nature." Those who possess this life are united with each other by their common union with Christ from whom they all receive it. Thus Christ's merits and satisfaction are shared by faithful Christians through their union with Christ in the Church. Further, so close is this bond of union that, as our Lord said, the Christian Church may be likened to a vine and its branches. The whole of this body, then, is benefited by the spiritual health of any one member, as the branches flourish with the vine.

Following on this doctrine of the Communion of Saints is that of the existence of a spiritual treasury. As in this world any act results in an indefinite series of effects, so, too, in the supernatural life any act of virtue once posited must have a value. If it be not immediately productive of its full effect, it remains, as it were, in existence, capable of being used so that its full benefit may be secured. Thus Christ's atonement being infinite is inexhaustible, and all the sins of the world can be expiated by it. Moreover, the saints have often made satisfaction in excess of what they require to atone for their own sins. This satisfactory value of their acts, not being used for themselves, remains in existence and can be used for others. This is that spiritual treasury often called the "Treasury of Merits," from which can be unceasingly drawn satisfaction for the sins of Christians.

Since, as we have seen, the Church has the power of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, this treasury is in her control. She can therefore draw from it satisfaction which she can apply to the souls of her members. This is an obvious corollary of the doctrine discussed in an earlier page. If the Church has the power to loose, surely she is able to loose from penalty, especially as she has at her disposal expiatory acts which the solidarity of the Christian Church renders of value to any Christian to whom they are applied.

If, therefore, we find that the early Church taught and put into practice these doctrines, then, even though she did not confer indulgences according to modern forms, the system is none the less *History*

primitive. It is certain that she taught both the Communion of Saints and her own power to bind and to loose; these points are discussed elsewhere. Did she use this power to bind and to loose so as to remit penalties as well as guilt? And if she did, did she do so by applying to Christians the expiatory merits of Christ and the Saints? If we can answer these two questions in the affirmative, we show at once that the system of indulgences is but the practical application of doctrines contained in Revelation.

We have almost answered our questions by wording them as we have done. Most certainly the whole penitential system of the Church was considered to remit partially at least the temporal punishment due to forgiven sin, and equally certainly it was by the application of Christ's merits to the individual soul that this was effected. This is the clear implication of most of our quotations on this subject. Hence we can conclude that the doctrines that underlie the system of indulgences were always taught and practised by the Church.

But the Council of Trent declared not only that the power to confer indulgences had been bestowed on the Church, but also that she had always made use of this power.¹ Consequently, we might expect to find a clearer use of this power elsewhere than in the Sacrament alone. We must not, however, look for modern forms; it is sufficient if we find that the Church authoritatively remitted penalties in virtue of its control of the treasury of merits. In the second Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians there is recorded the pardon granted by the Apostle to the incestuous Corinthian. This is often regarded as the prototype of indulgences. St Paul's act does, indeed, show that claim to control sin and its effects which underlies the whole system, even though we must acknowledge that to speak of it as an indulgence is somewhat too sweeping.

But in the first centuries there are examples of relaxations of ecclesiastical penalties with subsequent readmission to union with the Church.² As the penalties were considered of effect in the sight of God, and as admission to communion was thought to imply a full restoration to the friendship of God, such concessions are truly of the same kind as indulgences. They were remissions of temporal penalties, valid before God, made by ecclesiastical authority through the application to the soul of the merits of Christ.

Though we should hesitate to describe definitely as indulgences the remissions granted through the intercession of martyrs, yet the "letters of peace," given to a repentant apostate by a martyr about to die, if accepted by the bishop, are formal applications of the doctrines by which indulgences are justified. The bishops, by re-

¹ Session XXV, *Decretum de Indulgentiis*.

² The most frequent cases were at the moment of death, the reconciliation of converted heretics, the reconciliation of penitent clerics. See d'Alès, *L'Edit de Calliste*, pp. 443-449.

laxing at the request of a martyr the penalties imposed by the Church, clearly implied that they could relax efficaciously the penalties due to sin, and that they did so because the martyrs, possessed of abundant merits, implored the favour.

To see that these examples justify us in regarding the system of indulgences as primitive, we have only to remember the teaching of the Church on sin, its punishment and its forgiveness. Christians who sinned, and then in repentance submitted to the judgement of the Church, were restored to supernatural life, and their penance was efficacious before God. Hence any dispensation from this penance, which was accompanied by readmission to the Church, assumes the belief that the Church could control the penalty due to sin.

After the days of persecution and of primitive severity rapid development occurred. For various reasons a system of commutation of ecclesiastical penalties grew up. But the substituted work was in the circumstances often of less difficulty than the original penalty. Consequently discussion arose on the propriety of thus easing satisfaction. In the course of this discussion the power of the Church to apply the merits of Christ and the Saints began to be more clearly understood. The Crusades gave impetus to the development. Participation in them was declared authoritatively to free a man from all the temporal punishment due to his forgiven sins. Gradually, after the system was in existence, the doctrinal bases were fully elaborated, and erroneous, misleading, and insufficient wording was removed.

There were still abuses, however. The wide use of indulgences in days when there was no printing, no speedy means of communication, and consequently less efficient central control than to-day, was attended with great difficulties. Undoubtedly some bishops were too lavish, undoubtedly almsgiving was sometimes too prominent among the works imposed as conditions for the reception of an indulgence, thus suggesting simony; undoubtedly also there were too many frauds among the preachers, who often either abused their authority, or having no authority played upon the credulity of the simple.

One phrase in particular was dangerous: *Indulgentia a poena et culpa* ("Indulgence from penalty and from guilt"). To understand this phrase rightly, we must understand jurisdiction.¹ When an indulgence was granted it was often joined to a "confessional letter," which entitled recipients to choose as confessor a priest who had not faculties, or had restricted faculties, and to give him full faculties in the name of the Church. This phrase was invented to describe such concessions. Certainly it is liable to abuse, and was at times abused; but when it occurs officially, as it rarely does, it has always the sense explained.

¹ See below, p. 982.

As a result of the abuses and partly as a result of the attacks occasioned by them, the Council of Trent reformed the practical use of the system, but avoided the Protestant error of condemning the whole system because of the abuses.

Kinds and conditions

In modern times, then, the system is as described at the beginning. The conditions on which an indulgence can be gained are three. The recipient must be in a state of grace, must have the intention of gaining the indulgence, and must perform the prescribed works.

The indulgence, when gained, is gained through the authority of the Church. It is not the reward of the recipient's virtue, but a grant by the competent authority. Hence when a living person gains an indulgence it is by an authoritative act on the part of the Church. But some indulgences may be applied to the souls in Purgatory. Over these the Church has not disciplinary authority. Consequently these indulgences are not applied to the suffering souls by an authoritative decree, but the Church offers to God expiation from her treasury in the interests of the soul to whom the indulgence is applied. As this offering is official and as the expiation offered is from the treasury of merits, on which only the official Church can draw, an indulgence so applied is more certain of its effect than our own personal prayers for the suffering souls.

Finally, there are two kinds of indulgences, plenary and partial. A plenary indulgence remits all the penalty still due to forgiven sin. Partial indulgences, which are still conferred in terms of the former penitential discipline, remit as much of the temporal punishment due to sin as would have been remitted by the penalty mentioned in the concession. It is futile to ask how much of the temporal penalty is therefore remitted: we cannot say definitely. The remissions are as effective as was the former penitential discipline. That is all we know. With special indulgences, such as the Portiuncula, the Jubilee, indulgences *in articulo mortis*, we cannot deal here.

Thus indulgences, so often misunderstood, are merely further examples of God's untiring goodness to his children. It is for us to see to it that we do not, through indifference, fail to secure the full benefits of membership of the Church so richly endowed.

§ VI: THE FORM OF THE SACRAMENT AND ITS MINISTER

The form

THE form is that part of a sacrament which, added to the matter, makes up the whole sign, by defining precisely the significance more generally indicated by the matter.

In penance the form is the absolution uttered by the priest which gives to the penitent's acts their full significance, by making it clear that the Sacrament is a judgement, and not mere humiliation or general petition for forgiveness.

In the Latin Church the full form is :

“ May Almighty God have mercy upon thee, and having forgiven thy sins, may he lead thee to eternal life. Amen.

“ May the almighty and merciful Lord grant to thee pardon, absolution, and remission of thy sins. Amen.

“ May our Lord Jesus Christ absolve thee ; and I by his authority absolve thee from every bond of excommunication (of suspension) and of interdict, as far as I can and you need. Therefore I absolve thee from thy sins, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

“ May the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of all the saints, whatever good thou hast done, and whatever evil thou hast borne, avail thee for the remission of sins, the increase of grace, and the reward of eternal life. Amen.”¹

However, though this full form is normally obligatory, it contains much that is not strictly necessary to give sacramental significance to the matter. Thus for good reasons the first and last prayers may be omitted, and only the actual absolution uttered. In cases of extreme necessity there is an even shorter form prescribed, since it contains all that is required to make the Sacrament.

“ I absolve thee from all censures and sins, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.” Though even shorter forms, such as “ I absolve thee from thy sins,” would be probably valid, few occasions would arise to warrant their use.

The form must be spoken by the priest in the presence of the penitent. To avoid difficulties and abuses, a judgement delivered in writing or by signs is not normally permitted.

Moreover, the judgement must be definite ; its effect must not be doubtful. Thus conditional absolution is valid only if the condition is one already fulfilled. But it is only when there is no possibility of verifying the fulfilment of the condition that a priest is allowed to use a conditional form.

The form in the Latin rite is indicative. This is necessary for validity in the West. An assertion is the most fitting way in which to pass sentence, and therefore in the West only an indicative form is allowed. *The form in early times*

But in the early Church, and still in Oriental rites, deprecativ forms were, and are, valid and permissible. The priest gave absolution at one time, and still does in the East, by a supplication to God to forgive the penitent's sins.

Two difficulties arise from this. It seems at first strange that an essential part of the Sacrament should be variable. A sacrament is instituted by our Lord, and its essentials can therefore surely not be altered even by the Church. Actually, however, nothing essential has been altered. Our Lord founded this Sacrament as a judgement,

¹ Actually, of course, the form is in Latin.

but he said nothing as to the actual form of words to be used in passing sentence. Indeed, there is even now no set form for retaining sins by refusing absolution. It is therefore enough that the judgement should be preserved; over the form of words to be used in delivering judgement the Church has authority. If the words prescribed by the Church are compatible with a judicial decision the essence of the Sacrament is untouched.

But this seems to make the deprecativ forms invalid. A supplication to God seems hardly consistent with a judicial sentence passed by the priest. Does any judge pass sentence in an optative form expressing his hope that the accused be acquitted or condemned by someone else? No judge in England, for example, ends a trial by saying: "I trust that His Majesty will agree that you are guilty and that you ought to go to prison for ten years."

However, such forms are valid, even in earthly judgements, if they are the recognised mode of judicial decision. It is, for example, conceivable that the tradition of English justice should have imposed such a form as that imagined above. If it came at the end of a trial, after the hearing of evidence, and were the legally admitted form of passing sentence, it would be a true judgement. In short, the form of this Sacrament must be indicative in its true meaning in the circumstances, even though it be deprecativ in the apparent meaning according to a dictionary. It is certain that both in the early Church and in the East the deprecativ forms used are to be understood as conveying the definitive sentence of the judge. They are therefore valid.

However, the indicative form has this advantage, that it stresses clearly the judicial authority of the priest, which in the other forms is obscured by the customary meaning of the words.

With the form it is convenient to discuss the minister who utters it. Any priest and only a priest can be minister of this Sacrament. It is true that in earlier days bishops were the usual ministers, but even then priests occasionally dispensed the Sacrament. Any instances of laymen or of deacons administering this Sacrament are isolated. They can be explained, when it is a question of genuine attempts to administer the Sacrament, and not a mere matter of hearing confessions without attempting to absolve, by a mistaken desire to do all that was possible for a penitent in the absence of a priest. At no time has the Church, as such, sanctioned the administration of the Sacrament by any other than a priest.

But the priesthood alone does not enable a man to absolve validly. He needs, in addition, jurisdiction from the competent authority—normally from the bishop of a diocese. To explain this a parallel is useful. In creating a judge the Government cannot make an indiscriminate appointment; certain legal qualifications are normally necessary in the man to be appointed. But even when he is created judge a man must be assigned a definite area in which to exercise

*The
minister*

Jurisdiction

authority, before he can validly do so. He cannot walk into any court he likes and decide to try cases there. So with Penance. Only a priest can be appointed, but when, by his ordination, he has been given the power to absolve sacramentally, he still needs a further commission before he can exercise this power even validly. He must have subjects definitely assigned to him.

This is usually expressed by saying that a priest must have faculties. If a priest without faculties were to attempt to absolve, he would not remit the sins. The Church, like the State, can decide upon what conditions she will permit her judges to pass effective sentence.

A priest, therefore, must have received, normally from the bishop, faculties to administer Penance in his diocese. Outside that diocese he still indeed has the power, but he cannot exercise it. In a canonically constituted parish, the parish priest has this jurisdiction by the very fact of his appointment. Other priests must receive definite commissions from the bishop. In those houses of religious orders which are exempt from episcopal control, the superior gives faculties for hearing the confessions of those under his authority. Of course, the Pope has full jurisdiction over the whole Church, and can therefore give faculties for the whole Church.

Historically this need for jurisdiction has always been realised. In the early Church the bishop, who by his appointment receives authority, gave the absolutions. As the number of Christians increased, bishops delegated priests to do a work that had become too great for the bishops single-handed. During the Middle Ages the Church was very strict on this matter of jurisdiction; hence arose the confessional letters which we mentioned in connection with Indulgences. Finally the Council of Trent definitely taught that both orders and jurisdiction were necessary for the valid administration of Penance.

There are certain cases where the Church grants general jurisdiction to any priest. Thus, when circumstances are such that absolution could not otherwise be given, and is strictly necessary, as at the moment of death when there is no possibility of securing a priest with faculties, any priest validly absolves. Also, when there is an unavoidable and widespread error, so that the faithful are generally and inculpably receiving absolution from a priest, who in some way lacks authorisation, the Church supplies the necessary jurisdiction.

Connected with the question of jurisdiction is the practice *Reservation* whereby certain sins are reserved. The authority conferring jurisdiction may limit it, and withdraw certain sins from the priest's power. Some of these reservations are made by the general law of the Church, and the sins are reserved either to the Holy See or to the bishops. Moreover, bishops within their own dioceses may reserve other sins to themselves. This means that a priest cannot

normally ¹ absolve from these sins, without first applying for special faculties from the authority to whom the sins are reserved. Meanwhile the penitent must wait. The practice is in keeping with the traditional severity of the Church towards certain sins. It is intended to have a remedial value, by deterring people from certain very grave sins, especially when there is danger of their frequent commission. But for the ordinary Christians reservation has not much practical importance, as the sins reserved are always very grave and are comparatively few.

*Judge,
physician,
teacher*

As minister the priest has certain duties.... He must act as judge ; he must decide whether the penitent is adequately disposed for absolution ; should he, as rarely happens, decide that the penitent is not so disposed, he must refuse absolution. Though he must not try to compel a penitent to confess in greater detail than is necessary, as judge he may ask for necessary information and is entitled to receive it.

He is also doctor. As doctor it is his duty to do what seems to him possible to heal the souls of his penitents by strengthening their wills and helping them to avoid sin. This duty is particularly pressing with penitents who are habitual sinners. The priest must, of course, proceed with prudence, but he would be wrong to neglect this duty altogether.

Finally, he is a teacher. The intimacy of confession may disclose ignorance in his penitents which it is his duty to remove. This is particularly true when the penitents are young or illiterate.

There remains to be discussed the grave obligation of preserving the secrecy of confession ; " keeping the seal," as it is usually termed. The priest cannot, without the gravest sin, make any use of confessional knowledge to the detriment of the penitent, however slightly, nor in such a way as to risk discrediting the Sacrament. He should therefore not normally use his knowledge even to the penitent's advantage, as this might be misunderstood and might cause Christians to hesitate to use the Sacrament.

*The seal of
the con-
fessional*

In practice, the observance of the seal has been remarkable. There are few cases recorded of direct breach. Even of indirect breach—*i.e.*, a disclosure of confessional knowledge, not by explicit statement, but through carelessness and by inference—there are not many examples. The observance is indeed strangely easy. Gradually the priest seems to acquire two distinct mental sections, the confessional and the non-confessional, and it becomes easy to keep the two apart. Moreover, even if a priest wished, he would often find it difficult to break the seal. To the penitent his confession is the only one ; to the priest it is but one of hundreds heard in the dark, through a grating, and in a whisper. Normally it is difficult

¹ There are certain cases in which reservation loses all force, and any confessor has general faculties ; the two most notable are the moment of death, and when to apply for special faculties would endanger the seal.

to remember anything clearly, or to connect anything remembered with any definite person.

The strictness of this secrecy has, of course, developed, but secrecy is of divine imposition, for it arises out of the words of institution. There were indeed difficulties in the early Church. The extent and the strictness of the obligation at first were not always so clearly understood as to-day. Though confession was secret, penance was public; as the Sacrament was used only for grave sins, submission to it involved the public acknowledgement of the commission of a grave sin, even though that were not specifically told.

Still, the manner in which confession was made, injunctions such as those quoted from Origen on the choice of confessor, comparisons of confession to medical consultation, the manner in which early writers such as St John Chrysostom always talk of confession as made to God alone, all point to the recognition of the need of secrecy. St Leo gives us a summary of the traditional teaching:

"I decide also that the breach of apostolic rule which I learn lately some have dared to commit should be entirely suppressed; I mean that in penance, which is demanded by the faithful, the written confession of their sins should not be recited publicly, since it is sufficient that these manifestations of guilt in conscience should be made to priests only in secret confession. . . . For then, indeed, many can be excited to penance, if the conscience of the penitent be not published to the ears of the people."¹

Thus St Leo gives us not only the existence of the seal, but one reason for it, that without it Christians would be reluctant to use this Sacrament so necessary for their salvation.

During the Middle Ages the duty of secrecy was clearly recognised. But theologians did discuss its extent. The strictness of the obligation, however, was so fully appreciated that Lanfranc—though wrongly—advocated confession to a cleric not a priest, if confession to a priest involved danger of the breach of the seal.²

At length in the seventeenth century Innocent XI ended all possible dispute. He condemned the proposition that confessional knowledge could be used to the detriment of the penitent, even though there was no revelation of sin, and though the non-use of confessional knowledge would be more to the detriment of the penitent than its use. Thus to-day the obligation of the seal is as strict as it can be. Even reservation is removed if the priest deems it impossible to apply for faculties without danger of breach of the seal; the Church accords him general faculties in these circumstances. A priest, then, can in no way use his confessional knowledge outside confession to the harm of the penitent or the discredit of the Sacrament.

¹ St Leo, *Epistle*, clxviii 2.

² Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury (1070-1089), *De Celandia Confessione*.

The gravity of this obligation does not arise merely from the natural duty of secrecy concerning solemn confidences. Doctors and lawyers are bound to secrecy by ordinary natural law. The priest is bound, in addition, by the positive revealed law of Christ, though the exact basis in revelation is disputed. Here we may add to the reason given by St Leo this further consideration, that the priest in confession has the grave responsibility of acting in God's name. He is there not as man merely, but as God's representative. And he must not betray the secrets of God. Hence this obligation is so strict that nothing can destroy it. No advantage for any man, no law of any state, no command from any superior, even the Pope, no evil to be averted, not death itself, can ever justify a priest breaking the seal of confession.

§ VII: THE EFFECTS AND USE OF THE SACRAMENT

Effects

It is clear from what has been said that the chief effect of this Sacrament is the remission of mortal sin, and the consequent restoration to the soul of sanctifying grace, lost by grave sin. For a treatment of what this means to the soul we must refer to the relevant essays in this work.¹

As a further consequence of the remission of mortal sin, eternal punishment is necessarily remitted also; for this is closely connected with sin as its inevitable sequel.² A soul from which sin has been removed cannot therefore be under sentence of eternal punishment. This, though not expressly defined, is certain Catholic doctrine, and is assumed by the Council of Trent.

Eternal punishment follows from mortal sin inevitably. But even when the sin has been forgiven there remains a debt of temporal punishment which must be paid to restore right order upset by sin. This temporal punishment is not necessarily entirely remitted by the Sacrament. We have incurred it through our own fault, and it is but just, after God's exceeding mercy in remitting our sin and its eternal punishment, that we should in some way atone for our guilt. But the Sacrament does lessen the amount of punishment due to us. It applies Christ's merits to our souls, and therefore the performance of satisfactory acts as part of the Sacrament has a greater effect than the same acts would have independently thereof. But as even these could lessen the temporal punishment due to us, clearly the sacramental satisfaction can lessen this punishment even more effectively.

Since, however, any mortal sin is incompatible with the presence of grace in our souls, one mortal sin cannot be remitted while others

¹ Cf. *Sanctifying Grace, The Supernatural Virtues, Man and his Destiny, Sin and Repentance, Eternal Punishment, and Heaven*, in particular.

² Cf. p. 931.

are retained. Consequently if a man has committed more than one grave sin, he must be sorry for all, before he can be pardoned.

Venial sin also can be forgiven sacramentally, as we have already seen in the course of this essay. But venial sin does not destroy the life of grace. Therefore it is possible for us to be pardoned for our mortal sins, and to be restored to supernatural life even though no venial sin be remitted. Hence this Sacrament forgives those venial sins for which the penitent is sorry, and only those.

With the restoration and strengthening of the life of grace there is restored and strengthened all that accompanies that life. Thus those supernatural virtues ¹ which have been lost by sin are restored to us by this Sacrament, and are even strengthened. Also the merits which we formerly possessed and which we forfeited by our sin, are given back to us, at least in some measure, by the sacramental absolution.

These are the necessary sacramental effects. It is possible, however, for subjective dispositions to modify these effects, though, as long as we are not interposing obstacles to grace, mere lack of fervour cannot prevent them altogether. But intensity of devotion can increase them. Hence the extent to which temporal punishment is remitted, grace strengthened in us, our merits restored to us, is determined partly by the earnestness with which we receive the Sacrament.

So important is this Sacrament in the lives of Christians that some practical advice seems desirable as a complement to a doctrinal treatise. We have to use our knowledge to guide our actions. *Practical use of the Sacrament*

One grave danger must first be mentioned. The practising Catholic receives this Sacrament so often that he is sometimes apt to forget that it is a Sacrament, a momentous event in his life. For those in mortal sin, confession is like a new baptism, as we have seen the Fathers of the Church insisting. We should therefore remind ourselves of this and strive to make our confessions the notable occurrence they should be. In them we are entering into sacramental union with Christ on the Cross, and if we are receiving pardon for mortal sin, then nothing in our lives save baptism is of equal importance. For those in mortal sin confession is even of greater immediate necessity than the Sacrament of the Eucharist. *

Since this is so, and since many of the effects of the Sacrament are increased by fervour, we should try to be as fervent in its reception as possible. It not merely forgives our sins, it also gives strength to resist sin in future. Penitents, however, who are struggling against some habit of sin, often fail to secure the full benefit of their confessions, because they do not make effort enough when they receive the Sacrament.

¹ Cf. Essay xviii, *The Supernatural Virtues*, pp. 640-641.

To secure this fervour we should remember that this is a Sacrament of sorrow. Our preparation should largely consist in an effort to arouse in ourselves deep and true sorrow. In our examination of conscience we should avoid excessive introspection; if we are frequenting the Sacraments regularly, serious sin will come to our minds easily, and if we have to search with notable diligence, it is reasonably certain that the deliberation in our acts was so slight as to deprive them of all gravity. But having found our sins we should dwell almost fiercely on the motives for sorrow: on the goodness of God, on the vileness of even the slightest venial sin, on its ingratitude to God, who gave us the very powers we use in sinning and who keeps us in existence while we sin, and above all on the Passion of our Lord, endured because of sin. This should be the chief part of our preparation if we are to receive the full benefit of this Sacrament. Our very resolution against sin is rendered far stronger, if we have, though only for a time, felt real sorrow for our sins and a genuine detestation of them.

In confession, again, we should be humble, inspired thereto by our sorrow, anxious to disclose fully and truthfully our shame as a punishment for the foul guilt we so deeply regret.

Our thanksgiving and our satisfaction, too, ought to be quickened by this same contrition. We should feel intense gratitude to God for his goodness in thus enabling us to be free from the shame of sin. We should say our penance with real earnestness, only sorry that it is so slight, and that of ourselves we can do nothing to atone for the sins for which we are now so repentant.

A confession so made will have permanent effect, especially if we frequent the Sacrament regularly as we should do. It is a good practice to go to confession once a week, for thus we receive regularly an increase of grace to strengthen us against sin, and form gradually a habit of resistance to sin, by frequently renewing our sorrow for it, and our detestation of it. Even, therefore, if we should be so fortunate as not to have fallen since our last confession, yet we should go at the usual time and renew the confession of past sins, and sorrow for them.

To secure more fully the benefits of the Sacrament, Origen's advice is important: to choose our confessor carefully. Regular guidance is useful to the soul. A doctor, for complete efficiency, needs to know the medical history of his patient, and the circumstances of his life that may affect his health; so, too, the priest can help us better the more he knows of our spiritual history and of the circumstances of our life that may affect our spiritual well-being.

In choosing this confessor we should be guided by spiritual motives. He should be a man we find sympathetic and spiritually helpful. Normally one who knows us outside confession is able to be of more use to us than a stranger. He knows our lives, our circumstances, our difficulties, very fully, has no need to ask many

questions, and is less likely to be ignorant of some fact, perhaps important, that we overlook through a failure to realise its importance. Of course, if our regular confessor be not available and we have urgent need of absolution we should go to any priest who is at hand ; it would be foolish, because of the absence of any one man, to remain longer in mortal sin than is necessary.

Having chosen a confessor, we should help him by asking for guidance if we need it. Otherwise he may be hampered by fear of intruding on a soul, and perhaps doing harm by offending his penitent.

We must remember, above all, that this is a Sacrament, and an astounding proof of God's great goodness. If it did not exist, we should earnestly desire it. God in his goodness has given it to us. To fail to use this gift, then, or to use it carelessly, is to add to our other sins the crime of black ingratitude to God for the immense favour he has bestowed upon us.

H. HARRINGTON.

XXVIII

EXTREME UNCTION

§ I: INTRODUCTORY

GOD in his infinite mercy has encompassed the life of man on earth by the gracious net of his life-giving sacraments. Supernatural life is first opened to him by baptism. The sacrament of the new birth removes the stain of original and of any subsequent sin and constitutes him the adopted son of God, his heir through the Beatific Vision and co-heir of Christ. In the first years of adolescence, when the struggle with sin begins, God sends him the Holy Ghost in Confirmation to strengthen his soul for the combat which continues all the years of his life. As no life is ever maintained unless sustained by appropriate food, God with gracious bounty supplies a celestial food for the support of the supernatural life of man; he gives him the Manna that comes from heaven in the Holy Eucharist.

During man's sojourn on earth there occurs in the natural order no greater or more important change than marriage. A new world of duties and responsibilities as well as trials then begins to surround him and God created the mighty sacrament of Matrimony to support him in his task.

As God knows the clay of which we are made and the frailty of our human nature, he foresaw the shipwreck many would make of their supernatural life. In the sacrament of Penance he gave man a plank of safety by which even those who sinned mortally after baptism might be rescued from being engulfed in eternal damnation.

And finally with divine ingenuity God created the sacrament of Extreme Unction to be the complement and consummation of Penance. By this Unction at the end of life sin itself and the remnants of sin can be totally undone and man prepared for immediate entrance into everlasting glory.

In itself Extreme Unction is a sacrament of the living. It is meant for those whose souls are in the state of sanctifying grace, but who need support in the stress and strain of grave illness that leads to bodily death. But by an excess of long-suffering pity God made it avail even for those whose souls are in grievous sin but who have begun to return to him by imperfect repentance and who are so overcome by their illness that they can think and act no more. Extreme Unction may therefore be regarded as a final triumph of God's tenderness towards men, saving them to the uttermost, and almost in spite of their own weakness and the wiles of the evil one.

§ II: THE INSTITUTION OF THE SACRAMENT

A. Scripture

The Council of Trent teaches us ¹ that the unction of the sick was instituted by Christ our Lord, as truly and properly a sacrament of the New Law, insinuated indeed in the Gospel of St Mark, but recommended and promulgated to the faithful by St James. *Unction as practised by the Apostles*

The words in St Mark vi 12-13 are these: "Going forth they preached that men should do penance: and they cast out many devils and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them." Some have seen in these words an account of the use of the sacrament of Extreme Unction during our Lord's life on earth, but the Council of Trent with great caution uses the term "insinuated in Mark," making the healing unction performed by the Apostles rather a foretelling and prefiguring of this sacrament than the sacrament itself. It is indeed most likely that the unctions and healings performed then by the Apostles were not sacramental in character. Their anointings and prayers over the sick did not constitute an outward sign instituted by Christ signifying and effecting divine grace in the souls of the recipients in virtue of the very sign performed. We need not doubt that the Apostles used unction in the healing of the sick at our Lord's own command. Our Lord used his own spittle mixed with earth to anoint the eyes of the man he cured; he may well have commanded his Apostles to use unction in their healings, but such unction had as direct meaning and purpose the bodily health of the recipients and only indirectly the bestowal of divine grace on their souls. If divine grace was given, it was an uncovenanted mercy in accordance with the faith and repentance of the sick or their friends, not the outcome of a sacrament.

What the Apostles had practised during their missionary journeys when our Lord was on earth, was transformed and raised to the dignity of a sacrament when they went forth into all the world and preached Christ and his resurrection.

We have no record when and how precisely our Lord thus instituted this Sacrament of the New Law, but we learn from St James, the Brother of the Lord, in his Epistle to the Jewish Christians, that if anyone were sick amongst them, he was exhorted to receive this sacramental rite. *The text of St James' Epistle*

"Is any man sick among you? Let him send for the priests of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him; confess therefore your sins one to another and pray one for another that you may be healed, for the fervent prayer of a just man availeth much."²

¹ xiv 9, 1.² v 14-16.

If we consider these words in detail we gather that the first condition for this sacrament is a state of bodily sickness, and that of a serious nature, for the Greek word used indicates some grave ailment. The sick man is evidently in such a state of weakness that he cannot go to the church or the dwelling-place of the priests, but has to beg them to come to him. The English phrase "send for the priests" well renders the Greek expression, which implies not a mere asking of a favour as one might desire a pious and kind friend to come and pray, but an authoritative demand that these priests should come in their official capacity to do something for the sick man which he could not do for himself. It is to be noted that the word "priests" is in the plural. This fact is undoubtedly the reason why both in East and West, in many places and during many centuries, this sacrament was administered not by one, but by several priests, sometimes seven, or at least as many as were conveniently available. But though the text suggests, yet it does not absolutely demand, a plurality of priests. The priests are thought of as a group of men within the reach of the sick person; to send for them can mean to bid them send any one, or several from their number to perform their required functions. For many centuries in the West the custom has prevailed that the sacrament be administered by one priest alone, and this is now the only one sanctioned by authority. This therefore constitutes an infallible interpretation of the meaning of the text.

It is natural to ask whether the words "let him send" constitute a strict command, or merely a wholesome advice, which might be disregarded without serious sin. The words immediately preceding: "Is any of you sad? Let him pray! Is he cheerful in mind? Let him sing!" suggest a counsel rather than a command, but the following words containing a promise of forgiveness of sin for the sick man point to something more than a mere counsel. For a more definite interpretation of the passage we must go beyond the text itself to the interpretation of the Church.

It is obvious that the expression "the priests of the Church" cannot mean "the elders" in the sense of people of more advanced age, but must designate some special officials of the Church, who even in St James' day were designated by the term "presbyteroi," a word of which "priest" is but an abbreviation.¹

These priests should pray over the sick man. Note that the expression is not "pray for" the sick man, which might be done by anyone anywhere, but *over* him, as if they were to recite some powerful formula of impetration, while standing over him recumbent on his bed of sickness. This is in keeping with the words which follow: "anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." The praying and the anointing go together and constitute one combined action. Now this anointing is done "in the name of the Lord." It

¹ For information regarding the functions of the priesthood see Essay xxix.

is not merely some expression of the personal faith either of the sick man, or the priests or the bystanders, some symbolic action indicative of their personal desires or some natural medicinal practice, but an actual use of the power of Christ and an exercise of his authority committed to the priests. They act in the name of their Master. It is their Master's power which is brought into play and they are but the functionaries or officials, instruments in the hands of the Lord of the Church.

The effect of this use of divine power is thus indicated: "The prayer of faith shall save the sick man and the Lord shall raise him up." The prayer is said to be "of the faith"; it is not the mere informal expression of individual supplication by anyone, Jew, pagan, or Christian, who might be asking a favour of the Almighty, but it is the official exercise of the Christian Faith. It is an appeal to the power of Christ, sanctioned by him and carried out by his representatives. It is most emphatically an act of believers, unmeaning and useless to those not of the faith. The sending of the priests, the acceptance of the Christian rite by the sick man, the administration of it by the functionaries of the Church are typical manifestations of the faith, provoked by the extreme need of the ill person in danger of death. This prayer shall save the sick man.

The word "saving" is quite a general term, as also the expression "the Lord shall raise him up," and considered in itself might refer to bodily healing as well as to spiritual, and to both. The Greek word rendered "raising up" implies awakening, resuscitation, stirring up, bringing to life from torpor or dullness. We must note that in the last verse another word is used, "that you may be healed or cured"; this is normally used of bodily healing alone. If, then, St James here uses a wider term it is natural to conclude that it stands for a wider idea. In the first place the Epistle is throughout concerned with supernatural ideas: a merciful judgement, a happy coming of the Lord, saving the soul from death, the crown of life, the possession of the kingdom, the gift of patience and so on; hence to interpret the word "save" exclusively as meaning the recovery of bodily health would be out of harmony with the mind of St James. Moreover, a spiritual but conditional effect is next mentioned, and it is in the highest degree improbable that forgiveness of sins would be thus casually attached to bodily healing; and, finally, the verbs "to save" and "to raise" here indicate an unconditional result of the rite performed. Now St James cannot have spoken of the rite as an unconditional means of bodily healing, for it would mean an automatic escape from death, which is an absurdity.

"And if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." St James here clearly suggests that the proper state of the sick man when receiving the sacrament should be such that there be no guilt of grave or venial sin upon his soul; but so great is the efficacy of the sacrament that should there be still some stains of sin they will be deleted.

The text continues : " Confess therefore your sins one to another and pray one for another that you may be healed, for the fervent prayer of a just man availeth much." These words have led many to believe that St James had in his mind the combination of the two sacraments : Penance and Extreme Unction.

The priests of the Church administered the last rites to the sick man ; but no technical distinction of the two sacraments of Penance and Extreme Unction seems to have been in St James' mind, especially as the early form of absolution was in deprecativè form, not in that of a judicial verdict. Should there have been any grave matter to confess and the sick man still capable of confessing it, the priests would remit this by a specific prayer for its forgiveness and thus reconcile the sinner to God before the anointing ; but if the patient were speechless, if the priests knew of no grave fault which needed reconciliation, or if the sick man could recall no serious sin, then the prayer with unction would remit whatever sin there might be on the man's soul, which would prevent or retard his entrance into heaven.

" Confess one to another " is an expression like " obey one another, instruct one another, help one another," with the obvious implication that some are superiors, others inferiors, some teachers, some taught, some in need of help, others able to give it. As St James has mentioned presbyters in the plural, the expression is a natural one ; in the Christian community people have to confess one to another, some to make and others to accept the confession. But as St James is not writing a technical treatise on the sacraments but giving homely advice about well-known matters, the mention of forgiveness of sin brings him to urge open avowal of them in the Christian community, but in the proper way and to the proper persons. Then again the prayer of the priests suggests to him the universal power of prayer and its suitability in days of illness : " pray one for another that you may be healed." This cure may not always be infallibly obtained, but the prayer of just men is of great power.

Some interpreters detach the words " Confess therefore . . ." from the preceding and suggest that St James therewith begins a new train of thought unconnected with Extreme Unction. There can be little doubt, however, that the particle *therefore*, though lacking in some manuscripts, is part of the true text, and in consequence we must postulate some connection with what goes before. Nor is this difficult if we keep in mind St James' unstudied flow of thoughts and expressions, so different from the elaborate treatises of later centuries. The attempts of non-Catholics to utilise the last sentence to rob the previous ones of their sacramental meaning, and on the other hand the endeavour of some Catholics to prove sacramental confession from the last sentence apart from its context or the interpretation of the Church, are alike fruitless.

B. Tradition

The existence of this sacrament, which is thus so clearly indicated in Holy Scripture, is also taught by Christian tradition. Scarcity of direct references to Extreme Unction in the extant literature of the early Church is only what we might expect. The Epistle of St James is not a New Testament writing to which early commentators would first turn their exegetical or homiletic efforts. Didymus the Blind, born in A.D. 313 at Alexandria, is the only early Father who is known to have written a commentary on St James, and this, with the exception of a few fragments in a Latin translation, is lost. We have to wait four hundred years for the next commentator, St Bede. In apologetic literature the defence of the Christian faith against paganism would not naturally call for a reference to Extreme Unction. Great sermons that are handed down to posterity usually deal either with great historical occasions or with topics which need lengthy and repeated exposition to the faithful. They deal with public functions, feast days, or such parts of the life of the faithful as need considerable preparation. Hence reference to Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist and the penitential discipline are not infrequent.

Extreme Unction is in some sense a private matter withdrawn from the public life of the Church; though the sick were sometimes brought to the Church, this was of necessity a very rare occurrence. Moreover, Christians of the first four centuries, living in overwhelmingly pagan surroundings and at a great distance from priests, would very often be unable to call them to their sick-bed for the purpose of anointing. In our own day public references to Extreme Unction, whether in the pulpit or in print, are not frequent, and we cannot expect them to have been more frequent in the early days. The bulk of the faithful now have easy access to their priests and there are not many obstacles to the reception of this sacrament. Most of our present-day references consist in exhortations to call the priest to the sick in good time and the Last Sacraments are referred to generally without separate and express mention of the Unction.

In early days the technical term, Extreme Unction, had not yet been invented; the rite was often called the "imposition of hands." But as the same name was also given to Reconciliation, or Penance, as we now call it, it is not always possible to prove that Extreme Unction is meant; the more so as the imposition of hands for the Unction was regarded as supplementary to the Reconciliation and as constituting one whole with it, just as Confirmation was attached to Baptism as the complete initiatory rite. Thus the distinctness of the sacrament is often not directly emphasised.

If we take all this into consideration it is rather surprising that allusions to Extreme Unction should be so frequent as they are. A number of early Latin, Greek, and Syrian Fathers refer to the unction of the sick, though only incidentally. These indications are

indeed clear enough, especially in their cumulative force, for Catholics who already believe that Christ instituted this sacrament, but hardly strong enough to convince a gainsayer.

Tertullian

Tertullian rebukes heretics for abolishing the distinction between priests and laity, and says that they even permit women "to teach, to dispute, to perform exorcisms, to undertake cures, perhaps even to baptise." This is evidently a series of specifically clerical functions. There was therefore a function of healing the sick which was exclusive to the clergy. This cannot be miraculous or charismatic healing, which Tertullian, even if oil were used for the purpose, did not limit to the priests. He can therefore only be alluding to sacramental healing according to the prescription of St James: "let them send for the priests."¹

Origen

A direct reference to the texts dealing with Extreme Unction occurs in Origen's second homily on Leviticus (c. A.D. 240) and, remarkably enough, in a list of means of the forgiveness of sins after baptism.

Aphraates

Aphraates, born in Persia in A.D. 336, extolling the power of oil in the Christian religion, writes of it as the token "of the sacrament of life by which Christians (in baptism), priests (in ordination), kings, and prophets are made perfect, it (oil) illuminates darkness (in confirmation²), anoints the sick, and by its secret sacrament restores penitents."³

Non-sacramental anointings are here included, but in any case they are an enumeration of spiritual effects of the use of Holy Oil among Christians, and the natural implication of the words is the existence of a grace-giving rite administered by unction to the sick for a spiritual purpose and not merely for bodily healing.

Chrysostom

St John Chrysostom (about A.D. 380), in the third book of his famous treatise on the Priesthood, has a passage the significance of which can hardly be overlooked. He wishes to show that we owe to priests even more than to our parents; the latter gave us natural birth, but the former a supernatural one. "There is between the former and the latter as much difference as there is between the present life and the life to come. For our parents cannot shield their children against bodily death, or drive away oncoming illness; but priests have often saved the soul that is sick and about to die.

"For some souls they have lightened the punishment, others they did not allow to fall at all, and this not only by their teaching and their advice, but by the help of their prayers. Nor is this only so when they regenerate us (by baptism), but afterwards also they have the power to forgive sins, for indeed, 'Is any one sick amongst you, let him send. . . .'"⁴

¹ *De Praescr.*, c. 41, compared with *Ad Scap.*, c. 4.

² This initiatory rite is called in the East *photismos*: illumination.

³ *Dem.* xxiii 3.

⁴ In Greek "saved" and "sick" are the identical terms of St James.

The attestations increase in number and clearness as the centuries pass on, and by about A.D. 700 it is historically demonstrable that amongst Christians there existed a sacramental, grace-giving rite conferred upon the sick to purify their soul and restore their bodily health, if God sees fit. Our own St Bede is a conspicuous witness, attesting the faith of Celts and Saxons, less than a century after the arrival of St Augustine from Rome and the death of St Columba in Iona. It is worth while to quote his commentary on St James: "As he (St James) had given his counsel to the man who is sad, so he gives it also to the man who is sick, how he has to guard against the folly of murmuring, and he accommodates the kind of medicine to the kind of wound. . . . If anyone is sick in body or in faith he commands that he who received the greater injury should remember to cure himself with the help of many, and indeed of priests . . . and let them pray over him. We read in the Gospel,¹ that the Apostles did this also, and now the custom of the Church holds that the sick should be anointed with consecrated oil by the priests and that by the added prayer they should be healed."

So normal in those days was the administration to the sick of the three sacraments, Penance, Viaticum, and Extreme Unction, that in a capitulary of Charlemagne of 769, amongst the ordinary duties of the clergy this threefold administration is inculcated. Nor was this custom limited to the West, it existed also in the East, and even sects separated from the Church since the fifth century retained it, and referred its origin to Apostolic times. It is inconceivable that this universal practice should not be what it claims to be: part of the grace-giving system of outward signs derived from Christ himself.

Sometimes indeed there may be doubt in an individual case whether the sacrament of Extreme Unction is meant, or merely some sacramental, a pious rite instituted by the Church for the restoration of bodily health. It is certain that at least for some five hundred years the use of blessed oil as a sacramental, apart altogether from the sacrament, was common in many places.

This is parallel to the use of holy water or even of baptismal water, consecrated on Holy Saturday, as a sacramental, independently of Baptism itself. It was customary for the faithful during the Mass to offer and for the priests to bless oil, which the faithful then took home with them and used either as a drink or a liniment in case of illness, with pious trust in the prayers of the Church for those who used it in faith and reverence. It seems also that locally and for a time even oil consecrated for Extreme Unction was allowed so to be used by the faithful, obviously on the understanding that, unless it were used officially by the priests of the Church with the proper prayers for the administration of the sacrament referred to by St James, it was no sacrament, but only a sacramental for private use. Such at least is the almost unavoidable implication of the famous

¹ Mark vi 13.

letter of Pope Innocent I (A.D. 416) to the Bishop of Eugubium in which he speaks of "the holy oil, which, blessed by the bishop, not only priests but all Christians may use for anointing themselves and theirs when in need." The oil here spoken of is certainly that blessed for Extreme Unction, which, according to this Pope, bishops and priests use in carrying out St James' behest, and which may be used only for the faithful, not for those who are excluded from the sacraments.

*Distinct from
sacramental
use*

There are instances on record in the lives of the saints which show that in practice sacramental use of Holy Oil for the sick was clearly distinguished from charismatic use. A telling example is that of St Hypatius, who died about the year 446 in the East. This saint, before he was ordained, used to perform miracles of healing by anointing the sick with consecrated oil, though he was not in Orders. Yet he was fully aware of another kind of anointing which only priests could perform. We read in his life story, written by a contemporary: "When there was need of anointing the sick man, he informed the abbot, for he was a priest, and had the unction with the consecrated oil performed by him. And it often occurred that through God's co-operation with his efforts, he sent the man home restored to health."¹ Clearly the priest-abbot could do something which the lay-monk could not do.

No doubt sometimes amongst the uneducated or superstitious charismatic unction conferred by some reputedly holy lay-monk may have been preferred to sacramental anointing, or the two may have been confused in the minds of a few, but never by Church authorities or by the well-informed laity. Isaac of Antioch, a bishop who died in A.D. 460, in great old age, thus rebukes foolish women who for the unction prefer a wandering unknown monk to the proper priest of the circuit: "Woman, give thy alms to the recluse, but receive the unction from thy priest; support the monk, but let thy oil be that of the Apostles, the oil of the Crucified One, receive the unction from the priest. They neglect the oil of the Apostles and martyrs who have suffered for the truth, and the oil of fraud glistens on the face of perverted women. Christ's servants, the right-believing, have indeed the custom of bringing their sick to the altar, but dare not administer the oil lest they should seem to contemn the home of expiation. Where there is a priest to lead the people, they observe the true laws." The very condemnation of these abuses by this famous poet-bishop indicates the correct ecclesiastical usage.

That a clear distinction was drawn between the official, public, sacramental use of oil by the priest and its private use by the faithful is plain from the occurrence of distinct formulas of blessing for the two purposes. A remarkable instance is found in the prayer over the oil of the sick in the Sacramentary of Serapion, the Bishop of Thmuis, a friend of St Athanasius (about A.D. 350).

¹ See his *Life in the Bollandists*, June 17.

“ We invoke thee, thou who hast all authority and power, Saviour of all men, Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and we pray thee to send healing power from heaven from the only-begotten Son on this oil in order that from all those who are anointed or who partake in thy creatures here present it may drive away all sickness and all infirmity, that it may serve them as an antidote against every demon, that it expel from them every unclean spirit and banish every evil spirit, chase away every fever and chill and every sickness, that it may grant them good grace and remission of sin, that it may be unto them a remedy of life and salvation, that it may bring them health and integrity of soul, of body, of spirit, a perfect constitution. O Lord, may every satanic power, every demon, every snare of the adversary, every blow and torment, every sorrow, pain, or shock or disturbance or evil shade fear thy holy name which we invoke at this moment, and the name of thy only-begotten Son. May they vanish from within and without thy servants, that glory be unto the name of him who was crucified for us and rose, who bore our ills and our weaknesses, even Jesus Christ who shall come to judge the living and the dead. Through him be unto thee the glory and the power in the Holy Ghost now and for ever. Amen.”

On the other hand, the prayer to be said over the oil during the Mass is much shorter and of much more general import. The blessing of oil for the sick, intended for devout but not sacramental use, now only survives in the beautiful blessing of the oil of St Serapion, but formerly it was very widespread and for a time almost universal. Such use of oil in illness was so common that St Chrysostom, preaching at Antioch, could appeal to the experience of his congregation to acknowledge that many were cured by being anointed with the oil of the holy lamps in church.

In legends of the early saints, whether priests or layfolk, miraculous cures are ascribed to unction with oil. Here there is no question of the ordinary administration of a sacrament, but the cure is attributed to the intercession of a saint in fulfilment of Christ's last promise recorded in St Mark xvi 17, 18. “ These signs shall follow them that believe : In my name they shall cast out devils . . . they shall lay their hands upon the sick and they shall recover.” This use of oil as a sacramental in the early Church, with its consequent employment by the saints as an instrument for the exercise of miraculous powers, has led some non-Catholics to the erroneous supposition that Unction as a grace-giving rite for the sick and a true sacrament emerged only later in the Catholic Church. Of such gradual development, however, history knows nothing. The only rational interpretation of the facts is that sacrament and sacramental existed side by side from the beginning, but that the almost total discontinuance of the devout private use of blessed oil made the grace-giving character of the Jacobean rite stand out more clearly in the eyes of the children of the Church.

*Faith of the
Church in
this sacra-
ment*

When in the twelfth century theological precision singled out from all sacred ceremonies in use in the Catholic Church seven, and seven only, that were outward signs of inward grace, instituted by Jesus Christ, bestowing *ex opere operato* the grace they signify, Extreme Unction was always mentioned among them. But already much earlier, the Penitential attributed to Egbert of York (766), but containing also matter of a century after his death, refers to the unction prescribed by St James for the sick and says: "Every one of the faithful must, if possible, obtain for himself this unction and whatever is ordered concerning it, for it is written that if anyone submits to this discipline his soul after death will be as pure as that of a child dying forthwith after baptism." The phrase *scriptum est*, "it is written," though it does not refer directly to a text of Scripture, shows that the writer was not giving some private opinion of his own, but merely echoing the long-established teaching of the Church. No writer at any time shows any indication that he is innovating; rather he stresses the traditional character of the usage. In many ordinances of those days priests are told to instruct the faithful in this sacrament and to deter them from foolish superstitions then so rife in time of sickness. Priests are to carry the Holy Oils on their person when on a journey in order always to be able to anoint the sick. It is one of the normal functions of their ministry. They are gravely responsible if, through their fault, the faithful should die without this sacrament, to which they have a strict right. Some writers go even so far as to speak of it as necessary. All connect the practice with the text of St James, but none says that it was instituted by him, but only recommended or commanded. Its origin goes back to Christ himself, and the apostolic anointings at the command of Christ during his earthly lifetime are a foreshadowing of it. In fact, the faith of the Church on this point in the eighth century is demonstrably identical with that of the twentieth, and from the eighth century backwards whatever evidence exists—and it is considerable—points in the same direction; while there exists no cogent evidence to the contrary at all.

The absence from the four Gospels of explicit mention of the institution of this sacrament should not cause surprise. In Christ's final address to his Apostles he told them to teach all nations "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." One of those many observances which he had commanded may well have been a grace-giving rite of anointing the sick. He may have spoken of this during the forty days he spoke to them after the resurrection about the Kingdom of God; he may have taught them before the resurrection, or again he may have revealed it to them by direct revelation after Pentecost. One thing is certain, he alone can attach a spiritual grace, the forgiveness of sins, to any outward sign; he alone can institute a sacrament. Christ alone, therefore, instituted Extreme Unction, and even had St James never recommended its

use, it would still be what it is, a sacrament which Christ gave to his Church.

No definite heresy is known to have existed with regard to this sacrament before the Reformation. The Albigensians seem to have had a contempt for the use of it, but their tenets, being dualistic and Manichean, can hardly be regarded as a heresy from Christianity, since they are a fundamental denial of it. Their special hatred and contempt may have been aroused by the undoubted abuses in its administration, which were apparently widespread. The clergy—for several priests were then often engaged in conferring it, either together or on consecutive days—insisted on payment for their services and made the reception of it a burden on the poor. The law that the sacrament be administered by one priest alone in the West was made chiefly to deal with this difficulty, and also in consequence of the ostentation of some of the rich, who made vain display of their wealth by calling in a number of priests to administer it.

The Reformers were unanimous in rejecting this sacrament though they differed amongst themselves as to the grounds of the rejection. In England the Reformers at first retained it, but it was omitted in the Second Prayer Book of Edward VI. Recent attempts to reintroduce the Unction of the sick among English Protestants are not intended to restore this ceremony as a grace-giving rite, or as a true sacrament in the Catholic sense, but have in view a charismatic gift of bodily healing, such as they think it to have been in the early Church. Their practice therefore, even if it were not invalid for lack of priests and for lack of consecration of the oil, has nothing in common with Extreme Unction in the Catholic Church.

§ III: THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENT

THIS sacrament can be validly administered only by a priest. The *Ordinary minister* ordinary minister according to strict Church law is the parish priest of the place where the patient lies sick, and the administration of this sacrament by another priest against the will of the parish priest would be illicit. Religious institutes, however, are usually exempt by Pope or bishop, and the normal minister would be the superior or the chaplain. In case of necessity, or with the permission of parish priest or bishop, whether actually given or reasonably presumed, any priest may administer it. The parish priest is bound in justice to do so, or at least see that it is done. His curates obviously possess a permanent delegation in this matter. Strictly speaking, therefore, the sick person has no absolute right to demand any priest of his choice for the administration of Extreme Unction, although he can choose any confessor he likes; but the sick person's expressed wish, unless quite unreasonable, will rarely be refused. In case of

necessity any priest is bound by the law of charity to administer this sacrament.

The law in the West requires the sacrament to be administered by one priest only, but in the Greek Catholic Church it is administered when possible by several priests, though the sufficiency of one priest is of course acknowledged. Where several priests are employed the procedure has varied considerably; sometimes they anoint and pray successively, either on the same or consecutive days, sometimes they anoint and pray altogether, each anointing a separate member of the body, or each anointing the same member. Pope Benedict XIV denounced the practice in which some anointed silently and the others prayed without anointing, and declared that at least one priest should both pray and anoint at the same time.

There has likewise been considerable variation with regard to the parts of the body anointed in this sacrament. At present the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the lips, the hands, and the feet are anointed. The anointing of the feet may for any reasonable cause be omitted, and when there is danger in delay or any other sufficient reason a single anointing of one organ of sense, or better, of the forehead, suffices for the validity of the sacrament. But the priest is strictly bound, as soon as the necessity ceases, to continue with—or, if possible, later on, to supply—the anointings and the prayers for each of the five senses. It is held by some that in such cases the supplementary anointings become merely ceremonial, strictly obligatory indeed, but not part of the sacrament itself. The obligation to supply the five anointings would be similar to that of supplying the ceremonies of baptism, grave both for the priest and for those in charge of the child; yet such ceremonies are not part of the sacrament. Most theologians, however, hold that in the case of Extreme Unction these anointings belong to the integrity of the sacrament itself, and that they have sacramental efficacy in destroying the consequences of sin committed by the respective senses.

If the sole reason for the short form of anointing be the immediate danger of death of the one patient, the priest would forthwith continue with the five prayers and anointings after the first prayer and anointing on the forehead. If, however, the necessity arises from another source, the needs of others in a hospital, on a battlefield, an accident in which many are injured, the danger to the priest himself in pestilence or war, then the five anointings must be supplied later, if possible within about an hour, otherwise the moral unity of the administration of the sacrament is broken. These anointings may be supplied either by the priest who anointed the patient's forehead, or by any other priest; the parish priest of the place would have the obligation of doing so.

The laity are anointed in the same way as bishops and priests, with the exception that the latter are anointed on the back of the hands, whereas the laity are anointed on the palm. This distinction

is at least as old as the twelfth century and the reason given is that the palm of the hands of the priest is anointed at his ordination ; it is thus expressive of the reverence due to the sacredness of those hands which have been in constant contact with the Body of Christ and were instruments in administering the other sacraments ; it also reminds the priest who is anointed that sins done by consecrated hands are invested with a greater malice and quasi-sacrilegious character, needing the special mercy of God.

The sacramental form or the words used in Extreme Unction in *The form* the Latin Church are : “ By this holy anointing and by his most tender mercy may the Lord forgive thee whatever thou hast done amiss by thy sight, hearing, smell, speech, taste, touch, and walk.” This essential form is preceded and followed by prayers and imposition of hands, the omission of which, however, would not invalidate the sacrament.

In the Greek Church Prayer-Unction (*Euchelaion*) is given in these words : “ Holy Father, physician of bodies and souls, heal this thy servant from the infirmity of body and soul that holds him.” This form is pronounced only once while the forehead, chin, cheeks, hands, nostrils, and breast are anointed.

The anointing is done in the form of a cross by the thumb of the priest, unless in case of infectious disease it be advisable to use some intermediary matter, as wool or cloth. The Oil used is olive oil blessed by a bishop, or by a priest who has received authority from the Pope to do so.

In the Greek Church by a permanent delegation from the Pope the priests bless the Holy Oil each time before administration. In the Latin Church the blessing of the Holy Oils for Baptism, Confirmation, and Extreme Unction takes place once a year on Maundy Thursday, during the Sacrifice of the Mass, with great solemnity. The Oil for the sick is first exorcised and then blessed in this way :

Exorcism. “ I exorcise thee, most foul spirit and every invading devil and ghost, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, that thou depart from this Oil so that it may become a spiritual unction to strengthen the temple of the living God : that the Holy Spirit may dwell therein through the name of God the Father Almighty, and through the name of his most beloved Son our Lord Jesus Christ who is to judge the living and the dead and the world by fire. Amen.

“ Let us pray : Send down, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy Holy Spirit from heaven on this olive oil, which thou hast deigned to produce from the green wood unto the health of mind and body, and may it be through thy holy blessing unto everyone who is anointed by the unction of this heavenly medicine a safeguard of mind and body to drive away all pains, all infirmities and every sickness of mind and body. Since thou hast anointed kings, priests, prophets, and martyrs, let thy ointment be perfect, O Lord, blessed for us by

thee and remaining within our inmost selves. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The consecrated oil

Administration with unconsecrated Oil would certainly be invalid. If by mistake the Oil for Baptism or Confirmation were used, it would be doubtfully valid. If in the West the Oil for the sick were blessed by a priest without a special Apostolic faculty to do so, this would not only be illicit, but Extreme Unction, conferred with such Oil, would be invalid. Different explanations of this fact have been given. The best seems to be this: that the power and dignity required for the blessing of the Oil is by Christ's will inherent in the Episcopate alone, but through delegation the power and dignity of the simple priesthood can be so enhanced that priests can be the instruments to convey this episcopal blessing. Whether this is merely a matter of jurisdiction, or also of the sacrament of Order, cannot be decided. Nor can it be determined with certainty whether the power of the priests in the East comes to them directly from the Pope, or from their bishops with consent of the Pope.

The Holy Oils, thus consecrated once a year, each parish priest is bound forthwith to obtain from his own bishop, and he is not allowed, except in case of necessity, to use those consecrated in the previous year. He is bound to keep the Holy Oils in a locked cupboard in the church. They are usually kept in the aumbry in the wall of the sanctuary on the Gospel side. He is not allowed to keep them in the presbytery except for some good reason, approved by the bishop. In England, where frequent and sudden sick calls in large parishes make it desirable that the priests should have the Oil for the sick always immediately at hand, this is often permitted, especially if the presbytery is at some distance from the church. This, of course, applies only to the Oil for the sick; the Chrism for Confirmation and the Oil for Baptism must always be kept in the church. If during the year the Oil for the sick should give out, it is permissible to add unblessed olive oil to the Consecrated Oil, but always in minor quantity. The Oil of the previous year is poured into the sanctuary lamp and thus or otherwise burnt.

Circumstances of administration

The sacrament can only be administered to the faithful who after having reached the age of reason are in danger of death through illness or old age. Hence it must not be administered to non-Catholics, though they have been baptised and though they may be in good faith. Since for baptised persons, who are in mortal sin, but who have the implicit wish to receive this sacrament, it may be the only way to remission of sin and eternal salvation, some theologians argue that it might be given to well-disposed non-Catholics who are unconscious and in grave danger of death, if this could be done without scandal. Be this as it may, no priest could administer it to a non-Catholic, even though he asked for it in good faith, as long as he refused to be received into the Church.

The age of discretion required cannot be precisely determined.

The child must be able to distinguish between good and evil, and this it normally begins to do about the age of seven. The subject must be in danger of death through infirmity, *i.e.* either some specified disease or at least old age. Hence it cannot be given to soldiers before battle, or criminals before execution. It is essentially a sacrament for the sick. But the danger of death here referred to does not need to be immediate. Any grave illness, any illness the final issue of which is seriously doubtful, justifies the administration of this sacrament. Hence it may be given in illness requiring a major operation or any disease of which a considerable percentage normally die. It is most emphatically not a sacrament of the dying, but a sacrament of the sick.

The delay in asking for the sacrament till death is near or almost inevitable is a lamentable abuse, unfortunately all too frequent. It arises from lack of faith, foolish superstition, or false kindness, or from all these causes combined. *Delay in administration.*

Lack of faith is shown by failing to realise on the one hand the great spiritual needs of the sick, when the soul is enfeebled by bodily pains and sickness, and, on the other, the great might of this sacrament to comfort the soul in its distress. Lack of faith appears likewise in not trusting to the divine power of this sacrament for the healing of the body but confiding merely in human medicine, to the exclusion of that supernaturally provided by God. Foolish superstition not infrequently makes either the sick or their neighbours fancy that the coming of the priest to administer the last rites is a bad omen, almost inevitably foreboding death. This superstition is dishonouring to God and degrading to common sense, as well as to the religion which these people nominally profess.

The third reason, false kindness, is perhaps the most frequent reason for delay. It is imagined to be cruel to let the sick man know of his danger. "Humanitarian" doctors, relatives, and friends often vie one with another in the attempt to hide from the unfortunate patient his real state of health; they try to buoy him up with the promise of speedy recovery until the last hour of his life. No one around the sick-bed dares to tell the truth, they fear that the knowledge of the gravity of the disease will have an adverse psychological effect on the patient, robbing him of that calm and strength of mind which are so powerful a factor in restoring health. Often, however, this is only a pretence or a self-deception. The real reason is moral cowardice, no one having the courage to perform the unpleasant duty and face "a scene." As to the plea that it is better for the patient not to know, those who argue in this way forget that the sick person is often worried more by uncertainty than by knowing the worst. The patient may often think it a fine thing to show a brave exterior, while inwardly he is tormented by doubts as to his real state, and it often comes to him as an immense relief to be told the facts and to throw off the mask of forced gaiety. He can then calmly begin to

set aright his troubles of conscience, which disturb him more than any bodily pains.

The fear also of exhausting the patient's ebbing forces by the exertion of receiving the sacraments is usually idle. Priests are hardly ever fussy men, their calling makes them accustomed to the needs of the sick-room. When one considers the quiet and matter-of-fact way in which the sacraments are administered, the few short minutes it takes to go through the Church's ritual, the soothing effect of a few murmured prayers, the last sacraments, even from a purely psychological standpoint, are more likely to further than to hinder the patient's progress. An excited and nervous visitor may easily harm the sick man; the priest, who with a still and steady voice speaks of God's infinite might and mercy, is not likely to do so. This is borne out by the experience of non-Catholic as well as Catholic nurses and doctors in hospitals. No loud and impassioned appeal as at revival meetings is made by priests in a sick-room. Nineteen centuries of experience have made Catholic priests experts in dealing with the sick so as not to hamper the work of the physician of the body. The effect of the reception of Extreme Unction is almost invariably to increase the resistance of the sick person to the power of the disease if the sacrament is received in time. Hence it is cruelty to postpone the suggestion of its reception till nothing but a miracle can save the patient from death.

Catholic doctors in this matter have an important duty, since, owing to their scientific training, they are usually the first to gauge correctly the state of the patient. Direct deception as to his true state, which would lead to the loss of the last sacraments, would be grievously sinful. On the contrary, they are bound under pain of grave sin to tell the patient of his immediate danger and in default of other informants to warn the priest; this, however, only in the case of Catholics who have been notoriously slack in their religious duties and are probably in mortal sin. The last sacraments, and especially Unction, in the case of the unconscious may be the only available means of eternal salvation, and the law of charity binds every man to aid his neighbour in extreme spiritual need when this is reasonably feasible. In the case of pious Catholics the duty of telling the patient or the bystanders of the danger, and of informing the priest if no one else is available, lies with the doctor at least under pain of venial sin. A Catholic doctor who habitually neglected this duty of charity, treating all his patients indiscriminately, whether Catholic or non-Catholic, whether pious or notoriously slack, without ever troubling to warn them of their danger, or to see that the priest is informed of their need of the last sacraments, would certainly be committing a grave sin against the law of charity. In like manner any visitor, neighbour, or friend is bound to do what he can to ensure that one who is seriously ill should not be deprived of the last rites of the Church.

This brings us to the question of the obligation of receiving Extreme Unction. The Church teaches that, though this sacrament is not of itself necessary for salvation, yet no one is allowed to neglect it; hence every effort and diligence must be used to see that the sick receive it when they still have the full use of their senses. Only in one set of circumstances would this sacrament be absolutely necessary for salvation, namely, if a baptised person, being in the state of mortal sin and unabsolved, became unconscious after having made only an act of imperfect contrition. If such a sinner becomes unconscious and thus incapable of making any internal act of mind and will, he can only be saved by this sacrament; if he remains unconscious till death, it is his only and last means of salvation. Even should he up to the very moment of unconsciousness have elicited no act of sorrow whatever for his sin, but later on, though bereft of speech or other means of communication, internally regain consciousness and ask God's forgiveness without attaining perfect contrition, his sins would be forgiven him and his ultimate salvation secure. This presupposes that he had at least the habitual desire of dying with the last rites of the Church, for should even this desire have been lacking, Extreme Unction would be of no avail.

But if a man is not conscious of any grave sin or at least has confessed it and been absolved, is he still bound under grave obligation to receive Extreme Unction? The existence of divine positive precept in the matter cannot be proved either from Scripture or tradition. The existence of an ecclesiastical precept of such grave obligation that the omission would in itself be mortal sin and thus entail eternal damnation is also very difficult to prove. The transgression of the canon law ¹ probably does not by itself involve mortal sin. On the other hand, in the Catechism of the Council of Trent, which for centuries has been the most generally used handbook of instruction in Christian doctrine and thus well represents the mind of the Church, we read: "It is a very grievous sin to defer the Holy Unction until, all hope of recovery now being lost, life begins to ebb and the sick person is fast verging into a state of insensibility."

It may be argued from the context that this probably refers to the priest's obligation to administer, and not to the sick man's obligation to receive, though it seems hard to understand that it should be a deadly sin to delay the administration of a sacrament until a person is less fit to receive it, if there is no grave obligation to receive it at all. Be this as it may, if the refusal of this sacrament arose from contempt, or if it gave scandal, this would involve grave sin. If, however, a person refused Extreme Unction merely because he superstitiously regarded it as an augury of death, or for some foolish reason which excluded contempt or scandal, the priest could give him the benefit of the doubt, administering only Penance and Viaticum, urging him to allow the Unction at least when unconscious, or some time before

¹ Canon 944.

death. If even this were refused, the priest would have a right to doubt the patient's sanity or to suspect contempt.

*Repetition of
the
sacrament*

Extreme Unction cannot be repeated in the same illness, unless the sick person after Unction recovers and falls into a fresh danger of death. The reason for this is plain: the right to actual graces which this sacrament bestows continues as long as the illness which caused the danger of death continues. Hence where there is simply a gradual decline towards death without any perceptible sign of recovery, the sacrament cannot be repeated however long this slow decline may last. In this matter, however, one must judge by common estimation rather than by the scientific laws of medicine. Medical science may regard the slow wasting of strength in tuberculosis or cancer as one long uninterrupted process, which may continue for two or even more years; but after the first onslaught of the disease there may be at least an apparent recovery of relative health and the danger of death removed at least for some months. In such cases where there has been at least a seeming amelioration and the person has been somewhat active and able to move about, no priest would scruple to administer the sacrament again when there is a marked relapse and a recurrence of immediate danger of death. The same may be said of the danger of death through sheer old age, when the aged have shown many months of rejuvenescence.

The sacrament should not be repeated when it is ascertained that it was received in a state of unrepented mortal sin or even sacrilegiously, but only if a person who had at first no intention of receiving it (as might be the case with apostates or heretics) later on changed his mind, and became willing to receive it.

*Intention of
recipient*

It is not permissible to administer it to the impenitent who contumaciously persevere in mortal sin, and if this is doubtful it must be given conditionally.¹ The reason is that such contumacious perseverance in sin would normally imply unwillingness to receive the rites of the Church, and the absence of intention to receive the sacrament would render the sacrament invalid. Hence the need of the administration under condition: "if thou art capable."

Naturally the sick who are unconscious or bereft of speech should be given every benefit of the doubt; in some cases, unfortunately, no reasonable doubt is possible of deliberate, defiant, and prolonged continuance in sin and overt refusal of repentance till the last. In such cases nothing can be done. When the patient becomes unconscious or incapable of further intercourse he must be left to the mercy of God. The priest who, under pressure from sorrowing relatives, administered the sacraments to a manifestly evil liver of whose defiant perseverance in evil there could be no reasonable doubt, would sin against his sacred profession and duty. Freemasons who refuse to abandon the craft, those who persist in ordering cremation of their bodies, or who refuse to comply with a grave

¹ Canon 942.

precept of the Church must be classed amongst contumacious and impenitent sinners and should not be anointed.

If the sick man has expressed a wish for the visit of the priest and the priest on arrival finds him already unconscious the mere wish for the presence of the priest will normally be taken as indicating goodwill however evil the previous life of the penitent may have been, and Extreme Unction will be given. It is usually preceded by conditional absolution, but the validity and efficacy of Extreme Unction under these circumstances is more certain than that of the sacrament of Penance. It is doubtful whether Penance is valid without some outward manifestation of guilt and sorrow, whereas by God's infinite mercy Extreme Unction is certainly valid even when given to those who are incapable of any outward or inward acts at the time of reception. The unction bestows divine grace on the soul as long as the sick man has turned from his sin and has the general intention of dying with the last rites of the Church.

Modern science has taught us that after the last breath life may often remain for a short time in those who are apparently dead, and thus the actual severance of soul from body may take place considerably after the reputed moment of death. Extreme Unction is therefore sometimes given to those who have seemingly passed away. If apparent death occurs after a long illness or old age, life may sometimes remain for about half an hour ; if apparent death is sudden, or due to an accident and especially to drowning, life may remain for two hours and even longer. Those in charge of the dying should therefore send for the priest even though he may only arrive after death has apparently occurred. In such cases the priest will anoint the person conditionally in case life should not be completely extinct and the soul not yet have appeared before the judgement-seat of God. This condition, "if thou livest," and the condition, "If thou art capable of receiving it," are the only conditions which the priest is ever allowed to make in administering this sacrament. The latter condition might be required in the case of doubtful baptism, or doubtful willingness of the patient to receive it, for no sacrament is valid when administered against a person's will. But the condition, "if thou hast repented," or, "if thou art worthy," must never be added, for the person, though unrepentant at the very moment of administration, may repent afterwards and so obtain the grace of the valid sacrament received, as long as he was not directly unwilling to receive it.

There is sometimes a reluctance to ask for Extreme Unction for those who are indeed in danger of death by sickness but who are still capable of sitting up and moving about, and that for the sole reason that they are not actually in bed. This reluctance is entirely unreasonable and blameworthy. There is no need to be in bed for the administration of this sacrament. Some persons are mortally ill, yet do not take to bed till a few days or hours before death ; some,

in fact, do not take to bed at all ; the long-expected death carries them off in a moment. It would be a cruel folly to deprive such persons of the great graces of this sacrament received in time. Moreover, as the anointing of the feet may for any reasonable cause be omitted, there is no difficulty in anointing someone sitting in a chair, nor is there anything unseemly or improper for a person, who has received Extreme Unction, to be up again and moving about soon afterwards. This Unction is most emphatically not a sacrament of the dying, but a sacrament of the sick ; anyone seriously ill should receive it.

Operations

A doubt has been raised whether a person who would be in danger of death if he did not undergo an operation, but who is in no danger if he does, would be a fit subject for this sacrament. The doubt is more theoretical than practical. A person who, according to the ordinary laws of nature, is certain not to die if he takes the proper medicine, undergoes the proper treatment or submits to a minor operation, properly speaking is not in danger of death at all. Many diseases were formerly fatal which have ceased to be so because the proper treatment has been found. A minor operation may be defined as one of which experience teaches that it has normally no fatal issue, so that the person who undergoes it is not appreciably in greater danger of death than he normally is. On the other hand, a state of body necessitating an operation which considerably enhances the chances of death is obviously a serious illness, making the patient a fit subject for Extreme Unction ; hence it should be administered before the operation and not after, even if a high percentage of those undergoing it regain consciousness and completely recover.

It is quite certain that this sacrament, if conferred upon persons in perfect health, would be invalid, and such attempted administration would constitute a sacrilege. Unfortunately a custom of this kind exists among the schismatic Greeks, but has been definitely reprobated by the Catholics.

The validity of repeated administration

Another question is whether the sacrament could be validly repeated in the same illness. Such repetition, as we have seen, is at present against Church law if the patient remains in exactly the same danger of death. But would it be invalid if it were done ? For instance, it is not a rare occurrence in great hospitals or busy parishes for a priest mistakenly to anoint a person who has already been anointed before by another priest. We possess no absolute certainty in this matter, but everything seems to point to its being valid, though according to present legislation illicit. For many generations in many districts Unction used to be given to the sick on seven, or at least on several, consecutive days. Now it is hard to believe that only one of these administrations was a valid sacrament, or that altogether they constituted only one sacrament, which became valid only on the seventh day after the last administration. The same practically applies when several priests anoint consecutively on the

same day, all performing the Unction and pronouncing the words. Such repeated administration might be compared to the repeated administration of the sacrament of Penance, which is at present in use, when a penitent after a lapse of a few days or even only hours begs for absolution, submitting to the keys in confession only sins formerly confessed and already sacramentally absolved. Extreme Unction is the complement of Penance, normally intended, if not for the removal of mortal sin, then for the removal of venial sin, and of all consequences of sin. Such repeated remission, whether by Penance or by Extreme Unction, is valid, because at each administration there is a further infusion of sanctifying grace for the undoing of sin. On the other hand, the title to actual graces of comfort and strength throughout the whole of his illness is valid and sound at the first administration of the Unction, and there is no further strict need for its repetition in the same sickness.

Though the Church allows the repetition of Absolution and urges repeated reception of the Viaticum for the sick man, at present for wise reasons she does not allow the repetition of the Unction for the sake of mere devotion as long as the same danger of death lasts. Her practice, however, is very lenient in this matter, and no priest need have any scruple of exposing the sacrament to invalidity in a case of doubt, whether in a protracted illness the same danger of death has continued or not. There is certainly no need for him to add a condition "if thou art anew in danger of death," when in common estimation the patient has had a recovery and a relapse.

As Extreme Unction is instituted as a sacrament of the living, for the increase of sanctifying grace, not for its first bestowal, the patient is bound, if conscious, to place himself in the state of grace before reception. This he can do either by an act of perfect contrition or by attrition with the sacrament of Penance. Only in the case of Holy Communion does the Church command previous actual confession and absolution for those in mortal sin. The case is different with regard to Extreme Unction. It is sufficient that the sick man be in the state of grace acquired whether by perfect contrition or by the sacrament of Penance. Naturally, if confession could be made, it would be hazardous for anyone in grievous sin to trust to an act of perfect contrition; and it would be foolish, for the grave obligation would remain to confess before death, even after reception of Extreme Unction.

§ IV: THE EFFECTS OF EXTREME UNCTION

THE effects of this sacrament are best stated in the words of the Council of Trent: "This effect is the grace of the Holy Ghost, ^{Remission of} whose Unction blots out sins, if any remain to be expiated, and the ^{guilt} consequences of sin, and alleviates and strengthens the soul of the sick person, by exciting in him a great confidence in the divine mercy,

sustained by which he bears more lightly the troubles and sufferings of disease and more easily resists the temptations of the demon lying in wait for his heel and sometimes, when it is expedient for the soul's salvation, recovers health."

If we analyse this statement we see that it includes four distinct results of the sacrament :

- (1) Remission of the guilt of sins, if the sick man has any.
- (2) Remission of the "reliquiæ," remnants or consequences of past sin.
- (3) Strengthening of the soul by exciting confidence in God, thus giving patience and vigour against temptation.
- (4) Restoration of bodily health, if expedient.

The remission of the guilt of sin is mentioned first because of its supreme importance, although it is an effect which is not always produced, because the sick man may happily not have the guilt of any sins on his soul. The word "sins" refers to sins quite generally, whether mortal or venial. If it be thought that surely everyone has some sins on his soul, at least venial sins, and that therefore the very condition "if he be in sin" has no meaning unless mortal sin be meant, this thought does not correspond with facts. The sick man may have made a good confession even of his venial sins immediately previous to reception of Extreme Unction, or he may by an act of perfect contrition or by acts of intense love of God have had all his venial sins forgiven. In such a case, which we need not restrict to the saints only, Extreme Unction does not remove any stain of guilt.

"Habitual"
sorrow
necessary

It will at once be asked what must be the state of soul of the recipient in order to allow this sacrament to remit the guilt of his sins. In the case of mortal sins the person must be at least in a state of "habitual" repentance, *i.e.* after his last mortal sin he must at least once have elicited an act of contrition and never have revoked the same. If in such a state unconsciousness and the danger of death should overtake him, Extreme Unction would remit his sin and open to him the gate of heaven. Should he previously to death regain consciousness and have the opportunity of confession, he is still bound to confess his sin, for such is the will of Christ; but his soul, having been cleansed from mortal stain, is safe for eternity and has escaped the doom of eternal loss. It is this wonderful efficacy of Last Anointing which creates its unique importance in the eyes of priests and faithful, especially in the case of careless Catholics, who may be suddenly overtaken by unconsciousness and the danger of death. In such cases it is of greater importance than priestly absolution, for the validity of absolution pronounced over those who are totally unconscious and thus unable to give any outward sign of acknowledgement of sin and repentance is a matter of doubt. Conditional absolution is indeed always given in such cases, but whether such absolution, in the absence of any outward token of repentance whatever on the part of the recipient, is a valid sacrament is not

certain. The sacrament of Extreme Unction needs no such outward sign on the part of the recipient ; a mere inward willingness, once conceived and never retracted, suffices for its validity, and a mere inward state of attrition, if never retracted, suffices for its efficacy in remitting sin.

The efficacy of this sacrament is so great that it might produce its effect even should it have been received in a state of unconsciousness by a sinner, who had not yet repented of his sins, but who had the general wish to die as a Catholic and make his peace with God before he died. If such a sinner regained a moment's consciousness and in that moment conceived a horror for his sin and asked God's pardon by some inward act, however imperfect, his sin would be forgiven him in virtue of this sacrament and he would be certain of eternal salvation. God only can tell how many owe their escape from everlasting loss to Extreme Unction alone. It is the last haven of refuge provided by the infinite divine mercy for those who were about to make the final shipwreck of their lives. " And if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him," wrote St James, thereby manifesting the almost incredible lengths to which the loving-kindness of a merciful God can go.

So much for the forgiveness of mortal sin, should the sick man *Venial sin* have it on his soul. But what of venial sin ? The sick man is strictly bound to be in the state of grace either by confession or contrition previous to reception of Extreme Unction. There is no such strict obligation to be free from venial sin. No doubt every good Catholic normally would confess all the venial sins he remembered in the confession preceding Extreme Unction, and thus obtain forgiveness of them in the sacrament of Penance. Yet we must not forget, first, that in strict obligation he is not bound to do so, and secondly, that a valid absolution of one or more venial sins does not necessarily involve the remission of all of them. In consequence the existence of the guilt of venial sins in a person's soul previous to Extreme Unction is surely not a rare occurrence, even in the case of those who have led good lives and are accounted practising and devout Catholics.

Does Extreme Unction remit such venial sins or does it not ? We may answer with almost absolute certainty in the affirmative. There has indeed been no explicit declaration on this question by Pope or Council. " If he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him," said St James. No valid reason can be shown why in this text we should limit the meaning of " sins " to mortal sins, and such limitation seems irreconcilable with the nature of Extreme Unction. This sacrament has eminently a medicinal character, it is a sacrament of Healing, and a complement of the sacrament of Penance in the case of the sick. The forgiveness of mortal sin is rather of the nature of a resurrection than a healing, hence such forgiveness is not the primary purpose of the sacrament. It is rather the forgiveness of venial sins

that would seem to be characteristic of the sacrament of Healing. Venial sins are in fact the great cause of spiritual sickness and their removal the very essence of the healing of the soul and restoration to spiritual health.

May we then hold that Extreme Unction always remits all venial sins in the recipient ?

Although in a sense the answer is in the affirmative, yet we must explain and limit our affirmation. No sin is ever forgiven without repentance, and this applies to venial sins as well as to mortal ; hence the guilt of venial sins to which the penitent is still attached, and for which he has no real purpose of amendment, remains upon the soul, and this no sacrament can remove without a real change of mind. Deliberate feelings and acts of uncharity, deliberate refusal to rectify small matters of dishonesty or to unsay words against the character of one's neighbour, deliberate murmurings at the hardness of one's lot, and a great number of other small faults may still mar the soul even of those who are stretched on a sick-bed and who would shrink from any grievous sin or from venial sins of the more serious kind. The human heart is so strange and intricate a labyrinth of motives and affections that it is possible to show genuine fervour in prayer and almost at the same time to manifest glaring faults of character continued with unmistakable deliberation and full consent. So long as these thus continue, Extreme Unction cannot directly remove their guilt, for without repentance there is no forgiveness. It is quite true that the guilt of venial sins can be removed indirectly by the intensity of the love of God without these faults being individually remembered and repudiated. Venial sins are a retardation in our journey towards God, not a complete deviation or aversion from our last end ; hence greater fervour in our tending towards God undoes the harm venial sin has done. Yet as long as the complacency of the will in evil continues, so long does the inhibition remain, and the soul is hampered and hindered by affection to sin, be it only venial. Extreme Unction, then, removes the guilt of all those venial sins from which the heart has turned with at least implicit sorrow.

The forgiveness of sin, whether mortal or venial, by Extreme Unction remains, however, a purely conditional effect : " if he be in sins." Scripture and tradition presuppose that the sacrament is often received when no guilt of sin, whether mortal or venial, stains the soul of the recipient. In such happy circumstances has this sacrament then nothing to do with the removal of the effects of sin ?

*The
"remnants"
of sin*

When we consider that the Council of Trent calls Extreme Unction " the complement of Penance," and, moreover, that St James plainly connects the two sacraments of Penance and Unction by adding " Confess therefore your sins one to another," it becomes clear that even when no guilt actually stains the soul of the recipient, Extreme Unction extends its power in some way to the consequences of sin. The sacrament being essentially one of spiritual healing

must affect every spiritual infirmity which is the outcome of sin. This is implied in the very form employed in the Church: "May God pardon whatever thou hast done amiss," "Indulgeat quidquid deliquisti." If, then, there be no actual guilt, only the consequences of sin can be meant, and this is expressly stated by the Council of Trent. What, then, precisely does the Council mean by *reliquias peccati*, "remnants of sin"? Every sin committed enfeebles the soul and makes it more prone to sin. The wound of sin, even though it be healed, leaves a scar. The healing of sin is a complicated progress. It is the complete restoration to full health of mind and will after these have been debilitated by the sinful embracing of evil. All sin engenders a certain obscurity of mind and frailty of will, a lack of vigour in resistance to further evil. These things may remain even though the total aversion from God in mortal sin, or the clinging to temporal good to the detriment of our love of God in venial sin, has actually ceased and the guilt of past sin has been forgiven by the application of Christ's atonement to the repentant sinner.

The memory of past sin, moreover, is constantly with the sinner, even though he has been sacramentally absolved, and the cry "*amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea*" naturally rises to his lips. Confidence in God is harder for the man who has to look back on a life of sin, or a life of innumerable venial faults, than for the saint who has served his God for many years and who can say with St Antony: "I have served my Lord for eighty years, why should I fear to meet him now?" It is this complete healing from all spiritual sickness induced by past sin which Extreme Unction is intended to achieve.

In the numberless touching representations of the death of our Blessed Lady which mediæval sculpture or painting has left to us, St Peter and the Apostles surround her death-bed, according to legend, but the artist with truly Catholic instinct has never attempted to represent the administration of Extreme Unction. The sinless Mother of God had no need of this sacrament, which is in its nature a complement of Penance and is intended to remove, if not always directly the guilt of sin, at least the consequences of it. Her soul needed no healing of any kind to render it strong and vigorous in the hour of death. St John is indeed often represented as giving Holy Communion to the Mother of God, for she could receive this great sacrament of spiritual life to increase her love for her divine Son; but a sacrament which suggests at least the memory of past sin was not for her.

Be all this said to make clear what is meant by "the remnants of sin" counteracted by the grace of Extreme Unction.

There remains the further question whether Extreme Unction *Temporal punishment* also remits the temporal punishment due to forgiven sin, and this question also has to be answered in the affirmative. It has been the constant teaching of theologians that this sacrament constitutes the

final consummation of all spiritual cure, by which man is made ready for participation in heavenly glory. The purpose of Extreme Unction is that at the moment of death nothing should remain which might be a hindrance to the soul's immediate entrance into its eternal reward.

It may well be asked : if this sacrament is intended to remove even the temporal punishment of sin, what then remains of purgatory for those who receive it ? Why further blessings and the gaining of indulgences ? The answer is that all sacraments do indeed give the grace which they signify, but the measure of the grace bestowed depends on the disposition of the recipient. Millions receive Holy Communion day by day, all receive the same kind of grace, but amongst them all there are perhaps not two who receive exactly the same amount. So likewise of those who receive Extreme Unction in the same hospital, or on the same battlefield, hundreds may receive the same sacred anointing, which signifies and effects the healing of nature wounded by sin, and is meant to render the soul sound and fit for immediate entrance into glory, yet perhaps not two receive exactly the same measure of grace.

If they are conscious, the measure of grace received will depend upon the actual devotion at the moment of reception and the state of their soul previous to it ; if they are unconscious but in a state of repentance—habitually attrite as theologians would say—it will depend upon the state of their soul when the sacrament is administered. Certainly the guilt of mortal sins will infallibly be forgiven, likewise the guilt of some venial sins. But it may well be that the guilt of many venial sins will remain, owing to lack of repentance for them, therefore also the debt of punishment due to them. Extreme Unction is not an automatic means of escape from Purgatory, though the purpose of the sacrament is undoubtedly to remit the debt of temporal punishment, and it does indeed remit it entirely, if received with perfect dispositions.

The case of Extreme Unction is not unlike that of a Plenary Indulgence. A Plenary Indulgence is intended to remit the whole of the temporal punishment due, and if received in perfect dispositions and without any attachment to sin it will always achieve its object. But it would be rash to assert that all who perform correctly the outward works prescribed are thereby acquitted of all debt of purgatory. Indulgences are not sacraments, of course, but they at least resemble them in this that when applied to the living they are an exercise of spiritual power to which some spiritual result is infallibly attached, if the work prescribed is performed in proper dispositions.

We now come to the most characteristic grace bestowed by Last Anointing, the grace of "raising up" the sick man. "The Lord shall raise him up." The Greek word used might almost be translated "stir up," "wake up." It means the bestowal of unwonted strength and vigour on those who are prostrate through sickness.

By lowering vitality and introducing disorder into the sensitive life grievous illness is apt to interfere with the workings of the soul in mind and will. Sickness means lethargy, exhaustion, inability to concentrate, stupor, and even illusions, and hence extreme difficulty in prayer when prayer is the great necessity. Sickness means fever, unnatural excitement, physical irritation, inward annoyance, and perhaps intense pain; all these make the continuance of spiritual activities most difficult. Sickness may mean horror of approaching death, an almost complete enfeeblement of natural powers, a conjuring up of phantasms which lay the soul open to suggestions of despair, or at least to lack of trust in God; and to these may be added the paralysing dread of appearing before the Great Judge. It has been and still is the constant conviction of all those who are versed in spiritual matters, that the devil takes advantage of the enfeeblement of disease in men for his own purpose and that he uses his utmost endeavours for the perdition of a soul before that soul passes out of the sphere of his power by a holy death. It is not in vain that myriads of Catholic lips for centuries have prayed: "Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death." If after the daily Sacrifice we pray to St Michael to defend us in the day of battle, we stand in utmost need of every defence on the day when the final issue hangs in the balance.

The mercy of God has invented this sacrament to assist us in our utmost need: a medicine, a healing unction to counteract supernaturally the danger to the soul arising from the impending dissolution of the body; a strengthening and invigoration of the soul to overcome the languor and the confusion of mind connected with serious illness, and the menace of death.

It is remarkable that the two sacraments which have the special purpose of imparting strength of soul and vigour in combat have the anointing with oil as outward sign of their inward grace: Confirmation and Extreme Unction. They have this in common, that by anointing the body they signify the preparation for battle. But Confirmation, which is the complement of Baptism and imparted at the beginning of life's struggle, views man as a child of God regenerated and fresh from God in the integrity of his new spiritual life. It anoints the body of the young warrior who goes out to battle. In Extreme Unction the same warrior is regarded as in many ways worsted and defeated and overcome by sin. The Church again anoints him and the essential meaning is the same. The gift is called a "*confortatio animæ*," even as Confirmation was called a *confirmatio*, a strengthening for combat. If the words used in administration are different, it is because the circumstances are different. After a long fight with sin the warrior needs that his wounds be healed; and so God is asked to deal kindly with all things in which the weary warrior has failed in the past. The aim of this sacrament is to restore the sick man to that complete health and vigour of soul in which

Baptism and Confirmation had placed him at the beginning of life's combat.

*A theological
discussion*

There has been and to a certain extent still is a discussion amongst theologians which is the principal effect of these many spiritual effects just enumerated : (1) the remission of grievous sin, (2) the remission of venial sins, (3) the remission of the remnants of sin, (4) the remission of the temporal punishment of forgiven sin, and (5) the strengthening of the soul in its hard and perhaps final struggle. Which, it is asked, is the essential grace of which the sacrament is the efficient sign, the grace which it must always of necessity produce if worthily received and from which the other effects follow ?

Some have held that the essential grace is the undoing of past sin, if not in its guilt, at least in its consequences. These theologians appeal to the meaning of the sacramental form as now used in the Latin Church : " May God pardon whatever thou hast done amiss."

Others have placed the essential grace in the strengthening of the soul, so necessary in the time of sickness. They have argued that if we regard the sacrament as essentially remissive of sin, it could not be validly received by a person who by confession or perfect contrition had been freed from the guilt of all his sins, by a Plenary Indulgence had paid the whole debt of punishment due, and by a life of great holiness had undone all the scars and wounds of sin. A sacrament, they urge, that cannot give its essential grace is no valid sacrament. These authors plead that some of the very greatest saints have been anointed, and it might well be supposed that on their death-bed they had undone all their sins by their intense love of God. Moreover, St James seems to stress the raising up of the soul of the sick man, rather than the conditional forgiveness of sin, if the sick man have any. These reasons would at first sight seem decisive, but for the strong and insurmountable argument to the contrary derived from the Latin sacramental form, which is indicative of pardon of sin. A sacrament must always give the grace it signifies, and the form of words used in administration must needs indicate this grace.

The solution of the problem lies no doubt in the fact that no person on earth can be completely free from all consequences of past sin. He may be free from any guilt of sin, he may be free from all temporal punishment due to sin, the justice of God may be completely satisfied, yet some consequences may still remain. Our Lady excepted, no one has ever led a life without all sin, however slight, but all sin leaves some enfeebling result on the soul. It impairs a man's spiritual strength, it lowers his strength. In a state of illness and approaching death a person needs all the strength and full supernatural health of soul to face his dangers, and it is this complete health of soul which the sacrament intends to give. The sacrament deals not with abstractions but with realities, and in reality, Mary excepted, no saint can claim that he never knew sin. Hence all

can profit by a sacrament which restores divine grace that was in some degree impaired by a past fault. The bestowal of spiritual vigour on a sinner in bodily illness is therefore at the same time an undoing of sin; and therefore the form of this sacrament indicates the undoing of sin: "Indulgeat . . . quidquid deliquisti."

Moreover, the great need in illness is the divine assurance of a merciful judgement to come. Dread of the holiness of God and the rigour of his justice may disturb the soul, however slight the sins committed and however great the repentance of the sinner. It is this distressing and agonising fear which the sacrament intends to counteract. It is intended to fill the sick man with a Christian courage that through God's loving-kindness and infinite mercy the victory over evil will lie with him.

We conclude therefore that in reality the *confortatio animæ* and undoing of sin coincide; they are but the negative and positive aspect of identically the same grace. It is essentially a sacrament of healing, but healing is undoing of disease and that by an inpouring of strength. Logically, no doubt, the *confortatio animæ* precedes, but in fact the two coincide. We must carefully note that the Latin form does not directly mention the forgiveness of the guilt of sin, but uses deliberately the general expressions: *indulgeat tibi Dominus*, "may God deal mercifully with thee"; *quidquid deliquisti*, "with regard to anything there is still amiss," in consequence of any sins committed.

Finally, we have to deal with the last result of this sacrament: *The restoration of bodily health* the restoration of bodily health if God sees it to be expedient. Is there any rule or principle on which God acts in this matter and which we can know?

Some have suggested that God always restores to health if this is for the ultimate spiritual good of the patient. In consequence, if he foresees that, if now restored to health the patient would finally die in sin and be lost or at least would make a less good death than now, God would not arrest the course of the disease. This suggestion is, however, hardly tenable, for it would practically be equivalent to a private revelation to all those who recovered after Extreme Unction in the hour of death, that they could be certain of final salvation.

How then is this temporal effect connected with the sacrament? Is it a miracle? Does God suspend the laws of nature and on the occasion of Extreme Unction use his omnipotence apart from natural laws? It would seem not, because we are repeatedly warned not to postpone the reception of Extreme Unction precisely because this would be to force God's hand to work a miracle by raising up a man actually in the throes of death.

If, then, the restoration is not necessarily miraculous, but some utilisation of nature's forces by God, how have we to conceive this? "The Lord will raise him up." This raising up is by actual graces bestowed upon the soul; for the soul reacts upon the body, as well

as the body on the soul. Medical science will tell us that cheerfulness, mental happiness, and the encouragement of bystanders, normally make a great difference to the patient for betterment. Despondency is most deleterious to those in sickness, courage and brightness of character are of immense importance. Many a person recovers by the sheer will to live and struggles against the physical laws of sickness by an indomitable character.

If science tells us this in the purely natural sphere, how much more is this true when God by supernatural actual graces affects the soul for its strengthening and comfort? Beyond all doubt God can and sometimes does directly act on the bodily frame of man, thus curing him in a directly miraculous way, either by increasing natural recuperative power, or by directly creating new forces which make for health. For all we know he does so sometimes on account of the sacrament received. But there seems no absolute divine rule always connecting such miracles with Extreme Unction. Miracles must always be rare; they are the exception, not a matter of steady regularity. The sacrament bestowed on unconscious persons in the very throes of death does but exceedingly rarely restore bodily health. If it always did, death would be abolished. Hence it is presumptuous folly to postpone its reception till the last moment and expect escape from death. But even when received in the early stages of illness and received with great piety and devotion there seems to us no apparent rule by which God acts.

We are bound to believe that God will do so if it is expedient. Expedient to whom? To all men? To some men, amongst the relatives and household? To the sick man himself? It is certainly expedient to the sick man that he die at some time, for death is the gateway to heaven. If he be well-disposed, it may be expedient that he die now. The expediency, however, will be judged by God, whose Providence attends all men and takes every circumstance into account. Now the Council of Trent says: "if it be expedient to the soul's salvation," and thus evidently includes in the reasons for recovery the spiritual profit of the man's soul. On the other hand, the Council distinctly adds the word *interdum*, "sometimes," thus suggesting that, even if there is some foreordained plan and rule whereby these things are regulated, we do not know it. No doubt priests, doctors, and nurses have repeatedly noticed the most amazing changes for the better in sick persons after Anointing, and it is no wonder that people have often cried "miracle" after such a surprising recovery. God thus vindicates the dignity and the power of his sacraments, and the early devout reception of Extreme Unction is certainly a powerful appeal to the omnipotent mercy of God for the recovery of bodily health.

The "revival" of the sacrament

The revival of this sacrament, although briefly alluded to previously, needs a few words of explanation. Baptism, Confirmation, and Order may be received without due disposition. In such a case

these sacraments are valid and cannot be repeated, but the grace of them is not bestowed until the recipient repents and puts himself in the necessary state of soul. Such subsequent resurrection of sacramental energy goes by the name of reviviscence. This is universally accepted in the case of the three sacraments just mentioned, because they imprint an indelible mark on the soul and can be received only once in a lifetime. It is practically certain that the same is true of Matrimony. Though it leaves no indelible mark on the soul, yet it is normally received only once in life, and it is hard to believe that a married person should for ever be deprived of the graces needed for the married state owing to his sinful state at the moment of his wedding. There is probably no reviviscence of Penance, because being itself the sacrament of Penitence, it is utterly invalid when penitence is absent; and the reviviscence of Holy Communion, if received in mortal sin, is usually considered impossible.

In the case of Extreme Unction there exists no absolute certainty of its reviviscence; yet this can hardly be doubted. Theologians are practically unanimous that when received in the state of unrepented mortal sin it revives if the sick man later repents. Such reviviscence of the grace of Unction is, however, strictly limited to the period of the illness and would not occur if the patient only repented after the recovery of health. During the same danger of death through illness Extreme Unction, once validly received, remains an efficacious title to grace, though its effect is suspended as long as the patient remains in unrepentant mortal sin. Let him remove the obstacle by repentance and the grace will be bestowed. Should, however, a fresh mortal sin be committed after the reception of Extreme Unction, the guilt of this could only be removed either by perfect contrition or attrition with the actual reception of the sacrament of Penance. Extreme Unction can remit the guilt of sin incurred before and in its reception, but not that of sins committed afterwards. The priest then, should he learn that the patient was in unrepented mortal sin during the reception of Extreme Unction, should not repeat the administration, for according to Church law it must be given only once in the same illness. The only possible reason for repeating the rite would be if the priest ascertained that the patient had been unwilling to receive it, for no sacrament is valid if bestowed on an unwilling subject.

However great the divine ingenuity in contriving means of grace for the children of men, God's benign purposes can be foiled by the malice of man, but as far as the indulgence of the divine Father in heaven can go without destroying human liberty, so far does his tender mercy reach in this most Holy Unction.

J. P. ARENDZEN.

XXIX

THE SACRAMENT OF ORDER

§ I: THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST AND THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD

A. The Priesthood of Christ

“EVERY high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins.”¹ St Thomas Aquinas² teaches that the proper office of a priest is to be a mediator between God and men, inasmuch as he is the representative of the people with God, offering to him their sacrifices and prayers, and the representative of God with the people, bringing to them in return for their “gifts and sacrifices,” both pardon for sin, and those “most great and precious promises” by which they are “made partakers of the divine nature.”³ Who then is so fitted for the sacred office of Priesthood as the God-man, Jesus Christ, who, because he is the Son of God, is the natural representative of God with man; and, because he is the Son of Man and the Head of the human race, knowing our infirmities, and “one tempted in all things as we are, without sin,”⁴ is also the acceptable representative of sinful man with God? By virtue of the hypostatic union, then, Jesus Christ was anointed High Priest, and remains “a Priest for ever,”⁵ and the “one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”⁶

Priesthood and sacrifice are therefore correlative.⁷ The essential act of priesthood is the offering of sacrifice, both as the supreme act of man’s worship of God (latreutic), and in expiation for the sins of men (propitiatory); and our High Priest and Mediator, Jesus Christ, performed this supreme act of his Priesthood when he offered himself in sacrifice to his Heavenly Father on the Cross both as the perfect and supreme act of divine worship, and as the efficacious expiation of the sins of the world.⁸

¹ Heb. v 1.

² *Summa Theologica*, III, Q. xxii and Q. xxvi.

³ 2 Peter i 4.

⁴ Heb. iv 15.

⁵ Heb. v 5-6.

⁶ 1 Tim. ii 5.

⁷ Council of Trent, sess. 23, c. 1.

⁸ See Essay xiv, *Christ, Priest and Redeemer*.

B. *The Christian Priesthood*

Another act of Our Lord as High Priest and Redeemer was to establish his Church for the salvation of the world through the merits of his Sacrifice on Calvary. He, the eternal Priest, would be its Head and High Priest. But since he was about to withdraw his corporal presence from his Church, it was necessary that his Priesthood should be exercised visibly and externally by a body of ministers appointed by himself and acting in his name.

Our Lord, therefore, on the day before he suffered, having for the last time celebrated with his Apostles the legal feast of the Paschal Lamb, instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the New Testament, first, as the perennial commemoration of the Sacrifice of Redemption on Calvary, and secondly, in order that the merits of the Sacrifice of the Cross might be applied to individual souls for the remission of their sins. Further, in order that this memorial Sacrifice might be offered in the Church till the end of time, and "shew forth the death of the Lord *until he come*,"¹ by the words, "Do this for a commemoration of me," he ordained his Apostles priests and gave them power to ordain others in their turn, and thus established in his Church a permanent and perpetual Order of Christian Priesthood. All this we are taught by the Council of Trent in sess. 22, c. 1. Consequently, "If anyone shall say that by the words: 'Do this for a commemoration of me,' Christ did not ordain the Apostles priests, or did not enjoin that they and other priests should offer his body and blood, let him be anathema."² Moreover, to the power of consecrating and offering his Body and Blood, Our Lord on Easter Day added the power over his mystical body, the power, namely, of forgiving and retaining sins. "If," therefore, "anyone shall say that there is not a visible and external priesthood in the New Testament, or that there is no power of consecrating and offering the true body and blood of the Lord, and of remitting and retaining sins . . . let him be anathema."³ Other Sacraments also were instituted by Our Lord as the channels or vehicles of the grace of the Redemption, and committed by him to his Apostles, and through them to the Church, so that St Paul was able to speak of himself and his colleagues as "the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God."⁴

In all this we see the realisation of that greater wonder which Our divine Lord promised to Nathanael: "Greater things than this shalt thou see. And he saith to him: Amen, Amen, I say to you, you shall see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and

¹ 1 Cor. xi 26.

² Council of Trent, sess. 22, can. 2.

³ *Ibid.*, sess. 23, can. 1.

⁴ 1 Cor. iv 1.

descending upon the Son of Man." ¹ What was this greater thing that they should see ?

It was, first of all, this, that whereas heaven had hitherto, on account of unexpiated sin, remained closed to mankind, they should see heaven opened, or, more correctly according to the Greek, open, standing open, as a result of the accomplishment of the Redemption ; and secondly, that they should see the Cross, upon which was hanging the Son of Man, the Redeemer and Mediator, like Jacob's ladder, "standing upon the earth, and the top thereof touching heaven, the angels also of God ascending and descending by it." ² In other words, in the New Dispensation the Cross of Christ unites earth with heaven, and the ministers of Christ, the priests of the Church, ascend "upon the Son of Man," that is, by the ladder of the Cross of Christ, to heaven, bearing with them "the gifts and sacrifices" for the sins of the people, and descend from heaven by the same means, bringing as the gift of God for the people the sacramental and other graces of which they stand in need. The word "upon" (*ἐπι*) in the phrase "upon the Son of man" is to be understood in its literal sense of stepping upon the Son of Man as upon a ladder ; for the Cross of Christ is the only means of passage from earth to heaven and heaven to earth. Moreover, there is abundance of Biblical authority for interpreting "the angels of God" as the priests of the Church ; for are not the angels "ministering spirits sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation ?" ³ Hence the episcopal heads of the seven Churches are called Angels by St John in the Apocalypse ; and St Paul directs women to veil their heads in church "because of the angels." ⁴ "The lips of the priest," says the Prophet Malachy, "shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth, because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts." ⁵

It is noteworthy also that the Angels of God are here said first to *ascend* and then to *descend* upon the Son of Man. If the allusion was literally to the Angels of heaven, we should naturally expect them to *descend* before *ascending*. But the priest, the angel of earth, first *ascends* to heaven with the gifts of men to God, and then *descends* from heaven bearing God's gifts to men. So also Jacob, in his dream at Bethel, the House of God, the place of sacrifice of the Patriarchs and Judges, saw the angels first ascending and then descending by the ladder that joined earth with heaven.

The wonderful thing, then, that Nathanael and the others were to see was precisely this. The Redemption of the world was to be actually accomplished in their lifetime, and as the result of it they would see heaven once again lying open to men, and the Ministers

¹ John i 50-51. It is curious and significant that Our Lord, though apparently addressing Nathanael alone : "Greater things shalt *thou* see. And he saith to *him*," suddenly changes to the plural : "Amen, I say to *you*, *you* shall see, etc."

² Gen. xxviii 12.

³ Heb. i 14.

⁴ i Cor. xi 10.

⁵ ii 7.

of Christ representing man with God and on man's behalf offering to God the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and in turn representing God with man, and as such administering the grace-giving Sacraments for the sanctification and salvation of the world.¹

Such in brief outline is the Christian Priesthood.

§ II: THE THREEFOLD POWER OF THE CHURCH. THE POWER AND CHARACTER OF ORDER

A. *The Threefold Power of the Church*

THE purpose and object of the existence of any society is the pursuit and attainment by its members of some common end by the use of some common means. Experience, however, has proved over and over again—so much so, indeed, that it has long been a first principle of practical life—that no society, from the sovereign State to the smallest cricket club, is successful, unless it is governed by some competent authority, whether it be a king or a president, a chairman or a committee, a cabinet, a board of management, a managing director, etc. There must be some ruling power, whether individual or collective, whose office it is to govern, direct, legislate, judge, and even coerce and punish, all with the one object of securing the success of the society in the achievement of the purpose of its existence, which is the good, happiness, pleasure, in some way or other, of its members. Without some such governing authority any society is doomed to confusion, chaos, failure, and extinction. This ruling authority or power of government is called *Jurisdiction*.

Now most of the societies of which we have experience in ordinary life are societies whose aim it is to procure some natural good or pleasure or profit for the members; and we find that they have at their disposal, or they are able to obtain, the means which are necessary in order to enable them to attain their object. These societies are natural societies, the end that they have in view is natural, the means of attaining it are natural. All that is necessary is that the ruling authority in such a society should direct, guide, and control its members in the use of the means at their disposal to the best advantage for the common good.

But there is one Society within our experience which is a supernatural society, a society among men indeed, and for men, but having a supernatural origin and a supernatural end and purpose. This Society is the Catholic Church, founded by Jesus Christ for the sanctification and salvation of the human race. This Church is the supernatural, spiritual kingdom of Christ, existing in the world, but

¹ St Catherine of Siena likens the hypostatic union to a bridge built by God, and stretching from heaven to earth. This beautiful idea is, of course, analogous to Our Lord's own comparison of himself hanging on the Cross to a ladder uniting earth with heaven, etc., as explained in the text above.

not of the world. Being a kingdom, it is a perfect society ; and as such, it must have a government, and one which has received from its founder a power and authority that is proportioned to the spiritual nature of the society, and competent to direct its members to its supernatural end. Jesus Christ, therefore, provided for this power of government, *i.e.* the spiritual Jurisdiction of the Church, when he said to Peter : “ To thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven ” ; ¹ and to the whole body of the Apostles : “ Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven : and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven.” ²

*Teaching au-
thority and
power of
Order*

But since the end for which the Church was founded is a supernatural one, it follows that the means which it has at its disposal for the attainment of that end, are supernatural also ; for the means must be proportioned to the end. In this then the Church is not like natural societies, which find at hand the means they require for their purposes. If the means which the Church needs are supernatural, they must be provided for her by Jesus Christ, her Founder. Now what are the means which the Church requires ? They are two, divine truth and supernatural grace. We need divine truth, *i.e.* the truths of supernatural revelation, that we may know the mysteries of God himself, that we may know ourselves as we are before God, that we may know what God has done for us, and what he would have us do. They teach us the divine standards of human conduct, and show us what are the means that God has placed at our disposal to enable us to maintain those standards. This is the first means. The other is supernatural grace, sanctifying grace, by which we receive the adoption of sons,³ and are “ made partakers of the divine nature,” ⁴ and by which also (together with actual grace) the operations of the soul are raised to the supernatural plane and directed to the end and purpose of life eternal. Both these means have been placed by Our Lord in the hands of the governing authority of his Church, as we are taught by St John : ⁵ “ The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us full of grace and truth, and of his fulness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given to Moses : grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Thus, besides the power of Jurisdiction (alluded to above), which Christ had conferred on the Apostolic Hierarchy, he committed to them two further powers, one to propose, expound, and define the truths of revelation (which involves the corresponding obligation of the assent of faith on the part of those who are taught), and this is called the Magisterium, or teaching authority, which Christ bestowed on the Apostles when he said to them : “ Going therefore teach all nations : . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” ⁶ The other is the power to dispense divine grace to the faithful through the

¹ Matt. xvi 19.

³ Rom. viii 15 ; Gal. iv 5.

⁵ i 14-17.

² *Ibid.*, xviii 18.

⁴ 2 Peter i 4.

⁶ Matt. xxviii 19-20.

Sacraments, and this power is the power of Order, which is signified in the same commission of Our Lord to the Apostles: "Going therefore . . . baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost";¹ and when he said to them: "Do this for a commemoration of me." Hence St Paul desires that the Apostles be regarded as the "dispensers of the mysteries of God"; by which term we understand both the supernatural truths of God which are concealed from human reason, and the sacred, symbolic, sacramental rites, which contain hidden within them the supernatural grace of God.

B. *The Sacrament of Order*

Having thus established the existence of the power of Order in the Church, we have now to show that it is conferred and transmitted by means of a symbolic and ritual consecration, which in theological language is called a Sacrament; and we cannot do this better than in the words of St Thomas Aquinas:²

"It is clear that, in all the sacraments of which we have spoken hitherto, spiritual grace is bestowed under the sacred sign of visible things. Now every action should be proportionate to the agent. Hence these same sacraments should be dispensed by visible men having spiritual powers. For angels are not competent to dispense sacraments: but men clothed in visible flesh, according to the saying of the Apostle,³ 'Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God.'

"This may be proved in another way. Sacraments derive their institution and efficacy from Christ; of whom the Apostle says:⁴ 'Christ loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it, that he might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life.' It is also clear that at the Supper he gave the Sacrament of his body and blood, and instituted it for our frequent use: and this is the greatest of all the sacraments. Seeing then that he was about to withdraw his bodily presence from the Church, it was necessary that he should institute others as his ministers, who should dispense the sacraments to the faithful, according to the Apostle's words:⁵ 'Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God.' For this reason he entrusted his disciples with the consecration of his body and blood, saying:⁶ 'Do this for a commemoration of me': to them he gave the power to forgive sins:⁷ 'Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them': and on them he conferred the office of teaching and baptising, saying:⁸ 'Going, teach ye all nations, baptising them.' Now the minister is compared to his master as an instrument to the principal agent:

¹ Matt. xxviii 19.

² Heb. v 1.

⁶ Luke xxii 19.

³ *Contra Gentiles*, iv, cap. 74.

⁴ Eph. v 25-26.

⁷ John xx 23.

⁵ 1 Cor. iv 1.

⁸ Matt. xxviii 19.

for, just as the instrument is moved by the agent in order to produce an effect, so a minister is moved by his master to execute his will. Again, the instrument should be proportionate to the agent. Therefore Christ's ministers should be conformed to him. Now Christ wrought our salvation, as master, by his own authority and power, in as much as he is God and man : in that, as man, he suffered for our redemption, and, because he was God, his sufferings were made efficacious for our salvation. Consequently Christ's ministers must be men, and also have some share in his Godhead by a kind of spiritual power : since the instrument shares in the power of the principal agent. Of this power the Apostle says ¹ that ' the Lord gave him power unto edification and not unto destruction.'

" Now it cannot be said that this power was given to Christ's disciples in such manner that it would not be transmitted by them to others : for it was given to them unto the edification of the Church, according to the Apostle's words. Therefore this power must last as long as the Church needs to be edified : that is to say, from after the death of Christ's disciples until the end of the world. Consequently, spiritual power was given to Christ's disciples in such wise that others were to receive it from them. Hence Our Lord spoke to his disciples as representatives of the rest of the faithful, as we may see from his words, ² ' What I say to you, I say to all.' Again he said to his disciples : ³ ' Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.'

" Accordingly, this spiritual power flows from Christ to the ministers of the Church, and the spiritual effects (whether of spiritual power or of grace) accruing to us from Christ are conferred under certain sensible signs ; ⁴ and consequently it was proper that this spiritual power also should be conferred on men by means of sensible symbols. These are certain forms of words, certain actions, as for instance the imposition of hands, anointing, delivery of book or chalice or some such thing that pertains to the exercise of a spiritual power. Now, whenever something spiritual is bestowed under a bodily symbol, this is called a sacrament. It is clear, therefore, that in the bestowal of spiritual power a sacrament is enacted : and this is known as the Sacrament of Order. Now it is a part of the divine liberality that whosoever receives power to perform a certain work, receives also whatsoever is required for the suitable execution of that work. Since then the sacraments that are the purpose of this spiritual power, cannot be becomingly administered without the assistance of divine grace, it follows that grace is conferred in this sacrament, even as in the others.

" But since the power of Order is directed to the dispensing of the sacraments, and since of all the sacraments the Eucharist is the most sublime and perfect, it follows that we must consider the power of

¹ 2 Cor. xiii 10.

² Mark xiii 37.

³ Matt. xxviii 20.

⁴ Cf. Essay xxi, *The Sacramental System*.

Order chiefly in its relation to that sacrament : for a thing takes its name from its end.¹ Now it appears that the same power bestows a perfection, and prepares the matter to receive that perfection : thus fire has the power to communicate its form to a thing, and to prepare the material for the reception of its form. Since then the power of Order extends to the effecting of the sacrament of Christ's body and the distribution thereof to the faithful, it follows that the same power should extend to the preparation of the faithful, that they be made fit and worthy to receive this sacrament. Now the faithful are made fit and worthy to receive this sacrament by being freed from sin : otherwise spiritual union with Christ is impossible in one who is united with him sacramentally by receiving this sacrament. Consequently the power of Order must extend to the forgiveness of sins by the dispensation of those sacraments that are directed to the remission of sin, such as Baptism and Penance. Wherefore, Our Lord, having entrusted to his disciples the consecration of his body, gave them also the power to forgive sins, which power is indicated by the keys, of which he said to Peter : ² ' To thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' For heaven is closed and opened to a man according as he is shackled with or freed from sin : and for this reason the use of these keys is expressed as binding and loosing, namely from sins."³

The Council of Trent therefore defines : " If anyone shall say that Order or sacred ordination is not truly and really a sacrament instituted by Christ the Lord, or is only a man-made fiction, invented by men unskilled in ecclesiastical affairs ; or that it is only the ceremony of choosing ministers of the word of God and of the sacraments, let him be anathema."⁴

The power of Order, then, is conferred and transmitted by means of a sacramental consecration, which we call the Sacrament of Order. On the other hand, the power of Jurisdiction and the teaching authority, since their direct object is not the production of the spiritual effects of power and grace in the soul, are not bestowed by a sacramental rite, but by a commission received either from Christ himself (as in the case of the newly elected Pope) or from the lawfully constituted ecclesiastical governing authority.

It remains only to point out that there exists a close connection and mutual interdependence between the power of Order and the power of Jurisdiction. For on the one hand, the power of Order

¹ This phrase and the equivalent Latin reading *nominatur*, appears to make no sense here. There is, however, another reading *dominatur*—*unumquodque dominatur a fine*, " everything is governed or controlled by its end and purpose"—which has logical sequence.

² Matt. xvi 19.

³ We have used the translation of the Dominican Fathers for the above quotation ; but we have substituted other words where they seemed to express the original better.

⁴ Sess. 23, can. 3.

cannot be legitimately exercised except in accordance with the ordinances and regulations prescribed by the supreme ecclesiastical authority ; and on the other hand, the power of Jurisdiction regularly, ordinarily, and con-naturally resides in the highest rank of the hierarchy of Order, *i.e.* in the Episcopate, as the very name itself implies.

C. *The Character of Order*

Order is not only one of the seven Sacraments, but it is also one of the three Sacraments that imprint a character on the soul. "If anyone shall say that by means of ordination a character is not imprinted on the soul . . . let him be anathema."¹ A character, in the theological sense, is a spiritual seal or stamp impressed on the soul by God to indicate the consecration of that soul to him in some official capacity. Character receives its name from the stamp or brand imprinted upon the bodies of those who were enrolled in the imperial armies in ancient times, to show that they had the right and duty of fighting their country's battles. It expresses the idea of service of a master in some public ministerial office. The sacramental character therefore denotes some special ministerial relation to Christ in his Church ; *e.g.* the character of Baptism carries with it the office and rights of a *follower* of Christ ; the character of Confirmation those of a *soldier* of Christ ; the character of Order those of a *minister* of Christ. To put it in another way, the sacramental seal or character imports a spiritual power or capacity in regard to the sacred and divine things possessed by the Church. Baptism gives the capacity to *receive* these divine gifts ; Confirmation confers the power and office of *defending* them against hostile assaults ; Order bestows the power and office of *dispensing* and *ministering* them to the faithful. In each case there is a sacramental consecration of the soul to Christ and to his service. It follows that the sacramental character is indelible ; for it is the spiritual seal of the eternal Prince stamped on the immortal soul ; nor is it possible for the servant of Christ, having once accepted and been dedicated to his service, to repudiate that service and divest himself of his ministerial power and office. Consequently, to confine our further remarks to the Sacrament of Order, this Sacrament once received cannot be repeated. The recipient of the Sacrament remains for good or ill "a priest for ever," though he be so unfortunate as subsequently to fall from grace, or even to apostatise from the faith of Christ. The ministers of Christ must necessarily form a class apart, a body of men distinguished from the general mass of the laity in the eyes both of God and men. "Since in the Sacrament of Order, as in Baptism and in Confirmation, a character is imprinted which can never be effaced or removed, the holy Synod rightly condemns the opinion of those who assert that the priests of the New Testament possess only a temporary power,

¹ Council of Trent, sess. 23, can. 4 ; cf. sess. 7, can. 9.

and that those who are once duly ordained can become laymen again, if they do not exercise the ministry of the divine word.”¹

The term “ Sacrament of Order ” may be used both of the external ceremonial rite, and of the power or character which is conferred by that rite. But, as St Thomas teaches :² “ The interior character is essentially and principally the Sacrament of Order.” The external sacramental rite is more properly termed Ordination.

§ III: THE APOSTOLIC ORDINATIONS AND THE ECCLESIASTICAL HIERARCHY

A. *The Apostolic Ordinations*

WE have seen that Our divine Lord at the Last Supper bestowed the Priesthood on his Apostles by the words, “ Do this for a commemoration of me ” ; that he gave them the power to forgive sins, when on Easter Day he breathed on them and said, “ Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them : and whose sins you shall retain they are retained ” ;³ and that in them he established the Christian Priesthood as a permanent and perpetual institution, to be handed on by them to others in continuous succession to the end of time. We have seen, too, that the handing on of the priesthood was to be carried out by means of an external, sacramental rite. But the rite that the Apostles were to employ in passing on the priesthood to others was not that which Our Lord had used in ordaining them. He, as the High Priest and Redeemer and the Institutor of the Sacraments, was above the Sacraments, not subordinated to them ; and he did not need any sacramental rite in order to confer the effects of the Sacraments.⁴ Consequently, though Our Lord in ordaining the Apostles did make use of an external ceremony and pronounce certain words, they were not intended to be the means by which the sacerdotal powers were to be handed on in the Church. They were super-sacramental.

When, therefore, we examine the records of the Apostolic Church, particularly in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles of St Paul, we find that there is one rite of sacramental ordination and one only uniformly in use at that time.⁵ That rite was the imposition of hands accompanied by prayer, the imposition of hands, of course, constituting the sacramental matter, and the prayer the sacramental form. Thus in the Acts of the Apostles,⁶ when the people, directed by the Apostles, had chosen seven candidates for the office of “ the

*The Acts of
the Apostles*

¹ Council of Trent, sess. 23, can. 4.

² *Sum. Theol., Suppl.*, Q. xxxiv, art. 2, ad 1.

³ John xx 22-23.

⁴ St Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, III, Q. lxiv, art. 3.

⁵ We prescind for the present from the distinction of the various Orders, and confine our examination to Ordination in general.

⁶ vi 6.

daily ministration," "these they set before the Apostles: and they praying, imposed hands upon them."—Later on, when the time appointed by divine Providence for the evangelisation of the Gentile nations had come, "there were in the church which was at Antioch prophets and doctors. . . . And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Ghost said to them: Separate me Saul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have taken them. Then they, fasting and praying and imposing their hands upon them, sent them away."¹ This most probably refers to the episcopal ordination of St Paul and St Barnabas; though all commentators are not agreed on the point. At any rate, we see them, immediately after, going forth on their mission, and appointing presbyters in the Christian communities which they established in the various cities which they evangelised.—"When they had ordained to them priests in every church and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, etc." ■

*Pauline
Epistles*

We turn now to St Paul's Epistles to his disciples Timothy and Titus. These three Epistles were addressed to them to explain the duties of the pastoral office, and to guide them in the discharge of those duties; and in the course of his instructions and exhortations he refers to the ceremony of ordination. He gives to Timothy this admonition: "neglect not the grace that is in thee: which was given thee by prophecy, with the imposition of the hands of the priesthood," or college of presbyters.² Similarly in 2 Timothy i 6: "I admonish thee that thou stir up the grace of God that is in thee by the imposition of my hands." In these words are indicated an external rite, the

¹ Acts, xiii 1-3.

² *Ibid.*, xiv 22. The Greek word here used, which is translated in our version "ordained," is *χειροτονήσαντες*. This word, which certainly later on in the ecclesiastical writings had the definite meaning of imposing hands, did not originally express this idea. The literal or classical meaning of the verb *χειροτονεῖν* was "to extend the hand," especially in the act of voting; just as nowadays a vote is taken in public meetings by a show of hands: whence it came to mean to elect, to appoint, to establish. So in this passage the Vulgate has the Latin word "constituissent," "had appointed." The Greek term for the imposition of hands originally was *χειροθεσία* (*ἐπιθεσις τῶν χειρῶν*), and *χειροθετεῖν*; but in course of time the word *χειροτονία* acquired a more precise signification, and from a more generic and indeterminate term became even more specific than *χειροθεσία*, which was used of "imposition of hands" for any purpose whatever, while *χειροτονία* was reserved exclusively for the episcopal imposition of hands in the Sacrament of Order. As regards the ceremonial by which St Paul and St Barnabas appointed priests in the local churches founded by them, there can be no doubt that it consisted essentially in the imposition of the hands and prayer; for though the word *χειροτονήσαντες* does not of itself and etymologically express the idea of the laying on of hands, nevertheless the very fact that in the second century we find this very idea to be the fully developed and universally accepted signification of the term, becoming gradually more explicit as it descended in direct line from the Apostles, proves that the imposition of hands was implied in the term from the very beginning.

³ 1 Tim. iv 14.

imposition of hands, and an effect of grace produced by the rite. Guided by God through the prophets, St Paul himself had chosen Timothy for the sacred ministry, and he, together with the presbyteral college, had laid hands upon him and thus made him a pastor of the Church. The imposition of the Apostle's hands was the direct instrumental cause¹ of the sacramental effect; but the essential action of the minister of the sacrament was accompanied by the imposition of the hands of the assembled presbyters as accessories or co-operators.² The sacramental effect of grace was something permanently abiding in the soul ("the grace that is in thee"), which could be revived or made active, brought into operation at will. It was a grace which gave a supernatural fitness for the exercise of the pastoral office, and was described by St Paul in the next verse: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of sobriety."³ These were the special graces received by the Christian pastor or bishop to fit him to discharge worthily the arduous duties of his office—fortitude, to profess and teach the faith and to govern the Church amid all the difficulties and dangers which a bishop must necessarily encounter from a hostile world, love of God and of the brethren, and moderation or self-discipline.

In this ceremony, therefore, we find all the elements necessary for a sacrament—the outward sign, the imposition of hands, which of course was always accompanied by appropriate prayer; the competent minister, St Paul himself; and the internal grace which Timothy was admonished to rekindle within himself. Finally, the institution of Christ is implicit through it all, for it was undoubtedly in pursuance of the command of Christ: "Do this for a commemoration of me," that the symbolical imposition of hands was introduced and handed down as an established rite in the Church for the ordination of her ministers; and without the institution of Christ the ceremonial rite could have had no effect of grace.

Another reference by St Paul to the ceremony of ordination is found in the injunction: "Impose not hands lightly upon any man,"⁴ which shows that Timothy had the power to impose hands on others, and so possessed the plenitude of the pastoral or episcopal office.

The only allusion to ordination in the Epistle to Titus is in i 5: "For this cause I left thee in Crete: that thou . . . shouldst ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee." In this passage the original word for "ordain" has only the general sense of appointing, constituting, and does not express the laying on of hands. But it is to be noted that the references to the imposition of hands that occur in the Epistles to Timothy are in a sense casual and accidental. St Paul is not instructing his episcopal delegate *how* to ordain. It is clear that he assumes Timothy's perfect familiarity with the manner of

¹ *διά*, 2 Tim. i 6.

² 2 Tim. i 7.

³ *μερά*, 1 Tim. iv 14.

⁴ 1 Tim. v 22.

ordaining priests, and that in doing so he will perform the ceremony as he has learnt it from his Apostolic chief. And so it is with Titus. He was just as familiar with the ordination ceremony as was Timothy, and needed no instructions from St Paul how to ordain. Hence, when he is told by the Apostle to "ordain priests in every city," it is taken for granted that he will do this in the usual way, as he was ordained himself and had seen others ordained, *i.e.* by the imposition of hands. Indeed, he had already received his instructions in the matter by word of mouth from the Apostle: "as I also appointed thee." This text therefore does furnish good evidence that the Pauline practice and manner of ordination was carried out throughout the whole of the region that was evangelised by the Apostle. In other words, the imposition of hands was the Apostolic tradition.

The Council of Trent therefore teaches: "Since it is clear from the testimony of Scripture, from Apostolic tradition, and from the unanimous consent of the Fathers, that grace is conferred by sacred ordination, which is performed by words and external symbols, no one may doubt that Order is truly and really one of the seven Sacraments of Holy Church. For the Apostle saith: I admonish thee that thou stir up the grace of God which is in thee by the imposition of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear: but of power and of love and of sobriety."¹

B. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy

*Hierarchy
of juris-
diction*

Hitherto we have treated of Ordination in general and as a whole; but now we must consider it in its various grades or degrees, which constitute the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The term *Hierarchy*, meaning sacred rule or government, may be used in several senses. It may denote the whole body of those men in whom is vested the power, authority, and control in sacred things; and as this power or authority is given to various members of the ruling class in various degrees or grades, the Hierarchy is the whole class of those possessing sacred power or authority, organised in their successive grades and ranks. And since the ecclesiastical power is of two kinds, the power of order and the power of jurisdiction,² the term Hierarchy may be used of both these powers. Thus the hierarchy of jurisdiction is

¹ Sess. 23, cap. 3.

² It is true that the power of jurisdiction and the teaching authority are two distinct powers if considered in their essential natures and in the abstract, and so the correct scientific division of ecclesiastical power is into the three powers of jurisdiction, teaching authority, and Order; but when taken in the concrete and in their actual exercise, the teaching authority and the power of jurisdiction are closely connected, and the former implies the latter in respect of the members of the Church. It is usual therefore in practice to divide the ecclesiastical power into two, Order and jurisdiction, instead of into three kinds.

generally understood to consist of the highest class of ecclesiastical rulers, the diocesan bishops, who possess by virtue of their office authority to rule their dioceses as true princes of the Church. It is in this sense that we use the term when we speak of the restoration of the English Hierarchy.

There is also, however, the Hierarchy of Order, which is con-*Hierarchy of Order*stituted by the various degrees or ranks of those who have received the power to effect or to minister those sacred things which are the vehicles of grace to the members of the Church. We have seen earlier how the hierarchy of jurisdiction and the hierarchy of Order largely coincide in the same body of men, *i.e.* the hierarchy of jurisdiction is practically identified with the highest rank in the hierarchy of Order; but the two hierarchies differ in their essential characters and in their powers, as is evident. Of the hierarchy of Order, then, the Council of Trent teaches as follows: "Since the ministry of so holy a priesthood is something that is divine, it is fitting that, in order that it may be more worthily and more reverently exercised, there should be several different Orders of ministers, whose office it is to serve the priesthood." ¹—"The holy Council declares that besides the other ecclesiastical grades, the bishops, who have succeeded to the place of the Apostles, constitute the chief rank in this hierarchical Order; that they have been placed, as the Apostle says, ² by the Holy Ghost to rule the Church of God; and that they are higher than the priests or presbyters." ³ Consequently, "If anyone shall say that there is not in the Catholic Church a hierarchy instituted by divine ordinance, and consisting of bishops, priests, and ministers, let him be anathema": and "If anyone shall say that the bishops are not higher than the priests; or that they have not the power to confirm and ordain; or that they hold this power in common with the priests (presbyters) . . . let him be anathema." ⁴

The ecclesiastical hierarchy, then, consisting of bishops, priests, and deacons (at least), is an institution not merely of Apostolic, but of divine origin; *i.e.* it was not established by the Apostles on their own authority and by their own initiative, in pursuance of their general commission to found the Church; but it was received by them from Our Lord himself. Nevertheless we must not expect to find the hierarchy fully constituted and everywhere functioning normally in the Apostolic times. The first age of the Church was the age of infancy, of the first beginnings, of growth and development. The Church was in the making; and it would be unreasonable to look for the completed organisation, although that organisation already existed in principle and in its original model.

But, in order that we may understand how the hierarchy of Order, *Twofold mission of Apostolic Office* and especially the monarchical Episcopate, came to be firmly established throughout the early Church, we must have a clear conception

¹ Sess. 23, cap. 2.

² Acts xx 28.

³ Sess. 23, cap. 4.

⁴ Sess. 23, cap. 6, 7.

of the nature of the Apostolic office.—After Our divine Saviour had bestowed the fulness of the priesthood on the Apostles at the Last Supper and on Easter Day (as regards the power of forgiving sins), and after he had conferred the Headship of the Apostolic College and of the whole Church upon St Peter,¹ he gave to them their final commission, saying: “All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world”:² and, “You shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth.”³ Here then we see the teaching and ruling Church constituted in the Apostolic College presided over by Christ’s Vicar, St Peter. Moreover, the Apostolate comprised a twofold mission, one to found the Church, and the other to conserve, extend, and govern the Church once founded, and to minister to it unto the consummation of the world. The first mission was extraordinary, temporary, given to the Apostles personally and alone. It was not to be handed on to successors, but was to cease with them. It consisted in two things. The Apostles were first of all constituted promulgators of the whole Christian revelation. They had to form the deposit of the Christian faith, so that the whole body of revealed truth was handed on from them, and no new public revelation was to be expected after they had passed away. Secondly, it was the work of the Apostles to build up the Church according to the design which Christ had drawn for them, and to build it in such manner that it would remain to the end essentially or constitutionally the same as it was in its first foundation.—Now, as this mission was personal to the Apostles themselves and they had no successors in it, so also there was complete equality among them in its possession. I do not say that there was complete equality in the *execution* of their mission; for St Paul, as he himself testifies, “laboured more abundantly than all” the rest.⁴ But all the Apostles possessed equally and without limitation or restriction the prerogative of infallibility in carrying out the divine plan of the Church as Christ had designed it for them, and in contributing to the deposit of the Christian revelation. What each Apostle did in the formation of the deposit and the constitution of the Church possessed identical authority and identical stability. Consequently, when an Apostle in the course of his missionary labours founded a local Church, the very gift of infallibility which he possessed for this work required that he should make it a part of the one ecclesiastical fabric that was being built on the foundation of Peter. In other words, each local Church, as it was founded by an Apostle, was placed by him under the supreme government of St Peter.

¹ John xxi 15-17.² Acts i 8.³ Matt. xxviii 18-20.⁴ I Cor. xv 10.

This brings us to the second part of the Apostolic office, or the second mission contained in it, the Apostles' permanent and ordinary mission, which was to conserve and rule the Church thus established, and to minister in it to the end of time. Since each Apostle in his work of foundation built upon the Rock of Peter, since every part of the Church, as it came to be established, fell automatically under the supreme dominion of the Prince of the Apostles, it follows immediately that in the second part of their mission, viz., in maintaining, ruling, and ministering to the Churches, the Apostles were not all equal, but were subject to their supreme Head. Their jurisdiction or governing authority as individual Apostles was not supreme and independent, as was that of Peter, but subordinate and dependent; nor was it universal, but limited to the particular local Churches which they themselves had founded. "Certainly," says St Gregory the Great in his letter to John, Patriarch of Constantinople, who had roused the indignation of the Pontiff by claiming the title of "Universal Bishop," "Peter, the first of the Apostles, is a member of the holy and universal Church. Paul, Andrew, John, what are they but the heads of particular peoples? and yet they are all members under one head."¹ The Apostles remained bishops of these local Churches until they appointed successors to themselves in those particular sees. Each was at liberty to follow his own methods and frame his own policy in the organisation of the Churches he had established. One Apostle might immediately constitute the monarchical bishop at the head of each local Church, and leave him to govern his flock with full jurisdiction. Another might regard it as necessary or opportune to keep the supreme government of his Churches in his own hands, and rule either through episcopal delegates or through each resident body of presbyters. But, as a matter of history, we know little or nothing of the missionary methods and policy of the Apostles except those of St Peter, St Paul, and St John. We gather from tradition that St Peter ordained St Evodius as his successor in the bishopric of Antioch; and that he sent St Mark to be Bishop of Alexandria, and St Apollinaris Bishop of Ravenna; and it would appear natural that St Peter, since he was the supreme Head of the whole Church, should at once establish the monarchical episcopate, subject to his own supreme jurisdiction, in the Churches founded by himself.

As regards St John, the writers of the second century unanimously attribute to him the establishment of the resident episcopate in Asia Minor. The Churches of that country, after the death of St Paul, became subject to the Apostolic authority of St John; and he, with his headquarters at Ephesus, traversed the neighbouring districts both to appoint bishops and to organise the Churches. We learn from the Apocalypse,² that there were resident bishops at seven at least of the principal cities of Asia Minor; and there is no reason to suppose that the other local Churches had not each a bishop of its

¹ Ed. Maur., 1, 5, ep. 18.

² c. 2.

Establishment of Monarchical Episcopate

St John

own. We know too that St John appointed St Polycarp Bishop of Smyrna.

St Paul

We derive a certain amount of information about St Paul's methods of organisation and government, at least in their chief characteristics, if not in their details, from the Acts of the Apostles and from his Epistles; though the indications leave us in some uncertainty on various points. It is clear, first of all, that he kept in his own hands the government of the Churches which he had evangelised. In 2 Corinthians xi 28, he speaks of "my daily instance, the solicitude for all the Churches." As we have already seen, Paul and Barnabas appointed "priests (Presbyters) in every church";¹ just as they already existed in the Church of Jerusalem.² But it seems certain that St Paul never, as long as he lived, appointed resident bishops for the local Churches. Timothy and Titus were undoubtedly bishops, but they were itinerants, acting as St Paul's delegates and coadjutors wherever he might send them.³ It is true that the term "episcopus," "bishop," is used by St Paul both in the Acts and in the Epistles; but there can be no doubt that the term "episcopus" and the term "presbyter" are used synonymously in the New Testament. Moreover, it is most probable that when they are so used, they are intended to signify not the bishop in our sense of the term, but the second rank in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the simple priest. The fact was that in the first initiation of Christianity, Greek and Latin were the languages of pagan nations, and their words expressed ideas belonging to the ordinary natural human life, or ideas distinctively pagan; so that their terminology had to be adapted to the new and supernatural conceptions which called for expression in the Christian Religion. The selection and adaptation

¹ Acts xiv 22.

² Acts, *passim*; Jas. v 14.

³ Some authorities consider that St Paul definitely appointed St Timothy Bishop of Ephesus, and St Titus Bishop of Crete. If that is so, then we have evidence of an earlier establishment of the monarchical episcopate in two at least of St Paul's Churches. But the evidence is not conclusive. On the contrary, there are good reasons for thinking that St Timothy and St Titus were to the end of St Paul's Apostolate his episcopal delegates and coadjutors. The entire tenor and tone of the Pastoral Epistles suggest very strongly that St Paul was still as much the head as he had ever been, and that the chief pastor was writing to his subordinates. Besides, both had previously been sent by the Apostle on temporary missionary delegations; and it seems clear that these latest appointments of both bishops were meant by St Paul to be equally temporary; for he recalled them both, and sent Tychicus and Artemas to replace them.—"Make haste to come to me quickly. . . . Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry. But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus" (2 Tim. iv 8-12).—And to Titus: "When I shall send to thee Artemas or Tychicus, make haste to come unto me to Nicopolis. For there I have determined to winter" (Titus iii 12). Titus obeyed the summons and accompanied St Paul to Rome; but was sent thence into Dalmatia (2 Tim. iv 10). St Timothy also seems to have gone to Rome to be with St Paul in his last days; but was himself imprisoned, and afterwards released (Heb. xiii 23). He appears to have returned later to Ephesus as its diocesan bishop.

of the most appropriate terms for these Christian ideas naturally required time. Hence during the Apostolic age the terminology was in great measure in a fluid state, and only gradually settled down and became crystallised. What we therefore do find in St Paul's organisation of the Churches, is that he constituted everywhere a body of presbyters to the charge of the local congregation, and also appointed deacons to serve the Church. His episcopal delegates Timothy and Titus were also instructed to ordain priests and deacons. But over them all St Paul himself was the one bishop and pastor.

By the end of the first century, *i.e.* the end of the Apostolic age, both the hierarchical terminology and the offices themselves were everywhere definitely determined and established. This very rapid development throughout the Church shows that it took place by virtue of Apostolic ordinances, the Apostles having made provision, according to the essential constitution of the Church delivered to them by Christ himself, for the monarchical bishops to rule the Churches in succession to themselves. St Clement of Rome in his first epistle to the Corinthians (about A.D. 95) writes: "Our Apostles knew through Our Lord Jesus Christ that strife would arise about the name of the episcopate. Wherefore, endowed with perfect foreknowledge, they appointed the aforesaid, and then issued an ordinance that when they had passed away, other well-tryed men should succeed to the sacerdotal office (*λειτουργίαν*)." ¹ Some years later, the letters of St Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, who was martyred in A.D. 107, reveal the hierarchy of bishops, priests, and deacons in full working order. St Ignatius is so important and valuable a witness to Apostolic tradition in this matter that his testimony must be quoted here.—"That, perfect in one obedience, subject to the bishop and the presbyterate, you may be in all things sanctified." ²—"Your commendable presbyterate, worthy of God, is united with the bishop as the strings with the lyre." ³—"Since then I have been deemed worthy to see you through your bishop, Damas, worthy of God, and your worthy priests Bassus and Apollonius, and my fellow-servant, Zotion, in whom I would fain have joy, because he is subject to the bishop as to the benignity of God, and to the presbyterate as to the law of Jesus Christ." ⁴—"I exhort you to strive to perform all things, the bishop presiding in the place of God, and the priests in the place of the Apostolic College, and the deacons most dear to me, to whom is committed the ministry of Jesus Christ." ⁵—"It is necessary, as in fact you do, to do nothing without the bishop, and to be subject to the presbyterate as to the Apostles of Jesus Christ. The deacons also, who are the ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, should do all they can to please all. For they are not the ministers of food and drink, but ministers of the Church of God. . . . Let all likewise reverence the deacons as they would Jesus Christ; the

¹ n. xlv.² Ep. to the Ephesians ii.³ *Ibid.* iv.⁴ To the Magnesians ii.⁵ *Ibid.* vi.

bishop also, who is the figure of the Father, and the priests as the senate of God and the council of the Apostles. Without these there is no Church. I am convinced that these are your sentiments in these matters." ¹—"I salute the Church of Philadelphia . . . especially if they are united with the bishop and his priests and deacons who have been appointed according to the will of Christ." ²—"Strive to use one Eucharist: for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one chalice in the unity of his blood, one altar, as there is one bishop with the presbyterate and deacons." ³—"I cried with a loud voice, the voice of God: Obey the bishop, the presbyterate, and the deacons." ⁴—"Obey the bishop as Jesus Christ did the Father, and the presbyterate as the Apostles, reverence the deacons as the command of God." ⁵—"I salute the bishop, the presbyterate, and the deacons." ⁶—"I am ready to lay down my life for those who are obedient to the bishop, presbyterate, the deacons." ⁷

Bishops succeed Apostles in ordinary mission

The bishops are the successors of the Apostles, as we are taught by the Fathers of the Church and by the Council of Trent.⁸ They do not, however, succeed the Apostles in their mission of *founding* the Church, but in their office of ruling and governing the Church as its ordinary pastors. Our divine Lord did not give two constitutions to his Church, one for the Apostolic age only, and the other to come into force only when the Apostles had passed away. He gave it one constitution, which was embodied first in his Apostles, and after them in their successors. This was certainly the view of St Thomas Aquinas, who wrote in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*:⁹ "To Peter alone he made the promise: ¹⁰ To thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, in order to show that the power of the keys was to be received by others from him, so as to safeguard the unity of the Church. It cannot be said that, although he conferred this dignity on Peter, it does not pass from him to others. For it is evident that Christ so instituted his Church, that it would endure to the end of the world. . . . Hence it is evident that those who were then in the ministry (*i.e.* the Apostles), he appointed in such wise that their power was, for the good of the Church, to be transmitted to their successors until the end of time."

Divine Constitution of the Church

When, therefore, Our Lord ascended into heaven, he had already instituted his Church and given to it its constitution, the most important element of which was the Apostolic College with Peter at its Head. This, with the divine ordinance to constitute priests and deacons as the lower orders of the hierarchy, was the divine model of the Hierarchy of the Church for all time. The supreme power, whether of Order or government or teaching, resided in the Head,

¹ To the Trallians ii, iii.

² *Ibid.* iv.

³ To the Smyrnians viii.

⁴ To Polycarp vi.

⁵ I, iv, c. 76.

⁶ To the Philadelphians i.

⁷ *Ibid.* vii.

⁸ *Ibid.* xii.

⁹ Sess. 23, c. 4; see above, p. 1035.

¹⁰ Matt. xvi 19.

St Peter, and in the Apostolic College as such with their Head ; and to this succeeded and succeeds the Pope, and the Pope with the whole body of the bishops, the successors of the Apostles, whether assembled in General Council, or dispersed throughout the world. On the other hand, the individual Apostles (other than Peter) governed those local sees which they founded, with a limited jurisdiction,¹ which they handed on to the local resident bishops who succeeded them in those sees. They also ordained priests and deacons to serve the Churches ; and thus was established the hierarchy of bishops, priests, and deacons, which the Council of Trent has defined to belong to the essential constitution of the Church as instituted by Jesus Christ. Thus also was preserved in the Church for all time the office of the Apostolate, viz., in the Apostolic See of Peter and in the whole body of the Catholic bishops subject to that See. Hence Cardinal Baronius in his *Annales Ecclesiastici* (for the year 58) thus comments on the assertion of St Jerome and the other Fathers that the bishops are the successors of the Apostles : ² “ If the bishops have succeeded to the place of the Apostles (as all Catholics are agreed), the origin and dignity of the Episcopate are the same as of the Apostolate.”

¹ The difference of St Paul's tone in his Epistle to the Romans from that of the Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians, for example, is remarkable. In the latter he speaks as a true episcopal ruler and superior, teaching, legislating, commanding, rebuking, threatening, punishing. But he makes no claim of jurisdiction over the Romans. He rather “ takes good care, throughout the whole Letter, to treat with respectful reserve this Christian body, upon which he had no claims either as their Founder or their Evangelist, excusing himself for his boldness in writing to them, limiting his projected ministry in their city to ‘ visiting them on the way ’ when he shall start out on his journey Spainward, in order to enjoy the consolations of their society. One humble wish sums up all his ambition so far as they are concerned : ‘ God is my witness how unceasingly I remember you, evermore beseeching him in my prayers that, if it be his will, he would now at length afford me some favourable opportunity to come unto you, for I feel ■ great need of seeing you, to make you partakers of some spiritual gift ’ (i 9-11).” (Fouard, *St Paul and His Missions*, pp. 329-30). He informs them that his Apostolic labours have been devoted only to those regions which had not been evangelised and where Christ was unknown ; and he disclaims any intention of trespassing on the mission-field of another Apostle, “ lest I should build upon another man's foundation ” (xv 20).

² It is true that the Apostles exercised, even in Churches already well established, certain powers of jurisdiction which far surpassed the powers of an ordinary diocesan bishop. For instance, they appointed bishops to dioceses, or laid down the method of choosing future bishops ; and they also exercised a pastoral superintendence over whole provinces and countries. Thus St Jerome relates that St John, when residing at Ephesus, ruled all the Churches of Asia. These, however, were extraordinary powers possessed by the Apostles in their capacity as *founders* of the Church, and as Apostolic vicars of St Peter. A similar power was exercised later by the Patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria (both Patriarchates having originated from St Peter), who also appointed the bishops of their provinces, and possessed super-episcopal rights of jurisdiction over them and their dioceses. These powers the Patriarchs certainly held as delegates of the Supreme Pontiff.

§ IV: THE ONE PRIESTHOOD (SACERDOTIUM):
THE EPISCOPATE AND THE PRESBYTERATE

A. The One Priesthood

THE Hierarchy of Order, then, is constituted of "bishops, priests, and ministers." Now we must take a step farther. The Council of Trent also teaches as follows: "Since the ministry of so holy a priesthood is something divine, it was fitting, in order that it might be exercised more worthily and with greater reverence, that in the most orderly organisation of the Church there should be several orders of ministers, whose office it is to serve the priesthood; these orders being so distributed that those who had received the clerical tonsure, should pass through the minor orders to the major orders. For the sacred Scriptures mention expressly not only *priests*, but *deacons* also; and teach in most grave terms those things which have to be especially observed in their ordination. And from the very beginning of the Church the names of the following Orders, with the ministerial functions proper to each, are known to have been in use, viz., of the Subdeacon, Acolyte, Exorcist, Lector, and Porter. But these are not equal in degree, for the Subdeacon is classed by the Fathers and Councils among the major Orders."¹

Here then we have on the one hand the Hierarchy of "bishops, priests, and ministers," and, on the other hand, the Priesthood, with six attendant Orders of ministers from the Diaconate downwards. We shall treat directly of the six Orders of the Ministry in the next section. The point now is that while there are the two degrees of bishops and priests or presbyters in the Hierarchy of Order, yet the Council mentions only one Order of Priesthood. In this, as we shall see, there is no contradiction or inconsistency. What concerns us at the moment is this, that the Christian Priesthood, like the Priesthood of Christ himself, is one and only one. For "Sacrifice and Priesthood are so intimately related to each other by divine ordinance, that both exist under every law. Since therefore in the New Testament the Catholic Church received from the institution of Christ the holy visible Sacrifice of the Eucharist, it necessarily follows that she possesses also a new visible and external Priesthood, into which the priesthood of the Old Law was translated."² Hence St Thomas Aquinas lays down the principle that the Sacrament of Order exists for the Sacrament and Sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist, and that the primary and essential act of the Christian Priesthood is the consecration and oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ. The power of consecrating the Holy Eucharist and of offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice, therefore, is the essential power of the Priesthood; and since this power is one and indivisible, the Christian Priesthood also

¹ Sess. 23, cap. 2.

² Council of Trent, sess. 23, cap. 1.

is one and indivisible, so that all who have received sacerdotal ordination equally possess the order and power of the Priesthood in its substantial essence. Consequently the Council of Trent presents the Priesthood (sacerdotium) to us as the supreme Order, to which all the others, major and minor Orders, lead up as so many steps, and for which they all exist.¹ St Thomas therefore draws from his principle the conclusion that the Episcopate is not, strictly speaking, an Order distinct from the Presbyterate, because the bishop has not a higher power than the simple priest to consecrate and to offer the Holy Eucharist. In other words, there is one Order of the Christian Priesthood, the Sacerdotium.

B. The Episcopate and the Presbyterate

It is nevertheless equally true that there are two divinely instituted degrees in the Sacerdotium, the Episcopate and the Presbyterate, the bishops and the simple priests; and it is of faith that the bishops hold in the ecclesiastical hierarchy a superior rank to that of the simple priests.² This has been made sufficiently clear already in the previous section, when treating of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, at any rate as regards the power of jurisdiction. But the Episcopate holds a pre-eminence above the simple priesthood in the power of Order also. It is true that the essential act of the Priesthood is to consecrate and to offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and that in this the Episcopate possesses no superiority. But the continuance and permanence of this essential priestly power is exceedingly important, and even vital, for the Church, and this permanence is secured according to Christ's institution in the Episcopate alone. Only the bishop can transmit to others the power to consecrate the Holy Eucharist. The bishop, as the successor of the Apostles, has the power to generate sons like unto himself in the priesthood, so that he holds to the simple priest the relation of Father in God, and, in the words of St Jerome, "What Aaron and his sons were in the temple, that are the bishops and the priests in the Church."³ The bishop, too, as the prince of the Church, has the power to enrol soldiers in the army of Christ as the ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation, and he alone can consecrate churches and other sacred things. The bishop, therefore, for all these reasons, but chiefly of course because he possesses the power of handing on the priesthood, is superior to the simple priest in the sacramental power of Order.

His distinctive power, though of the greatest importance, is not the essential power to consecrate the Holy Eucharist, but is subsidiary to it. It is an extension and complement of the Presbyterate, and so it does not constitute a distinct Order. But it is a power essentially connected with the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, for it

¹ Sess. 23, can. 2.

² Council of Trent, sess. 23, can. 7.

³ Ep. 146 to Evangelus.

is the power to hand on the power to consecrate, and consequently it forms a superior rank within the Order of the Priesthood. St Robert Bellarmine says in this connection: "The Episcopate is one Order with the Presbyterate; but they are different grades. For Orders are reckoned according to their relation to the Eucharist; and because the highest power with regard to the Eucharist is the power of consecrating it, the first Order is the Priesthood, *i.e.* the Order of those who have the power to consecrate the Eucharist; nor can any other Order greater than or superior to this be conceived. But because this power is shared by bishops and priests in different ways, there are therefore two grades of priests. The simple priests (presbyters) are dependent on the bishops in the consecration of the Eucharist, at least as regards the exercise of the power; for the bishops can forbid them to consecrate, or suspend them temporarily, or command them to celebrate at such a time and place, and in such a way. Besides, simple priests do not so possess this power that they can transmit it to others; but bishops both possess the power and can transmit it to others."¹

*Two ranks
in one Order*

The Catechism of the Council of Trent teaches the same doctrine: "These are the chief functions of the Sacerdotal Order, which, *although it is one*, has different degrees of dignity and power. The first degree is that of the simple priests. . . . The second is that of the bishops, etc."²

There are indeed theologians who would prefer to call the Episcopate a distinct Order from the Presbyterate; who nevertheless understand the matter precisely as we have explained it above. To dispute about mere terms would be futile. But it certainly seems more correct to speak of two degrees or ranks in the same Order of the Sacerdotium, than of two Orders which are not adequately distinct from each other.

So far we have described the relations of the Episcopate and the Presbyterate according to the common view of the Scholastics and the practice of the Church. For it is a fact that in actual practice no one is consecrated to the Episcopate who has not already been ordained priest, and consequently that the Episcopate does not actually confer the essential power of the priesthood, but only those additional and complementary powers which have already been enumerated as proper to the Episcopate. Those who hold this view maintain further that previous ordination to the Presbyterate is essential to the Episcopate, so that the episcopal consecration of one who was not already a priest would be null and void; for the conferment of the extension or complement of a spiritual power is not conceivable, if that power does not already exist in the recipient. This is certainly the general view of the theologians; and, as we have said, it is confirmed by the universal practice of the Church. There are some, however, especially among the canonists, who regard the Episcopate as an Order

¹ *De Ordine*, cap. v.

² *The Sacrament of Order*, No. 26.

entirely distinct from the Presbyterate ; so distinct indeed, that it does not even presuppose, of its own nature, ordination to the priesthood. In other words, the Episcopate, in this view, is the *whole* priesthood, and of itself confers the whole priestly power, or would confer it if it happened (quite unlawfully, to say the least) that someone were consecrated bishop without previous ordination to the priesthood : the Episcopate is the whole, and the Presbyterate is a part contained in it. The ground on which this opinion is based is the supposed historical fact of episcopal consecrations in the early ages which were not preceded by ordination to the priesthood, *i.e.* there exists no record of such ordination. They instance the Apostles themselves ; but the Apostles did not receive their episcopal power by means of the Sacrament of Order. They received it supersacramentally from Our Lord himself. The only other argument used is that from silence, which is inconclusive and treacherous. We have therefore deemed it unnecessary and undesirable to depart from the common view and the common practice, which enumerates seven Orders, culminating in the Priesthood or Sacerdotium.

Whichever of these views be accepted of the distinction of the Episcopate and Presbyterate from the point of view of Order, there can be no dispute as to their sacramental nature.¹ Let us take the Presbyterate first. The Priesthood or Presbyterate, which consists in the essential power of the Sacrament of Order, *viz.*, the power to consecrate the Holy Eucharist and to absolve from sins, is, beyond all controversy, a Sacrament. It is the very heart of the Sacrament of Order. It is for this power that all the other powers of Order exist, even the power of the Episcopate, for that in its essence is the power to hand on and perpetuate the power of consecration.—Moreover, the Presbyterate possesses the three elements that are required to constitute a sacrament—outward sign, institution by Christ, and the power to produce sanctifying grace in the soul of the recipient. The outward sign exists, *i.e.* the external ceremonial rite by which the priesthood is conferred ;² the institution by Christ has already been proved from Scripture, from Apostolic Tradition, and from the definition of the Council of Trent ;³ and finally, the ordination rite confers sanctifying grace, because, as St Thomas argues, “The works of God are perfect ;⁴ and consequently whoever receives power from above receives also those things that render him competent to exercise that power. This is also the case in natural things, since animals are provided with members, by which their soul’s powers are enabled to proceed to their respective actions unless there be some defect on the part of matter. Now just as sanctifying grace

*Sacramental
nature of
Episcopate
and Presby-
terate*

¹ Some theologians, by a certain confusion of thought, have identified the terms “Order” and “Sacrament” in reference to the Episcopate, arguing that if the Episcopate were not a separate Order, it would not be a Sacrament. This is not so, as will be made clear.

² Cf. below, pp. 1053 ff.

³ Sess. 23, can. 1 and 6.

⁴ Deut. xxxii 4.

is necessary in order that man may receive the sacraments worthily, so is it that he may dispense them worthily. Wherefore as in Baptism, whereby a man is adapted to receive the other sacraments, sanctifying grace is given, so is it in the sacrament of Order whereby man is ordained to the dispensation of the other sacraments.”¹

Moreover, the Council of Trent defines that “by sacred ordination the Holy Ghost is given; and therefore the bishops do not say in vain *Receive the Holy Ghost*.”² The Presbyterate is therefore a Sacrament.

The Episcopate too, though it is not a distinct Order from the Presbyterate, is also a Sacrament. For it is the complement, the fulness, the consummation of the Sacerdotium, conferring a distinct power in reference to the Holy Eucharist, viz., that of transmitting the power of consecration (as well as the power to perform other hierarchical functions), by means of an external rite, which also confers grace. All this has already been proved above.

The Presbyterate and the Episcopate, however, are not two distinct Sacraments, nor (to express the same thing in other words) do they produce in the soul two distinct sacramental characters. The Presbyterate gives the essential character of the Sacerdotium; but it is an incomplete, imperfect, immature character, because it is incapable of reproducing and perpetuating itself. The Episcopate amplifies and perfects the character of the Presbyterate, giving to it that further power which was lacking to its fulness and completeness. Hence the Sacrament of Order is one, and the character of Order is one; and they exist in their ultimate perfection in the bishop, who possesses the plenitude of the Sacerdotium.

In the view of those who would prefer to hold that the Episcopate does not presuppose the Presbyterate, and contains in itself the whole Sacerdotium, the rite of episcopal consecration would be in itself the complete and perfect Sacrament of Order, and would produce the complete and perfect character of the Sacerdotium; while the Presbyterate would be only an imperfect participation of the Sacrament and of the character of the Episcopate.

But whichever view we may elect to take, the Sacrament of Order is one, and the character of Order is one; and the Episcopate in the concrete is the plenitude of the Christian Priesthood. The canonists and theologians who maintain that the Episcopate, though it necessarily presupposes the Presbyterate, which it completes and perfects, is a distinct Order, hold as a consequence that it confers a new and distinct character. This is probably, as we have already suggested,

¹ *Suppl.*, Q. xxxv, art. 1.

² Sess. 23, can. 4. This does not mean that the words “Receive the Holy Ghost” constitute the *form* of the Sacrament of Order; but that the ordination rite which contains those words does actually have the effect of giving the Holy Ghost and sanctifying grace. Since the words “Receive the Holy Ghost” occur in the ordination rites of bishop, priest, and deacon, this argument applies equally to all these three ordinations.

merely a difference of opinion about the more correct form of expression, as certainly appears to be the case with St Robert Bellarmine,¹ who prefers to say that the Episcopate confers a new character.—But if the dispute is about realities, and if it is contended that two distinct and disparate characters are necessary for the fulness of the Sacerdotium, it may perhaps be difficult to defend the unity of the Sacrament of Order.

§ V: THE INFERIOR OR MINISTERIAL ORDERS

WE have now to consider the various Orders of the Ministry. The term “Ministry” (and “Ministers”) is now used not in the sense in which even priests and bishops are ministers—“Ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God,” like St Paul.² It is the Ministry as distinguished from the Sacerdotium, the Ministers whose official duty it is to serve the priest or bishop in the discharge of their sacerdotal functions. The teaching of the Council of Trent on the subject of the Ministry has already been quoted:—first, that the divinely instituted hierarchy of Order consists of bishops, priests, and *ministers*,³ and secondly, that the Orders of Ministers are the Deacons, Subdeacons, Acolytes, Exorcists, Lectors, and Porters.⁴

A. The Diaconate

The word “Deacon” means “minister,” and the Diaconate may *In the New Testament* be described as the plenitude of the ministry (in the sense of the word explained above).—It is narrated in Acts vi that “In those days, the number of the disciples increasing, there arose a murmuring of the Greeks against the Hebrews, for that their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve, calling together the multitude of the disciples, said: It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And the saying was liked by all the multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip and Prochorus and Nicanor, and Timon and Parmenas and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the Apostles: and they praying, imposed hands upon them.”⁵

This is the first recorded ordination of Deacons. We learn, first of all, what was the *occasion* of this ordination. It was to take charge of the temporal administration of the goods of the Church. The first Christians of Jerusalem were living a common life. “As many

¹ *Loc. cit.*

² 1 Cor. iv 1.

³ Sess. 23, can. 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, cap. 2 and can. 2.

⁵ 1-6.

as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the price of the things they sold, and laid it down before the feet of the Apostles. And distribution was made to every one according as he had need.”¹ In order therefore that the Apostles themselves might not be distracted by temporal cares from their much more important spiritual duties, men were chosen to administer the common goods, and to see that none went in need. These men constituted a class of sacred ministers, subject to the Apostles ; and it was only fitting that the temporalities of the Church should be administered by a special class of officers of the Church.

But this material ministry was not their only, or their highest office. Had it been so, the Apostles would hardly have made it a condition that they should be “ full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom ” ; nor would they have dignified their appointment with a solemn religious ceremony. Moreover, the Christian tables were closely associated with the “ agape,” and through the “ agape ” with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.² Furthermore, we find the Deacons Stephen and Philip (the others receive no further mention) immediately engaged in the work of preaching the Gospel, instructing converts, and baptising. The Deacons, then, formed a class of sacred ministers instituted to serve the Apostles not only in material affairs, but also in their spiritual functions. St Paul associates them with the Bishops as a class distinct from the general body of the faithful ;³ and describes the virtues and qualities that are to be required of them.⁴

The writings of the Apostolic Fathers confirm and clarify the indications which are given in the New Testament. We read in the *Didache* or *Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles* :⁵ “ Meeting on Sunday, break bread and give thanks, after you have confessed your sins, that your sacrifice may be pure. Let no one who is in disagreement with his friend join you until he is reconciled, lest your sacrifice be sullied. For the Lord has said : ‘ In every place and time let there be offered to me a clean sacrifice, for I am a great King, saith the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the Gentiles.’ ”⁶ Appoint *therefore* among you bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men of meekness, unselfish, truthful, honourable : for they minister to you the ministry of the prophets and doctors. Do not, then, despise them : for they have been honoured among you together with the prophets and doctors.”⁷—In this passage we have a testimony from the Apostolic age both to the Sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist, and to the active ministry which was assigned to the deacons in that Sacrifice.

St Clement of Rome⁸ declares : “ The Apostles were made preachers of the Gospel to us by the Lord Jesus Christ ; Jesus Christ was sent from God, and the Apostles from Christ ; and both these

¹ Acts iv 34-35.⁴ 1 Tim. iii 8-13.⁷ xiv-xv.² See 1 Cor. xi 20 ff.⁵ A.D. 80-100.⁸ 1st Ep. to the Corinthians, about A.D. 93-95.³ Phil. i 1.⁶ Malachy i 11.

things were done in order according to the will of God. Having therefore received their commands, and being fully convinced through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and trusting in the word of God, with sure confidence in the Holy Ghost, they went forth announcing the coming of the kingdom of God. Preaching the word, therefore, through the countries and cities, they appointed their first converts, having proved them in the spirit, the bishops and deacons of the future believers. Nor was this a new institution; for many centuries before it was written of bishops and deacons. For thus says the Scripture in a certain place: 'I will appoint their bishops in justice and their deacons in faith.' This clearly shows that Pope Clement attributed the episcopate and the diaconate equally to divine institution.

We have already seen ¹ that St Ignatius of Antioch places the Deacons in the third rank of the ecclesiastical hierarchy; and teaches that to them "is committed the ministry of Jesus Christ"; that they "are the ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ; for they are not ministers of food and drink, but ministers of the Church of God"; and that without the deacons, the bishops, and the priests, "there is no Church," *i.e.* they belong to the essential constitution of the Church, and are therefore of divine institution; as appears also from his exhortation to reverence the deacons because they are the "command of God," and "have been appointed according to the will of Christ."—Similarly, St Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna († 166), writes that "the deacons must be faultless before the justice of God, as the ministers of God and Christ, and not of men."²

In this connection one can hardly omit the testimony of the great Martyr Deacon, St Laurence († 258), as recorded by St Ambrose († 397). Laurence, the Archdeacon of Rome, meets Pope Sixtus on the way to martyrdom, and thus addresses him: "Whither are you going, my father, without your son? Whither do you hasten without your deacon? You were never accustomed to offer the Sacrifice without your minister."

A favourite name of the ancient Fathers for the Deacon was that of "levite"; and they compared the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the New Testament with that of the Old. Thus St Clement of Rome in the first century: "The high priest has his proper functions; to the priests their place is assigned; and the levites discharge their ministry."³ And St Jerome in the fifth century in his letter to Evangelus: "That we may know the Apostolic traditions taken from the Old Testament: what Aaron and his sons and the levites were in the temple, that the bishops and priests and deacons are in the Church."

Apostolic tradition therefore presents to us the Diaconate as a *Office and divine institution of Diaconate* sacred ministry, whose principal functions are attendance on the bishop in the offering of the holy Sacrifice, the distribution of the

¹ pp. 1039-1040.

² To the Philippians v.

³ 1st Ep. to the Corinthians xl 5.

Holy Eucharist, the administration of baptism, and the reading and preaching of the Gospel; and further, it attests that the Diaconate is a divine institution.

An interesting suggestion

An interesting suggestion has been made that the seven Deacons whose ordination is narrated in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, were not the first to be appointed to that office. It is to be noted that the occasion of the election of these seven deacons was the dissatisfaction of the Greek or Hellenist converts with the treatment which their widows received in the daily ministrations. Their complaint was that the Hebrews received more favourable consideration. Already, in c. 4, v. 4, the number of men alone in the Christian community had reached 5000; and they were constantly receiving additions to their ranks. Among these the Hebrews would naturally be in the majority. Moreover, the disciples had everything in common, so that the daily ministrations were necessarily an official service. It seems reasonable then to conclude that even if the Twelve had performed this duty themselves, they would have been compelled to call in others to their assistance. But we are further told that when the Hellenists complained of unfair treatment, the Apostles replied that it was not fitting that they should leave the word of God and serve tables. Their work was a spiritual one, prayer and the ministry of the word.¹ So, obviously, they had not themselves been engaged hitherto in this work of food distribution, but had entrusted it to subordinate officers. These officers would naturally have been chosen from the Hebrews; and it was their alleged favouritism of which complaint was made by the Hellenists. Confirmation of this is found in the fact that the seven Deacons chosen in c. vi, were themselves all Hellenists, as is proved by their very names, which are all Greek. The appointment of seven Hellenist deacons for the whole community, the majority of whose members were Hebrews, could scarcely be justified, and would undoubtedly have been a fruitful source of further discontent and dissension, this time on the part of the Hebrews. These considerations are singularly strengthened by a variant reading, or probably a gloss, of the Codex Bezae (sixth century), which in c. vi, 1, has "in the daily ministrations (diaconia) of the Hebrews"; and the Palimpsest of Fleury (fifth or sixth century) reads as follows: "that the widows of the Hellenists were neglected in the daily ministrations by the deacons of the Hebrews." We may then reasonably conclude that the suggestion that other deacons already existed when the seven were appointed for the Greeks, is neither new nor unsupported by evidence.

B. The Subdiaconate and the Minor Orders

We pass on now to the Subdiaconate and the Minor Orders. The position with regard to these is not quite the same as that of the Diaconate. It is of faith that the Diaconate belongs by divine

¹ vi 2, 4; cf. v 42.

institution to the ecclesiastical hierarchy ; and the proposition that the Diaconate belongs also by divine institution to the Sacrament of Order, if not a doctrine of faith, is only one step removed from it ; in other words, it is certain theologically. But it is freely disputed among theologians whether the Subdiaconate and the Minor Orders are or are not parts of the Sacrament of Order. St Thomas Aquinas and most of the early Scholastics, as well as many of the more modern theologians, hold that they do form part of the Sacrament. Others with the great majority of modern theologians teach that the Subdiaconate and the Minor Orders are only ceremonies instituted by the Church, and have not the nature of a Sacrament. We will give the arguments of both sides in the discussion, and will leave the reader to form his own considered opinion on the point.

It is common ground that these Orders do not appear in ecclesiastical history till about the middle of the third century ; and it is certain that in the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic times bishops, priests, and deacons were the only ministers of the Church. As an immediate consequence, those who hold the negative view infer that the Subdiaconate and the Minor Orders are not Sacraments, on the principle that the Church has not the power to institute Sacraments. The reply to this argument is that there is no question of the institution of Sacraments by the Church. St Thomas explains the matter thus : " In the early Church, on account of the fewness of the ministers, all the lower ministries were entrusted to the deacons. . . . Nevertheless all the said powers existed, but implicitly in the one power of the deacon. But afterwards divine worship developed ; and the Church transmitted explicitly in several Orders that which had hitherto existed implicitly in one Order. This is what the Master (Peter Lombard) means when he says in the text that the Church instituted other Orders." ¹ The full ministry of the Diaconate comprises all the various services, both remote and proximate, that may be required for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass ; and as these various services are of their nature distinct and separable, the Church, when the exigencies of public worship called for it, separated them and committed them to distinct persons, who thus constituted the lower Orders of the Ministry, the plenitude of which remained in the Diaconate. This, it is contended, is not to institute a Sacrament ; and, in this view, it is not necessary that the Minor Orders should be of the same character and number at all times and in all parts of the Church.

But, further, it is denied that the Church possesses this power of separating the various ministries, because she would have to institute the ceremonial rites by which these various Orders are conferred ; and the Church cannot determine the matter and form of a Sacrament.—On this point the exponents of the affirmative view have much to say ; but as we shall meet it again in the next section on the matter

¹ *Suppl.*, Q. xxxvii, art. 2, ad. 2.

and form of the Sacrament of Order, we may now postpone its consideration.

It remains now only to mention the arguments from authority. Thus, the Decree for the Armenians, published in the Council of Florence by Pope Eugenius IV (A.D. 1439), which, though probably not an *ex cathedra* definition, is a practical instruction on doctrine emanating from the highest teaching authority of the Church, and as such is a theological document of the first rank,¹ has the following on the Sacrament of Order: "The sixth Sacrament is Order, whose matter is that thing by the handing of which the Order is conferred; as the priesthood is given by the handing of the chalice with wine, and the paten with bread; the diaconate by the giving of the book of the Gospels; the subdiaconate by the handing of the empty chalice with the empty paten upon it; and *in like manner the other Orders (i.e. the Minor Orders)*, by the presentation of the things that appertain to their respective ministries."

Furthermore, the Council of Trent, while admitting it had no intention of authoritatively deciding the theological controversy in question, appears to use language which favours the affirmative opinion. Thus in sess. 23, c. 2, the Council enumerates the seven Orders, including the Subdiaconate and the Minor Orders; in canon 2 it defines that besides the priesthood there are in the Church other Orders, both major and minor; in canon 3 that Order or sacred ordination is truly and literally a Sacrament instituted by Christ; in canon 6 that there exists in the Church the divinely instituted hierarchy, consisting of bishops, priests, and *ministers* (the word *deacons* is not used, when it might just as easily, and with even more propriety, have been used, if deacons only were meant); and finally in chap. 2 it teaches that there are "several different *orders of ministers*."

Nevertheless, the question is an open one, and we leave it so. But whichever view is preferred, it remains true that the inferior ministries represented by the Subdiaconate and the Minor Orders are all contained supereminently in the Diaconate; and consequently that, even if those Orders are admitted to possess and confer each a sacramental character, those characters are not something extrinsic to the Diaconate, but are implicitly contained in it, and when the Diaconate is actually received, are absorbed into the sacramental character of the plenitude of the ministry.

Moreover, the Diaconate itself, the plenitude of the ministry, is not a power independent of the priesthood (sacerdotium). Indeed, the Diaconate does not confer a *power* in the strict sense of the term. It commits to the recipient a *ministry* to be exercised *ex officio*. All therefore that is conferred by the Diaconate is contained supereminently in the Priesthood; for if the priest can *offer* the holy Sacrifice, he can *a fortiori* minister to another who is offering it. Hence the character of the Diaconate is contained in, incorporated

¹ This question also will recur below, p. 1058.

into, the character of the Priesthood. And since we have shown the sacramental unity of the Priesthood and the Episcopate, it follows that the unity of the Sacrament of Order is established, no matter how many and diverse may be the Orders which it includes.

§ VI: THE MATTER AND FORM OF ORDER

IT may be thought that this question has already been decided in section III, *A*, when the Apostolic Ordinations were discussed; for there we saw that bishops, priests, and deacons were all ordained by the imposition of hands with prayer. It seems reasonable therefore to conclude that we have here the matter and form of the Sacrament of Order. But the question is not to be settled quite so simply. There is indeed a certain amount of common ground in this controversy. It is admitted on both sides (1) that the imposition of hands was the original and sole matter of the priesthood, etc., dating back to the time of the Apostles; (2) that the ceremony of the imposition of hands has always and everywhere been retained in the sacramental rite throughout the universal Church down to the present day; (3) that the Oriental Rites have retained the imposition of hands as the *only* matter of the Sacrament down to the present time, with the sole exception of the Armenian Rite, which borrowed the tradition of the instruments from the Latin Rite about or after the middle of the twelfth century; (4) that the Latin Rite itself did not possess the ceremony of the tradition of the instruments until certainly the tenth century; and until that time the imposition of hands was the only matter of the Sacrament in the Western as well as in the Eastern Church.

But from that date in the Latin Church the ordination rites gradually expanded and developed by the addition of other significant ceremonies, which both enhanced the solemnity of the occasion, and especially brought out more clearly the sacramental symbolism. One ceremony in particular was introduced into the ordination rites of the priesthood and the diaconate, which vividly expressed the power to be conferred; and this ceremony was the tradition or handing to the candidate of the things used in the exercise of the Order in question—the chalice with wine and the paten with bread for the priesthood, and the book of the Gospels for the diaconate, together with a form of words signifying the power conferred by the ordination. By the thirteenth century the tradition of the instruments had been universally adopted throughout the Latin Church; so much so that the Scholastics began to teach that this tradition of the instruments with the respective form of words belonged to the sacramental matter and form.

The question then arises: Was the imposition of hands in the Latin Church deposed from its status as the matter of the Sacrament

¹ Cardinal Van Rossum, *De Essentia Sacramenti Ordinis*, nn. 242 ff.

Common ground in the controversy

The tradition of the instruments

The Church and the "substance" of the sacraments

by the tradition of the instruments? *Could* it have been so deposed?—These questions can be answered with certainty only when we have settled the controverted point whether the Church has the power to interfere with the matter and form of the Sacraments. That the Church *has* power over the Sacraments is undoubted, and was taught by the Council of Trent. But the difficulty is to define the precise extent of that power. “The Council declares that the Church has always possessed the power in the *dispensation (or administration)* of the Sacraments, *saving their substance*, to determine or to change those things which it judges to be more expedient for the utility of the recipients or for the reverence due to the Sacraments themselves, according to the diversity of the circumstances of time, place, etc.”¹ “*Saving their substance.*”

What does this mean or involve?—First of all, since Christ Our Lord alone could institute Sacraments, and what he did is inviolate and immutable, if he determined the matter and the form of the Sacraments specifically and definitely, the Church has no power to change them. It is admitted on all hands that this is true of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. Our Lord chose water for the matter of Baptism, bread for the matter of the Holy Eucharist; and nothing else can ever be admitted. Similarly, he made the legitimate marriage contract the outward sign of Matrimony. But in the cases of Confirmation, Order, and Extreme Unction, it is contended that they were instituted only with a generic determination of their outward sign. The effect, whether of power or of grace, which they were designed to produce in the soul was indicated; and it was left to the Apostles and to the supreme authority of the Church to determine “according to the diversity of the circumstances,” as the Council of Trent says, the particular thing or sign which should be chosen to signify and produce the sacramental effect in the soul.

Now the Sacraments are essentially signs, practical signs of an inward spiritual effect. “The Sacraments cause what they signify, and inasmuch as they signify.” In other words, it is its significance which constitutes the metaphysical essence of the sacramental sign. If there are two material things which signify the same spiritual effect, then that which is important and vital and substantial in the sign is the identity of the signification, not the physical constitution of the material thing, which is of no account and negligible. Hence, of two signs that are of equal value in signifying, the Church can, according to Trent as above, select this one or that one, this one for that time and the other for another time, this one for one place and the other for another place, or she can use both together, as may seem to her expedient—where the matter has not been precisely determined by Christ himself. In other words such action on the part of the Church pertains to the administration, not to the substance of the Sacrament. If two or more distinct forms of words having the

¹ Sess. 21, c. 2.

same meaning, whether in the same language or in different languages, can be and are admitted as the equally valid forms of the same Sacrament, it is difficult to see why two or more material things which express the same idea, cannot be adopted by the Church according to circumstances to symbolise the effect of a Sacrament. If, then, Christ did not determine the matter of the priesthood specifically, the Church had to do so, and can change it within the limits described.—This is the argument of the one side.

But those theologians who hold that the imposition of the hands *Another view* alone is the complete matter of the priesthood base their view precisely on their conviction that the Church has no power at all of this kind over the Sacrament of Order. They hold that Our Lord definitely fixed the imposition of hands as the matter.—Let us test the strength of their position. Cardinal Van Rossum ¹ writes: "Sacred Scripture so clearly and frequently records the matter of the Sacrament of Order that it is impossible to say that it was not specifically determined by Our Lord."—We have seen earlier what the New Testament does say. It makes no statement of any such specific determination of the matter by Our Lord himself. The Apostles were ordained priests and bishops not by the imposition of hands or by any Sacrament, but by the words, "Do this for a commemoration of me." The Apostles, of course, had to ordain bishops, priests, and deacons; but we have no record of any instruction given to them by Our Lord how they were to do it. Moreover, the sacramental matter would be just as clearly and frequently indicated in the New Testament, if it had been determined by the Apostles themselves and not by Our Lord. There is therefore certainly some plausibility in the theory that Our Lord left the choice to the Apostles.

But even though we may accept the view that the Church possesses *Sacramental efficacy of imposition of hands* this power, if we are to be persuaded that she, some time after the tenth century, deprived the imposition of hands of its sacramental efficacy, and transferred it to the tradition of the instrument, we shall require very conclusive and rigorous proof. Of course, if it could be shown that the Church suppressed the imposition of hands entirely in the ordination rite and substituted the tradition of the instruments for it, there could be no question. But the Church has not done this. The imposition of hands has kept its place in the ordination of bishops, priests, and deacons, from the time of the Apostles to the present day. What has been done in the Latin Church is to *add* the tradition of the instruments to the Ordinal. What then has to be shown is that the Church, while leaving the imposition of hands to hold its place in the rite of ordination, has nevertheless deprived it of its importance and efficacy, and reduced it to a mere ceremony. This, we venture to say, has not yet been proved; nor, in our belief, can it be proved. The Church, like Our Lord himself, came not to destroy but to fulfil. She has ever been jealous and

¹ *Op. cit.* n. 470.

tenacious of her venerable traditions and institutions, especially those that are traced right back to the Apostles themselves, as is this tradition and institution of the laying-on of hands for the sacramental transmission of the Christian Priesthood. In such vital matters as this, the Church's instinct and practice is not destruction but preservation and perpetuation. If she were to take away from the imposition of hands its sacramental efficacy (assuming that she had the power to do so) she would be depriving the Sacrament of Order of its Scriptural testimony, and the Apostolic Succession of its Scriptural guarantee. So, throughout the history of the development of the sacramental liturgy, the tendency has always been towards growth—additions and accretions, the effort to obtain a fuller, more perfect, more clearly significant symbolism. Thus many beautiful and highly appropriate ceremonies have from time to time been added to the Ordinals in use in various parts of the Church, but nothing has been discarded; ¹ and notably, the imposition of hands holds in every one of them the same position, and has the same significance and import that it has ever held and possessed.

If then the Church has deprived this ceremony of its sacramental causality, we shall require a compelling proof, which can be found only in a positive act of the supreme magisterium of the supreme authority. No such decree is forthcoming. No attempt has ever been made to allege any act of the supreme authority of the Church which could be construed to decree the reduction of the imposition of hands in the rite of ordination to the condition of a mere empty ceremony. On the contrary. If such a thing has ever happened to the imposition of hands, it must have been between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries; so that at the time of the Council of Trent the ordination ceremony was precisely as it is now; and if the imposition of hands ever lost its efficacy, it had lost it then. Yet the Council teaches that the ministers of Extreme Unction are bishops and priests who have been ordained by the imposition of hands; ² and in sess. 23, c. 2, 3, it proves the sacramental nature of the ordination rite *then actually in use* from the famous text of 2 Timothy i 6-7 on the imposition of hands. It seems clear that the Council had no knowledge of any essential change; for how could they appeal to this text, if the imposition of hands had been shorn of all its sacramental significance?

There is still another significant indication of the attitude of the supreme authority of the Church in this matter. In the Bull *Apostolica curæ*, by which Leo XIII declared Anglican Orders to be null and void, the Pope argues thus: "In the examination of any rite for the effecting and administering of the Sacraments, distinction is

¹ This, however, is precisely what was done in England at the Reformation. The Ordinal was mutilated and essential parts suppressed with an heretical intention; and the whole rite of ordination was thereby invalidated.

² Sess. 14, c. 3.

rightly made between the part which is *ceremonial* and that which is *essential*, which is usually called the *matter and form*. All know that the Sacraments of the New Law as sensible and efficient signs of invisible grace, must both signify the grace which they produce, and produce the grace which they signify. And this signification, although it should exist in the whole essential rite, that is, in the matter and form, nevertheless pertains chiefly to the form; since the matter is the part which is not determined of itself, but which is determined by the form. And this appears more clearly in the Sacrament of Order, *the matter of which, in so far as we have to consider it in this case, is the imposition of hands*; which indeed of itself signifies nothing definite, and is used equally for several Orders and for Confirmation. But the words which until recently were commonly held by Anglicans to constitute the proper form of priestly ordination—namely, ‘Receive the Holy Ghost,’ certainly do not in the least express definitely the sacred Order of Priesthood, or its grace and power, which is chiefly the power ‘of consecrating and offering the true body and blood of the Lord,’¹ in that sacrifice which is no ‘nude commemoration of the sacrifice offered on the Cross.’² . . . Let this argument suffice for all. From the prayers of the Ordinal there has been deliberately removed whatever sets forth the dignity and office of the priesthood in the Catholic rite. That form therefore cannot be considered valid and sufficient for the Sacrament which omits what it ought essentially to signify.”

Leo’s argument therefore is that the matter of the Sacrament of Order, “in so far as we have to consider it in this case,” is the imposition of hands with a form of words expressing the order or its power and grace; and since the Anglican Ordinal had excluded any such form, its ordinations were invalid. Now Leo XIII knew quite well that the Anglican Ordinal had also suppressed the tradition of the instruments. If then he had also known that the Church had substituted the tradition of the instruments and its form for the imposition of hands and the invocation of the Holy Ghost as the matter and form of the Sacrament of Order, he would have had his argument ready to hand:—You have suppressed the true matter and form, viz., the tradition of the instruments with the accompanying words, and you have substituted the handing of a Bible and another form, which are not sacramental at all. But Leo apparently knew nothing of the substitution of the instruments for the imposition of hands. In fact, he had already earlier in the Bull shown that he regarded the tradition of the instruments as at best doubtful matter—in this following the uniform practice of the Church. But he has no such doubt about the imposition of hands and its form. That these belong to the outward sign of the Sacrament of Order is absolute with Leo XIII, and affords a *certain* proof of the invalidity of Anglican Orders. We are therefore entitled to conclude from all this that the Church has no

¹ Council of Trent, sess. 23, can. 1.

² *Ibid.* sess. 22, can. 3.

knowledge of this alleged substitution of the tradition of the instruments for the imposition of hands, and that, in point of fact, no such substitution was ever made. Consequently, the imposition of hands still remains the matter of the Sacrament of Order; and this is the practically unanimous view of the modern theologians, and may be regarded as certain.

*Sacramental
efficacy of
tradition of
instruments*

But the further question now arises: Is the imposition of hands the complete matter; or has the tradition of the instruments been conjoined with it to constitute one composite sacramental matter?

While it is not conceivable that the Scriptural imposition of hands has lost its sacramental status, it can readily be imagined that, assuming that the Church has the power, there has been development along the line of more explicit signification and more vivid representation of the power of the priesthood. That there have been such accretions to the Ordinal is an incontestable fact: there we actually do find the tradition of the instruments, with the appropriate form expressing the conferring of the power of the priesthood. The only question is whether it is a mere accessory ceremony, or an integral part of the sacramental matter.

We have already mentioned the famous Decree for the Armenians, published by Eugenius IV in the Council of Florence. This Decree teaches that "The sixth Sacrament is Order, whose matter is that thing by the tradition of which the order is conferred."—We do not propose to enter into the merits of the controversy about this Decree, whether it is an infallible document, as one side claims, or theologically erroneous, which is the opposite extreme view. It suffices for us that it is an official document of the highest authority of the Church, recognising the sacramental status of the tradition of the instruments. Nor is the imposition of hands thereby deposed from its place; first, because the Council of Florence itself, just as the Church before and since has always done, acknowledged the validity of the Oriental rites having the imposition of hands alone. But the case was not the same for the Armenians. They had always preserved the imposition of hands; but they alone, of all the Oriental Rites, had recently adopted into their rite from the Roman Church the tradition of the instruments.¹ Hence, Eugenius IV, pre-supposing, not rejecting, the imposition of hands, instructs the Armenians about the tradition of the instruments, in the exact words of St Thomas Aquinas. Yet, St Thomas, although he most emphatically attributes the impression of the character of Order to the tradition of the instruments as the instrumental cause, does not thereby exclude the imposition of hands from the matter of the Sacrament. On the contrary, both in his Commentary on the Sentences² and in almost the last question of the *Summa Theologica* written by him before his death,³ he attributes

¹ Theologians seem almost entirely to have overlooked this significant historical fact.

² IV, D. 24, Q. ii, art. 3.

³ III, Q. lxxxiv, art. 4.

the grace of the Sacrament of Order to the imposition of hands. "By the imposition of hands is given the plenitude of grace by which they are fitted for their high offices." Now if St Thomas could write this, and yet teach that the matter of the Sacrament is the tradition of the instruments, why could not Pope Eugenius copy these words into his decree in the same sense, viz., assuming that the imposition of hands has preceded the tradition of the instruments as the sacramental preparation for the completion of the rite?

Reference to the Roman Pontifical must not be omitted. In the preliminary instructions the bishop is directed to "warn those to be ordained to touch the instruments, *by which the character is imprinted.*" And in the ceremony itself the candidates are called "Ordinandi" as far as the anointing of the hands. Then immediately follows the tradition of the instruments with its form, and they become at once "Ordinati."

My final conclusion, then, is that the imposition of hands with the invocation of the Holy Ghost are certainly the sacramental matter and form of the Episcopate, Priesthood, and Diaconate; and that probably the tradition of the instruments with its form also belongs to the sacramental outward sign of the Priesthood and Diaconate. Of the Subdiaconate and the Minor Orders the tradition of the instruments and the accompanying words alone constitute the matter and form, whether sacramental or otherwise.

§ VII: THE MINISTER AND THE RECIPIENT OF ORDER

I. *The Minister.*—Only a consecrated bishop can confer those Orders which certainly belong to the Sacrament, viz., the episcopate, the priesthood, and the diaconate. It is said that Innocent VIII gave to the Cistercian Abbots the power to ordain deacons; but this concession is of very doubtful authenticity, and may certainly be ignored by the theologian.

The Pope can authorise a simple priest to confer the Subdiaconate and the Minor Orders; and the common law of the Church grants to Cardinals who have not received episcopal consecration, the right to confer the Tonsure and the Minor Orders. Also Vicars Apostolic, Prefects Apostolic, and Abbots and Prelates who have territorial jurisdiction, can in their own territory and while they hold office, give the Tonsure and the Minor Orders to their own subjects and to any others who are furnished with the necessary documents from their bishops; and also monastic Abbots, provided that they are in priest's orders and have received the Abbatial blessing, can confer the Tonsure and the Minor Orders on their own subjects by religious profession, and on these only.¹

For the consecration of a bishop three bishops are required. But

¹ See Code of Canon Law, Canons 239, 957, 964.

this is most probably only a matter of custom and ecclesiastical precept, and is not necessary for the validity of the consecration.¹

2. *The Recipient.*—Two conditions are required for valid ordination, the male sex and baptism. That women cannot be validly ordained is clear from St Paul's Epistles, 1 Corinthians xiv 34-35, and 1 Timothy ii 11-12, from Apostolic tradition and from the constant practice of the Church. St Epiphanius remarks that if it were lawful for women to be priests, Mary, the Mother of God, would certainly have been the first.

That baptism should be an absolute condition of ordination is obvious; for baptism is the door to the other Sacraments; and one must be a member of the Church before he can be an officer, a leader and teacher in it.

The simple priesthood is a pre-requisite of the episcopate, at least according to the actual practice of the Church. We have already dealt sufficiently with the theoretical question whether the episcopate is the whole sacerdotium independently of the presbyterate, or whether it essentially presupposes the latter, of which it is the complement and ultimate perfection.

One might write at great length of the spiritual qualities required of the recipient of the Sacrament of Order; but that would be outside the scope of this small dogmatic treatise, and it has already been well done by many eminent writers. This therefore brings to a close our study of the theology of the Sacrament of Order.

NOTE ON CLERICAL CELIBACY

THE practice of Christian Celibacy is based on the words of Our Lord by which he proclaimed the virtue of chastity to be a Christian ideal and one of the evangelical counsels: "Not all take in this saying, but they to whom it hath been given. For there are eunuchs who were born so from their mother's womb, and eunuchs who were made such by men; and there are eunuchs who have made themselves such for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He that can take this in, let him take it in."² Hence St Paul teaches: "To the unmarried and to widows I say, it is good for them if they remain even as I. . . . He that is unmarried hath a care for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but he that is married hath a care for the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is drawn different ways. . . . Now this I say for your own profit, not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for the sake of seemly and devoted and undistracted service of the Lord."³ This being so, to whom can the words of the Apostle be so appropriately applied as to the "ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God?" By

¹This doctrine is described by Pope Pius XII as being "beyond all doubt". Constitution *Episcopalis Consecrationis*, 30 Nov., 1944 (*A.A.S.*, 1945, p. 131).—*Editor's Note.* ²Matt. xix 11, 12; Westm. Vers.

³1 Cor. vii 8, 32, 33, 35; Westm. Vers.

their very vocation their whole life is dedicated to "the service of the Lord" and of the souls placed in their charge. They are the spiritual fathers of the faithful, and the pattern to them of all virtue. It is fitting then that they should be free from the cares and ties, the distractions and hindrances of the natural family life. Celibacy therefore has from Apostolic times been regarded as the appropriate state for the ministers of the Church.

St Paul does indeed say that the bishop, the priest, and the deacon must be the "husband of one wife";¹ but he certainly does not intend to stultify his own life and his words, as well as the words of Christ himself, by making marriage obligatory on the clergy. He is merely stating what is really only a negative qualification for the ministry, viz., that no one may be admitted to it who has been married *more than once*.²

It is certain that there is no *divine* law of celibacy binding upon the clergy; but it is disputed among theologians whether they were bound to it by *Apostolic* precept or not. It appears impossible, however, to prove the affirmative. What is certain is that celibacy was recommended to the clergy from Apostolic times, and also that large numbers did actually practise it. The writers of the third and fourth centuries (*e.g.* Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, St Cyril of Jerusalem, St Jerome, St Epiphanius) show indeed that the practice was held in honour by the great body of the clergy throughout the Church from the earliest times.

The written law of clerical celibacy appears for the first time in the Latin Church in the epistle of Pope Siricius (an. 385) in which he states that "all priests and deacons are bound by an indispensable law" to observe chastity from the day of their ordination; and he implies that this is no new obligation, but one of long standing. Later subdeacons also were included under the law. Finally, the 1st Lateran Council (an. 1123), can. 3, and 2nd Lateran Council (an. 1139), can. 7, not only re-enacted the general law, but also declared the marriages of clerics in sacred orders to be invalid.³

The law is not the same in the Oriental Church. Married men (*i.e.* married only once) may be ordained to sacred orders (but not to the episcopate) and still live the married life; but if the wife should die, they may not marry again. Indeed all marriages of clerics in sacred orders are null and void just as much in the Oriental as in the Latin Church.⁴

C. CRONIN.

¹ 1 Tim. iii 2, 12; Titus i 6.

² Compare with 1 Tim. v 9.—The consequence of the Apostle's prohibition is that bigamy in the canonical sense, *i.e.* two successive valid marriages, has always constituted an irregularity, or impediment to sacred orders. Cp. Codex, can. 984.

³ Cf. Conc. Trid., sess. 24, can. 9; Codex, can. 132, 1072.

⁴ Second Trullan Synod, an. 692; Pope Benedict XIV, Const. *Etsi Pastoralis*, etc.

XXX

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

§ I: THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

THE following description of Christian marriage is designed chiefly for the Catholic laity. It is a part of Christian doctrine which cannot be taught adequately to children, with the result that many Catholics remain uninformed about it, and receive the sacrament with no accurate perception of all that it implies. Because the marriage contract is the *sign* of this sacrament, it becomes necessary to expound, in its broad lines, the law by which the Church regulates everything concerned with it. Canonical legislation must of necessity be more in evidence in this part of Christian doctrine than in any other. But a word of warning is necessary. The reader, even though the contents of this account have been understood, must beware of passing any judgement on the validity of the marriage contract in any given case. This is the province of professional theologians and canonists, and requires a degree of technical knowledge and experience which few laymen possess. With this reservation, and it is an important one, a simple statement of Catholic principles, which avoids obscure issues and controversial details, may help the recipients of this sacrament to understand it better, and understanding it to appreciate more fully the sacrament which signifies the union between Christ and the Church.

* * * * *

*A type of
Christ and
the Church*

The first blessing given by God to man, as he stood in original beauty and innocence fresh from the hand of God, was a human companion. "It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a help like unto himself."¹ That first marriage, hallowed by God in order that the human race should increase and multiply upon the earth, would have achieved its purpose and peopled the earth with a holy and sinless race, if our first parents had not fallen and involved us all in their ruin.

The second blessing from God was the promise of a Redeemer, who was to be the seed of a woman, a promise repeatedly made throughout the ages waiting his coming. From the time when that promise was centred in the chosen family of Abraham, the marriage of his children became invested with a fresh meaning, and it was a sorrow and a reproach to the daughters of Israel to be childless. When at last the fulness of time was come, and, as Isaias foretold, a virgin conceived and bore a son, it was under the protection of

¹ Gen. ii 18.

marriage between Mary and Joseph that our divine Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ came into the world ; the first miracle that he wrought took place in Cana of Galilee, during the marriage blessed by his presence.

The eternal Son of God, coming into this world, wedded his divinity to our humanity. He shared in our humanity, in order that we might have some share in his divinity. From Christ our head divine grace flows into all the members of his body ; from the stem of the vine the sap of life invigorates all the branches. This complete and supernatural union between Christ and the Church is called his Mystical Body. It is through this union that we are regenerated into the family of God and share in his inheritance. This is the mystery hidden in God from all eternity, and there is no other way to salvation except this.

Even though the inspired words of St Paul had not taught us explicitly, we could hardly fail to see how closely earthly marriage is the type and symbol of this union between our souls and God, through Christ our Lord. The eternal Son of God so loved men that he took unto himself our nature and, by the Incarnation, the divine and human natures became united inseparably and indissolubly in one divine person. In the holy state of matrimony, man and woman are also united as one principle, a union that no human power can break asunder. The two become so joined that the joys of the one are the joys of the other, the sorrows of the one the sorrows of the other, "for better for worse, for richer for poorer." So also the Son of God took on our infirmities and bore our griefs ; being rich he became poor for our sakes in order that by his poverty we might become rich.¹ And if, in the design of God, the natural purpose of marriage is the generation of the children of men, it is also the design of God that these children of men should be raised up by grace to be sons of God, "fellow citizens with the saints and the domestics of God."² This is a supernatural end which is brought within our reach by Christ's Redemption and the sacrament of regeneration. But in this lofty and sublime purpose the Christian parent co-operates. Through the holy state of marriage the Church increases and multiplies, and the number of the elect is brought to completion. When St John saw in vision the end of the world and the whole Church coming forth in glory to meet its Redeemer, he could think of no human symbol to describe that scene more fittingly than the espousals of a bride : "And I, John, saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."³

Earthly marriage is a sign, a type, a symbol of the union between Christ and the Church ; the points of resemblance are from their nature ethereal and mysterious. But, in an age like the present, when current views on matrimony are often the reverse of ethereal,

¹ 2 Cor. viii 9.² Eph. ii 19.³ Apoc. xxi 2.

it is all the more necessary that a Catholic who is married, or contemplating marriage, should bear in mind the mysteries it typifies. Irregular unions, adulterous remarriage, and birth prevention can be demonstrated as wrong, on principles of natural ethics. But for a Christian, the abuse of marriage can almost be called sacrilegious, since it violates the heavenly signification of the union between Christ and the Church. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and delivered himself up for it. . . . So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. . . . For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also Christ doth the Church. . . . This is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ and in the church."¹

Because of its mysterious significance, the Church surrounds earthly nuptials with sacred rites, reserves for its recipients the most solemn blessings, and mingles the marriage rite with the holy sacrifice of the Mass. The sacrament of Matrimony, like all the sacraments, is subordinated to the Holy Eucharist and derives grace therefrom, as from a common fountain or source. The effects and purpose of the one are intimately connected with the effects and purpose of the other. By the sacrament of Matrimony a remedy is offered for the concupiscence of the flesh, lest bodily sin should prevent the reception of the body of Christ. By receiving the body of Christ we are incorporated into his Mystical Body, and of this ineffable union between humanity and Christ the sacrament of Matrimony is the type and the sign.

A sacrament

Profound, beautiful, and mysterious as this doctrine of St Paul is, yet, in saying that Matrimony is a sacrament, we mean something even more definite and explicit. We mean that it is an outward sign, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only *signifying* but *effectively causing* grace in our souls. The seven religious rites, known as sacraments, have been regarded from the earliest Christian times as conferring grace. Many writers before the thirteenth century did not use, of course, the technical terms that have been introduced in the course of centuries for the purpose of refuting heresies, and explaining more clearly the doctrine of the Church. But the sacramental teaching in its substance was always there. In the case of some of the sacraments, there is explicit reference in the New Testament establishing their institution by Christ. Others, like Matrimony, are not so explicitly mentioned, but the doctrine with regard to them is contained in tradition and rests ultimately on the infallible authority of the Church. The Fathers, ritual books, and the universal faith of the Church, both East and West, are witnesses to this living tradition which every Catholic holds so dear. "If anyone says that Matrimony is not truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the New Law, instituted by Christ our Lord, but was invented by men in the Church and does not confer grace, let him be anathema."²

¹ Eph. v 25-32.

² Council of Trent, Sess. xxiv, can. 1.

This doctrine, as the Council of Trent says, is *inferred* from the New Testament. The explicit teaching of Christ is concerned primarily with the "indissolubility" of marriage, reasserting this essential property of marriage "as it was from the beginning," and abrogating the Mosaic permission of divorce.¹ We infer, from the amazement of the disciples at the difficulty of this doctrine, that special grace is necessary for preserving the marriage union intact, and that Christ would not have taught a doctrine so difficult to observe, unless he had instituted marriage as a sacrament of the New Law.

A similar inference is drawn from the text of St Paul already quoted. It would not, indeed, be correct to take the phrase "this is a great sacrament" as bearing a direct reference to "sacrament" in the strict dogmatic sense with which we are familiar; the word bears rather the meaning of a secret, sacred or mysterious thing. But from the beautiful way in which St Paul regards marriage, as symbolising the union existing between Christ and the Church, we infer that it is a sacrament causing grace. From the fact that, in speaking of marriage, he uses an analogy with the headship of Christ, from whom all grace flows to us as branches of the vine, we infer that this grace-bestowing power belongs to marriage. For, if the sacraments are instruments in the hands of Christ, and the means by which our union with him is effected, then the sacramental nature of marriage is fully proclaimed in this text of St Paul.

The living voice and teaching of the Church is paramount in declaring the Christian revelation; without this voice, even the New Testament cannot be accepted as the inspired word of God. It is in the unanimous and constant faith of the Church that we find the surest argument, if any were needed, that Matrimony is a sacrament. It would be beyond the scope of this account to develop the argument fully by means of quotations from patristic sources. The Fathers speak of Christian marriage as a holy thing, carrying with it special blessings from God, and therefore to be contracted religiously under the guidance of the Church. Such phrases we find in abundance, especially in the commentaries on the marriage feast at Cana. With the progress of centuries, owing to the suppression of various heresies and the solutions given in cases where the sacraments were administered doubtfully, sacramental theology gradually determined more explicitly their nature.² In the light of this gradual analysis, we can determine more closely and exactly the sacramental *sign* in Matrimony.

It is of the essence of a sacrament to be an external sign, instituted by Christ and causing grace. Human nature is so constituted that the spiritual part of our nature cannot operate except through the channel of the bodily senses. The external ceremonies and worship of the Catholic Church rest on this fact. The Incarnation of the

¹ Matt. xix 8; Mark x 11; Luke xvi 18.

² Cf. *The Sacramental System*, above, pp. 758-766.

invisible God is itself an accommodation to our weakness, dependent as we are on material and bodily things: "That knowing God in visible form, we may by him be drawn to the love of things invisible."¹ God has accommodated his power still further to our weakness and needs in instituting external visible signs, by means of which invisible grace may be conferred upon our souls. Thus, the sacramental sign of Baptism is the pouring of water with its accompanying words; the sign of Extreme Unction is anointing with oil accompanied by prayer.

The contract is the sacramental sign

What is the external sign which constitutes the sacrament of Matrimony? It is simply the contract validly made by a man and woman to live together as husband and wife, a contract which existed as a holy thing from the beginning of the human race. Christ our Lord, who made all things new and brought to the world a fuller outpouring of divine grace under the New Law, has taken this contract and elevated it to the dignity of a sacrament. Whenever a contract or agreement to live as husband and wife is made by two Christians validly, it is a sacrament and causes grace. *This fact is the very core and centre-point of all matrimonial doctrine and legislation.* The marriage contract of two Christians is a sacrament, and if there is no valid contract there is no sacrament. In order to have even a superficial understanding of the subject, this fact must be constantly borne in mind whilst reading the following pages.

It will be seen on examination that, because the sacraments are external signs, there is in all of them an element which is undetermined—generally some material thing like oil or water; and there is an element which crystallises, completes, and determines the signification—generally the accompanying words. The medieval theologians, familiar as they were with the terminology of Aristotle, found that the sacramental sign could be analysed by its aid. They therefore styled the indeterminate element *matter* and the determining element *form*. These terms have the greatest value in establishing with accuracy the external sacramental sign, and they have been universally adopted by the Church. For, without them, it would be difficult to decide in some cases whether the rite has been validly performed. For example, the sign of Extreme Unction is anointing with oil accompanied by priestly prayer.² But what kind of oil, what kind of prayer? The sacramental signification is indicated in the New Testament, but it needs a more precise determining by the Church, to whose care the mysteries of God are committed.

These common terms are therefore a convenient analysis of the sacramental sign, but their use improperly understood might cause confusion instead of elucidation. Thus, if we were to make it a rigid rule that the *matter* is always a material thing, and the *form* always words, we should find some difficulty in analysing the sign of matrimony. But taking the terms in their proper meaning, the matter as

¹ *Preface* for Christmas Day.

² James v 14.

the indeterminate element and the form as the determining element, their application becomes clear. For in every contract there is an offer and an acceptance, and the offer is not determined as a contract until it has been accepted. The matrimonial contract is concerned with the mutual agreement to live as husband and wife, and, since it is a mutual transfer of the same rights, it follows that the external consent, usually expressed in words, is both the matter and form of this sacrament.

It may appear, at first sight, that this accepted use of the terms *matter* and *form* has no particular importance, but its value is seen if we proceed to a further point. A sacrament requires a minister. Christ is the author and principal minister of them all, and he has deputed men to act in his name. It is not clear from the Gospel record at what precise time our Lord instituted this sacrament. It may have been at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, or it may have been when Christ declared the indissolubility of the Christian union. The one thing quite certain is that Christ instituted all the sacraments, which are as instruments in his hands, conferring grace from him to the members of his Mystical Body. Apart from this intimate union with Christ they cannot confer grace. The person who administers a sacrament contributes to its effect as a secondary cause or agent, but the primary cause is Christ, in whose person the minister acts. *The ministers*

Now, for quite a long period the view was held by many that the minister of matrimony is the officiating priest. This idea arose partly from a mistaken view about the matter and form, the contract of the parties being considered the matter and the blessing of the priest the form. Another circumstance probably served to strengthen the misconception. The Council of Trent had framed a decree known as *Tametsi*, which required the assistance of the parish priest, as well as witnesses, for the validity of a marriage contract. At a time when the efforts of ecclesiastical authority turned towards abolishing secret or clandestine marriages, it was obviously an advantage to hold that the priest's presence was necessary as the minister.

But a moment's reflection will show that this view cannot be the true one, nor is it now defended by any theological authority. For it is universally admitted that the contract is the sacrament, and that in every sacrament it is the minister who uses the matter and form, thus effecting the sacramental sign. Now, it is clear that no one is able to make a contract except the contracting parties, and in this sacrament the contract is the sacramental sign, *i.e.* the matter and form. Therefore, the contracting parties, not the officiating priest, are the ministers of the sacrament.

Moreover, it has always been recognised by the Church that in certain cases, provided for by Canon Law, marriage may be contracted and the sacrament received without the presence of a priest.¹ It is almost impossible to explain how this can be true, if the priest

¹ See p. 1077.

is the minister. The presence of a priest is absolutely necessary for the marriage of Catholics, in normal circumstances, and without a priest there is no sacrament and no valid contract, as we shall establish more fully later on. But the priest is not the minister of the sacrament.

If we now regard the contracting parties from the point of view of recipients of sacramental grace, it may be stated as a general principle that all baptised persons, not affected by a diriment impediment,¹ are capable of receiving this sacrament validly. Baptism is the door to all the other sacraments, which, because of their intimate connection with Christ, cannot be received unless the recipient is first incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ by the sacrament of regeneration. Non-Catholics, therefore, provided they are validly baptised and have no diriment impediments, normally make this sacramental contract validly; for they are definitely excluded from the ecclesiastical law requiring the presence of the parish priest, and their unions are in all essential respects identical with those of Catholics, except that they do not receive the nuptial blessing.

*Sacramental
grace*

It is the chief effect of the sacraments to cause or increase grace in the soul, *i.e.* habitual sanctifying grace, making us sons of God and sharers of the divine nature.² It is that quality, infused into our souls, which is the very kernel of the supernatural life, which increases with our growth in holiness, and by mortal sin is lost altogether. God, who has bestowed this supreme gift upon us in baptism, can increase its growth in any way he pleases, but the normal channel of sanctifying grace is through the sacraments.

How, then, do the seven sacraments differ from each other, since each of them causes grace? They differ in this respect, that the grace bestowed by each of them carries with it a title to divine assistance, strengthening the Christian soul in its journey through this world, and enabling it to fulfil all its duties. Every condition and state of life is attended by certain difficulties and obligations. The grace of the sacrament of Matrimony entitles the recipient to God's help, in perfecting earthly love and fidelity, and in surmounting triumphantly the cares and difficulties of married life. The primary end and purpose of marriage is the generation and education of children, a task which often entails very considerable sacrifice and self-denial. In some cases the burden may be so great as to be, humanly speaking, unbearable. "Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened: and I will refresh you."³ The grace of God will assist human weakness and make what is hard and difficult easy to bear. Again, if two people are living together in a permanent indissoluble union, some friction and discord may perhaps arise; the grace of this sacrament will preserve mutual love and affection in spite of everything. Even though in some cases the wine of earthly

¹ Cf. pp. 1080 ff.

² 2 Pet. i 4.

³ Matt. xi 28.

love has begun to fail, then it is that at the word of Christ the new wine of spiritual love and charity will appear at the nuptials, overflowing to the brim and surpassing in sweetness the old. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church."

These are the needs our Lord referred to when he said, "Ask and you shall receive." If people live their married life with no reference whatever to God, not seeking his grace, but rather putting an obstacle to its operation, the divine help to which they have a sacramental title is not obtained. One cannot help thinking that many excellent Catholics forget all about the sacramental grace once the sacrament has been received. We are perfectly familiar with the idea that the grace of Holy Order supports a priest in the difficulties of his life, and the same is every bit as true in the married state. Like the Ordination rite, a proper Catholic marriage is mingled with the sacrifice of the Mass, which is interrupted at the Pater Noster in order that the solemn nuptial blessing may be given. Christ is present on the altar as he was at Cana in Galilee, and blesses a union without which the number of the elect cannot be brought to completion. "This is a great sacrament: but I speak in Christ and in the Church."

A vital consequence follows from the fact that the marriage of Christians is a sacrament—namely, that everything pertaining to it must be regulated by the Church. It is a right that has always been claimed and used by ecclesiastical authority, which continues as in the past to enforce a legislation which is often completely at variance with civil laws. Our Lord's teaching on divorce, and the "privilege of the faith" referred to by St Paul,¹ were contrary to Roman Law. At the Council of Trent the doctrine was reasserted: "If anyone saith that the Church could not establish impediments invalidating marriage, let him be anathema. . . . If anyone saith that matrimonial causes do not pertain to ecclesiastical judges, let him be anathema."² Leo XIII, in one of his famous encyclicals, has dealt authoritatively and fully with this point: "Since marriage is holy by its own power, in its own nature, and of itself, it ought not to be regulated and administered by the will of civil rulers, but by the divine authority of the Church. . . . To decree and ordain concerning the sacrament is, by the will of Christ himself, so much a part of the power and duty of the Church, that it is plainly absurd to maintain that even the smallest fraction of such power has been transferred to the civil ruler. . . . Among Christians every true marriage is, in itself and by itself, a sacrament, and nothing can be further from the truth than to say that the sacrament is a certain added ornament, or outward endowment, which can be separated and torn away from the contract at the caprice of man."³ Civil enactments, therefore, which

¹ 1 Cor. vii 12; cf. p. 1097.

² Sess. xxiv, can. 4 and 12.

³ *Arcanum*, Eng. trans., C.T.S., pp. 189, 193. Cf. also *Casti Connubii*, C.T.S., Do. 113, §§ 37-43.

interfere with the substance and essential properties of marriage—as, for example, divorce laws—are regarded by the Church not only as evil and unjust, but also as an unwarranted interference with the rights of the Church.

This central truth once understood, we must acknowledge in the State quite a considerable power with regard to the purely civil effects of Christian marriage—for example, everything relating to the property of husband and wife and questions of intestacy. In order to deal adequately with these civil questions, the State rightly insists that certain formalities must be observed before a civil registrar.¹ There is, secondly, the question of the marriages of unbaptised people, which are not sacraments. These unions are, nevertheless, good and holy, and must be regulated by the natural law of God. But this natural law often requires an official interpretation, and the usual view is that the marriages of these persons are to be regulated by the civil authority, provided nothing is enacted which is contrary to the natural law.

The big conclusion to be drawn, and one which dominates the whole subject, is the cardinal fact that the matrimonial contract of Christians is a sacrament. Everything which invalidates the contract invalidates also the sacrament. In the following section we must make a closer examination of the contract as such, since many essential features of Catholic doctrine turn upon a proper understanding of all that it implies.

§ II: THE MARRIAGE CONTRACT

Object and essential properties

THE first thing to examine in any contract is its object, and it will usually be found that there are certain qualities or properties bound up with it. Thus, the contract of sale has for its object the transfer of goods in exchange for money; as a quality or property of this object, it follows that the price paid must be a just price. A further element in any contract, and one of vital importance, is the consent of the contracting parties. In the contract of sale, for example, the agreement might be vitiated by fraud. The sacramental contract of marriage must be examined under this twofold aspect.

In marriage, two persons become united as one principle for the purpose of the procreation of children. This is the primary object of the contract. The union, it is true, encourages mutual love and affection; it is a remedy for concupiscence; it issues in good and lawful actions causing physical pleasure of the highest kind. But in none of these things does the *primary* object of marriage consist, for they all presuppose and take for granted certain actions which are of their nature fitted for the generation of children. This contract and its essential object have their origin in the law of nature²—that is to

¹ Cf. *Arcanum*, Eng. trans., C.T.S., p. 201. *Casti Connubii*, C.T.S., Do. 113, §§ 129-134.

² Cf. below, pp. 1089 ff., for a fuller explanation of the natural law.

say, the purpose of the union is founded in the nature of the human species—it is natural for the human race to be propagated in this way. The natural law itself, in this as in other human activities, is a participation in the rational creature of the eternal law of God, who created our first parents and blessed them, saying: “Increase and multiply and fill the earth.”¹ Marriage, even in its purely natural aspect, is a holy thing, established at the dawn of the human race by the command of God. It is an institution recognised by the common consent of men. But when we consider that man has been raised to a supernatural state, and will share, as an adopted son of God, “spiritual blessings in heavenly places,”² then we see a new beauty and radiance in the fecundity of the marriage contract. For this reason, St Paul regarded marriage as a type and symbol of the union between Christ and the Church, for it is only by Christ, “through him, with him, and in him,” that we attain this supernatural end.

Children born of this union are unable, for many years, to preserve their existence alone and unaided. Therefore, united inseparably to the procreation of children is their physical and moral education or rearing. It is the right and duty of the parents to supervise everything pertaining to the education of their children; to bring infants into the world and take no further care of them is patently unnatural, and is, in fact, at variance with the mere instincts of most animals.

We have to stress the child-rearing aspect of marriage as its primary object, for it is from this fact that the two essential *properties* of marriage are deduced—namely, its UNITY and INDISSOLUBILITY. That a Christian marriage, validly contracted and consummated, cannot be dissolved except by death, is a doctrine of such importance that a special section will be devoted to its discussion. It may be noticed now that the chief natural reason why divorce is wrong is the fact that the children’s good requires that their parents remain permanently united.

Facilities for divorce are increasing in many modern states, but our Western civilisation has not yet, at least overtly, discarded the principle “one man, one wife”—*i.e.* the principle of the UNITY of marriage. This essential property of marriage is a necessary deduction, as we have said, from its primary object, which is the procreation of children. The simultaneous possession by one woman of more than one husband is clearly and directly opposed to the natural law; it would be impossible to say who was responsible for the rearing of the children, for the parentage would be completely uncertain. The practice would be separated only by a very thin line from a general promiscuity of the sexes; the comparatively few examples of customs tolerating such promiscuity are a sign of decadence among the communities in which they exist, and offer no proof whatever that the unity of marriage was unknown in primitive times.

¹ Gen. i 28.

² Eph. i 3.

Polygamy

Polygamy, in the strict meaning of the word, is the possession by one husband of more than one wife, and is also opposed to the natural law, but much less clearly and directly. It is not opposed to the generation of children—on the contrary—nor is it opposed to their proper care and education, granted certain conditions of human society. But law has to consider the effects of actions in the generality of cases. Polygamy is generally harmful to the proper rearing of children, since the presence of more than one wife is calculated to lead to domestic disturbance, and threatens that peaceful cohabitation which is essential for the proper upbringing of children. The practice is forbidden by the natural law.

We are faced with the objection that polygamy was practised by the patriarchs and tolerated by the Mosaic Law.¹ To appreciate the solution, both of this difficulty and of the similar objection drawn from the Mosaic permission of divorce, we should bear in mind the common analysis of the natural law into *primary* and *secondary* precepts. A given practice may be of such a kind that the end or purpose of nature is thereby rendered nugatory and completely frustrated: promiscuity of the sexes and unrestricted divorce are of this kind. Another practice may be adverse to the natural order, in the sense that the purpose of nature is thereby made more difficult of attainment, but not defeated altogether: polygamy and divorce, restricted to specific cases by legitimate authority, are of this nature. The former set of practices is said to be against the *primary* precepts, the latter against the *secondary* precepts of the natural law. Now, whereas it is altogether repugnant that God should dispense the natural law in its primary precepts, there is no reason why the secondary precepts should not be so dispensed for a time and for adequate reasons. Polygamy was allowed by God for the Jews under the Old Dispensation, although monogamy was the primitive law of nature. But now, under the New Law of the Gospel, this dispensation or toleration has been abolished, as well as the limited toleration of divorce, and marriage is restored to its pristine dignity. The Councils of the Church have always insisted that polygamous unions are no longer valid or lawful, even for non-Christians, for the natural law is binding upon all, whether baptised or not. The reason for this abrogation is not far to seek, if we recall the doctrine that Christian marriage typifies the union between Christ and the Church, one head and one body. One head and several bodies, one body and several heads, is a monster. "Christ brought matrimony back to the nobility of its primeval origin, by condemning the custom of the Jews in their abuse of the plurality of wives, and of their power in giving Bills of Divorce. . . . He raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament; to husband and wife, guarded and strengthened by the heavenly grace which his merits gained for them, he gave power to attain holiness in the married state; making marriage in a wondrous

¹ Cf. Deut. xxi 15, xxv 5; Matt. xxii 24.

way a type of the mystical union between himself and his Church, he not only perfected that love which is according to nature, but also made the natural union of one man with one woman far more perfect through the bond of heavenly love." ¹

It is because of this mystical signification, and because second marriages may sometimes be injurious to the children of the first union, that the Church has looked less kindly on a second marriage even after the death of the first partner, and some of the Fathers condemned the practice severely. There is still a prohibition known as "irregularity" which forbids sacred orders to a man after the death of his second wife. But one cannot insist too strongly that there exists no sort of ecclesiastical law against second marriages as such: "A woman is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband die she is at liberty; let her marry to whom she will, only in the Lord. But more blessed shall she be if she so remain according to my counsel." ² Not only is such a marriage not forbidden; it is recommended by the Church, if there is any danger of incontinence, or if it is desirable for the welfare of existing children.

Having examined the nature of the matrimonial contract, we can now turn to the CONSENT by which the union is effected. It is an act of the will, by which each party gives and accepts the perpetual and exclusive right to actions which are in themselves fitted for the generation of children. It is the manifestation of consent which constitutes the contract and the sacrament, and if the proper consent is lacking nothing can supply the defect—the marriage is invalid.

From the fact that a sacrament is an external sign, it is clear that the consent must be *manifested externally*, and normally it is given in words. It must be *mutual and simultaneous*, since it is the union of the two acts of the will which effects the contract. Most important of all, it must be *free and deliberate*, since it is a personal individual act which no one can make except the contracting parties. It will be recognised on reflection that, chiefly on the score of insufficient *freedom*, consent may sometimes be defective.

Consent is an act of the will, but it presupposes some knowledge in the understanding. A person signing a document in ignorance of its terms, or labouring under a fundamental error about the responsibilities assumed, may be drawn into litigation on the strength of his signature, but he would feel no obligation in conscience with regard to it. *Ignorance or error* concerning the meaning of the marriage contract may be of such a vital kind as to make true consent impossible. The parties must at least be aware that the primary object of marriage is the procreation of children. An accurate perception of all that the act of generation entails is not necessary, but

¹ *Arcanum*, p. 181. *Casti Connubii*, C.T.S., Do. 113, § 35.

² 1 Cor. vii 39.

some knowledge—at least, of a general and confused character—that begetting children results from this union is clearly requisite.

Error

Moreover, in these days, unfortunately, there are current many erroneous views concerning the nature of the contract, *e.g.*, some marry with the intention of preventing the birth of children or of getting divorced should the necessity arise ; others completely reject the sacramental character of marriage. Errors of this kind, if they enter expressly into the contract or if they are made a condition of consent, *may* sometimes invalidate the contract. We can only say the marriage *may* be invalid. It is the province of ecclesiastical authority to decide on the evidence whether the intention to contract marriage is predominant, or whether the consent is vitiated by an immoral condition or positive act of the will, levelled against the primary object of marriage or one of its essential properties. There may exist, in a similar manner, *errors concerning the individual* with whom the contract is made. The normal rule of guidance is that a person's qualifications (*e.g.*, health or social status) cannot usually be regarded as a substantial element affecting valid consent. There is an exception to this rule in what is, in effect, a very ancient ecclesiastical impediment, namely, the error made by a free person in marrying a slave.

Fear or violence

If a marriage is defective on the score of insufficient consent, it is more usually due to *fear or violence*. A person, forced into making a contract unjustly and unwillingly, might give a purely external and fictitious consent to its terms, in which case—at least in conscience—there would be no valid agreement. Even if some consent were given to a contract made under duress, grave fear unjustly inflicted would rightly be considered sufficient reason for rescinding the terms of an agreement made in these circumstances. This is perfectly true of human contracts in general, which can be revoked by mutual consent. But a ratified and consummated marriage, as we shall see more fully in a later section, cannot be rescinded ; it is of its nature indissoluble. Yet, on the other hand, it would be intolerable if matrimonial consent, extorted by fear, were allowed to stand. Abuses of this sort have existed from the earliest times, and grave penalties were inflicted by the Church upon those who forced women into marriage. This legislation gradually took the form of constituting *fear and violence* a diriment impediment.¹ Grave fear, unjustly inflicted in order to extort consent, invalidates the contract. It must be grave and imminent—at least, in the estimation of the person concerned—though other people might consider it very slight ; filial fear of a child for its parents might easily be of this nature.

The reader, who reflects on the matter, will easily perceive that it is precisely because the marriage contract cannot be dissolved that it is necessary to secure, by all means open to canonical legislation, a sufficiently perfect consent on the part of those who contract, and

¹ See p. 1081.

to penalise the non-observance of these laws by declaring the contract to be null and void.

In all cases of defective consent arising from ignorance, fear, or any other cause, the defect is remedied by the parties renewing and making good their consent by a fresh act of the will. The possible flaws in matrimonial consent are usually very difficult to detect and establish. Any priest could say whether there are sufficient grounds for suspecting their presence, but an authoritative decision must be left to the competent ecclesiastical authority.

A proper appreciation of the importance of *consent* in this contract, and some knowledge of the possible obstacles existing, must not blind our judgement to the fact that in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand there is never the remotest danger of any defect. In the one case where the defect exists, and where the parties refuse to renew their consent, the marriage *may* be declared invalid.¹ But in cases of such complexity it would be idle for anyone, except professional canonists, to pass a judgement on the validity or invalidity of the contract.

It is because of the paramount importance of consent, as the very core and centre of the sacrament, that the Church requires it to be given publicly and with legal formalities, under pain of nullity. This aspect of the subject will now be explained.

§ III: MARRIAGE LAWS

It is known to everyone that the marriages of Catholics which take *Tridentine form* place in register offices, or in Protestant churches, are not valid. The opinion is no doubt fairly widespread that the reason for this invalidity is the fact that Matrimony is a sacrament, and therefore requires a priest to administer it. But we have already seen that the priest does not administer the sacrament; the contract is the matter and form, and the ministers are the two contracting parties.

Why, then, does the Church require, under pain of nullity, the presence of an authorised priest at the marriages of Catholics? The reason is that it is the office of the Church to legislate for everything connected with the sacraments. The State regulates civil contracts in a similar manner, *e.g.*, conveyancing of land requires legal formalities; marriage has many civil effects, and unless certain formalities are observed before a registrar or other authorised person, the union is not regarded as valid in civil law. What the State does for the contract in its civil effects, *a fortiori* the Church should do for the very substance and essence of the union. These laws are not merely formalities, but necessary safeguards for securing the validity of marriage.

Although the Church has always required the contract to be blessed by a priest, yet, up to the time of the Council of Trent, it

¹ See pp. 1098-1099.

was commonly recognised that marriages without the presence of a priest were valid sacraments, since the contract was the sacramental sign.

But though these marriages, which were called "clandestine," were valid, they were attended with many evils and abuses. It was comparatively easy for a man to repudiate his obligations, and desert his wife and children; it was difficult to establish with certainty the validity of these contracts, since there was no competent person present to make enquiries regarding the freedom of the parties to marry and the absence of diriment impediments. In a word, a most solemn and sacred contract, which should be certain and beyond all suspicion, was rendered doubtful and uncertain. The Church had always regarded clandestinity with the utmost disfavour. It was one of the great reforms of the Council of Trent to remedy these abuses by the famous decree *Tametsi*: "Those who shall attempt to contract marriage otherwise than in the presence of the parish priest, or of some other priest by permission of the parish priest, or of the Ordinary, and in the presence of two or three witnesses; the Holy Synod renders such wholly incapable of thus contracting, and declares such contracts invalid and null."¹

"*Ne Temere*"

Largely because of the disturbances of the Reformation, England and a few other places were excepted from the terms of this law, and marriages in these places were governed by the pre-Tridentine law. This in itself was a considerable source of difficulty; there was also much confusion arising from the fact that the parish priest mentioned in *Tametsi* was the priest in whose territory the contracting parties were domiciled, and if people moved about frequently it was not easy to decide who was really their parish priest. Therefore, Pius X stabilised and simplified the legislation of the Council of Trent by the decree *Ne Temere*, which came into force at Easter, 1908 (April 19). From that date the law is to be observed throughout the whole Church, and the parish priest is made competent for the validity of all marriages within his territory, whether the parties are actually domiciled there or not.

The law now applies throughout the whole world. Catholics of Oriental rites and all non-Catholics, when contracting marriage amongst themselves, are exempt from its provisions; so also are the children of non-Catholics who happen to have been baptised in the Catholic Church, but afterwards have been educated from infancy in heresy or schism. These exceptions are very important, for all baptised people are subject to ecclesiastical law, whether they acknowledge the authority of the Church or not, and the Church legislates for them. With regard to the *form* of marriage, however, baptised non-Catholics, when contracting marriage with each other, are exempted from the law requiring the presence of the parish priest or his delegate. It follows that, granted they have been validly

Priest and witnesses

¹ Sess. xxiv, cap. 1.

baptised, and are on other grounds free from diriment impediments, their unions are most certainly to be regarded as valid sacramental contracts. It must be clearly understood that the exemption of one party is not shared by the other. Non-Catholics are exempted only when they contract amongst themselves, but if they marry Catholics the *Ne Temere* form must be observed.

The witnesses should, of course, be Catholics, but any persons of sound mind and of the age of puberty are capable of exercising the office validly.

In addition to two witnesses, it is necessary for *validity* that the matrimonial consent should be asked and received by the parish priest or Ordinary of the place where the marriage is taking place, or by their delegate. By "Ordinary" is meant the bishop or anyone taking the place of the bishop, *e.g.*, a Vicar-Apostolic in missionary countries. All kinds of technical offices are, for the purpose of matrimony, included in the term "parish priest"; it means, in effect, the senior priest in charge of a parish. It may happen that large and important churches, belonging to religious Orders, are free from parochial cares and responsibilities; in their case the regular clergy have no competence for marriages. The parish priest or Ordinary has power to delegate any other priest to perform the office. If the curates or junior clergy assist at a marriage, they do so in virtue of delegation either from the Ordinary or from the senior priest. When, therefore, it is desired that a priest friend or relative from another place should assist at a marriage, it is absolutely necessary for him to obtain the requisite delegation.

For the priest's function to be exercised not only validly but *lawfully*,¹ the parties should be attached in some way to his territory either by being domiciled in it, or by actual residence for thirty days, and it is the rule that the marriage should be performed by the parish priest of the bride.

In urgent necessity, when the competent priest cannot be had, *Cases of necessity* an exception is made to the law in two cases, and the sacramental contract is valid if entered into before two witnesses only. The case of necessity occurring at once to the mind is the danger of death. It might seem at first sight that no one would want to get married at this time, but what the law has in mind is the revalidation of an irregular union, *e.g.*, a civil marriage which has not been recognised by the Church. It is supposed that, as a matter of conscience, one of the parties wishes to make good this defect before dying, and that the competent priest cannot be had.

Outside the danger of death, marriage may be contracted in a similar manner before witnesses only, whenever there is grave inconvenience in delay, and it is foreseen that a competent priest cannot be had within a month. Circumstances of this kind might easily arise in missionary countries, and it is said that during the persecutions

¹ See p. 1080 for the distinction between *valid* and *lawful*.

in Mexico marriages have been contracted by this method, owing to the laws directed against the Church and the priesthood in that country.

Civil formalities

It is not the purpose of this essay to discuss the civil formalities attendant on marriage. In all modern States these laws are usually just and necessary, and, although the Church claims the right to legislate in everything pertaining to the marriage contract, it is fully recognised that the civil effects of the contract make it necessary for the State to intervene, and officially to register the fact that the contract has been made. Granted, as usually is the case, that the civil requirements do no violence to conscience, it is most imperative that the law should be obeyed, and that no sacramental contracts should be made, unless the civil effects are secured by observing the civil formalities. Otherwise there would arise a quite unnecessary conflict between the two authorities, and a given marriage would be valid in the eyes of God yet denied its civil status as such. Usually, however, when any conflict arises between the two authorities, it is due to the non-observance of the canonical form, although the civil formalities have been observed. It is the duty of every Catholic, who has any influence with friends and relatives living in this unhappy condition, to try to induce them to regularise the union. One can do so with tact and with respect for their feelings, but it must be definitely understood that these persons are not married in the eyes of God, and cannot live together as married people until the defect has been remedied.

Engagement

We may usefully consider, at this point, a somewhat similar legal formality attendant on the *engagement* of two parties. From the earliest times the promise of future marriage has been regarded as a sacred compact, but no legal form was attached to it until recently. The purpose of the legislation is to abolish certain abuses and inconveniences arising from private engagement. It is, of course, a promise of a very solemn character, exaggerated by some and minimised by others. One person might become engaged impetuously and without reflection, and though realising later that the union was altogether disastrous, might feel bound to keep the promise made. Another person might break it lightly and, in the absence of any record, even deny that it was made. A written and witnessed document would go a long way towards preventing these abuses. The present law is that a promise of future marriage, whether unilateral or bilateral, is null and void unless made in writing, signed by both parties and either by the parish priest or Ordinary of that place or by two witnesses. There is no strict obligation on people contemplating marriage to become formally engaged in this way, but its advantages are manifest.

Banns

The observance of the matrimonial legislation is largely assured by the publication of *Banns*. Impediments may be discovered by this means, secret unions may be avoided, and parents or other

interested persons have the opportunity of intervening, if necessary. They must be published in the parish church of each place in which the parties dwell and, should there be a serious suspicion of some unrevealed impediment, it may be necessary to publish them in other places as well. The names are usually read out in the church on three successive Sundays or holidays of obligation, during Mass, or any other service attended by a large concourse of people ; or they may be affixed to the notice-board at the church door. If, as a result of this publication, any impediment is detected, the person who is aware of it is bound to make it known to the clergy of the church.

A priest must not administer the sacraments to the unworthy. Although he is not the minister of this sacrament, his assistance is normally required for its validity, and it is his duty to make all necessary enquiries before doing so. The faithful should understand this point, and, especially if they are strangers in the parish, should gladly supply all the relevant information. They certainly should not regard the priest's enquiries as unduly inquisitive, for he is bound by his office to put certain questions in the interests of the parties themselves. He should be told of a proposed marriage at least a month before the time fixed for its celebration. For exceptional reasons the formalities may be arranged in a day or two, but such short notice is a source of considerable trouble and expense to all concerned. Sufficient knowledge of the Catholic religion and of the sacrament of Matrimony may generally be presumed in Catholics, but the priest may occasionally have to satisfy his conscience on the point. A certificate of baptism must be obtained. The priest must also be assured that there are no impediments to the union, and, if either of the parties has been married before, the death of the previous partner must be certified.

Every Catholic should, of course, go to confession before being married. The full Catholic rite presupposes it, since Holy Communion is received at the nuptial Mass. But quite apart from this fact, Matrimony is a sacrament of the living, and sacrilege is committed by receiving it in mortal sin.

The marriage rite must be celebrated in a church, unless the *Closed* bishop authorises its celebration elsewhere. It may take place at *times* any time of the year, but the accompanying solemnities of nuptial Mass and Blessing are forbidden from the First Sunday of Advent till Christmas Day, and from Ash Wednesday till Easter Sunday inclusively. For proper reasons the bishop may permit these solemnities during the *closed times*, but no unnecessary festivities should accompany the marriage.

A large part of the matrimonial legislation finds expression in the form of *impediments*. These will be explained in the following pages.

§ IV: THE IMPEDIMENTS

THE limits of this short description of Matrimony do not allow space for more than a brief enumeration of the impediments. They are obstacles arising from the natural law, or from the positive legislation of the Church, which render a marriage either unlawful or invalid.

The distinction between *lawfulness* and *validity* has a very important bearing on all the theology of the sacraments. A sacrament is valid when the sign determined by Christ has its effect, *e.g.*, the pouring of water accompanied by the prescribed words in baptism. But the Church surrounds this initiation into the Mystical Body of Christ with fitting rites and ceremonial. If baptism is administered without these rites, except in cases of necessity, it is a valid sacrament, but its administration is unlawful and may be gravely sinful.

The same doctrine applies to the contract which is the sacramental sign of Matrimony. There are some impediments, called *diriment*, which make the contract invalid; there are others, called *prohibiting* impediments, which forbid the union and make it altogether unlawful, but which in no way affect its validity. If persons go through the rites of marriage in a Catholic church with a diriment impediment, there is no valid contract—therefore no sacrament at all; it is as though baptism were administered with all the ceremonies but without the pouring of water.

There is a further vital division of impediments into those of the *divine or natural law* and those of *ecclesiastical law*. For example, a previous existing marriage is a diriment impediment of the natural law; Holy Order is also a diriment impediment invalidating marriage, but it does so by the ecclesiastical law operating only in the Latin Church. The value of this distinction is that impediments of the divine or natural law are not subject to change, and cannot be dispensed even for the gravest reasons. On the other hand, the ecclesiastical impediments have often varied and can obviously be dispensed by the authority which instituted them. It is sometimes difficult to determine with exactness where the natural law ends and ecclesiastical law begins. In cases of doubt the Church is not accustomed to dispense. Moreover, certain ecclesiastical impediments, owing to their extreme gravity (*e.g.*, the priesthood), are never dispensed for the private good of any individual. There is a further implication arising from this distinction between natural and ecclesiastical law; unbaptised persons are not subjects of the Church, and are therefore not bound by her marriage laws, except when contracting with Christians. On the other hand, all baptised persons, including heretics and schismatics, are bound by the laws of the Church unless expressly exempted.

§ 1. THE DIRIMENT IMPEDIMENTS can be examined, first of all, from the point of view of obstacles liable to affect *consent*. The lack

of the legal formalities which surround the consent is often referred to as the impediment of CLANDESTINITY ; we have already discussed these requirements in some detail.¹ ERROR, VIOLENCE, and FEAR are also called impediments, but it has been found more convenient to explain these radical ideas in an earlier section.² Closely connected with fear and violence is the impediment of ABDUCTION, which invalidates marriage between a man and a woman whom he has abducted or violently detained against her will, as long as she remains in his power.

By the natural law, a person of any age is capable of marrying, *Age* provided there is sufficient understanding about the nature of the contract. But marriages of children are so clearly undesirable that the Church has instituted the impediment of AGE, by which a youth before the completion of his sixteenth year, or a girl before the completion of her fourteenth year, is prevented from validly contracting marriage.

IMPOTENCE, which is antecedent to marriage and permanent, *Impotence* whether in the man or in the woman, whether known to the other party or not, whether absolute or relative, invalidates marriage by the law of nature. By impotence is meant not sterility, but incapability of rendering the marriage debt. This impediment is closely connected with true consent, since no person can validly undertake obligations which he is incapable of performing.

There are various impediments which arise from some sort of *Relationship* relationship, and many of them existed under the Old Law. In the case of *Consanguinity*, the reason for the impediment is partly physical: conditions are more favourable to the bodily and mental health of a child if its parents are not closely related. But, quite apart from this fact, there is a certain piety and reverence due towards parents, and consequently towards other relatives, which is inconsistent with carnal intercourse. The kind of relationship which now invalidates marriage is that arising, within certain degrees, from consanguinity, affinity, spiritual relationship and adoption.

CONSANGUINITY is the bond uniting persons of the same blood. In the direct line it invalidates marriage, by the natural law, between all ascendants and descendants ; in the collateral line it extends to the third degree inclusively. There are as many degrees as persons in one line, excluding the common stock—*e.g.*, the children of cousins are in the third degree, collateral line.

AFFINITY is the bond which unites a person to the blood relations of his or her partner in a valid marriage. In the direct line it invalidates marriage in all degrees, in the collateral line to the second degree inclusively. Degrees are computed in much the same way as in consanguinity. The blood relations of one partner having been determined, it follows at once that the other partner is related to them

¹ Pp. 1075 ff.

² Pp. 1074 ff.

by affinity in exactly the same degree. Thus, A marries B; B is related to his cousin C in the second degree of consanguinity, collateral line; it follows that A is related to C in the second degree of affinity, collateral line. The pivot on which this ecclesiastical impediment turns, in the present legislation, is valid marriage. If two parties are living together, but not validly married, the similar relationship which arises constitutes the impediment of PUBLIC DECENCY. It has its origin either from an invalid marriage or from public and notorious concubinage, and, by ecclesiastical law, it invalidates the contract between one party and the blood relations of the other, to the second degree in the direct line only.

The very ancient impediment of SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP, which arises from the sacrament of regeneration, invalidates marriage between the minister of baptism and the person baptised; also between the godparent and the person baptised.

Those who are prevented from validly contracting marriage by the civil law, owing to the relationship arising from ADOPTION, are also prevented by Canon Law.

The remaining diriment impediments cannot be placed in any group or class. A person held by the existing bond of a PREVIOUS MARRIAGE cannot validly remarry. For a proper understanding of this impediment, the whole of Section VI on "Divorce" should be read. Somewhat similar is the bond arising from HOLY ORDER and SOLEMN VOWS. A marriage attempted by a cleric in sacred orders (Subdiaconate, Diaconate, and Priesthood), or by a religious with solemn vows, is invalid.

An impediment, known as DIFFERENCE OF WORSHIP, invalidates marriage contracted between a non-baptised person and one baptised in the Catholic Church, or converted to it from heresy or schism. Under the present legislation, it no longer exists between a baptised non-Catholic and an unbaptised person. Before a dispensation is granted, guarantees similar to those required in *mixed religion*¹ must be given.

Lastly, marriage cannot be contracted validly between persons who, with a promise of marriage, have committed adultery; nor between two persons who have committed adultery, of whom one has also caused the death of his or her lawful partner; nor between two persons who have conspired in causing such death, even though no adultery has taken place.² This rather intricate impediment, known as CRIME, is of ecclesiastical origin, though based on a very natural repugnance that an adulterer or conjugicide should marry his accomplice in sin.

¹ Cf. *infra*, p. 1083.

² Adultery in this connection must be understood not in the loose sense of a grave sin against the sixth commandment, but in the strict legal sense of an act, fitted in itself for generation, performed by two persons, of whom one at least is already validly married to a third party.

Previous
marriage

Order

Difference
of worship

Crime

§ 2. The PROHIBITING IMPEDIMENTS are fewer in number. BETROTHAL, CLOSED TIMES, and PARENTAL PROHIBITION are practically equivalent to impediments. If two people are betrothed,¹ it is clearly unlawful for either of them to marry someone else, until their engagement is formally broken off. The meaning of CLOSED TIMES and the extent to which PARENTAL CONSENT is required, are explained elsewhere.² Marriage is also unlawful in the face of a PROHIBITION OF THE CHURCH.

It has already been said that *Solemn Vow* is a diriment impediment. The following SIMPLE VOWS constitute prohibiting impediments to marriage: the vow of virginity, of perfect chastity, of not marrying, of receiving Holy Orders, and of embracing the religious state.

Wherever the civil law prohibits marriage because of the relationship of ADOPTION, it is equally forbidden by Canon Law.

The Church forbids most severely, and in all places, marriages between Catholics and baptised non-Catholics. This impediment of MIXED RELIGION must be carefully distinguished from *Mixed Religion* of *Mixed Religion*, which is diriment of marriage. The reason why the Church is so severe regarding mixed marriages is that there always exists in these unions some danger to the faith of the Catholic party. If this danger is effectively removed, or made more remote by guarantees, the impediment may be dispensed for proper reasons. The guarantees required, before a dispensation is granted, are written promises to the effect that the religion of the Catholic will not be menaced, and that all the children born of the marriage shall be brought up Catholics. There is a further obligation on the Catholic party to secure, if possible, the conversion of the non-Catholic. These regulations might appear to many non-Catholics unfair and one-sided, but in reality they are perfectly just and logical. The Church is merely exercising the right of any society to protect its members. Mixed marriages are viewed with such concern because they are a menace to the faith, and, even when a dispensation is granted, the Church does not smile on the union. The beautiful Catholic rite of nuptial Mass and Blessing, so reminiscent of Christ's presence at the marriage feast, is forbidden, and the ceremony is reduced to a minimum.

For similar reasons the faithful are not allowed to contract marriage with apostates, members of forbidden societies, public sinners, and those censured by the Church. As a rule, one rarely finds a lapsed Catholic, or one of notoriously evil life, joining some heretical sect. Yet, it is evident that the Church must regard with disfavour the marriages of her children with people of UNWORTHY LIFE, and it may often happen that the surest way of averting danger to the Catholic party, in cases where grave reasons exist for

¹ Cf. above, p. 1078.

² P. 1079; p. 1086.

permitting the union, is by securing written guarantees as in mixed marriages.

Dispensations § 3. The presence of any impediment should be sufficient reason for abandoning a proposed marriage. Nevertheless, a dispensation may sometimes be obtained, for proportionately grave reasons, and under certain conditions. If it is an impediment of the natural law, it cannot be dispensed and the marriage cannot possibly take place. If it is one of ecclesiastical origin which the Church is not accustomed to dispense (*e.g.*, affinity in the direct line), it would be almost futile to seek a dispensation. The rest can be dispensed for urgent reasons, but the proper attitude for a Catholic, if no grave harm be feared, is to break off the proposed union. Laws are not made for the purpose of being dispensed, and, in particular, the impediments are constituted because marriages affected by them are altogether undesirable.

One practical point should be remembered. The grant of a dispensation entails expense, on the part of ecclesiastical offices, in examining the petition. Except in the case of poor persons, who can pay nothing at all, it is just and reasonable that this expense should be borne by the parties who profit by the dispensation. The faithful who apply for dispensations should make enquiries from the parish priest on this matter, for it often happens that the clergy or bishops have to bear the expense themselves, when this very obvious duty has been neglected.

§ V: MATRIMONIAL OBLIGATIONS

Preparation If the dignity and holiness of marriage is understood, as a sacrament signifying the union between Christ and the Church, it will necessarily follow that the way to it must be prepared by a life which is at least not in flat contradiction to the holiness of this state. It is true, of course, that the grace of God is powerful and can effect anything. Cases are known, for example, of youths who from leaving school have led irreligious and even dissolute lives, and yet after receiving this sacrament have been exemplary husbands and fathers. "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife."¹ It is equally true that the grace of repentance may be given at the moment of death, but in neither of these cases do we detect the ordinary workings of Providence.

No Catholic, unless he denies the principles of his faith, can give even an implicit approval to the process known as "sowing wild oats," if by that phrase is meant that healthy young people are under some sort of necessity of breaking the moral law for a certain period. What we are saying applies to all sin, but it has a special application to sins against the virtue of chastity. Violent temptations often assail the young in this matter, but like any other inclination to sin

¹ 1 Cor. vii 14.

they can be overcome with God's grace. It is when a soul is not in a state of grace that resistance becomes most difficult. An exhortation to a holy life is not the immediate purpose of this essay, but we must insist on this: the ordinary channels of grace are the sacraments, and it is the neglect of them that leads almost inevitably to ruin. The virtue of chastity is best safeguarded by a regular and frequent reception of the sacraments.

The subject is mentioned here because of its close connection with the matrimonial contract. Popular judgement usually expects a woman to be pure and undefiled on the day of her nuptials, but it does not always expect the same qualities in the man. This view, though rarely expressed in words, is fundamentally wrong, and is utterly opposed to Catholic principles. It is true that the effects of sexual sin may be graver in the woman than in the man, but looked at from the point of view of moral guilt, the sin is equal. A young man who is tempted to indulge in sexual excess should be restrained chiefly because it is a grave sin against God. He should also remember that the day may come when he will desire to be united for life to a pure and good woman, and it will be difficult for him to do this with a clear conscience if he is himself seared with vice.

The sacred obligations assumed in marriage, its sacramental character, and the indissoluble bond arising from it, all point to the necessity of a careful and *reasonable* judgement on the part of persons who are contemplating the married state. It may be objected that marriage is entirely an affair of the heart, not of the head. Certainly, the union must be based on mutual affection, and, if this is lacking, a marriage which is on other counts most suitable, can hardly be anything else but a failure. But while the decision must depend very largely on the affections, these must not be allowed to run loose until prudent reflection has shown the proposed union to be suitable. For in no other serious affair of human life are we accustomed to undertake grave and serious obligations of a permanent character without serious thought. A person who is thinking of joining a religious Order is wrapped up in his desire, yet no one takes the first steps toward this vocation except after receiving advice from competent people, and the Church requires a long period of novitiate before even simple vows of a temporary nature are taken. Marriage is equally a vocation, and the bond which results is more binding than the vows of any religious Order, for these can be dispensed for grave reasons. In the name of common sense, we must repudiate the romantic notion that there is some sort of sacred love urging marriage imperatively between two people from the first moment of their meeting each other. Such attractions exist, but there is nothing particularly ethereal about them. Granted the union is not undesirable on other grounds, this deep natural tendency will flower into the perfect love between husband and wife of which St Paul speaks. But if this "love at first sight" is going to violate the most

elementary rules of prudence, how can it survive? If it were any other contract the parties could learn from experience and be more careful the next time; but, seeing that the bond of marriage cannot be untied, a Catholic is bound to resist a sudden attraction of this kind until he has formed a reasonable judgement on the suitability of the union.

What are the obvious points to be examined? The first thing is to see whether there are any impediments which either prohibit or invalidate marriage. Although some of these impediments may be dispensed for grave reasons, the proper course is to obey the laws of the Church and not contemplate a marriage which for any reason is forbidden. Every just law is a friend, not an enemy to be circumvented and defeated. This applies especially to the impediments of "difference of worship" and "mixed religion."

From the purely material and temporal point of view, a marriage is usually more suitable if both parties belong to the same status in society; their habits, tastes, and general outlook on life are more likely to be in agreement.

Parental consent

One would readily admit that many happy unions have been contracted in spite of these and other possible obstacles, but the question can only be discussed as it appears in the generality of cases. Whether a proposed union is advisable can only be judged with some degree of certainty by a person of experience who knows all the circumstances. It is precisely for this reason that marriage should not normally be contracted without parental consent. No priest may assist at the marriage of minors, in the face of opposition on the part of their parents, without previously consulting the bishop. But it would be wrong to conclude that children who have reached their majority are free to flout the reasonable wishes of parents in this matter. Quite apart from the fact that they are commanded by God to honour their parents, no one on earth could be more fit to give advice and guidance. There are doubtless parents who treat their grown-up children as though they were still infants, and there are exceptional cases where children are entitled flatly to contradict the wishes of their parents in this matter; but, speaking for the generality of cases, their consent should most emphatically be obtained before engagement.

On the other hand, undue parental influence might easily interfere with the complete freedom of matrimonial consent. Only the contracting parties are capable of making a pact, whose object is concerned with intimate rights that the parties alone can give. We must make a closer examination of these rights and corresponding obligations.

The marriage debt

Since matrimony is a bilateral contract, the primary purpose of which is the procreation of children, each of the contracting persons has equal rights in everything relating to this object. There is, accordingly, the gravest obligation not to violate these rights in any

way. The malice of adultery and infidelity consists in their infringement. The headship of the family must reside in the father, to whom all the members of the family owe obedience in everything pertaining to its government, and the wife is not excepted from this rule: "Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church."¹ But, in the use of marriage itself, the husband has no greater authority than the wife; the two parties are absolutely equal in this respect, and the equality of rights must be respected: "Let the husband render the debt to his wife, and the wife also in like manner to the husband. The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband. And in like manner the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife. Defraud not one another, except perhaps by consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to prayer; and return again together lest Satan tempt you for your incontinency."² It is a general and universal principle, obvious from the nature of the contract, that if one party desires the debt to be paid, the other must render it in justice. The principle, however, does admit of a few exceptions.

If husband and wife, by *mutual consent*, agree not to exercise their rights, they are perfectly entitled to do so. It is even a counsel and a deep Christian instinct to refrain at sacred times from motives of Christian temperance, and it is in many ways a matter of regret that the holy practice of Tobias is not more universally observed: "For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and the mule which have not understanding: over these the devil hath power. But when thou shalt take her, go into the chamber, and for three days keep thyself continent from her, and give thyself to nothing else but to prayers with her . . . and when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayest obtain a blessing in children. . . . Then Tobias exhorted the virgin, and said to her: Sara, arise and let us pray to God to-day and to-morrow and the next day, because for three nights we are joined to God, and when the third night is over, we will be in our own wedlock. For we are the children of the saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God. So they both arose and prayed earnestly that health might be given them. . . . Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, and let us both grow old together in health."³

It is good, therefore, to abstain in this way, and at other holy times, not because rendering the marriage debt has the slightest element of wrong in it—on the contrary, it is holy and good, and symbolises the union of Christ and the Church—but because it is easier to raise the mind to spiritual things if earthly pleasures are for

¹ Eph. v 22.² 1 Cor. vii 3.³ Tobias vi, vii.

a time restrained. But whilst all this is profoundly true, and is one of the signs of conjugal chastity, we must insist that all abstention, even on spiritual grounds, must be mutual ; if ever a rendering of the debt appears necessary, in order to forestall the danger of incontinence, it is not only lawful but obligatory to pay it, even at the most sacred times.

The debt may sometimes be refused, without any violation of justice, even though there is no mutual agreement. No general rule can be formulated, but the individual conscience must be formed in view of the particular circumstances of each case. Thus, everything which justifies *separation*,¹ justifies also the refusal of the marriage debt ; the right to it is forfeited by a well-grounded fear of bodily harm or disease resulting ; it may easily be a grave obligation of charity, if not of justice, for the husband not to ask the debt to be rendered at certain times. In all these and similar cases, where some doubt may exist, the proper course is to seek advice in order to avoid the possibility of causing grave injustice. But if the object sought in marital intercourse is some vicious and unnatural act, subversive of the primary object of the contract, it may be obligatory to refuse. The matrimonial contract is concerned with everything leading directly or indirectly to the generation of children, and, provided this purpose is not frustrated, married intercourse is good and holy ; at the most there might be some venial sin of excess. On the other hand, if married relations are so exercised that the primary object of the act is defeated, by being performed in an unnatural manner, there is undoubtedly mortal sin.

*Birth
prevention*

The subject of birth prevention is engaging the earnest attention of all thinking men, and the most widely divergent views are held and disseminated amongst the masses of the people. The teaching of the Church on this matter, as on most matters, is clear and definite, and most people of any education at all are quite aware that the practice is forbidden by the Catholic Church. But what it is exactly that the Church forbids, and the reasons of the prohibition, are not always understood. When people, for example, appeal to the Church to change or modify her judgement on this practice, they betray a complete misunderstanding of the Catholic standpoint ; they would appear to think that birth prevention is forbidden in much the same way that eating meat on Fridays is forbidden ; that the law can be traced to some Council or other, which imposed it on the faithful ; that an infringement of the law merely implies disobedience to the sacred legislation of the Church, and that the authority which made the law can dispense it. The truth is, of course, that the practice is forbidden by the Church, because it is already wrong with an initial fundamental wrongness. The obligations of married people in this matter are antecedent to all ecclesiastical law—they are clearly derived from the *natural law*.

¹ Cf. pp. 1096–1097.

The statement that an action is forbidden by the natural law requires a little explanation. It takes us out of the realm of detailed discussion of minutiae, and engages our attention on a matter of vast importance, namely, the distinction between moral good and evil. Speaking in quite general terms, we call a thing "good" when nothing is wanting to the perfection of its nature: good coal or a good racehorse. A human action is good when it makes for the ultimate perfection of human nature, but inasmuch as only those actions capable of being controlled by reason and will are specifically human, we use the qualifying word "moral" for describing this particular type of goodness. But how am I to know whether a given human action of mine is perfecting my nature or not? A growing plant will develop into a good one, provided its needs for water, air, and sunlight are supplied. But the needs, appetites, and activities of a human being are so varied and complex, he enjoys the use of so many faculties, that it is occasionally difficult to determine exactly whether a given action is good or not. We can at least, without any difficulty, understand this: in a complex organism, the perfection of the whole will be achieved by employing each separate individual faculty in accordance with its natural object. The most universal and most elementary test in distinguishing between moral good and evil consists in determining whether a human faculty is being used in a natural manner, and in subordination to its natural object. For it is the immediate object of an action which primarily gives it a moral goodness or badness. No amount of good intention, no wealth of pressing circumstances, can ever justify an action which is bad from its object. This is a proposition to which most people would assent; the Church insists on sustaining it rigorously and logically.

Now the natural law, of which we are speaking, presupposes a law-giver. Granted that God exists, the creator and ruler of the universe, his plan of divine wisdom, which directs all created things, is law in the fullest sense. It is called "eternal" because it is the fount and origin of all law. Physical laws and animal instincts are all reflections of the eternal law of God, but it is only a creature endowed with reason and will who can be said, in a strict sense, to *obey* law. For this reason the term "natural law" is restricted in its use to signify the participation of the eternal law of God in a rational creature. It is called "natural," because its chief precepts can be perceived by unaided reason, and because it is deduced from human nature. When, therefore, a person employs a human faculty in an unnatural manner, perverting its natural object, he is disobeying the natural law, which is nothing else than the law of God.

With this brief outline of the principles governing moral conduct, we can proceed to see why it is that the Church, in declaring and explaining the natural law, has always maintained that birth prevention is forbidden by the law of God, and cannot be dispensed by any human authority. In showing that a certain line of conduct is

immoral and opposed to the natural law, there are two lines of procedure. One may approach the subject *directly*, examining the act itself, and demonstrating its wrongness from the unnatural use made of a human faculty; or one may approach it *indirectly*, showing that the effects of such conduct are detrimental to the individual or to the race.

Of these two methods, the second is the more popular and attractive because easier to understand, but it is by the first method that the most fundamental and exact conclusions can be reached. For, with regard to the nature and purpose of the faculty of generation, there cannot be two opinions. A man eats food for the purpose of supporting the individual; he uses the faculty of generation for the purpose of supporting the race. It requires no great acumen to see that eating must be regulated according to the purpose of the act; the use of emetics solely for the pleasure of eating repeatedly is clearly immoral. Similarly, the frustration of the natural purpose of the act of generation is immoral; the immorality consists in gratifying sexual pleasure while frustrating the object of the act. Grossly unnatural sexual vice is punished by every civil code, and between actions of this kind punishable by law, and actions which frustrate the purpose of normal sexual relations, there is only a difference of degree; in both cases an unnatural use is made of the human body.

We may examine the practice from the more popular angle of the consequences which follow from it, but the fundamental position turns on what has already been said. Even though it could be shown that no harmful consequences follow from using emetics in order to enjoy three dinners in one evening, such conduct would still be immoral. The exponents of Catholic morality fully recognise the difficult economic conditions of modern life. They recognise that, in most cases, the advocates of birth prevention promulgate their views with the good intention of alleviating human misery and want. But the Catholic standpoint is absolutely committed to the doctrine, that an action which is objectively wrong cannot become right, no matter what the circumstances or intentions of the agent may be.

The first thing which occurs to one is an enquiry into the purely physical effects of this malpractice on the health of the individual. From the lay point of view, it is a little disconcerting to find that medical opinion is not in complete agreement about the effects of anti-conceptual practices. A few writers advocate methods ranging from mutilation to mechanical devices, and maintain that, if physical injury results, it is due to their unskilful and unhygienic use. It is difficult, of course, to make any general statement with regard to medical opinion on the whole, as distinguished from that of a few extremists, but it can certainly be said, without any prejudice, that the best and most representative opinion of medical authority has been adverse to the practice. There is fairly substantial agreement

that the persons who use anti-conceptional methods at least run the risk of physical injury to their own bodies. Even this modest conclusion supports the ethical contention that the unnatural use of the faculty of generation is morally wrong.

There are various ills of a nervous character resulting very easily from the practice. To many people the fear of bearing children makes a strong appeal in restraining sexual desire; take away the possibility of conception, and one of the strongest human impulses is left to satisfy itself without any check. The knowledge of birth-preventive methods leads inevitably to other immoral actions, for it removes the natural sanction deterring people from illicit intercourse. Of the social effects we need not speak. The subject has been fully discussed and statistics are available. Nearly every European country is threatened by a continual decline in the birth-rate, and in many cases the civil government is taking more or less futile steps to avert the evil. On the face of it, it seems unlikely that people will refrain from immoral conduct on motives of patriotism, when they are not deterred by the fear of God.

For there is one last supremely evil effect far outweighing all the rest, which experience proves to be the chief reason refraining people from this unlawful practice. It is the fact that their conduct is an offence against a personal God, the fear of whom is the beginning of wisdom; for when we say that an action is forbidden by the natural law, we mean that it is forbidden by the law of God. "Any use of matrimony whatsoever in the exercise of which the act is deprived, by human interference, of its natural power to procreate life, is an offence against the law of God and of nature, and those who commit it are guilty of grave sin."¹ The human legislator, affixing a sanction to the non-observance of his laws, is only reflecting the government of God. No matter how curious it may seem to certain modern exponents of Christianity, a Catholic must believe that his sins may be punished by God for all eternity.

It is sometimes alleged that the Church has failed to impose this doctrine on birth-prevention upon the faithful as a whole. If by this is meant that the ruling is not accepted by people who are nominally Catholics, but who from indolence and indifference do not practise their religion, the statement may be true. But if it means that a Catholic can practise his religion, frequent the sacraments regularly, and yet defend this malpractice, the statement is completely false. People who do not set foot in a Catholic church, except perhaps for the purpose of getting married, are Catholics only in the sense that they owe no allegiance to another religion, but one can hardly be surprised if they refuse to be guided by the Church in this arduous matter.

It may be asked to what extent a Catholic who is true to his religion may limit his family without committing sin. It is a popular

¹ *Casti Connubii*, C.T.S., Do. 113, § 56.

misconception that the Church requires Catholic parents, under pain of sin, to have large families ; the only thing insisted upon is that they should not exercise the marriage act in a sinful manner. If, for any reason whatever, married people agree to live in mutual continence, they commit no sin and their restraint may even be virtuous. It is also the considered judgement of the Church that married persons may be prudently allowed to use their marriage rights at those times when conception is less likely, although it must be admitted that competent medical opinion is by no means agreed that conception is, as a matter of fact, less likely at these times. The most obvious method of restricting birth, and the only sure way that is not sinful, is to refrain from exercising marriage rights.

This is all that can be usefully said here on this important topic. The doctrine is not the opinion of a few rigorous theologians, but the considered and universal teaching of an authority which every Catholic knows cannot err in matters affecting Christian morals. It may seem hard and severe, but it is based on a logical application of principles which lie at the very roots of moral conduct. The inherent difficulty of observing the law is lessened from the fact that the marriage contract is a sacrament, conferring divine grace on the recipients, and enabling them to fulfil all the obligations of their state of life.

§ VI: DIVORCE

PERHAPS there is no teaching of the Church so well known to the whole world as the Catholic doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage. It rests on the supreme fact, so often recalled in these pages, that the marriages of Christians signify the indissoluble union between Christ and the Church, but it is also a doctrine intimately connected with the natural law. Because of its importance, it is all the more necessary to have an accurate appreciation of the very definite limits, within which no human authority whatever can dissolve the marriage bond. It can be expressed quite briefly by saying that those marriages are absolutely indissoluble which have been *ratified and consummated*. A *ratified* marriage is the contract validly made between two baptised persons, *i.e.*, it is the sacrament. It is *consummated* when the physical act which the contract has in view is performed, the act by which the parties are made one flesh. Accordingly, if a marriage falls short of its complete fulness, either because it is not ratified or because it is not consummated, it is possible for the union in certain cases to be dissolved ; but if it is ratified and consummated, a divorce is impossible.

While bearing in mind this necessary qualification, it must be our first care to establish the substance of the teaching that marriage is indissoluble. We shall then be able to appreciate more clearly the cases in which the doctrine cannot be strictly applied. We are

sometimes accustomed to regard the indissolubility of marriage as something specifically imposed on the Christian Church by the positive will of Christ. Our Lord did indeed restore marriage to its primitive state, and by his divine authority abolished divorce, which was permitted for certain reasons under the law of Moses. But it would sadly weaken the doctrine if we regarded it solely as a matter of positive law, for it rests ultimately on the natural law, which is and must be binding on the whole of humanity.

The institution of marriage being ordained by nature for the pro-*Natural law* creation of children and their education, everything tending to frustrate this purpose is forbidden by the natural law. It is chiefly from the aspect of the children's good that the natural reasons against divorce are deduced. It will be conceded at once that, if by divorce is meant that married persons may separate at will or caprice and contract fresh unions, the situation would differ very slightly from a general promiscuity of the sexes, which is clearly adverse to the nurture of children. But no one, except the wildest fanatic, advocates divorce in this sense; public opinion requires grave reasons and the intervention of authority before the marriage bond may be severed. Here precisely is the snare and illusion. Everyone knows that the introduction of divorce laws in modern states has caused a gradual and inevitable increase in the number of divorces, the laws have become less rigorous, the grounds of petition more fictitious, and the elimination of collusion more difficult. What is this but a gradual destruction of the institution of marriage altogether?

Even though the principle be restricted to its narrowest limits, divorce would still be forbidden by the natural law, for all law must regard the common good and the generality of cases. Divorce, even in the most restricted sense, tends to make the end and purpose of marriage more difficult of attainment.¹ The possibility of having a new partner and a new family would deflect parental care from the present offspring. Even if there were no children from the first marriage, the possibility of divorce being contingent on this fact would be an added inducement to birth prevention, and would act still further against the purpose of matrimony.

If we regard the matter not only from the angle of the children's good, but from the point of view of the two parties who make the contract, we shall find similar natural reasons operating. The possibility of divorce must weaken the mutual love and fidelity between husband and wife, which is the most beautiful thing on earth. Little differences of character and outlook would gradually assume enormous proportions, if it were possible to break off the union; on the other hand, granted the firm persuasion that whatever happens divorce is impossible, differences will be minimised and mutual forbearance encouraged. If facilities for divorce are to be granted even for exceptional cases, the number of hasty and ill-considered marriages

¹ See p. 1072, on the primary and secondary precepts of the natural law.

would be increased. If allowed for misconduct, it would be almost an encouragement to commit adultery. It was for such reasons as these that the Syllabus of Pius IX reasserted the doctrine that marriage is indissoluble by the law of nature. Christ abolished whatever toleration was extended to the Jews in this matter, and restored marriage to its primitive state: "Moses, by reason of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."¹

St Matthew
xix

A closer examination of this and parallel texts must now be made, since in one place our Lord appears to allow an exception to an otherwise universal law. For a Catholic, the meaning of Christ's teaching is known, not by wrangling over texts, but by the infallible authority of the Church. But this particular difficulty is so important, and so many people are persuaded that Christ sanctioned divorce subsequent to the sin of adultery, that we must show that Christ's words are best interpreted in the orthodox Catholic sense. The passages of the New Testament are as follows in the Douay version:

ST MATTHEW

"And it hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a bill of divorce. But I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, excepting for the cause of fornication, maketh her to commit adultery; and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery" (v 31, 32).

"Moses, by reason of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that shall marry her that is put away committeth adultery. His disciples say unto him: If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry" (xix 8-10).

ST MARK

"Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another committeth adultery against her. And if the wife shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery" (x 11).

ST LUKE

"Everyone that putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery; and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery" (xvi 18).

ST PAUL

"Therefore, whilst her husband liveth, she shall be called an adulteress if she be with another man: but if her husband be dead, she is delivered from the law of her husband" (Rom. vii 3).

"But to them that are married, not I but the Lord commandeth that the wife depart not from her husband. And if she depart, that she remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. And let not the husband put away his wife" (1 Cor. vii 10).

¹ Matt. xix 8.

In the Gospel texts, the Pharisees had hoped to set Christ at variance with the law of Moses which sanctioned divorce. Christ's answer was that Moses *permitted* it because of the hardness of their hearts, and he quoted Genesis ii 24 in support of his words that from the beginning marriage was indissoluble. St Paul's teaching, especially in 1 Cor. vii 10, is absolute, and, like the texts from St Luke and St Mark, makes no exception. This is all the more striking in view of the fact that, in the succeeding verses, he mentions the exception to the indissolubility of marriage known as the Pauline privilege,¹ thus bringing into stronger relief the absolute indissolubility of Christian marriage. The phrase "if she depart, that she remain unmarried" means what we now understand by separation. It is, of course, the Catholic interpretation also of St Matthew's text, that the exception refers merely to the right of separation. There is less difficulty in the words of chapter v of St Matthew. They can be taken in the sense that a man who puts away his wife "maketh her to commit adultery"—*i.e.*, he is responsible for her sin in remarrying, except only in the case where she is put away justly owing to her fornication, when the responsibility is entirely her own. In any case, "he that shall marry her that is put away committeth adultery."

It is in chapter xix that the chief difficulty occurs. For it appears to say that a man who puts away his wife and marries another is not committing adultery, provided his first wife was put away for fornication. Many solutions have been suggested in order to evade this unorthodox meaning. There is considerable obscurity caused by the word "fornication," for the word usually refers to sin which is committed by unmarried people. Some therefore understand it to refer to pre-matrimonial sin not discovered until after marriage, and suppose that the exception mentioned is tolerated because the first marriage is invalid, owing to the matrimonial consent being conditional on the woman being a virgin.

Other explanations turn on the Greek used in the exceptive clause, which is certainly capable of being translated: "He that shall put away his wife, which is not allowed even for fornication." Again, a whole class of interpretation is concerned with reconstructing the text of St Matthew, for many scholars have come to the conclusion that St Mark's Gospel is the earliest, and where discrepancies occur his rendering is to be preferred to the others. St Matthew's exception is regarded as an insertion by a later hand, in order to make the Gospel law tally with the Jewish practice and the laws of the Roman Empire. But this method of reconstructing the text is foreign to Catholic principles. For us the Vulgate is the authentic version for doctrinal purposes, and the Vulgate contains the difficult reading which has to be explained.

Leaving the minutiae of interpretation, and regarding the passage in the broad lines of its context, we are forced to conclude that Christ

¹ Cf. p. 1097.

did not contemplate any exception to the indissolubility of a Christian consummated marriage ; that the traditional Catholic interpretation is the correct one, and that the " putting away for fornication " refers to separation and not to divorce. We are on the strongest possible ground, if we approach the difficulty of this passage by insisting that the exception cannot refer to divorce without doing violence to the whole context, especially as the Catholic interpretation is fully supported by the texts from St Mark, St Luke, and St Paul. For the whole passage is concerned with explaining the difference between the Old Law and the New. Marriage is to be restored to its primitive purity as it was " from the beginning." Divorce, tolerated of old " for the hardness of their hearts," is to be tolerated no longer. If, having taught this, Christ allowed that it was nevertheless lawful in the case of adultery, his teaching would not be vastly different from the Old Law ; there would be no need for him to speak with all the solemnity of making a startling change ; the astonishment of the disciples would be inexplicable.

In the text itself, the exception must be restricted to " putting away," and must not be extended to " marrying another." For a Catholic, Christ's meaning in this and other texts of the Gospel is to be found in the constant and infallible teaching of the Church. Although certain local Synods, as well as the schismatic Oriental Churches, have admitted adultery as a cause for divorce, on the strength of this text, yet the Church Universal has never admitted it : " If anyone saith that the Church has erred in that she hath taught, and doth teach, that the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved on account of the adultery of one of the parties . . . let him be anathema." ¹

Separation

Although divorce is forbidden, it is taught by the Church, with equal insistence, that there are many causes which justify separation between husband and wife.² The sin of adultery, as Christ teaches, gives the innocent party the right to complete and permanent separation. The right cannot be claimed if misconduct is mutual, nor if the offence has been tacitly condoned. Condonation need not necessarily mean forgiveness, but it means that a person cannot exercise married rights while at the same time intending to secure a separation.

There are other reasons which justify separation for a time, *e.g.*, public apostasy, grave spiritual or bodily danger, or cruelty ; but when the cause of rupture has been removed, the offending partner must be received back again, unless the Church decides otherwise in exceptional cases. For we must always remember that the matrimonial causes of Christians are subject to the ruling of the Church ; before a Catholic can have recourse to the civil power, valid grounds in conscience must exist. In many cases the justifying reason is quite apparent, but often it is extremely doubtful. The matter should

¹ Council of Trent, Sess. xxiv, can. 7:

² *Ibid.* Sess. xxiv, can. 8.

be put before the parish priest, who, if it is necessary to do so, will have recourse to the diocesan authorities.

When we say that a person has a right to separation, the question is regarded solely from the point of view of justice: in using the right, there is no violation of the marriage contract. But, on a principle of Christian charity and forgiveness, it will be equally evident that the innocent party should often not use this right. Occasions may arise when a prudent survey of all the circumstances points to the extreme course of securing perpetual separation. But the grace of the sacrament, its sacred character and its mystical significance, should always inspire the parties of a Christian marriage to complete forgiveness and forbearance.

We can now examine shortly the exceptional cases in which *Pauline* marriage can be dissolved, owing to the fact that it just falls short of *privilege* being *ratified and consummated*. A ratified marriage implies the valid and sacramental union between two baptised persons, for the Church is immediately concerned only with people brought under her authority by baptism. Therefore, the marriages of unbaptised persons amongst themselves remain outside the care of the Church, until one of the parties becomes a Christian by baptism. In these cases of conversion, it may happen that the unbaptised party is opposed to Christianity; in fact, the fear of possible disturbance might even prevent a person from becoming a Christian. In these circumstances, and under certain conditions, the marriage contracted in infidelity may be dissolved, even though it has been consummated. The procedure is known as the "Pauline privilege,"¹ since it was first promulgated by St Paul. In every case in which the privilege is used, it is not baptism, but subsequent marriage which dissolves the previous bond.

It remains to examine two instances of the possible dissolution of *Non-consummated marriage* a ratified sacramental contract among Christians, which has fallen short of its full completion by remaining unconsummated. The valid contract alone is without any doubt the sacrament of Matrimony; but, until conjugal rights have been exercised, the two persons are not yet one flesh, and we should expect to find that their marriage is not regarded in quite the same light as those which have been consummated. The bond of a non-consummated marriage may be dissolved, for adequate reasons and under certain conditions, by a papal dispensation or by solemn vows in a religious Order. The fact of non-consummation must be completely established, for once the union is consummated no power on earth can dissolve it.

The papal prerogative, in this matter, has been used for centuries; from this fact alone we are forced to conclude that the Papacy has exercised this power because such is the will of Christ, who is with his Church until the consummation of the world.

¹ 1 Cor. vii 12-17.

In the second method of dissolving these marriages, it is the solemn profession which causes the dissolution of the previous non-consummated marriage. This power has also been recognised in the Church from very ancient times, and is beautifully analysed by St Thomas: "Before bodily union, there exists between married people a spiritual tie, but after the marriage has been consummated there exists also a bodily tie. After bodily union a marriage is dissolved only by bodily death; but before bodily union it is dissolved by religious profession, which is a kind of spiritual death whereby a person dies to the world in order to live to God."¹

*Nullity
decrees*

Lastly, a word must be said about *decrees of nullity*, for these are sometimes, in the popular mind, confused with divorce. From the doctrine explained in the previous pages, it will be evident that occasionally some flaw may exist which renders a marriage invalid, e.g., a defective consent or a diriment impediment. The care which surrounds the celebration of marriage will usually result in the obstacle being detected; if it is not detected until after the ceremony has taken place, the invalid union can usually be revalidated. But supposing the defect in question cannot be removed (e.g., the bond of an existing marriage), or supposing it is an impediment which the Church refuses to dispense (e.g., affinity in the direct line), or supposing that the parties themselves, after discovering the invalidity of their attempted marriage, refuse to have it revalidated? In all these cases the invalid marriage must remain invalid, and it is often necessary and advisable to secure an official ecclesiastical declaration, to the effect that the bond of marriage has in this case never existed. This is what is known as a *decree of nullity*.

It is sufficiently rare to be quite outside the experience of ordinary people, but perhaps one may hear of some prominent person obtaining a decree and marrying again; the news is spread abroad, and very often the impression is wilfully created that a divorce has been obtained. Nothing could be more ridiculous than an error of this kind. *Divorce* is a declaration which pretends to dissolve the bond of a ratified and consummated marriage; a *decree of nullity* is a declaration, following upon a most careful and repeated survey of the evidence, that the bond of marriage has never existed.

The misconception is occasionally of a more offensive character. It is sometimes alleged that the machinery of nullity decrees is merely a legal expedient for divorce, and that impediments and obstacles are multiplied for this purpose. Well, in the first place, the impediments have been gradually reduced, and in the present legislation are more restricted than they have ever been before. Moreover, voiding laws are not peculiar to ecclesiastical legislation; for example, previous marriage and lack of legal formalities invalidate the contract in the eyes of the civil law also. Any suspicion that the Church grants these decrees easily, and without sufficient reason, is dispelled

¹ *Summa, Suppl. lxi, art. 2.*

if the procedure is examined. The case is twice tried by separate judges, and each diocesan tribunal has a "defender of the bond," whose business it may be to appeal to Rome for a final confirmation of a verdict of nullity. The more important and interesting cases are printed in full in the *Acta Apostolica Sedis*, and any competent person may study the evidence on which a judgement is given. A mere comparison between the small number of nullity decrees granted in the Catholic Church, and the appalling number of divorces granted in France or America is more than sufficient to show that any suspicion that these decrees are merely evasions of the law is due either to prejudice or ignorance.

* * * * *

It has not been possible to explain accurately the sacrament of *Conclusion* Matrimony without drawing attention to the obstacles which may arise in the contract, the sins which married people are liable to commit, and the obligations which accompany this as any other state of life. But "how can we describe the happiness of that marriage which the Church unites, the oblation confirms, and the blessing seals" ?¹ We can describe it best, as we have done so often, by saying that it typifies the eternal love with which Christ has loved us. Strengthened by his divine grace, the recipients of this sacrament will easily surmount the difficulties of life, fulfil the obligations of their state, and experience to the full that happiness which the Church has invoked upon them.

We cannot close this account of Christian marriage more fittingly than by recalling some of the phrases used in the prayer of the nuptial blessing, which, like all liturgical prayers of the Church, is a precious synthesis of doctrine. After the Pater Noster, the priest celebrating the nuptial Mass turns to the bride and bridegroom, kneeling in the sanctuary, and says over them the following prayers :

"Be propitious, O Lord, to our supplications, and deign to assist what thou hast instituted and ordained for the propagation of mankind, and preserve by thy assistance what thou hast joined together by thy authority. Through Jesus Christ our Lord."

"O God, who by the might of thy power didst create all things out of nothing, who, when the beginnings of the Universe were set in order, and man was made to the image of God, didst ordain the indissoluble assistance of woman, in such wise that thou gavest beginning to her body out of the flesh of man, teaching thereby that what thou didst please to form of one could never lawfully be put asunder : O God, who hast consecrated the marriage bond by such exceeding mystery, that in the covenant of matrimony is signified the sacrament of the union between Christ and his Church. . . . Look mercifully upon this thy handmaiden, who, entering upon wedlock, earnestly desires to be strengthened by thy protection :

¹ Tertullian, *Ad Uxorem*, lib. ii, c. 9.

may it be to her a yoke of love and peace, may she marry in Christ faithful and chaste, and remain a follower of holy women ; may she be amiable to her husband like Rachel, wise like Rebecca, long-lived and faithful like Sara. . . . May she be fruitful in offspring, approved and innocent, and attain with the rest of the blessed to the kingdom of heaven ; that they both may see their children's children unto the third and fourth generation, and arrive at a desired old age. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

E. J. MAHONEY.

XXXI

DEATH AND JUDGEMENT

§ I: THE CAUSE OF DEATH

DEATH has with man far-reaching philosophical and theological implications. We may grant to the physiologist all he wants and all he claims; he is no enemy of the Christian faith so long as he remains within his own province of physiological and material happenings. We may leave it to him to explain to us how death occurs. No doubt scientists find it as hard to define death in terms of biology as theologians and philosophers find it difficult to give an answer to all the queries that are raised by the materialist and the unbeliever. As an instance of such an attempt on the part of science to state the causes of death in terms which have some meaning, I may quote from the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, under the word Biology: "Recent investigations point to the conclusion that the immediate cause of the arrest of vitality, in the first place, and of its destruction, in the second, is the coagulation of certain substances in the protoplasm, and that the latter contains various coagulable matters, which solidify at different temperatures. And it remains to be seen, how far the death of any form of living matter, at a given temperature, depends on the destruction of its fundamental substance at that heat, and how far death is brought about by the coagulation of merely accessory compounds." From this passage we see the hesitation of even the most recent investigators when they try to define death otherwise than by the accidental signs which show that it has occurred. Catholic theologians and philosophers will welcome further elucidation of the causes of this terrible phenomenon.

Physiological aspect of death

As Christians we have our own problems on the matter of death, one of which may be assigned to the theologian and one to the philosopher. The theologian inquires why it is that mankind in general regards death as a penal arrangement. The philosopher's question is different: he asks how the phenomenon can take place in spite of the spiritual soul.

Death natural but penal

Catholic faith, which is the proper province of the theologian, teaches that the death of man is a punishment: "By one man sin entered into this world and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men."¹ Catholic faith does not consider the death of animals to be in any way or in any sense penal, but of man's death it deliberately says that it is the result of sin. How did such a reading of the phenomenon of death originate? Why is it considered to be ■

¹ Rom. v 12.

punitive measure, when to all appearances it has the inevitableness of a similar law of nature to that which governs the death of animals ? How can an event in the natural order be turned into a castigation ? The answer is found in the potency of a presupposition. Faith presupposes something of which it alone can have knowledge : it presupposes that God made the bodily frame of man immortal by means of a special gift, a gift added to human nature, even detachable from it. God intended all mankind to possess this extra gift—the gift of immortality. Man lost it through his sin, through his own guilty act. So—always in the presupposition of this additional gift—it is perfectly accurate to say that death is a punishment, not a normal occurrence. Theologians commonly admit that without that gift man is not, indeed could not be, immortal in his body. We do not pretend to know or say that it would not be possible for the Creator to make a living bodily organism which could endure for ever in virtue of its own intrinsic natural constituents. Perhaps it is not beyond the power of the Creator to produce such an organism ; theology is not concerned with such an hypothesis. Our speculations must be confined to that organism of which we have experience and of which it is said in the Book of Genesis that it was formed from the slime of the earth. Of such an organism theology says that, though left to itself it must sooner or later decay, such decay was not according to God's first intentions, but that he planned to prevent that decay by an additional gift of an entirely preternatural character. The forfeiture of this gift through the act of sin may be truly considered as the cause of death in this relative sense of a presupposition. Some would not deny to God the power to make a bodily organism which should be *naturally* immortal. Had he so made man, sin would not have had death for its penalty, since God never destroys that which is according to nature. Such, however, were not the ways of God in the creation of man. He made him naturally mortal, but he added to mortality the gift of preternatural immortality. Now that which is beyond nature—except, of course, the state of Beatific Vision—can always be lost or forfeited. That terrific insistence of God on man's fundamental mortality is the key to the chapter of the Fall in Genesis : “ In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken : for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.”¹ The gift of immortality conferred by God on man was entirely gratuitous and preternatural in quality. In what it really consisted it is impossible for us to say or even to imagine. It was more than an external watchfulness, guarding man from all possible forces that might have caused death ; it was an inherent and intrinsic quality,² though one that could be lost, as grace also could be lost. It was in man's power to live, but it was also in his power to die, if he chose to prove

¹ Gen. iii 19.

² For a different view see p. 327.

faithless to God's pact with him : "Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death." ¹

Death, then, was known to man as a possible contingency even in the days of his innocence. Adam did not know evil ; he did not know that he was naked ; but he did know, even then when he was in that state of blissful ignorance, that he could die ; the meaning of the word death was clear to him : "Of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die. And the serpent said to the woman : No, you shall not die the death." ²

This clear appreciation of the meaning of death by man, when as yet he knew no evil, brings out most strongly the gratuitous, one might almost say the precarious, nature of the gift of possible immortality which had been bestowed on him.

It is therefore evident that the Catholic tradition which considers death as a penal arrangement in no wise interferes with the investigations of the physiologist into the causes of death. Is it not the very essence of Catholic thought in this matter to assume that man's punishment lies in this particular thing, that his body should be left to its congenital weakness, to its natural decay, when the arresting or healing preternatural quality of immortality is gone ? Let us sum up these considerations in the concise words of St Thomas : "Death is natural on account of the conditions of matter, but it is penal on account of the loss of the divine gift which has power to preserve from death." ³

But the theologian is not the only authority to be assailed by the exclusively secular explanation of death. The Catholic philosopher, and especially the scholastic philosopher, is called upon to explain how, with the doctrine which he holds concerning the human soul, he can pretend to leave death to merely physiological causalities. If a spiritual essence, an immortal soul, animates the body, if it is, in scholastic terminology, the *forma* of the body, is it not to be assumed that death occurs then only—can occur then only—when that soul departs from the body ? For, since the soul is supposed to be the very principle and source of life to the body, so long as it is in the body the physical organism must be alive. Now, says the physiologist, the phenomenon of death belongs entirely to the material realm of things ; at no time, at no stage of bodily decadence is anything either arrested or modified by some mystical agency called the "soul." It has not been found necessary to define death as the departure of the soul ; death is sufficiently explained and amply described, says not only the materialist but even the vitalist, through causes which do not transcend the order of observable data. The physiologist is, of course, quite right in his contention as to the

*Death and
the im-
mortal soul*

¹ Gen. ii 17.

² Gen. iii 3, 4.

³ *Summa* II-II, Q. clxiv, art. 1.

physical nature of the factors that bring about death in man ; but he is wrong in supposing, as he constantly does, at least by implication, that if there really were an immortal soul in man things would take a different course. The innuendo is, obviously, that there is no soul at all ; with a soul man could not die, such is the unspoken conclusion of the adversary of spiritualistic philosophy. It is, however, the very nature of the soul's abiding presence in man to be of such a kind that the phenomenon of death is not meant to be arrested by the soul at any time or under any circumstances, nor to be interfered with by it ; Catholic philosophy has never regarded the soul as having any such office or function. We may say that the presence of an immortal soul in man may be viewed either loosely or strictly, according to the school to which Christian thinkers belong. The looser view is more imaginative, more phenomenalist ; it looks upon the spiritual soul as upon an extramundane substance dwelling in a material body. To those thinkers or rather philosophical poets who hold such views death would be the destruction of the house of the soul, a destruction brought about by quite material agencies. The house being destroyed, the soul takes to its wings, goes forth into the world of pure spirits, either good or bad. Such poetry would be sufficient to visualise death as being a fact entirely of this earth.

The task of the strict scholastic, who is also the more exact Catholic thinker, will, however, be more difficult. For him the spiritual soul in man is the " form " of the body, the principle of oneness in man's life and personality. The soul, in orthodox Catholic philosophy, is much more than a dweller in the body ; it is to the body the cause of much that makes of it what it is. Can the scholastic, who is also a Catholic, serenely ignore the soul in the phenomenon of death, when his whole philosophy makes him hold that the union between soul and body in man is the greatest and most intimate of all partnerships ? The answer is that the schoolmen, like the modern physiologists, look to entirely material agencies as the causes of death in man. And this is in conformity with that special mode of function which our philosophy attributes to the soul. The soul is to the body a formal cause, not an efficient cause : this distinction is the root of that important piece of created reality. A spirit like the soul can only be the " form " of a body if certain material dispositions and predispositions are provided for its reception. These all-important predispositions are produced by efficient causes, the generating parent, and many other factors. Now, other efficient causes may undermine those indispensable dispositions, nay, even destroy them completely. This is the action we call death. The dispositions gone, the soul can no more be " form " to the body : the very definition of " form " would be against any such continuance. We are not here concerned with the survival of the soul after death nor the soul's fate and future when it ceases to " inform " the body ; these are points to be treated fully by and by. Our task now is to

make clear that, according to the very tenets of our spiritualistic philosophy, our belief in the presence of a soul in man does not compel us to explain death otherwise than by a chain of causes which are exclusively of the material order.

§ II: DEATH AND THE SUPERNATURAL ORDER

IF in the first section we have conceded all that is needful to the modern views concerning the natural and material explanation of the phenomenon of death in man, we do not on this account deprive death of all supernatural and spiritual significance. Though it be the result of forces that are not by any manner of means mystical, death is a most mystical factor in the economy of man's ultimate sanctification and salvation. According to Catholic theology, death has a threefold action on the whole scheme of final election: its occurrence is part of man's predestination; its universality is part of man's satisfaction to divine justice; its wholesale destructiveness puts an end to man's power of meriting, and places him in the *status termini*, the condition of finality, with regard to his spiritual state. God has kept this instrument of severity in his own hands, and uses it for the purposes of his mercy and justice, not only in a general way, but in relation to individual human beings.

*Death and
predestina-
tion*

We need not enter into all the profundities of the Catholic doctrine of predestination. It is orthodox to confess that all those who are saved are brought into the harbour of eternal life through a direct act of God, whilst it is heresy to say that those who are lost are predestinated by God to so terrible a fate. Catholic theology upholds most energetically the necessity of predestination, but it knows of no predestination that is not for heaven. To bring about this end God multiplies graces and shapes the external settings of the individual human lives of the elect. The *opportunitas mortis*, the propitious moment of death, is the principal of those outward arrangements of the predestinating Providence, man being taken away from this earth, which is the place of temptation and of crisis, at a time when he is in the friendship of God, when he is fit for heaven. It is possible for God to bestow on a human being the gift of impeccability. Our Lady possessed it; so also did the Apostles, in the sense that after the descent of the Holy Ghost they could never more sin grievously. The predestined are said to be confirmed in grace, not through an inherent gift, but through the fact that, through the providence of God, death overtakes them in a state of grace. Such an opportuneness of death is a part of the positive ordinance of God to secure the ultimate salvation of the soul: "But the just man, if he be prevented with death, shall be in rest. For venerable old age is not that of long time, nor counted by the number of years: but the understanding of a man is grey hairs. And a spotless life is old age."¹

¹ Wis. iv 7-9.

Unless a man be endowed with the supreme gift of confirmation in grace, at no time of his life is his virtue such that it could not fail under the stress of temptation ; it is always an act of God's merciful disposition if he sends death at the time when a man is in a state of grace. Quite technically, the great Spanish theologian, Joannes a S. Thoma, puts the matter thus : " If we consider death as the indispensable condition for acquiring fixity in the state of grace and for being admitted to heavenly glory, death thus viewed is a gift of God's especial providence. . . . The special gift of death may be called an exceptional favour of an external nature because it means a very particular protection on the part of God against temptation and against those obstacles which stand in the way of eternal glory, lest they arise or lest they overcome man if they do arise." ¹

The second supernatural aspect of death, the satisfaction of divine justice, opens out a vast theological field. We can only lay down here the fundamental principle of satisfaction by human death in its widest outlines. We must make clear distinction between death and those ills, more or less consciously felt by men, which in most cases precedes death and are its forerunners. What we say on death in this essay is to be understood to bear exclusively on the cessation of life ; whether that cessation be painful or not does not affect our speculation. The laying down of life, the return of man to the dust from which he was taken, this is death, with all its theological implications. Now this is, in God's supernatural providence, a complete atonement for all sin, provided we include in the cycle of human death the death of the God-Man Jesus Christ, as it should be included. It is a universal proposition, which for Christians is unassailable, that death has satisfied for man's sin. No other human happening has this effect to the same extent. The relationship which exists between the death of ordinary human beings in their countless millions and the death of the Son of God will be seen in another place ; but we may consider at once the extent to which the death of every individual man is a power of satisfaction for sin. That it is the normal, the most efficacious mode of paying to God what is technically called the " debt of temporal punishment " is evident from the very words in which God announced to Adam the results of his sin. Above all we must consider the death of the Christian who willingly and consciously accepts the chastisement in union with Christ's death, to be the most potent cleansing of man's soul. There is, of course, more ; there is in death a possibility of justice and sanctification which goes beyond its penal character. Man may die for justice' sake, as a martyr for Christ, as a witness to the Faith of Christ. Now martyrdom must include death : *Mors est de ratione martyrii.*²

In martyrdom death as death is the glory, quite apart from the many virtues that may have preceded it while the martyr languished

¹ *De Gratia*, Disp. xxi, art. 2.

² II-II, Q. cxxiv, art. 4.

in his torments. To have died for the Faith of Christ is the supreme ennobling of human death, is its highest supernatural role in the merely human sphere.

The third connection which death has with supernatural life is of a less positive character than the two preceding ones, though its theological importance is truly unfathomable. Through death there comes a sudden and permanent standstill to that mighty forward movement of man's soul which had been produced by the grace of God. The period of spiritual change, of merit, of progress, is for ever at an end. Henceforth there can be manifestation of the life that is in man through grace, but there can be no further advance on the road of sanctity; death destroys in man the very capacity to change, to progress, to rise higher. This "power of meriting," as it is technically called, vanishes at death as completely as life itself. We do not consider at this stage that state of fixity of purpose in which the soul of man finds itself through its separation from the body at death; that is a separate factor, and will be dealt with in this essay in due course. At death man's soul becomes unchangeable. But this is not the reason of that tremendous halt in his spiritual life which Catholic faith associates with death. Man ceases to merit, to gain fresh rewards, because death destroys in him all his true human working powers. All the supernatural store of merit must be acquired by deeds done in the body; we know of no virtue that is not a deed done in the body, however sublime and mystical that virtue may be. "You have not chosen me: but I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go and bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain: that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."¹ The fruitfulness referred to in the text is to take place on this earth; there will be no fruitfulness hereafter, only the gathering of the fruits. This cessation of merit at death is an essential doctrine in the Catholic view of man's justification and salvation. Innumerable authorities could be quoted to show the persevering conviction of the Church that the present life is man's only chance for doing the works that will be rewarded with increased heavenly bliss: "I must work the works of him that sent me, whilst it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."² In these words Christ undoubtedly states that very far-reaching truth. Christianity would indeed be quite incomprehensible if we did not take the bodily death of man for an absolute and final limit of his spiritual possibilities. The great systematiser of practical spiritual life in the sixth century, St Benedict, voices the mind of the Church in his own period, a period of great maturity in the Christian conscience: "If we would arrive at eternal life, escaping the pains of hell, then—while there is yet time, while we are still in the flesh, and are able to fulfil all these things by the light which is now given us—we must hasten to do what will profit us for all eternity."³

*Death the end
of spiritual
progress*

¹ John xv 16.

² John ix 4.

³ Prologue, Holy Rule.

It would be difficult to give the ultimate reason why, in the dispensation of God's grace, death has become this impassable limit. Is it a positive ordinance or is it in the very nature of things? It is certain that at death man ceases to be truly man; though his spirit survives, he cannot do the deeds of man any more, so it would seem that it becomes inevitable for merit and progress to be then brought to a standstill. The glories that come to a soul when it enters heaven, the splendours of the risen body on the day of the general Resurrection, will not be new things, they will merely be the manifestation of the perfections that were in us when we lived and died in the supernatural state: "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God: and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is."¹

§ III: THE PROVISIONAL NATURE OF DEATH

*Destruction
of death by
Christ—the
Resurrection*

NOTHING is more certain in Christian faith than the provisional nature of death. However dimly the saints of the Old Law may have apprehended this truth, with the Resurrection of Christ from the dead the idea that death is not final but only provisional established itself with unconquerable splendour of certainty. In the words of St Paul, Jesus Christ "hath destroyed death and hath brought to light life and incorruption."² Death, in the phraseology of the New Testament, is considered as an enemy to be conquered by God. Death is personified, not only in the Apocalypse of St John but also in the writings of the Apostles, very much as it was represented in all medieval literature and art. Now this grim tyrant must be overcome completely if the work of God is to be a success at all.

We may here make a distinction between the doctrine of the Resurrection and that other truth, the destruction of death and its ultimate defeat. It may be said that the Christian belief in God's final victory over death is a larger and more comprehensive faith than the belief in the Resurrection, because the raising up of the dead might be followed, at least hypothetically, by another death, whilst that triumph over death of which the New Testament speaks is a complete abolition of death for all times, under all circumstances, both for the good and for the wicked. That such is Christian doctrine is beyond all question, and it is important in our days to lay stress on this ancient dogma of the Church. To-day more than ever men preach a restoration of things in Christ which does not contain the destruction of death; they even speak of Resurrection in the Person of Christ and also for the human race, in terms which are not truly expressive of a victory of God over death. Man, they say, is given a new life. Out of death new existences are born; the spirit triumphs over death in the sense that it survives death, it mocks

¹ 1 John iii 2.

² 2 Tim. i 10.

death, it eludes death in a mystical triumph, but death, as death, is not overcome. Now, this is not Christianity. Unless we profess that God will one day abolish that very order of things which he established when he said to man: "Thou shalt die the death," we have not grasped the full power of Christ's Redemption. Catholic thought is all in favour of the blissful state of the souls of the elect during that period of expectation which precedes the resurrection of the flesh; in fact, we are so used to the spiritual intercourse with the saints as they are now in the state of disembodiment that it is one of the tasks of the accurate theologian to remind the Christian people that the present state of the elect, however blissful, is by no means that state of glorious consummation towards which all things are working in the great dispensation of the mystery of Christ. We are inclined, more or less consciously, to endow the spirits of the saints with that condition of complete human personality which will only be real and actual after the Resurrection. But, even if the spiritual prerogatives of the elect in their disembodied existence were greater than they are, it is certain that such bliss is by no means and in no sense that victory over death which is Christ's own particular triumph and glory. By way of a bold hypothesis, let us suppose that those elect were given a bodily frame by God's omnipotence, entirely disconnected with anything they ever possessed in their mortal days, such a completion of their personalities would not be that triumph over death which is Christ's supreme act and the final evidence of his possession of all power. The words of our Scriptures are so telling that nothing but a complete reversal of those conditions which exist since man's fall will do them justice. Death is cancelled by Christ. Death is swallowed up by Christ: "Who is on the right hand of God, swallowing down death that we might be made heirs of life everlasting."¹ Death is wiped out, as sin is wiped out, by Christ. The human race, through the power of Christ as its Redeemer, will be a race of beings that were dead and live again for ever and ever, even as Christ was dead and lives for ever and ever, as if death had never touched them, so complete is Christ's mastery over death.

It is Christian faith to admit that not the elect only will rise from the dead but the whole human race, good and bad: "The hour cometh, wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God."² The resurrection of the elect and their immortality presents no special difficulties, as we can readily grant to Christ the power of pouring out gifts of life of the supernatural kind on those blessed ones who share his life. But how shall we explain the immortality of the reprobate? Here, of course, we cannot give as an explanation the bestowal upon them of supernatural vitalities, as, by very definition, they are excluded from all such vitalities. At this point we see the necessity of a dogma vaster than the dogma of

*Immortality
even for the
reprobate*

¹ 1 Pet. iii 22.

² John v 28.

the supernatural resurrection in Christ; we need the dogma of Christ's universal victory over death, not only in the supernatural but even in the natural order. How mankind, universally speaking, prescind from the supernatural and the natural order, will be rendered inaccessible for ever to death, need not be explained here. The new world which God will make out of the old will have properties and qualities, even on the material side, not known to this present order of things.

§ IV: THE DEATH OF THE SON OF GOD

*The death
of Christ
exemplary*

It would be a grave omission in our speculations on death if we did not pay a good deal of attention to the mystery of the death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The fact that the God Incarnate died so deeply affects the Christian theology on death that one might almost say that to the Christian death has an entirely different meaning from its significance in exclusively pagan thought. It is, of course, evident that the event of Christ's death on the Cross can be studied, and indeed, must be studied, from many different angles. Above all, that great death is the supreme ritual sacrifice of the New Covenant, but nothing is more certain in Catholic theology than the reaction of all the happenings of Christ's career on similar happenings in the careers of ordinary human beings. Thus all the virtuous deeds of the God-Man whilst here on earth have a direct influence on our own acts of virtue, and we must take it for granted that the death of man is immediately affected, in some very true though mysterious fashion, by the death of the Son of God. If God himself died, if God at one time was amongst the dead, death cannot any longer be an unmitigated evil: to be dead cannot be a desperate and hopeless condition: to die cannot be any more a matter of real terror: "Therefore because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner hath been partaker of the same: that, through death, he might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil: And might deliver them who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to servitude."¹ There is, as we know, in the death of Christ that supreme value of satisfaction to the justice of God through which we have confidence in God at all times, in life and in death; but there is also in the death of Christ the aspect of exemplariness in a high degree: Christ died in order to share that universal human condition, and to give that condition the supporting splendour of his personality. So it is an ever-recurring thought in New Testament theology that between life and death there is no longer any real chasm, because Christ, having tasted of both conditions, life and death, has bridged the abyss between the two. "For none of us liveth to himself: and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord: or whether we die,

¹ Heb. ii 14, 15.

we die unto the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and rose again: that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." ¹ Life and death are equally profitable to the Christian: "For all things are yours . . . the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come." ²

The devotion of the Christian people to Christ in his death is one of the soundest and deepest manifestations of the genius of our spirit: to glory in the death of Christ is the source of Christian joyfulness: *Devotion to the death of Christ* "Together, death and life in a strange conflict strove. The Prince of life, who died, now lives and reigns." ³ The Church in her liturgy never grows tired of those ideas that through death we have life, that in death we are vivified, that the death of God is man's birth. Death is no longer something catastrophic, but, through Christ, has become one of the functions of our supernatural life in the Son of God; it is good for us to die, even as Christ has died: "For God hath not appointed us unto wrath: but unto the purchasing of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us: that, whether we watch or sleep, we may live together with him. For which cause comfort one another and edify one another, as you also do." ⁴

We ought not to omit here certain considerations which belong more directly to a treatise on the Incarnation, but whose connection with the present matter is evident. Though Catholic theology upholds the exemplariness of Christ's death and considers it as a pivotal thought in Christian mentality, it is also the concern of that same Catholic theology to bring out the differences between the death of Christ and the decease of all other human beings. That there are profound differences is evident. The one thing certain in Christ's death is this, that his Spirit, his Soul, left the Body: "Being put to death indeed in the flesh, but enlivened in the spirit." ⁵ Perhaps we may say that Christ's is the only death which consists precisely in this, that the soul was separated from the body. We know for certain that the divine Nature was not separated from Christ's Body at death. The Body which Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus laid in the tomb remained as much the temple of the Godhead, remained as completely and as immediately united hypostatically with the Second Person of the Trinity as it had been during life. Moreover, we know that this most holy Body never saw corruption, the process of organic disintegration is no part of the death of Christ. For this reason and others the doctors of the Church have always looked upon Christ's death as one of the marvels of the Incarnation; they have never fallen victim to the temptation of heaping up indignities in order to make the stupendous sacrifice even more impressive to the imagination.

¹ Rom. xiv 7-9.² I Cor. iii 22.³ Easter Sequence.⁴ I Thess. v 9-11.⁵ I Pet. iii 18.

§ V: MAN'S SOUL AT DEATH

*Christian
immortality
embraces the
whole man*

It has become the ineradicable fashion of philosophical writers to apply the term immortality, not to man's bodily organism, but to his soul. Of the soul it is asked whether it be mortal or immortal, and in modern phraseology the whole question of man's immortality centres round the hotly debated point whether the human soul survives the disintegration of the body, or if there be no such survival. That the paramount doctrine of immortality in Christian thought is primarily concerned with the whole man, with man in his bodily frame as well as in his spiritual elements, seems to be an idea which has been dislodged from the contemporary intellect for ever. The revelations in the New Testament concerning immortality are, as we have seen, invariably expressions of the vaster faith, man's total restoration in Christ; the soul's survival is hinted at, but St Paul's inspired enthusiasms about our future state reveal without exception the sense of victory over bodily death through the resurrection of the flesh.

*Spirituality
of the soul*

With this overwhelming mode of expression in modern philosophical and theological literature, it becomes inevitable that the great problem of the survival of man's soul should be described as the problem of the soul's immortality; but it would be sufficient, and vastly more logical, to speak of the soul's spirituality. If it be admitted that man's soul is a truly spiritual substance, with no material elements in its composition, then its imperviousness to death, its so-called immortality, is for ever established. No man in his senses would for one moment hesitate to admit such a conclusion. Death makes no difference to the soul's real status, it becomes neither more spiritual nor more imperishable than it is during man's lifetime; it remains what it has always been—an unmixed spiritual substance. So the problem of the soul's immortality and survival should not be deferred to the moment of death; the consideration should be formulated and discussed at every stage of man's career, at his birth, at the maturity of his conscious powers, at the period of his decadence. Is there or is there not in man a spiritual substance called "soul" which is superior to all sense-life? If this mighty query be answered in the affirmative, then we have the soul's immortality, even were we to take a child's conscious life as the field of our philosophical investigations. The only new problem which death would present is the mystery of the soul's abode, as we might call it, when the bodily habitation which it enjoyed has become the howling wilderness of disintegration. Although the great problem of the soul's immortality is not first raised on account of death, but is only rendered more acute thereby, it is natural for man, when he sees human personality thus brought to nought, to ask himself with increased insistence and anxiety whether there is anything in man that does endure for ever, whether he may in truth say of himself

non omnis moriar. Thus from this point of view the soul's survival becomes more particularly associated with death, though the reasons on which Christian doctrine bases the possibility of such survival are reasons which hold good through every period and condition of man's life. The only ground on which we can establish the principle that the soul cannot die is this, that it is spiritual and that it has always been spiritual; it is not death-proof through some hidden, extrinsic quality which only asserts itself at the demolition of the body.

The evidences which establish the doctrine that in man there is a truly spiritual substance, united with the body though independent of it, are, in the last analysis, easily classed under three headings. There is first the whole attitude of the Christian Church, which assumes a spiritual soul in man. Secondly, there is the natural, historic tradition of mankind. Then, in the third place, we have the findings and conclusions of spiritualistic philosophy, from the Greeks down to our own days.

I call the Church's testimony in this matter an attitude. The fact is that Catholicism, in its whole presentment of spiritual life as the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, postulates in man a spirit that is the fit recipient of the graces of the Paraclete, of the regenerative power of the Sacraments, of the mystical union with Christ. The practical view which the Church takes of man, the whole man, is such that unless there be in him a higher thing than flesh and blood the Church's ministry would be meaningless. *The testimony of the Church*

Little is said, either in the Old or the New Testament, of the soul of man in sharp contra-distinction to the body, as is so largely done in the non-inspired and more modern religious literature. As already said, Christianity has founded its own hopes of immortality on Christ's victory over death, and it has never thought it necessary to explain the soul's immortality with a kind of feverish insistence, in order to strengthen the belief of Christians in an eternal life. But life in Christ as propounded by Christianity is such that it demands at all times in man that image and likeness of God which is the spiritual soul.

Mankind has always believed in a spirit in man, a spirit that could withdraw from the body at death. But since it is of less interest to men to know that there is in them a spiritual soul while they enjoy the good things of life than it is to be assured that at death all their chances of existence have not come to an end, this unreasoned faith has certainly been more pronounced with regard to the dead than with regard to the living. Thus on most men this great philosophical and religious matter presses more urgently in connection with death rather than during life. All this implies that the immense majority of human beings always have held the conviction that in man there was a spirit which would go forth from him at the moment of his bodily decease. *Of the human race*

The findings of rational psychology are varied in mode of approach, but they are at one in the centre. The activities of man during life are of a kind that presupposes in him a principle which transcends matter, sense, space and time. Whatever we may call this tremendous force, whether a sense of duty, a desire of immortality, a love of beauty or universality of thought, it is always one and the same mysterious reality: an activity in man which is not limited by sense-life. Therefore the principle of such activity, the soul, is ultimately beyond the senses. But I must not pursue this line of thought further; if fully followed up volumes might be written upon it.

*Immortality
in the Old
Testament*

Wonder has been expressed very often that throughout the Old Testament there is almost complete silence on the subject of man's soul and on the fate of that soul at death. Critics have gone so far as to accuse the writers of the Old Testament of materialism, of lack of faith in a Hereafter. But the same reproach might be formulated against the New Testament also; special and express mention of the soul is not easy to find either in the Gospels or the Epistles; man himself is always the theme of the inspired writers.

Now there is nothing clearer than the view which the two Testaments take of man. Either individually or as a nation, man is essentially a being with definite moral responsibilities, and those responsibilities are of the highest kind, at all times. God enters into judgement with man, has clear relationships with him, both in his social and individual status. Herein may lie a difference between the Old and the New Testaments, that the ancient writers and prophets were more concerned with mankind as a nation, while in the New Testament greater allowance is made for man, individually. But even this distinction must not be pressed, as the corporate life of the Christians is not less pronounced than the corporate life of the Jewish race, that perennial bride of God. Should we not see in this very uniformity of thought in the inspired writers a mark of their supreme grasp of man's true nature and mission? It would certainly be an immense loss to our religious literature if the prophets and the Apostles had abandoned their vast style of visualising mankind and had sunk to mere solicitude concerning individual souls. Let us always remember that the inspired writers are what they are because they express, not the thoughts of man, but the thoughts of God.

§ VI: THE STATE OF THE HUMAN SOUL AFTER DEATH

*The dis-
embodied
soul*

THE survival of man's soul after the disintegration of death once granted, there arises the entrancing but also perplexing subject of the conditions under which that soul exists when thus separated from the body. This grave question, in spite of its obscurity, has always possessed a kind of allurements for the human mind. From

the cult of the saints down to necromancy, the powers of the incarnate human spirits have always played a great rôle in the religious history of mankind. The data of Catholic revelation are clear but few, and they are concerned only with the souls of the elect, the saved. At death, says the Catholic Church, the human soul, if it be in a state of perfect charity, will enter into heavenly bliss, without any retardation. It will enjoy the Vision of God in an entirely intellectual way in a degree that will correspond with the supernatural merits acquired by it during life. The soul will not be in a state of unconsciousness, but will be fully aware of its own existence, its election, its final escape from evil. To a great extent it will be in a state of expectation, awaiting reunion with the body ; without which man's life, even his glorified life, cannot be full and entire. In that condition of disembodied happiness the souls of the saved constitute a portion of Christ's Church ; they are the Church Triumphant ; they are in communion with the Church here on earth, they receive our prayers, they intercede for us before the Throne of God.

If the soul of the Christian, though in a state of grace at death, yet be not perfect in charity, then admission to heavenly bliss is retarded ; the soul is perfected through a mysterious process called purgatory. Discarnate spirits in that state are also part of the Church ; they are the Suffering Church ; they are in communion with the rest of the Church passively, receiving the benefit of the intercession of all other Christians.

All these things will be said excellently in other essays of these volumes ; my task is to make clear the more intimate conditions of the disembodied human soul, conditions which will apply to all souls, irrespective of the supernatural state, irrespective even of happiness and misery.

The question to be settled here, as far as it is possible to do so, is the special psychological state of those spirits of the dead. What is a disembodied human soul ? What powers, what consciousness, what knowledge does it possess ? In other words, we are trying to find out the natural results of death on the soul itself. In this investigation we have only rational philosophy to guide us ; all our conclusions come from the true understanding of the difference between matter and spirit, sense and intellect.

Now such a study has been made with very great care and assiduity by Catholic thinkers, chiefly by the scholastic philosophers ; they have left us a body of sound speculation on this abstruse subject which is the last word in the matter, so far, indeed, as man can speak a last word on so high a plane of thought. St Thomas has quite a preference for the subject and his reasonings on the *Anima separata*—the separated soul—are a great contribution to Catholic speculation. The Scriptures cannot help us in this sphere of abstract consideration ; they take for granted the survival of the soul, principally the elect soul ; when they speak of it they necessarily give it all the attributes

of a complete human personality, ascribing to it a behaviour that belongs to the risen state, when body and soul will be reunited : " And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying : How long, O Lord (Holy and True), dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ? And white robes were given to every one of them one. And it was said to them that they should rest for a little time till their fellow servants and their brethren, who are to be slain even as they, should be filled up." ¹

In our liturgical life we do the same thing. We address the saints in heaven, not as discarnate spirits, but as fully constituted human personalities. We could not, under any circumstances, render them present to our thoughts in a disembodied state.

*Only the
immaterial
remains*

The philosophical principles which have enabled Catholic thinkers to establish the spirituality of the human soul on rational grounds are also the principles which have guided them in laying down clear data concerning the disembodied human spirits. We say that man's soul is entirely spiritual because during life it has entirely spiritual operations. From this St Thomas concludes, with all other scholastics, that only such portions or powers of man's soul are found in the discarnate state as are entirely spiritual ; for the whole scholastic case with regard to the soul's survival turns on that one fact, the complete immateriality of certain acts of man in lifetime. So they arrive at this very rational conclusion that only those things remain after death which are entirely immaterial, without any admixture of matter and sense-life. If the discarnate spirit were supposed still to possess material elements or sense-life, even of the most refined description, there would be no reason, says St Thomas, why we should not grant immortality also to the souls of animals. If sense-life of any kind could survive death, then the animal soul could survive death ; but this hypothesis is an absurdity to Catholic thinkers. So all our philosophical premisses postulate this, that only an entirely immaterial substance, with immaterial powers and immaterial operations, can survive death. Consequently the discarnate soul of man is, in the eyes of Catholic philosophers, an exclusively spiritual being ; in fact, it is a spirit.

From this we see that Catholic philosophy, whilst upholding the soul's survival, admits that the havoc of death is much greater than less logical thinkers would make it. All that part of the human mind which is concerned with sense-life, even of the highest type, perishes at death. There is in man, truly, the perishable mind as Aristotle already saw it, but there is also in man the imperishable mind, also as Aristotle saw it, I mean the exclusively intellectual mind ; that mind remains. Only let us remember that when we speak of the perishable and the imperishable mind we are not speaking of two

¹ Apoc. vi 9-11.

souls, but of two different powers in the one soul, whose root or substance is entirely spiritual. So the discarnate spirit of man is credited by scholastic philosophy with two powers only, the power of intellection and the power of volition ; all other operations, however wonderful, however æsthetic, have been left behind at death, they perish with the body. So our dead are truly for us mysterious beings ; we can only think of them by clothing them in our imagination with a humanity which is not theirs any more, but which will be theirs again when death will be overcome by Christ.

The question to ask now is this : what is the extent of that intellectual and volitive life which Catholic philosophy grants to the separated human soul ? To begin with the intellect. St Thomas is willing to concede to the discarnate soul a measure of knowledge which is truly astonishing. The guiding principle which Aquinas follows is this : through death the soul of man becomes a spirit in the truest sense of the word, though it be the lowest degree of spirit ; accordingly, let it be endowed with spirit activities, let it receive all that a spirit ought to possess. As insinuated already, this has nothing to do with the soul's sanctity or lack of sanctity ; such intellectual enlargement would not even mean happiness unless other factors of the supernatural order come into play. The soul is naturally a spirit after death, be it for weal or woe. We cannot, of course, enter into details ; St Thomas is wise enough not to do so. We cannot give a description of that new intellectual life of the discarnate soul ; all we can say is that it is a spirit, the lowest spirit, yet a spirit, and that it knows all those things which naturally belong to its sphere.

Volition of the disembodied human soul is a matter which is not without its terrors, for happiness and sanctity, as well as their opposites, ultimately depend on the state of man's will. Now though it is admitted by all theologians that the spirit, of whatever degree it be, has an unchangeable and an unchanging will, even scholastics are not united over the explanation of that unchangeableness, while they all admit it as a certain fact. Some say that it comes from God's withholding further graces ; some think that the root of the unchangeableness lies in the very essence of the spirit-nature. A fact, however, which is certain and, as I said, terrifying, admits of no doubt : the discarnate human soul, like all other spirits, has its will fixed unalterably : it remains in the same loyalty which it had embraced at the end of life, whether this means God or self.

A point raised by Catholic thinkers has a further interest : are the discarnate human souls endowed with certain executive powers of acting, of doing, nay, even of moving, in the spirit-sense of moving ? Those spirits whom we call angels or demons have certainly such powers. Some scholastics, like the Scotists, have no hesitation in admitting that the souls of the dead can do things as other spirits can do them. St Thomas seems to hesitate, yet, even with him the matter admits of no doubt ; a careful study of his works reveals the

fact that he, too, grants powers of acting to the dead ; he falls back on the universal principle that the human souls have become pure spirits and must possess spirit-life, however exiguous that spirit-life may be.

An incomplete substance

The disembodied human soul could hardly be called a human person, it is an imperfect person, as it is an incomplete substance ; it has an innate fitness, which is called a natural desire, to be reunited with the body, for it is only in that dual state of sense and spirit that the human personality is entire and has its full range of activities. These considerations, which are the best which Catholic philosophy can offer, do not present a cheerful view of the world of the dead. Even independently of the possibility of actual reprobation, man's soul, separated from the body, outside the supernatural sphere, must be regarded as a maimed being, one that is deprived of the splendours of human life and human personality, for though our theologians grant spirit-activities, such powers are no real enjoyment to the souls that possess them. We are not surprised, therefore, to find that human tradition, outside the influences of the Christian revelation, has taken a gloomy view of the realm of the dead.

§ VII: THE INTERCOURSE OF THE LIVING WITH THE DEAD

Necromancy in the Old Testament

IT is one of the oldest beliefs of mankind that the living may, under certain circumstances, get into touch with the dead. This superstition, if we must give such a name to this belief, is at least an indirect evidence that men have always admitted in practice some kind of survival of the human personality after death. It would be difficult to describe with any accuracy the kind of existence that men have attributed to their dead, yet they have endowed them with substance and reality sufficient to make them agents of good and evil in practical life. In the oldest portions of the Scriptures, in Deuteronomy, we find this practice of holding intercourse with the dead condemned as one of the great sins among the doomed races of Canaan : " Neither let there be found among you any one that shall expiate his son or daughter, making them to pass through the fire : or that consulteth soothsayers, or observeth dreams or omens. Neither let there be any wizard, nor charmer, nor any one that consulteth pythonic spirits, or fortune-tellers : or that seeketh the truth from the dead. For the Lord abhorreth all these things : and for these abominations he will destroy them at thy coming." ¹ The earliest instance of necromancy recorded in the Bible is an attempt to consult one who was among the dead, as to the future ; Saul the king went to the woman that had a divining spirit at Endor : " And he said to her : Divine to me by thy divining spirit, and bring me up whom I shall tell thee." And the rest of the story may be told in

¹ Deut. xviii 10-12.

the full text, for the methods of necromancy have not altered in the course of the centuries. "And the woman said to him: Whom shall I bring up to thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice, and said to Saul: Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said to her: Fear not. What hast thou seen? And the woman said to Saul: I saw gods ascending out of the earth. And he said to her: What form is he of? And she said: An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul understood that it was Samuel, and he bowed himself with his face to the ground, and adored. And Samuel said to Saul: Why hast thou disturbed my rest that I should be brought up? And Saul said: I am in great distress; for the Philistines fight against me; and God is departed from me; and would not hear me, neither by the hand of prophets nor by dreams. Therefore have I called thee, that thou mayest shew me what I shall do. And Samuel said: Why askest thou me, seeing the Lord has departed from thee, and is gone over to thy rival? . . . And forthwith Saul fell all along on the ground, for he was frightened with the words of Samuel." ¹

From this long narrative taken from the Book of Kings, we can gather what is meant by the expression in the older Biblical document, Deuteronomy, "to seek the truth from the dead." It is not merely some form of vain observance by which definite meanings would be attached to happenings concerned with the bodies of the dead; by the dead are meant the spirits who are not seen, but who are credited with knowledge, and who may, under given circumstances, impart that knowledge to the living. Shall we say *a priori* that this ancient belief of mankind is a complete deception, and that the dead are powerless to do anything either for or against man? Here, of course, I must remind the reader that I am concerned with this problem in its natural aspect only; the intercourse which the living may have with the holy dead, with the elect, the spirits of the just, is a different matter altogether, belonging to that great mystery, the Communion of Saints; in that blessed sphere anything may happen in God's providence, the saints may appear to the living and teach and guide and help them on to eternal salvation. Our subject demands no such exceptional state; we are simply asking whether the spirits of the dead—in other words, the dead—have it in their power to influence the living. This question may be approached from three different points of view. Firstly, we may ask in an abstract manner whether any spirit can manifest himself to man. Secondly, we may inquire if that special class of spirit, the discarnate human soul, has it in his power so to do. The third point to be settled is of a general order; granted that spirits have such power, is it within God's providence to allow them to exercise the power? And here we must recognise the difference between the *absolute* and the *conditional* in

¹ 1 Kings xxviii 11-16, 20.

the divine ordinances. In his omnipotence God may prevent spirits of every class from the exercise of such power, or he may permit them to exert it, even though its exercise would be against his commands, and would, in fact, be a sin on the part of the spirits.

*Natural
power of
spirits to
communicate
with man*

There is such a bulk of tradition that spirits not only may exert influence over man but may actually manifest themselves to him, speaking with him in his own language, that it would be temerarious to refuse to the spirit-world this privilege of communicating with humanity. We take it for granted here that a spirit when he enters into converse with man does so under definite human forms which it is in his power to assume ; it matters little to our purpose whether these forms are merely subjective impressions on man's senses or have some objective consistency. The saints of heaven have come and talked to their friends and clients here on earth, angels have appeared, and demons have been allowed to tempt Christ's disciples as they tempted the Master himself in the desert.

*Discarnate
spirits*

Must we make an exception for the discarnate human soul in its natural state ? There seems to be no *a priori* reason why we should do so ; the separate human soul possesses spirit-qualities and it ought to be granted those powers which spirits ordinarily possess. We may, indeed, limit those powers to the least possible range compatible with a spirit-nature—after all, the discarnate soul is the lowest and weakest form of spirit—but to refuse it spirit-activities, spirit-motions, would be illogical. So I should not advise any antagonist of necromancy and spiritism to base his denunciations of that black craft on the powerlessness of spirits to do anything ; it is just possible that such spirits might be able, and even might be allowed, to do much. Thus this question is really one of divine ordinance. Does God allow such intercourse, in the sense that he does not inhibit, through some act of his providence, the activities of the discarnate, human spirits ? We know, of course, that he does not prohibit the activities of demons absolutely, though he may limit and confine them, lest we perish. This is the intention of our daily prayer after Mass : “ Holy Michael, Archangel, defend us in the day of battle ; be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we most humbly pray ; and do thou, Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust down to hell Satan and all wicked spirits, who wander through the world for the ruin of souls.” It is our constant cry to God to defend us against our spiritual enemies ; we are given the armour of the Spirit that we may be able to withstand them. Does God restrict the evil human soul in its discarnate state in the same manner ? I use the term “ evil ” here in connection with the souls of the dead, because in this matter we are concerned only with such spirits as are neither in purgatory nor dwelling with Christ in heaven. On general theological and psychological principles it would be safe to assume that God deals with human spirits in the same way as with all other

spirits ; thus we may base on these foundations the same attitude which mankind has instinctively held for so many ages and ascribe to the dead real powers, we may give them initiative, we may without hesitation accept it as a possibility that certain human spirits may make their presence felt among the living, especially in those places which were the scenes of their human activities.¹

Thus our considerations are brought down to this very simple *The divine ordinance* issue : whether or not it is lawful for man here on earth to attempt to enter into communication with the dead and, in the words of Deuteronomy, to seek truth from them. Now it is evident that the Catholic Church has never hesitated in her condemnation of every kind of spiritism ; for her, spiritism is merely necromancy. I need not enter here into the phases of modern spiritism ; the " seeking of truth from the dead " is one of the most serious wounds in our modern society. That strange things do happen at séances is a matter beyond doubt ; it would be rash to treat it all as delusion or imposture. Orthodox writers differ in their interpretation of the origin of these alarming occurrences. Some say that the evil spirits, the demons, the fallen angels, are the dark powers that manifest themselves ; they seem to take it for granted that human souls could not in any way show such activities. But, as we have already said, there is not the least reason why discarnate human souls should not behave in the same way as demons. The principal conclusion at which we should arrive is this : that to whichever grade those spirits may belong which are responsible for the communications of the medium, they are not good spirits but bad spirits ; whether they be human or demoniac matters but little in the ultimate outcome.

This conclusion is, obviously, supremely abhorrent to the bulk *Modern spiritism* of modern spiritists. They deny on principle that it is an evil thing to seek truth from the dead, and maintain, therefore, that if the dead answer, such behaviour, far from being blameworthy, shows love and interest on the other side. When the spiritist is reproached with the apparent futility, nay, even the nauseousness of many of the spirit-communications, his answer is that, if not all intercourse with the dead is above suspicion, there may be a kind of communication that has all the quality of a highly ethical act. If spirits are consulted by men of science and virtue concerning good and holy things, even with respect to religious issues, and if the spirits give reply worthy of a wise man, is not spiritism justified through the very decorum of its behaviour ? I readily admit that a type of spiritism might be developed which would deceive even the very elect, and from which all coarse and vulgar elements could be eliminated, though it would not seem that hitherto spiritism has been anything but a degrading necromancy. I do not think that there is any other answer against spiritism when considered in all its possible aspects than this : God has proscribed it for man as he forbade man to partake of the tree of

¹ For another view see Essay xxxiii, pp. 1209-1210.

the knowledge of good and evil. This is the standpoint of the Catholic Church ; and unless people are ready to accept this divine prohibition they are not unlikely to fall into the snares of the spiritists.

The following typical case, under the pseudonym of Titius, was propounded to the Holy See : Titius, banishing from his mind every intention of holding intercourse with evil spirits, is in the habit of calling up the spirits of the dead. He behaves as follows : finding himself alone, without any preliminary, he prays to the chief of the heavenly army that from him he may obtain power to enter into touch with the spirit of a given person. He waits a little, holding his hand ready to write, and all at once he feels that his hand is moved ; thus he knows that the spirit is present. He asks what he wants to know and his hand writes the answers to his queries ; these replies invariably squaring with the Catholic faith and the Church's doctrine concerning eternal life. As a rule they have to do with the state in which the soul of some dead person finds itself ; they speak of the necessity of prayers for the dead and also complain of the ingratitude of relatives and so on. Is this manner of acting lawful on the part of Titius ?

The answer of the Holy See was clear. Such behaviour is not lawful.

Again in 1917, with equal definiteness the Holy Office gave a complete denial as to the legitimacy of the practices described thus : Whether it be lawful to be present at any kind of spiritistic locutions or manifestations, questioning souls or spirits, listening to their answers, or even looking on, although there might be a tacit or express stipulation that there was no intention whatever to enter into any sort of co-operation with evil spirits. From the nature of the case such transgressions would be grievously culpable, as they would be sins against a grave precept of religion. So far the Church has not attached any kind of censure or excommunication to spiritistic practices, but she considers them to be mortal sin.

§ VIII: THE JUDGE OF THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

*God's
judicial
power*

No attribute is more constantly predicated of God than judgement. With the boldness of a friend, Abraham appeals to God and reminds him of this supreme quality when interceding for the men of Sodom : " Far be it from thee to do this thing, and to slay the just with the wicked, and for the just to be in like case as the wicked. This is not beseeeming thee : thou who judgest all the earth, wilt not make this judgement." ¹

It would be a big volume that would be written were all the utterances of the canonical writers concerning God in his capacity as Judge to be gathered together. By God's judicial power we mean

¹ Gen. xviii 25.

something very definite and clearly discernible from other divine operations ; we mean a constant intervention of God in the affairs of the created universe, arranging and rearranging both spiritual and material issues on account of the free actions of his rational creatures. Though judgement is more obviously associated with God's punitive interference it is not, of course, confined to the divine severities ; the most adorable portions of his judgements are those providential mutations in the course of the universe which are the rewards of the virtuous actions of the children of God.

There is, however, one important fact to be borne in mind, that right through the Old Testament God is represented as exercising the supreme function of Judge, not in the distant future only, but in the immediate present, with men, with nations living now on this earth. The prophets who announced the great Judgement were not speaking of an event to take place in a future world, but of severities and rigours to be shown by God towards the living generations of men. God's function of Judge is, in scriptural thought, essentially a continuous function, an unceasing function, not one that is reserved exclusively for a special date hereafter. I do not say that there are not very clear allusions by the prophets to a judgement at the end of times, but the bulk of their vaticination is of judgements to be executed within a short space of time. Thus Isaias uses language which goes far beyond the threats against Egypt or Babylon or Tyre : "With breaking shall the earth be broken . . . with shaking shall the earth be shaken as a drunken man, and shall be removed as the tent of one night. And the iniquity thereof shall be heavy upon it : and it shall fall and not rise again." ¹

If we come to the New Testament, to the Person of the Incarnate God, we find that he likewise is endowed with the power of judging, with the power of separating good and evil, of awarding to men their due, according to their deserts, long before the hour of final judgement. It is in the New Testament that the expression occurs "Judge of the living and the dead." This name for God is not found in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament it is given invariably to the Person of Christ : "He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that it is he who was appointed by God, to be a judge of the living and the dead." ² How are we to understand this extension of God's judicial power to the dead ? Does it mean that God has not judged men in their lifetime to the full extent, so that he completes after death the judgement of men ? Or shall we see in this formula only a drastic expression of the all-embracing power of divine justice, from which nothing can escape ? It is indeed not easy to see the full meaning of this inspired phrase. As every generation of living men will soon belong to the world of the dead, it is not apparent who are the living in contradistinction to the dead whom God is said to judge. Doubtless, the simplest

¹ Is. xxiv 19, 20.

² Acts x 42.

interpretation is this : that as God deals with men and nations on this earth according to the dictates of his justice, so he will dispose of them in that other state, the state of death, giving to each man his due. By the formula " Judge of the living and the dead " is meant, I think, not always a twofold classification of human beings, but the complete career of the same beings, their conditions of life and death, whose happenings, whose details, are equally in the scales of divine justice. This phrase, used by St Peter and St Paul, has also been inserted in the oldest symbols of the faith : " He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead." As the Creed identifies Christ's judgement of the living and the dead with his second Coming, it may be said that, in this instance at least, by the living are meant those human beings who shall be found alive on this earth at his advent, while the dead are those who will come forth from their tombs. But as we have seen in a former section, it is New Testament language to give Christ a general dominion over the living and the dead in a kind of universal visualising of the whole human race : " For to this end Christ died and rose again : that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." ¹

We may now come to the interesting point how the various judgements which are attributed to the supreme Judge of the living and the dead are to be distinguished from each other and yet correlated ; for Christ, even as is the Father, is always seated on the throne of judgement.

*Temporal
and eternal
judgements*

The distinction I submit in order to proceed clearly in this vast subject is as follows : we must recognise God's *temporal* judgements and also his *eternal* judgements. The discrimination between the temporal and eternal judgements is a most far-reaching doctrine in this matter : the decrees of the temporal judgement have a concluding point, while those of the eternal judgement are endless in effect. Again, each of these distinctions contains a sub-distinction : God's temporal judgements are concerned with men either in their bodily state on earth or in their disembodied state ; his eternal judgements deal either with individual men or with the whole race. So we have four aspects of the great doctrine of God, the Judge of the living and the dead. Men, either individually or as races or nations, as families or even as religious bodies, receive rewards or punishments while they are on earth. Or again, if the divine justice in its temporal equalisation of conditions is not satisfied, there is that other adjustment which goes by the comprehensive name of purgatory, and which all theologians agree in describing as a portion of the temporal punishment for sin. At death the soul of man is definitely fixed either in election or reprobation, its eternal fate is sealed, it is said to be condemned by God's justice or to be admitted into the society of the elect, also by God's justice, though theologians, with edifying humility, generally prefer to say that the soul is granted entrance to

¹ Rom. xiv 9.

everlasting life through the mercy of God. This portion of the eternal judgement is hidden and affects, so to speak, the very substance of man's individual personality. To it is given by all theologians the name of particular or private judgement. This denomination we may keep here, provided we remember that even in the first class of judgements—the temporal judgements—there is also something very particular and private to the individual, such, for instance, as the punishment due to each soul in purgatory for its own sin. The judgement of a man who dies in mortal sin ought to be called the particular eternal judgement, in contradistinction to the particular temporal judgement which is the lot of one dying in a state of grace, who yet has to undergo temporal punishment.

Then there is finally the Last Judgement, the results of which will also be eternal, but which will be concerned essentially with the whole human race, in soul and body, with the greatest possible manifestation of all hidden things. It is pre-eminently the Day of Judgement, the one great act of God as the supreme Judge of the living and the dead. In the following pages we shall give a fuller account of these four divisions of God's judicial activities; at present I am trying to make clear to the reader the connection of the different spheres of the divine justice; for it is evident that, radically speaking, there is only one judgement, and the four acts constitute one mighty drama of God's sanctity. Theologians constantly warn us that there are never new judgements, but that the one judgement is progressive till it reaches consummation on the Last Day.

This, then, is that divine march of him who, in the words of Abraham, "judges all the earth." The temporal administration of divine justice has this one great object, to vindicate God's sanctity even in the case of those who will ultimately be saved, because they, too, have offended much against his justice; even the saints are punished here on earth lest the anger of God destroy their chances of salvation; the elect are punished after death in the avenging flames of the purgatorial state because, though they be saved, they are saved out of many sins "as through fire." The grave judgements of God here on earth have, moreover, a power of grace for man, that man by them should be converted and live, that he should be warned and frightened when he hears the blows of the divine judgements. The writings of the Fathers are full of that *leit-motif*; they seem to have understood the judgements of God in their temporal aspect more clearly than we do. So we may say that God's temporal judgements in this life and after death have an essentially providential character in the sense that they are meant as chances of ultimate salvation; they are temporal, because the punitive arrangements of which they consist will end sooner or later. The human being to whom the judgements of God have been, to the very end of his life, a useless lesson will be judged finally at death as one incapable of eternal life, because he did not want to understand the judgements of

divine justice. It may be said, with full theological accuracy, that man is judged and condemned eternally because he despised God's temporal judgements.

The relation of the Last Judgement—the fourth act—to these preceding ones has been a favourite theme with the Fathers and theologians of all ages. Why will there be that great, that universal Assize, when it is apparent that the justice of God has never been idle, in fact, seems to have had its full scope; when all those who are unworthy of eternal life are already condemned, when God has punished man, has brought things back to the golden rule of justice with his unceasing severities towards men in their days of life and even after death, in purgatory? The most satisfying view and the one that seems to have the support of reiterated scriptural language is this: that the Last Judgement is truly the manifestation of all the judicial acts of God that have gone before; there is no new judgement, but there is the proclamation to all flesh of the complete justice of God in all previous judgements. For the three previous judgements are mostly hidden, are incomprehensible to man, they cannot be followed by the eye of man, they are too complex to be understood by man. Now it is the special function of the Last Judgement to make clear before all creation that not one evil thing has remained unvisited, not one good thing has passed unrewarded, in all the vast history of the human race: "Every man's work shall be manifest. For the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire. And the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." ¹

St Thomas gives expression to this thought in a very lucid fashion: there are two operations in God; the first, the creation of all things; the second, the government of all things. Both these operations have as their complement a judgement. To the operation of creation corresponds the Last Judgement, while the other set of judgements are congruous to the operation of government; and this for very clear reasons: "Through the judgement which corresponds to the government of the world—which could not be carried out without judgement—everyone is judged individually for his works, not only as far as it concerns himself, but also as far as it concerns the government of the world. For this reason the reward of one man is delayed for the benefit of other people, and the punishment of one becomes the benefit of another. For this reason it is necessary that there should be another universal judgement which is the direct counterpart of the first creation of all things; so that, in the same way as all things then came forth from God without an intermediary, so there will be a final finishing off of the world, everyone receiving ultimately what is due to him according to his own personality. Therefore in that judgement divine justice will show itself manifestly in all those things which are now hidden, for this very reason

¹ 1 Cor. iii' 13.

that one man is sometimes so treated as to be of utility to other men, a treatment contrary to that which his well-known works seem to merit. For this reason, too, there will then be the most extensive separation between the good and the bad, for there will be no longer room for that arrangement by which evil men are helped by good men and good men are helped by bad men ; for as long as the present state of life is under the government of divine providence there is this mixing together of the good and the evil for their mutual benefit.”¹

§ IX : THE TEMPORAL JUDGEMENT

WE may now consider the various judgements in themselves, and we may watch Christ at his great work as Judge of the living and the dead. *Christ the present judge* As all judgement has been given to him, we shall use indiscriminately the name of God and the name of Christ in connection with judgement for the remainder of our essay.

The temporal judgements are indeed a most important province of Christ's activities in his judicial capacity ; if we left them out of our theology the whole matter of God's judgements would become distorted and even incomprehensible. As already insinuated, by temporal judgements we mean those ordinances of Christ, be they punitive, be they remunerative, which take place in time, outside eternity. We do not say, of course, that their results will not go beyond time, will have no eternal repercussions ; everything God does is meant in some way to have effects that modify man's everlasting destinies. The distinction between eternal judgements and temporal judgements is to be found in the arrangements of divine providence, of which some are transient, some are permanent. Thus, for instance, if through a just judgement of God a Christian prince were to lose his temporal powers, for, say, not being loyal to the Church, this would be a temporal judgement, since the loss of power would not necessarily affect the eternal fate of the prince's soul ; the punitive arrangement is not, in such a case, an immutable state, affecting eternity itself.

Christ, since he ascended to heaven and took up his position at the right hand of the Father, is most certainly acting as the Judge of mankind. Judgement is more than providence, or better still, it is the moral side of providence. The free deeds of men and above all of Christians, their prayers, their virtues, their sins, are matters which the divine Judge contemplates unceasingly, and he orders all things in perfect equity. This is the meaning of St Paul's splendid words to the Corinthians : “ For he must reign, until he hath put all his enemies under his feet. . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then the Son also himself shall be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”²

¹ *Suppl.* xlvii, art. 1.

² 1 Cor. xv 25-28.

The coming of Christ is itself described as a judgement. That separation between good and evil which is the purpose of all judgement, begins with the Incarnation : " And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother : Behold, this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel and for a sign which shall be contradicted." ¹ But the separation was not then manifest, it only began to become visible, at least relatively, after the Ascension, when there took place in such terrible and evident fashion the casting away of that people who had rejected the Son of God. Christ's Redemption on the Cross is the greatest act of divine judgement. He was then struggling beneath the burden of all the injustice committed by man against the Father, he was judged by God as though he bore the guilt of all sins, and by his acceptance of that suffering and that death in his own flesh he made complete payment of the debts of his brethren to divine Majesty : " Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And he hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross." ² So we hear Christ saying confidently a few days before his Passion : " Now is the judgement of the world : now shall the prince of this world be cast out." ³ And again Christ says that the Spirit will convince the world of judgement " because the prince of this world is already judged." ⁴ The Baptist had made the same announcement in a metaphor of unmatched power : " He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire : Whose fan is in his hand : and he will purge his floor and will gather the wheat into his barn : but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." ⁵

The temporal judgement of Christ is concerned with spiritual punishments and rewards as well as with temporal ones ; for let us bear in mind that divine judgements are exercised over that most important possession of man, his graces, as well as over his external goods : " And Jesus said : For judgement I am come into this world : that they who see not may see ; and they who see may become blind." ⁶ The temporal severities are announced when Christ speaks of what is manifestly the end of the Jewish people as his " day," for by " day " is here meant judgement : " Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed. In that hour, he that shall be on the housetop, and his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away : and he that shall be in the field, in like manner, let him not turn back. Remember Lot's wife." ⁷

It is true that several times our Lord says that he came, not to judge the world but to save it : " God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world : but that the world may be saved by him." ⁸ How are we to reconcile these apparently contradictory utterances ? The explanation seems to be a simple one, namely that during the

¹ Luke ii 34.

⁴ John xvi 11.

⁷ Luke xvii 30-32.

² Col. ii 14.

⁵ Luke iii 16, 17.

³ John xii 31.

⁶ John ix 39.

⁸ John iii 17.

days of his mortality, before his exaltation, Christ did not, as Man, exert his judicial power, at least in the external government of the world. Thus it is in the same sense that he says he was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, though we know he was sent to the whole human race. But after Christ's Ascension Christians never hesitated to attribute to him the vastest activities as Judge of the world; they looked to him for the redress of their grievances when they suffered at the hands of persecutors; they confidently believed that the pagan world, above all, pagan Rome, would soon feel the heavy arm of the divine Judge: "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning and famine. And she shall be burnt with the fire: because God is strong, who shall judge her. . . . Rejoice over her, thou heaven and ye holy apostles and prophets. For God hath judged your judgement upon her." ¹ "True and just are his judgements, who hath judged the great harlot which corrupted the earth with her fornication and hath revenged the blood of his servants at her hands." ²

Christ himself is seen coming out of heaven by the prophet of Patmos at a period of human history which does not appear to correspond with the end of the world: "And I saw heaven opened: and behold a white horse. And he that sat upon him was called faithful and true: and with justice doth he judge and fight." ³ This is the true view of Christ; this makes him into a living power. Genuine Christian sentiment has ever been deeply impregnated with this trait of Christ as the just Judge, and Christians have always found it possible to love him with the tenderest love because they know him to be such; they speak to Christ with all the familiarity with which Abraham spoke to the Lord his friend, when he praised his justice as they overlooked the cities of Sodom and Gomorrhah. Our Jesus would be less amiable if he were less true and less powerful in his judgements.

The doctrine of the divine judgements is stated very often in other terms, such as the doctrine of temporal punishment for sin; but it is in truth one and the same thing. Christ punishes man with temporal punishments because he executes judgement over man. The doctrine of temporal punishment says that man owes the divine justice satisfaction, and even great satisfaction, after the stain of sin has been taken away from his soul by the grace of God. The punishment is meted out by God's providence, either in this life or in purgatory.

In no province of sacred theology are we so much in need of the *Purgatory* fundamental doctrine of Christ's judicial power, for the sake of clearness, as in the case of the Church's teaching on purgatory. It seems difficult to give any other explanation why so many amongst the saved must pass through the purgatorial state than the truth so simply expressed in the old Catholic phrase that the souls of men

¹ Apoc. xviii ■ and 20.

² Apoc. xix 2.

³ Apoc. xix 11.

have to pay a debt to divine justice. A more superficial view of purgatory would be this : that the souls of men pass into the other life ignorant, with the stains upon them of many venial sins and the impediments of innumerable imperfections.¹ We exclude, of course, the state of mortal sin, as such a state is tantamount to eternal reprobation. We might call this view of purgatory the psychological view, as it implies that the process of purgatorial purification would be a gradual transition of man's disembodied spirit from a lower to a higher grade of power. But such a view seems excluded by another very important consideration : the souls in purgatory are pure spirits. Now spirits operate at all times with the entirety of their being. So theologians have to admit that the moment the saved soul enters into the spirit-state it turns to God with a completeness of surrender which is not comprehensible to man here on earth, and which establishes it in perfect charity. So the purgatorial process ought to be taken in an exclusively juridical sense. The word *purgare* in Latin law means "to pay the full amount of the punishment due." So our best theologians in speaking of purgatory use the language of the law courts ; the divine Judge decides, assesses, the amount of penalty to be undergone for offences and neglects not fully repaired during mortal life. What those pains and penalties are, we need not investigate here ; they belong to another portion of theology. But it seems evident that nothing can account for the burdens thus put on those holy spirits except the direct act of the divine Judge ; nor could a finite authority settle how much or how little of penalty each such spirit must undergo. "Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him : lest perhaps the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Amen I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing."² The purgatorial adjustment of the divine claims might almost be called an afterthought in God's providence, because the general plan of salvation which God has produced for man is such that if man were faithful he would reach the hour of death in a state of perfect justice, having done his day's work, and having produced for his Master that amount of profit which his Lord has a right to expect from him.

The Church's liturgy is full of invocations to God and his Christ that man may find mercy with his Judge. These prayers, which are so profoundly Christian, refer, of course, to the temporal judgement, for the eternal judgement is unalterable. When we hope to be judged leniently we expect Christ to relinquish in our favour some of his rights as Judge, either in this life or in purgatory. It is in connection with this judgement also that we have those solemn promises of Christ that according to the mercifulness of our own judgements, judgement shall be shown to us : "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not : and you shall

¹ Cf. Essay xxxii, pp. 1143 ff.

² Matt. v 25, 26.

not be judged. Condemn not : and you shall not be condemned. Forgive : and you shall be forgiven. Give : and it shall be given to you : good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." ¹

§ X: THE ETERNAL JUDGEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL SOULS

THE designation of " particular judgement " has been applied for a *Particular judgement* long time now as a kind of technical term to that act of God by which the soul of man at death is either received into the society of the elect or is rejected and cast away for ever. The main features of the particular judgement thus understood are its peremptoriness and its complete secrecy. Of no human being do we know with certainty that he has been rejected by God, though, on the other hand, we do know of definite human beings having been admitted into the society of the elect, as, for instance, all the canonised saints. But no eye has seen what really happens between God and the human soul at that first moment when the soul finds itself in eternity. Though this name " particular judgement " more commonly brings home to us the idea of possible reprobation of individual souls, such a one-sided aspect of this act of God would leave in obscurity the most marvellous manifestation of the divine sanctity and justice. For the elect, for those who are saved, that moment which constitutes the soul in eternity is an overwhelming revelation of God's fidelity ; not only does it become immensely clear to the soul that it is saved, that it is in a state of grace, that it belongs to God for ever and ever, but all the works done in the supernatural order during the mortal life are remembered by God, are brought to the knowledge of the fortunate soul, are seen in their full setting ; and God rewards as only God can reward. " For I know whom I have believed and I am certain that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day." ² Or again : " I have fought a good fight : I have finished my course : I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord the just judge will render to me in that day : and not only to me, but to them also that love his coming." ³

In the case of the elect there is this double marvel of divine *Of the elect* justice and truth : they are given, firstly, that eternal life which they have always sought, and secondly they are also granted that additional glory which comes from every fresh merit. The inspired writers seem to have been particularly struck by God's fidelity in remembering all the works of the elect. It is divine judgement in its most glorious and most consoling form ; it is justice superabounding, because not

¹ Luke vi 36-38.

² 2 Tim. i 12.

³ 2 Tim. iv 7, 8.

a cup of cold water given in the name of Christ will be without its reward. The good works of the elect follow their entry into eternity like a cortège of angels : “ And I heard a voice from heaven, saying to me : Write : Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours. For their works follow them.”¹ Though for many of the elect the bestowal of that reward may perhaps be delayed through the captivity of purgatory, still their immense treasure of merits is for ever secure, the justice of God will not allow him to let anything go unremunerated. Merit and reward belong to another part of theology, here we look upon them as the pronouncement of a judgement. In their essential quality they will be bestowed on the discarnate human soul when it is admitted into heaven ; when it will be granted not only the blessed Vision of God but various degrees in that Vision. May we not say, speaking now naïvely, that the greatest surprise of the elect at that blessed moment will be to find how God has remembered even the least of their deeds ; how their works, long forgotten by themselves, are truly recorded in the Book of Life.

Theologians have gone deeply into the matter of that “ finding ” of all the merits of a long life at the first moment of eternity. They would love to construct theories which would account for the presence of all that past merit in the soul ; they say, for instance, that grace has never ceased growing as merit grew, so that the soul at death has already the full wealth of spiritual beauty, though in a hidden way. However, with the ups and downs of human life, and very often with long interruptions of mortal sin, it seems difficult to explain completely how all the works of the elect revive when they enter heaven, unless we admit God’s own power of restoring to man all his past merits.

The term “ to judge ” has, in New Testament language, generally the unfavourable sense of judgement for condemnation, though the word “ judge ” as substantive stands for God in his office, both as rewarder of merit and avenger of sin. So our Lord says : “ He that believeth in him (Christ) is not judged. But he that doth not believe is already judged : because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgement : Because the light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than the light. For their works were evil.”²

With this divine utterance we approach the dreadful subject of man’s condemnation to eternal reprobation after death. In reprobation, as in election, there are two elements which must be kept apart in our consideration of the subject : man is admitted into the society of the elect because he dies in the state of grace, but he also receives a higher or lower degree of eternal life according as his merits are great or small. So, on the other hand, man is cast into eternal death because temporal death found him in a state of mortal sin, but

¹ Apoc. xiv 13.

² John iii 18, 19.

his degree of punishment will depend on the amount of evil which he did in life and which had not been forgiven. In very exact theology we should say that man is admitted to eternal life or is cast away, not by a judgement that takes place over him after the separation of the soul from the body, but by that judgement through which God decided that death should overtake the holy one in a state of grace, whilst, through the permissive will of the divine justice, death was allowed to come to the sinner when he was in the state of mortal sin. Theologians would not be unwilling to say that there is no real pronouncement of sentence, either of eternal life or of eternal death, these great issues following naturally, as it were, from the state of the soul at the moment of death. In this matter we have our Lord's own words in the verse quoted above: "He that believeth in him is not judged. But he that doth not believe is already judged: because he believeth not in the name of the Son of God. And this is the judgement. . . ." ¹ But we may, of course, take the less technical view and say that souls are condemned or are exalted by a just judgement of God when they enter eternity. We certainly cannot get away from a definite act of God which settles for ever man's fate by putting an end to the period of mutability and change.

There is, however, in the case of the reprobate as well as in the case of the elect, the great question how God deals with individual guilt, because he cannot treat alike, even in reprobation, the great criminal and the ordinary sinner. The fact of reprobation itself, of being cast for ever into exterior darkness, is a necessary result of final unrepentance, of the state of mortal sin at death. Between reprobation thus considered as a deprivation of eternal life, and the just punishment to be inflicted for the great human sins, there must, of course, be a very grave difference. How this difference makes itself felt in the lost spirits of all degrees of guilt it is not possible for us to say. We have no clear guidance on this subject. We know definitely what constitutes the higher or the lower degree of reward among the saved: it is always a deeper comprehension of God in his Essence. More or less of divine life is added unto the soul. With the lost we have no such provision. So we may content ourselves with the general principle that sin is visited in eternity according to its gravity. The Inferno of Dante is the poetical presentment of a very grave truth. Yet it is good Christian feeling to hold that the vindictive justice of God is not as comprehensive as is his remunerative justice; even the reprobate is punished less severely than he deserves. One theological principle whose validity is beyond doubt could be invoked here to bring out this difference in remuneration and punishment. Whatever supernatural merits man had during lifetime, those merits are counted unto him as an increase of glory, though it may have happened very often that by the act of mortal sin the merits were, so to speak, killed. If the sin is repented of, if the Christian

*Degrees of
punishment*

¹ John iii 18, 19.

die in a state of grace, all his merits are revived for him. Now there is no such bringing back of past sin. So, if a man has sinned much but has repented, even if afterwards he sin again and die in his sin, those sins are not brought back to him of which he had repented.

The profoundest thing said by any theologian in this matter of eternal reprobation is the utterance of St Thomas Aquinas : "Eternity of pain does not correspond to the gravity of the guilt but it corresponds to the irreparable nature of the guilt."¹

It may seem strange at first sight that a less guilty man should be lost everlastingly as much as one who may be a million times more guilty. Now according to St Thomas the real punishment inflicted by divine justice does not lie in the fact that it is everlasting, for such everlastingness is the condition of everything spiritual, but that the special burden lain on the reprobate spirit corresponding to his guilt is indeed the direct act of the divine judgement. What this punishment is we have no means of knowing. But as Catholic theology has always maintained that reprobation is entirely the result of divine justice, this doctrine has its mitigations in its very definition. We do not say of any man that he is eternally subject to this or to that torment ; in such a case we should find it difficult to give an explanation that would be satisfying. But we say that God visits justly all sins for which there is not due repentance before death. So to speak, we approach the whole subject from God's point of view, and we leave it with God ; we know he could do nothing unjust without denying himself.

§ XI : THE LAST JUDGEMENT

Its catastrophic nature

THE phraseology of the Scriptures does not always make it very apparent whether certain happenings which are prophesied are to be catastrophic events of short duration or long periods of God's visitation. Thus, in the various utterances of Christ concerning the end of the world it is not easy to distinguish lengthy times of tribulation from sudden manifestations of God's anger, appearing with the rapidity of lightning. Many of God's judgements are long drawn-out punishments and the catastrophic chastisements are, on the whole, rare. A thought frequently expressed in a certain class of modern literature is this, that the World's History is the World's Judgement. There is much truth in such a view. There is, however, no doubt whatever concerning the nature of the Last Judgement ; it is described as an event of terrifying suddenness and as something entirely outside the historic development of mankind. Its date is so mysterious that no one knows it, not even the angels of God : "But of that day and hour no one knoweth : no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone."² Even the signs which are to be the precursors of that day will be no clear indication of its exact hour : "For yourselves

¹ *Summa*, I-II, Q. lxxxvii, art. 5.

² Matt. xxiv 36.

know perfectly that the day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night. For when they shall say : Peace and security ; then shall sudden destruction come upon them, as the pains upon her that is with child. And they shall not escape.”¹ The Last Judgement, therefore, ought to be regarded by us as a great mystery, as to its date, as to its nature, and as to its purpose. We can, in a way, understand the meaning of those temporal judgements of which we have spoken above ; we can even grasp the doctrine of God’s dealings with the soul at death ; but when we come to the Last Judgement we are in presence of a dogma which is entirely outside all experience and for which we have no terms of comparison. Very wisely, in a passage quoted in an earlier page, St Thomas considers the Last Judgement as the counterpart of the creation of all things out of nothing. No finite measure can be applied to that greatest of all events, it is an act on an infinite scale. It is true that several very precious hints are dropped by the inspired writers as to its tremendous import, but the few suggestions which are given are in themselves allusions to possibilities quite beyond our grasp. The most constantly recurring idea is this, that God will reveal all things on that day ; but it is easy to see that such revelation is a mystery, great beyond all words. So we must exert our faith and believe that God will make all things manifest, as we believe that at the beginning he created light. How this revelation will take place no finite mind can know, because it is truly the revelation of an infinite thing—the whole economy of God’s grace on the one hand, and the whole range of the created free will on the other ; so that not only facts but even possibilities will be disclosed, in order to discover to every eye God’s providence in all its perfection.

Nor would it be in keeping with Catholic thought to say that the Last Judgement is nothing else than the beginning of eternity or the state of eternity. It is to be an event, a passing act of finite duration, not an everlasting condition. There will be a moment when that great judgement will begin and there will be a moment when it will end, though its results will be interminable. In other words, it will be an act of God such as he never did before and such as he will not again repeat. Never again will the human race be gathered in all its entirety as at that supreme hour, but that such an assemblage of all the human beings that ever existed will take place is one of the very few clear indications concerning that act of God that has been made known, though the race, thus brought together, will be separated again, and this for all eternity : “ And when the Son of man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the seat of his majesty. And all nations shall be gathered together before him : and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats : And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left.”² A revelation

¹ 1 Thess. v 2, 3.

² Matt. xxv 31-33.

will then be made which will be truly miraculous in its effects, but transient as a divine act. This revelation will be given to the wicked as much as to the elect. It is a manifestation of God's justice and sanctity, different in kind from that Vision of God which the elect in their souls enjoy even now before the great day. Nothing but an act of divine omnipotence can explain that manifestation of God's justice to all flesh. This great event is invariably called the "day of the Lord" as if it were an event so particularly different from all other historic happenings as to be the one day outside eternity worthy of the Son of God. Its importance will be commensurate with the Person of the God Incarnate.

*Four mani-
festations*

The day of the Lord consists in four manifestations of God's omnipotence whose literal reality cannot be doubted by any Catholic: there will be the destruction of the physical world through fire; there will be the raising up of all the dead; there will be the revelation of all the hidden things of man's conscience and God's providence; and then, ultimately, there will be the separation of the good and the wicked. The day of the Lord will contain all that, and the term "Last Judgement" may be applied to this whole complex of divine operation. It is certain that the Resurrection of the dead will precede the judgement, properly so-called; there is more room for doubting the sequence of happenings with regard to the universal conflagration, but it would seem that the fire in which all men then living will find their death will be the first act in this tremendous drama. Out of the ruins of the world that was till then, a new world will be created which will be truly part of the Resurrection. It will be in that new world that the judgement will take place; it will be in that new world that Christ will appear in glory and majesty. St Thomas adopts this order for these great mysteries. The world will be purified in that searching fire and the reprobate will be cast out of it, because they will be unworthy of it in its new perfection.

It is evident that no pictorial presentment can be attempted of so vast a change of all things. The great ideas of the Scriptures are still the most potent and most satisfying expressions. To try to depict the Last Judgement will always be a miserable failure, even if the artist be a Michelangelo. Just let us take in their literal meaning words like the following, in which the four great facts are described, and we shall be as near visualising that solemn truth as it is possible for man to be.

"The Lord delayeth not his promise, as some imagine, but dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance. But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence and the elements shall be melted with heat and the earth and the works which are in it shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things are to be dissolved, what manner of people ought you to be in holy conversation and godliness? Looking for and hasting unto the

coming of the day of the Lord, by which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with the burning heat. But we look for new heavens and a new earth according to his promises, in which justice dwelleth.”¹

“Wonder not at this : for the hour cometh, wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life ; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgement.”²

“Their conscience bearing witness to them : and their thoughts between themselves accusing or also defending one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.”³

“Then shall the king say to them that shall be on his right hand : Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. . . . Then shall he say to them also that shall be on his left hand : Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels.”⁴

Christ will do the judgement in Person, he will appear as the God-*Christ* Man, in full glory. Whether his coming will be before or after the conflagration and the Resurrection it is not possible to say ; but that he will execute judgement is in the very essence of our Creed : *Qui venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos*. Much more, indeed, could be said concerning the many speculations of theologians about things of such magnitude ; but there is just one article of St Thomas which, through its very dignity, is not out of place here : “Whether the judgement be done by word of mouth.” “It is difficult to say with any certainty what is true in this matter ; however, it seems more probable that all that judgement from the point of view of the discussion, from the point of view of the accusation of the wicked, and of the praise of the good, and from the point of view of the sentence pronounced over both classes, will be carried out only mentally. For if the deeds of every one were spoken orally, a length of time would be necessary, great beyond all concept.”⁵

There are in the Gospels and in the Epistles words of great *The elect* solemnity which compel us to stop one moment more in our con-*judge* siderations on the Last Judgement. Christ and his Apostles declare, with the greatest emphasis possible, that the elect will also judge, that they will be seated in majesty as judges on that day : “And Jesus said to them : Amen, I say to you that you, who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of his majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”⁶ St Paul makes use of this great Christian hope in order to pour contempt on the quarrelsomeness of some of the Corinthians who went to law before the unbelievers : “Know you not that the saints shall judge this world ? And if the world shall be judged by

¹ 2 Pet. iii 9-13.

² Rom. ii 15, 16.

⁵ *Suppl.* lxxviii, art. 2.

² John v 28, 29.

³ Matt. xxv 34 and 41.

⁶ Matt. xix 28.

you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know you not that we shall judge angels? How much more things of this world?"¹ Such words are too clear to admit of any other interpretation than a literal one. There will evidently be an active participation of the elect, or at least some of the elect, in that final condemnation of the world. The Fathers freely use a term which no doubt recalled a familiar scene in the Roman law courts, they speak of assessors, men who sat by the side of the judge, by their very presence giving support and approval to his verdict; it was natural for them to say that the saints will be Christ's assessors on that day. The practice of religious poverty in life or the merit of martyrdom would single out a person to be specially fit to be Christ's assessor when he will speak his terrific anathema over sinful mankind. But even without metaphors it ought to be easy for us in a way to understand that the very contrast between the high sanctity of so many of the elect and the darkness of the reprobate will be a judgement severe beyond words.

*Christ's
alleged
eschatological
obsession*

We could not conclude this section without reference to a matter which is one of the undying controversies of both friend and foe. The enemies of Christ's Godhead have often said—and they are still saying it—that Jesus had what might be called an eschatological obsession; he was under the impression that the world would soon come to an end, and he announced his appearance as Judge of the living and the dead as an event not far distant, in fact to take place in the lifetime of the men who were his foes. And as such a catastrophe has evidently not taken place, Christ's claim to be God is an untenable ambition. On this subject volumes have been written. It is certain that our Lord warned the men with whom he lived, and especially the Apostles, always to watch lest their Lord and Master, coming at an unexpected moment, find them asleep. But, on the other hand, it is just as evident that Christ leaves the hour of that advent in great uncertainty and that no one could conclude from his words that he taught a coming in the immediate future. There is in all those passages which either inculcate vigilance or else leave the date of the Master's return in such uncertainty, a blending of the near future and the mysteriously remote future which is truly unparalleled. Thus, speaking of the near future, Christ says: "Take ye heed, watch and pray. For ye know not when the time is. Even as a man who, going into a far country, left his house and gave authority to his servants over every work and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore (for you know not when the lord of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning): Lest coming on a sudden, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch."² All this sounds as if Christ meant his Apostles to expect the possibility of the judgement at any time, and yet in the verse before: "But of that day or hour

¹ 1 Cor. vi 2-3.

² Mark xiii 33-37.

no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father,"¹ we have his most emphatic utterance as to the unknowable character of the great event.

So we have again a description on the part of our Lord of the kingdom of God which is anything but catastrophic: "And he said: So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the earth, and should sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up whilst he knoweth not. For the earth of itself bringeth forth fruit, first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear. And when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."² Here we see the world's history described in the metaphor of a ripening field: the Sower himself, who is evidently Christ, is as one who leaves the seed to itself to do its work, as one who has gone away. So we might multiply instances of that mysterious blending of the two ideas, the necessity of watchfulness and the remoteness of the final harvesting. But if we bear in mind what has been said in an earlier page, how Christ's judicial operations are unceasing, we can readily understand how there is need for every man to be always on the watch. The coming of Christ to each one at death is a complete judgement, and he who is not prepared for that coming is truly a foolish man. Thus those well-known parables on the necessity of watchfulness have been applied by the Christian doctors both to the individual human being, always in danger of death, and also to the whole human race, always in danger of the catastrophic advent of Christ. This is truly a divine grasp of the situation; what is true of man in his universality is also true of man individually. If we take it for granted that Christ at no moment ceases to be Judge, then we shall easily comprehend the complete actuality of all his parables and utterances with regard to the imprudence of being unprepared for his coming. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Even without waiting for that new world we serve him now with "fear and reverence. For our God is a consuming fire."³

Whatever may have been the thoughts of the Apostles before Pentecost concerning the establishment of a triumphant kingdom of their Master during their own lifetime, it is certain that when once they had begun their great ministry the catastrophic coming of Christ was as much part of their preaching as it had been in that of their Lord. It was a certainty; the date of it mattered but little for practical behaviour, Christians had always to be ready: "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgement and perdition of the ungodly men. But of this one thing be not ignorant, my beloved, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord delayeth not his promise, as some imagine, but dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that

¹ Mark xiii 32.² Mark iv 26-29.³ Heb. xii 28, 29.

any should perish, but that all should return to penance. But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence and the elements shall be melted with heat and the earth and the works which are in it shall be burnt up.”¹

Millenarism

Another form of illusion in this great matter of Christ's second advent has been much more universal, much more persistent, and is, in a way, more easily forgivable. This form of religious dreaming is even older than the Gospels; it is man's hope of the millennium. It has always been the faith of certain pious people, whom the iniquities of the world have afflicted in their souls, that there would be on this earth some day a very magnificent kingdom of God. With the advent of Christianity it was, of course, Christ who would be the King of that happy era of human sanctity. It is not easy to contradict people and prove them to be wrong if they profess a hope in some mighty triumph of Christ here on earth before the final consummation of all things. Such an occurrence is not excluded, is not impossible, it is not at all certain that there may not be a prolonged period of triumphant Christianity before the end. The point of division between the legitimate aspirations of devout souls and the aberrations of false millenarism is this: the Chiliasts—as believers in the millennium are called, from the Greek word for thousand—seem to expect a coming of Christ and a presence of him in glory and majesty on this earth which would not be the consummation of all things but would still be a portion of the history of mankind. This is not consonant with Catholic dogma. The coming of Christ in the second Advent—the Parousia, as it is called technically—in orthodox Christianity is the consummation of all things, the end of human history. If before that final end there is to be a period, more or less prolonged, of triumphant sanctity, such a result will be brought about, not by the apparition of the Person of Christ in Majesty but by the operation of those powers of sanctification which are now at work, the Holy Ghost and the Sacraments of the Church. The Chiliasts of all times and shades of opinion, and there are many to be found even to-day, seem to despair, not only of the world, but even of that dispensation of grace which was inaugurated at Pentecost; they expect from the visible presence of Christ a complete conversion of the world, as if such a happy result could not be otherwise brought about. They have still to learn the meaning of Christ's words to the Apostles: “It is expedient to you that I go. For if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you: but if I go, I will send him to you.”²

The Catholic Church has full confidence in the present order of supernatural life, and if she sighs for the return of her Christ it is not because she despairs of the work he has done, but because she desires to see that work made manifest to all men, that it may appear what wondrous things Christ accomplished for man before his Ascension into heaven.

ANSCAR VONIER, O.S.B.

¹ 2 Peter iii 7-10.

² John xvi 7.

XXXII

PURGATORY, OR THE CHURCH SUFFERING

§ I: PARDON AND PENANCE

IN purgatory, souls suffer for a time after death on account of their sins : either for venial sins that are not repented nor forgiven before death ; or for sins whose guilt was forgiven in this life, but whose *Penance follows pardon* due of punishment is to be completed after death.

Healthy-minded children feel it quite natural that after forgiveness of a fault they have still penance to do for it. The child is forgiven as soon as he is brought to see that he has done wrong and to be sorry. He is forgiven in a moment ; the father takes him back into friendship again. But it is a serious, chastened friendship. He sees his father's love shown now in trying to make him a better boy, teaching him to realise the wrongness of what he has done, and the seriousness of wilfully choosing such wrong-doing. He feels that his fault calls for punishment ; he accepts the punishment and takes it understandingly, not welcoming it, but seeing that, just because he does not like it, it is what he needs to set right his sin. In such a child, the actual bearing of the punishment when it comes does not lead to any rebellion or sulkiness. It may be that for a week, night after night, he has to be sent to bed early, while the other children are not. Each time it is a hard and bitter reminder of his fault and repentance ; but he knows it is the thing that ought to be, and he feels no soreness about it. In the daily life of a Catholic school, one of the most beautiful things is to see this acceptance of punishment going on constantly : the boy doing his penance at the appointed times, and in the intervals exchanging thoughts with the teacher in the most frank and friendly way. On the other hand, a child who knows he ought to be punished and is not, feels at first that in some way right is not being done and wrong is to be let go free. Soon, no doubt, he loses his sense of right and wrong about his own doings. But, as manhood approaches, often he blames his parents that they did not correct him when he had no sense to correct himself.

A healthy-minded child sees this truth, that after repenting and obtaining forgiveness, we should then take our punishment. But many parents do not see it. If their temper is roused, they punish the child ; if not, they do nothing to check his fault ; and so the child is spoiled. Their only notion of forgiveness is forgiving punishment. Yet even they in many cases feel the need of making atonement when they have offended a neighbour and been forgiven.

Anyone who wants to understand the existence of purgatory must ponder this point till he feels the need for punishment as well as forgiveness.

The Catechism speaks often of bearing punishment for our sins after God has forgiven our guilt. The guilt is the badness in the will, the badness which consented to do this wrong. Repentance is changing our mind, judging sin as God judges it. Not merely "I know it was wrong and ought never to have been done," but "I wish, as God wishes, that I had never done it." That change of mind God himself enables us to make, in contrition and in confession; and thereby he forgives us and makes friends with us. What punishment shall we now suffer, to atone to him? The priest appoints us penance, by God's authority. Not always is this enough; perhaps not often. There will be other penances appointed by the Church, fasting and abstaining, to satisfy for our sins. And yet others, the best penances of all, sent by God himself—crosses, sicknesses, pains; and we should say "Lord, I take these for my sins." Again, we ourselves should devise further atonements; either by doing good works to satisfy for our bad works, or by punishments self-inflicted. Here the Church helps us. She suggests good works and penances for us to choose from, when we seek something to offer to God in atonement. By her power of loosing on earth what shall be loosed also in heaven, she makes these good works and penances take the place of much longer and greater punishment, if our sorrow and desire to atone be such as to fit us in God's sight to receive this indulgence. And after all this, when we depart this life, we expect to find that we have not fully paid our due punishment for our sins. We set the littleness of our penances and good works beside the majesty of God and his outraged love; we see how unsteady and incomplete are our highest efforts, and how our daily weaknesses and unmastered habits stain us anew after all our repentings and atonings; and we look for the days of purgation, when there shall be no distraction nor weakness nor power to sin, and the soul can give its whole being to suffer in an agony of longing to be clean.

*Suffering
needed for
atonement
and
cleansing*

Why is suffering needed to cleanse us? Some have thought of God as a hard creditor, fixing the tax of pain for every sin or every sinner. But we must not think that right and wrong are fixed arbitrarily by God; for they rest on his very nature. Not, it is right that we should suffer for sin, since God so commands; rather, He commands it because it is right. And in his goodness he has made us like himself; giving us light not only to see what is his will, but also to see to some extent what he sees. Therefore let us try to see why it is right that after repenting our sins we must suffer for them.

Consider a spirit, angel or man, that defies God and disobeys his will. Imagine that God consents to this; treats the rebellious spirit as a welcome friend, as a fitting companion for the sinless angels and for God himself. Imagine that God creates spirits such that they

can find eternal and untroubled happiness in defying their Maker, and can bask unrebuked in his love. Do we not feel at once that this is not God that we are picturing? that in some way eternal justice would be violated if these things were possible, and the holiness of God would be profaned? If God be God, such defyings and rebellion and all unholiness must be hateful to him. His very nature requires that all sin shall bring its own punishment on the sinner.

Again, consider the sinner who discovers and realises what he has done in defying his Maker. He sees at once that punishment unthinkable is his due. Only two alternatives seem possible to him: the despair of devils and of Judas, if he has lost all love for God; or, if he keeps any root of love, then the wish to suffer to the limits of his nature, that in some way he may acknowledge the majesty and the holiness that he has outraged. To him comes the gift of hope; the seemingly unbelievable yet certain knowledge that God's all-mastering power can so change him from his sin that he shall be as if he had never sinned. The Magdalen shall dwell unabashed with the spotless Mother of God; yea, and with God himself. With this hope to enlighten him, the sinner sees he is to make an atonement far ampler than he had thought. He will suffer now, and by his sufferings not only atone to the Majesty he had insulted, but also restore to God the servant and friend who seemed lost, rendering up his own soul new-made in the fires of God's love.

There are, therefore, two reasons for suffering for sin: first, atonement to God; and second, the re-making of our souls. And we can see that suffering for these purposes may well last long. If we look at the suffering endured to atone to God, there is no reason why it should ever end, except his mercy. And the remaking of our souls is slow. A wound or sprain is received in an instant, but very slowly is it healed. A sin is committed in an instant by an act of will, and forgiven in an instant when the will submits in love to God; but the mischief wrought by the sin in our nature is deep, and slow to mend.

A drunkard can repent in an instant; he may struggle for years before he is a sober man again. By his sin, his bodily appetite for drink has grown unnaturally strong; as do all bodily appetites that are sinfully indulged. The bodily appetite has to be brought back to its natural state by painful self-denial. His will has lost the habit of controlling the body. Probably it has even made itself the servant of the body, using its reason to find ways of gratifying the body's desires. Slowly the soul must regain its natural mastery over all its servants—the appetites, passions, habits, imagination, and other powers. And in the very soul itself, evil habits have formed—habits of pride; of self-will and stubbornness; the all-pervading habit of untruth, that seeks excuses for telling itself that the sin is not sinful, that the danger is not dangerous, that the voice of God is not his

voice. And it may easily be that the soul has grown fond of being ruled by its servants and of indulging their desires.

With God's grace and man's faithful labour, all these mischiefs can be undone in the end. But we cannot wonder if it takes a very long time, and is still uncompleted when death comes. "With the Lord, one day is as a thousand years," in this as in all else. To our seeing, the new making of our souls is a task for a thousand years. But the power and the mercy of God can do it in an instant. The Church sings of the martyrs fitted for heaven *Mortis sacrae compendio*, by the crowded action of their holy death. For what God does slowly through our years of prayer and self-denial and suffering is still God's work, not ours. He it is that gives to these exercises the power to rebuild the soul. But when he chooses to do this himself, he has no need of the long delays and the painful processes ; his word, his will, does its work in an instant.

How suffering cleanses

We have said that to repair the ills that sin has wrought in our nature, suffering is ordinarily necessary and is the means appointed by God. Let us now consider how suffering does its work of healing. There are three points to consider : the bodily appetites, overgrown and unhealthy, have to be brought back to their natural limits ; the soul's control over the body is to be restored ; and the soul itself is to be freed from all wrong habits and desires.

Common experience teaches us that in sickness or in great pain all the bodily appetites are numbed and silenced for the time being. The body has no pleasure in its work nor in its resting. And the same effect on the body can come from mental anguish ; from worry or great grief, when a man can neither eat nor sleep. But these are only temporary effects, lasting while the suffering lasts. Carried on long enough, such pain or grief might reduce to natural strength a drunkard's craving for drink, or a passion for gambling, and other such overgrown appetites. But, meantime, temper may be growing to unnatural strength ; or melancholy, or nervous fear, or some other passion. For there is a natural balance in the body, and a reaction and resistance against repression. So that when the suffering is over, old cravings may reassert themselves, and new cravings may have developed during the pain. It is clear, therefore, that suffering does not of itself set right the bodily nature. It is an instrument that can help to set it right, but only if the soul uses it for that purpose. If the soul is firmly resolved to master the craving for drink or other vices, it can do so by subjecting the body to regular work, by denial of ease and of many gratifications and comforts ; and by inflicting positive sufferings with prudence and moderation, at times when it is necessary to distract the body from a sudden awakening of its craving. By such self-denial and wilful suffering a man can reduce his unnaturally strong cravings for a time to something like their natural force ; and so he at the same time regains to some extent his soul's

control over the body. Some saints, by continuing this discipline wisely, gently, but unrelentingly, have reduced their bodily passions to far below their natural activity, and so acquired a more than natural control over the whole body.

For the sake of his business career, a man might resolve once for all to master his craving for drink, and therefore undertake to discipline and deny his body and finally succeed and be free from the craving. Or an athlete may discipline his body for the sake of his sports. The healthy state of the body so acquired, and the soul's control over the body, are both good as far as they go. But they only go as far as the purpose which inspired them. In things that do not endanger the business career or the athlete's success, he will allow the body its own way. Or worse, the soul, the will, may make itself the servant of the body's delights in other ways, to compensate for its hardships and discipline. In such case it is evident that the sufferings inflicted on the body are only making it healthy in part and subjecting it to the soul in part. Meanwhile there may be other cravings and passions in the body growing to unnatural proportions and enslaving the soul.

There is another danger, of forming bad habits and vices in the soul itself. The Pharisee fasted twice in the week, and the only effect on his soul was to make him proud that he was not as the rest of men. A defiant schoolboy may seek punishments simply to show that he will not be mastered by them. In times of famine or distress, parents may bear double hunger for the sake of their children, and at the same time embitter their own souls against God who allows such things. In all these cases the suffering that is borne undoes no sin nor effect of sin, but is misused by the soul to bind itself deeper in sin. There is another more spiritual sin. A man, for instance, who has prided himself on a perfectly honourable life, falls once into dishonesty when faced with sudden strong temptation. He will not move among honourable men any more. He says he cannot look an honourable man in the face, being himself a thief. He is told to repent, to atone, to begin a new life. "If I did so," he says, "I should still be a thief. Nothing can undo the fact that I am a thief, nor make me an honest man." He is told that God's power and God's love will make him into an honest man again, and will forgive him. He answers, "I could never forgive myself." This is sin, in the very depths of his spirit. All that God offers him does not satisfy him. For it will not give him the one thing that he wants. He wants to regain his pride in himself, as one who was always honourable. He knows that God cannot give him this, and therefore he rejects God. For God is not offering him pride in himself, but on the contrary humility. His sin is not to be undone as a thing that never was. All its evil effects are to be undone, and the memory of it is to live with him for ever, embodied in his humility. God is all and I am nothing. I did nothing but sin; he has taken me, the

thief, from the dunghill and changed me till I am fit to sit with the princes of his people in his kingdom.

It is to this humility and perfect truth that God calls us ; and the path by which we are to reach it is the path of suffering. We must chastise the body and bring it into subjection ; the soul too must suffer in its own way. But these chastisings and wilful sufferings must never be separated from the consciousness that it is I that ought to suffer, because it was I that consented to the sin. With that thought, we can safely punish and mortify the body, and accept humiliations and wrongs from our neighbours, and crosses and sufferings from the hand of God. These will do the work that God means them to do in our souls. By making our nature and giving us free will, God has made us unable to receive any spiritual good to our souls unless we consent. We give him the consent he wants when we say, I ought to suffer to atone for wronging the majesty of God ; gladly I give myself into his hands to suffer, and by suffering to be cleansed and rebuilt.

*Penance
after death*

At death a soul may be in one of three states. Thinking of sin, we say that a person dies in mortal sin, or in venial sin, or dies free from all sin. We can see more clearly by thinking of the love of God ; that charity of God which is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us in baptism.¹ A soul may be entirely without this love of God—either because it has never received it and is still in the state of original sin ; or because after receiving the gift of love in baptism, it has rejected God's love for the sake of self or of creatures, and thereby has fallen into mortal sin. If death finds a person in this state, the lack of divine charity shuts him out of heaven for ever. Another soul may have the love of God still living in it, and be determined to love him, but hampered and hindered by attractions to creatures, by bad habits that have been formed by small sins and have not been uprooted. A soul dying in this state goes to purgatory—not to hell, for its love for God is that sanctifying grace that is the beginning of his eternal friendship in heaven. But not yet can it enter heaven, till all unworthiness is burned out of it by suffering wilfully accepted.

A third soul at death may be filled with the love of God and free from all stain of sin, and therefore pass straight to behold God in heaven. Such was our Lady's soul ; such also are the souls of babes baptised who die before they can sin. In such a soul, the whole nature is prompt at the service of God. The soul in man's nature holds a position like to that of the commander of a ship or of a regiment in the king's service. To do his duty perfectly, the commander must on one hand have his men completely under his control, and so trained that he can be sure of instant and thorough obedience to all his orders. And on the other side he must himself be at all moments at his king's call ; his will firm to carry out the king's

¹ Rom. v 5.

commands perfectly ; his mind habitually devoted to studying his business, so that he may promptly understand the commands he receives and how to carry them out. So in the glorious Mother of God, her soul's will was unshakably set to do the divine will in all things. Her whole study was to understand and rejoice in his love. And the whole of her nature was prompt to do the biddings of her soul, as she moved her servants to do her Lord's will. In a new-baptised babe, the soul has not begun to take charge of its servants in the lower nature ; nor is there yet any power to actually think of God or to actually love him. So that the inpouring of love in baptism is seen most clearly to be a pure grace, an utterly unearned gift from God's love ; and the bringing the babe to heaven at death is simply due to his divine joy in giving happiness.

We who have sinned know too well how disordered is our whole nature. We do not get from our servants, the powers and passions of the body, the obedience they should give, instant, tranquil, joyous. When we want them to obey God's commands, we have to fight to make them do it. And in our souls there is little power to understand promptly the will of God. We are deaf to his whisperings, and awake to the clamour of the world. What little we understand of his bidding, we water down by blending it with the folly of human knowledge and maxims and prudence. As to our very will to serve him, we can, it is true, by his grace resolve in an instant that he must be obeyed always, in all things, completely ; but the will does not last. And the Church has to warn us to pray that he will steady it and force it to keep right ; *nutantia corda tu dirigas ; nostras etiam rebelles compelle voluntates*. And since we find ourselves always or nearly always in this state, it is reasonable to think that most of us will still be in this state when death comes. And we shall still be looking forward to the day when all our powers and our whole nature will move in complete accord with the soul, and the soul will unceasingly move, as do the angels in heaven, in complete and loving accord with the will of God. That day will come when our purgatory is over. There our inconstancy and our many backslidings will bring their own punishment, when through much pain we acquire that freedom and mastery which here we threw away, and clear the soul from all hindrances till its love for God can burn steady and untroubled.

False religions, such as Buddhism and Spiritualism, have recognised this fact, that at death most men are not yet fitted for eternal rest. All false religions are built of fragments of truth, built up into a nightmare of falsehood. Here the question they face is a real question. All our lives we see before us a high standard calling us to live up to it, and at death we have not reached it ; how are we to reach it after death ? They invent wild and sometimes ghastly answers. But the true answer is : by the power of God, through the purifying power of suffering ; and this we name purgatory.

These false religions think only of the perfecting of man's soul, not of giving God his due. And thereby they leave out the highest part of man's perfection. Certainly man should grieve that he has lowered and degraded himself by sin, and should rejoice to rise to better things. This grief is a necessary part of the whole agony entailed by sins ; but if it stand alone it is merely pride, part of a great rejection of truth. For the chief cause of agony ought to be the knowledge that he has ill-treated God, despised his majesty, outraged his holiness, rejected his love. The soul in purgatory, realising what is due to God, loving him with its whole being, will wish above all things to atone for its sin by suffering worthy punishment. If it could be content to leave in the smallest degree unrepaired the wrongs it has done to God, it would be far from the perfection that is possible to saints even in this life. In purgatory the soul longs to suffer in order to be clean, to suffer in order to reach God ; but above all these is its longing to suffer in order to make amends to the Divine Majesty, Holiness, Love. For its love of God is everything to it now ; its desire for its own purification and happiness is part of its love for God.

Those who are entangled in these false religions are likely to lose all sense of what is due to God. They may talk of man rising through sphere after sphere to perfection ; but the perfection they talk of is simply their fancy of the moment ; for they have lost sight of man's true perfection. And often they seem to fall into a further blindness. In thinking of man's future perfection as compared with his state in this life, they see his present faults and falls as merely an earlier stage of development ; as imperfections to be grown out of, not as sins to be lamented and atoned for. They lose first the sense of God, and then the sense of sin.

§ II: THE PAINS OF PURGATORY

The love in purgatory

WE must keep in mind the main facts.

The suffering souls are still on the way to heaven ; but they have arrived at the stage when their salvation is sure ; there is no further doubt or danger of not reaching heaven. Death found them loving God, each with his own degree of love. That love can never now grow to greater heights nor fall lower ; for their time of trial is over.

That love has earned them the right to go to heaven ; and therefore the right to be freed from all that delays their entering heaven.

The hindrances that keep them back are their unrepented venial sins ; and the attachments to creatures that through sin have taken root in their souls ; and the atonement they must make for their now forgiven sins.

Since their time of trial is over, they themselves can do nothing

now to fit themselves for heaven. Therefore the removing of these hindrances must be done by God. The means by which he removes them is suffering.

Their love for God makes them long to atone to him and to be wholly pleasing to him. Consequently they long to suffer all that is needed to atone and to make them pleasing to God.

In trying to picture the state of a soul in purgatory, we must put first its intense love for God. This love it had in this world, where those who are to be saved acquire each in their own degree a love of God above all else ; some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, some a hundred-fold. The level of love they have reached at death is the level of what they will be capable of for all eternity. Immediately after death, this love is released from all the distractions and darknesses that sin has wrought in the body, and is drawn towards God by the sight of his love for the soul he has made and saved. From that moment, this love for God is the one overmastering activity of the soul. Whatever other activities it may have, we must think of them as included in this love, springing from this love, and giving effect to it. Looking at his majesty as Creator of all, this love sees that it is worth dying even the death of the cross to give him his due reverence, and atone to him for sin. Looking at his holiness, love sees that it is worth dying the death of the cross to purify souls from all that is unworthy to God. Looking at his love, the soul sees and feels the overwhelming truth : he loves even me, and is drawing me to a complete union of love with himself.

This love for God gives to the soul happiness unspeakable. But at the same time it finds itself hindered by its past sins from flying freely to the love of its God ; and this hindrance is an agony to it, becoming the cause of its grief and its longings. At seeing that it has insulted the majesty of God and outraged his love, it is in anguish. A fire like hell springs up within it, says St Catherine of Genoa. Its love is tortured at being held back from God, at knowing itself stained by sin, and therefore unfit for him. We must remember always that these pains and griefs are not a distraction from its love for God, but are the fruit of the working of that love. It is precisely because the love is working so vehemently that it produces these agonies of grief. The love itself is such a joy that the hindrances become unspeakable pain.

From this love also spring all the longings of the soul ; the longing to atone to God for sin ; the longing to be clean from all stain, for God's sake, that his servant may be what he wishes ; the longing to be with God ; the longing to suffer all that he wills, which is also a joy in suffering and being cleansed as he wills, when he wills, how he wills. For this joy in his will being done is the highest part of the soul's love for him. So it rejoices in knowing that he is purifying it in his own way, and that he will in the end bring it to himself, purified through and through.

Our Blessed Lord has shown us in himself the pattern and model which the soul imitates in purgatory. It was his love for his Father's glory, and his love for souls and for their purity, that brought him on earth to die. We know how intense were the sufferings he took on him, by his agony, when he prayed, "If it be possible, let this chalice pass from me."¹ But he showed how these sufferings were part of his love for his Father and his hatred of sin, when he said, "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised: and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."² His love for his Father gave him always the very happiness and joy of the blessed in heaven; and this very love called for and embraced the sufferings that would give effect to his love's desire.

After this pattern, the love which a soul in purgatory has for God produces, and calls for, and embraces the sufferings of purgatory. It would not for anything be without these sufferings, since they are the necessary and just and holy means appointed by God to satisfy its love for God, by atoning to him and fitting the soul for him. And in this sense it suffers willingly, and with its whole being chooses to suffer, as did our Lord. But, at the same time, the very essence of the suffering is that the soul is hindered from what it most desires and chooses—to be wholly pleasing and spotless in God's sight, to be united with him in a love complete and untroubled.

*Pain of
deferment*

There is in us a power to love the best, and a longing to be partakers of it. The best that we know is God's joy in all that is holy, all that is noble; secondarily, in the created holiness and nobility of men and angels; but first, and wholly, in his own uncreated holiness and generous love. This holiness and love is himself, and his joy in it is infinite. And his very self is that uncreated joy in his infinite holiness and love. Into that joy we long to enter. Even now on earth we have this longing, and we look forward to death as the gate whereby we shall enter into that joy. At death, released from the distractions and attractions bred by sin in the body, we shall see far more clearly the loveliness of the joy of God, and our longing for it will be the only longing left in us, possessing therefore the whole strength of the soul. But if we are still stained with sin unrepented or unatoned for, we shall know instantly that we are unworthy to enter into that joy; and this knowledge is agony to the soul. Our very love for that infinite holiness of God makes it a horror to think of intruding upon it unclean. Our agony at being shut out from it is blent with the deeper agony at our having outraged it.

In making intelligent beings, us and the angels, Almighty God has inseparably bound up our happiness with his own glory. He made us for happiness; he made us for his glory. It is part of his glory, a very tiny part, that he gives eternal happiness to one of us. But the whole of our happiness lies in giving him the glory that is

¹ Matt. xxvi 39.

² Luke xii 50.

his due, such glory as can come from us. We desire our own happiness; deepest in our hearts is the undying longing for eternal rest. But our folly and our sin is that we put asunder what God has joined; we would have happiness without giving him glory. At death the soul awakes to a new knowledge: to see the beauty of God's holiness, the majesty of his glory that fills heaven and earth with his kingship; to feel with its whole being the drawing of his love, infinite, special and individual to this one soul. At once the soul sees where its true bliss lies—to dwell with purest joy in uncreated holiness, to bathe with delight in the fire of everlasting love.¹

From this bliss the soul was shut out when on earth by a barrier that God had made to try it, the veil of its unglorified body. And now after death it finds itself again shut out by its sins, a barrier of its own making.

We must not picture it as like a struggling soul still in this life, weary of battling with sin and longing blindly for God and rest. The soul in purgatory sees what it longs for, sees more clearly as its cleansing progresses. It longs to be with God, and sees itself unfit. It longs that God should have his will, enfolding it in that love for which he made it; and it hates the stains that hold it from him. It sees how it has stabbed him whom it loves supremely, and it longs to make amends. Helpless now to do anything, it seeks for sufferings and pains to endure, for atonement and for cleansing. If in this life we realised these truths we should turn to fastings, scourgings, and other bodily punishment for this purpose. In our purgatory, therefore, we expect positive pains and punishments to the soul, as well as the anguish of being still unfit for heaven.

The root of these positive punishments we can see by considering *Positive* the way that sin takes hold of us. In all sin we are unduly seeking *punishments* something that is not God. There is often a positive delighting in the creature, called inordinate delight, because it is against reason and against the will of God. This delight calls for positive suffering, to atone for it. Again, when we consider the will that seeks or consents to this delight, it is evident that there may be in the will an habitual readiness to accept this delight; a readiness more or less strong in different souls. "Some venial sins cling to the soul more than others; inasmuch as our affection is more drawn to them and more strongly fixed on them," says St Thomas Aquinas.² And in this he finds the reason why some souls suffer longer in purgatory than others, though not necessarily more severely. For the keenness of pain corresponds to the quantity of the sin—that is, of delighting in creatures inordinately. But the length of purgation depends on the rootedness of the sins in the soul; for what clings deeper in the soul takes longer to cleanse. St Paul helps us to understand this deep-rooted clinging of the sin in the soul. In the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans he describes the agony of the soul even

¹ Is. xxxiii 14.

² *S. Theol., Suppl., Append., Q. ii, art. 6.*

in this life in its conflict with the attraction of sin. "To will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good, I find not. . . . For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man ; but I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin." ¹ This division of our nature against itself causes the agonising conflicts of temptation which are an agony even when the soul faithfully fights through and refuses all consent to wrong. But by weakening and consenting even to small sins, the soul gives the law of sin a hold on its very will, the will which has so often chosen to yield to sin. The soul remains divided against itself. Looking to God, it is delighted with his law. Yet, turning again to think of the creatures that have captivated it, it finds that it cannot tranquilly govern its thoughts of them to rejoice simply in doing God's law in their regard. For it finds it has an affection for them, drawing it to delight in them in disregard of God's law. Thus the very soul is divided against itself, and has no peace. "That which I work, I understand not. For I do not that good which I will, but the evil which I hate, that I do. . . . Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?" ² The body which was created in innocence to be the soul's partner in glory, the flesh which, as David ³ says, " thirsts for God, oh how many ways ;" this body sin has corrupted, making it for a time the body of death. At death soul and body are parted, and the soul has no longer to battle with the body's inclinations, humours, passions. But the habits of thought and will are in the soul itself, and their corruptions are not shed by merely shedding the body. Such as they were at the moment of death, the soul carries them to judgement and to purgatory. The soul will not be fit for heaven till this division has ceased in it ; till the all-pervading love of God has replaced all other attractions ; till the soul can think of all creatures alike and have no slightest desire about any of them except the desire that God may be glorified in them. The almighty power of God could make this change in the soul in one moment. The soul's love for him could be raised to such intensity as to burn out instantly all other loves, desires, attractions. This we believe God does in the souls of his martyrs, who lay down their lives for him with a love than which no man hath greater. But in other souls there is no reason to suppose such a miracle of grace. It is fitting that they should go through the long agony of painfully detaching their souls from the wrong affections to creatures which they have wilfully and persistently encouraged to take root in their souls. Moreover, a soul so divided against itself, unless roused by the spur and challenge of martyrdom, is not likely to consent to such a fiery act of love for God as would consume at once all its habitual affections for creatures.

¹ Rom. vii 18, 22, 23.

² Rom. vii 15, 24.

³ Ps. lxxii 2.

The keenness of the pains in purgatory depends on two things.

The soul, burning with love for God, is faced with its own sins, and with the evil affections these sins have left in the soul to hold it back from God.¹ One thing that increases the soul's anguish is the quantity of its sins. For the greater the quantity, the more keenly will it feel the wrong it has done to God. And the second thing is its own love for God, acquired before death. The more intense its love is, the more will it feel the anguish of having wronged and being separated from him whom it loves.

The keenness of the soul's pain is a different thing from the length of time it must suffer. This depends not on the quantity of sin, but on the rootedness in the soul of those wrong affections which sin has implanted. The deeper their roots, the longer will it take to be freed from them.

As the purifying of the soul goes on, and it is more and more cleansed from its wrong affections, it is more and more open to the inflowing of the love and joy of God; for these wrong affections were the only hindrance to complete union with him. Consequently the soul's happiness increases as time goes on. But the agony of being still hindered from him and unfit for his complete love will not be lessened; rather we should expect it to be more unendurable when the soul is nearer its heaven and still delayed.

When the soul's purifying is complete, no purgatory nor hell itself could cause it any suffering. For since there is now in the soul nothing displeasing to God, there is likewise nothing displeasing to the soul itself, whose whole being is given to loving God and his will. And therefore there is nothing in the soul that any grief, sorrow, or pain can lay hold on.

The early Fathers spoke of the purifying fire. The word fire is used in the Scriptures sometimes literally and sometimes figuratively—*e.g.*, "We have passed through fire and water;"² "gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation."³ And the Fathers may have understood the word literally in some cases and figuratively in others. But the Church has made no pronouncement concerning the existence of a real fire in purgatory. The point was raised by the Greeks, when an attempt was made to bring back the Greek Orthodox Church into the fold of Christ, at the Council of Florence (1439), and they were told that the Church had given no dogmatic decision that there is real fire. St Catherine of Genoa says, "This sense of the grievousness of being kept from beholding the Divine Light, coupled with that instinctive longing which would fain be without hindrance to follow the enticing look of God—these things I say make up the pains of the souls in purgatory." This seems to mean that the pains of purgatory are entirely the spiritual pains resulting from seeing God's love and

¹ For another view see Essay xxxi, p. 1130.

² Ps. lxxv 12.

³ Eccles. ii 5.

its own sin. St Catherine's teaching was examined and approved before she was canonised.

On the other hand, St Thomas Aquinas, after pointing out that Scripture reveals nothing on this question and that no decisive argument can be brought forward to settle it, considers it more probable and more in accordance with private revelations to hold that, as a rule, souls suffer their purgation in the fire of hell itself. And he applies an illustration of St Augustine's, "In one same fire, gold glows and straw smokes," to show how the fire which endlessly torments the devils can purify a soul that dies in the charity of God.¹

§ III: THE STATE OF THE SUFFERING SOULS

*The souls
suffer
willingly*

WE sometimes meet the suggestion that the souls in purgatory murmur at their pains, are restless under them, and turn to human intercessors in the hope that their prayers may win God to grant them mercy rather than strict justice. The mistake is to imagine that the holy souls lose sight of their love for God, and weigh their sufferings in the darkness of their own thoughts, as we do on earth. In our moments of love we resolve to bear gladly whatever pains he sends us. But when disappointment comes, or ill-treatment, or injustice, it is easy to weigh these things in a merely human way, judging them as between ourselves and our wrongers, or wondering what we have done to deserve such suffering. In our darkness this seems an innocent thing to do, for we are only trying to see the rights and wrongs of the case. But when we get back to the light of God, we see that we have been separating his treatment of us from the love that guided that treatment, and so have missed seeing the essential truth about it. And we see that this losing sight of his love, and studying his work without it, was an imperfection at least, and a flagging in our love for him. No such imperfection or flagging is possible to the soul in purgatory in its activity towards God. For with the laying aside of the body, it has laid aside all other activities except the active loving of God; and now all its thoughts about itself and its sufferings are merely part of its love for God. Since its sufferings are appointed by him, since they are the means to remove all hindrances to loving him perfectly, it would not for anything be without those sufferings. As our blessed Lord would not be without his Passion, nor would his martyrs be without the torments of their death.

In the same way, apart from God's love the soul has no thought of gaining relief through the intercessions of others. But so far as it is his will that it should be thus aided by others' prayers, the soul desires this to be done, with the same intensity that it desires his will to be done in all other ways. In many ways we can see a fittingness in God's appointing that the soul's relief shall come through

¹ *S. Theol., Suppl., Append., Q. i, art. 2.*

others. His work is to spread in us his love ; love for him who is all, and joy in our own nothingness. The suffering soul knows that it can do nothing to end the mischief it has wrought in itself, to cleanse itself from the stains of its sins. It is a cause of joyful humility to see that God will cleanse us for the sake of the loving prayers of others. Again, thinking of those others who pray for us, we see God doing in their souls God's own work, when he moves them to pray for the cleansing of souls ; for this means that they love both the holiness of God and the souls that God has made.

This life is the time to win our place in heaven. After death all that is to happen is what we earned in this life, whether joy or punishment or both. If no prize were offered, no one could win a prize. God has offered and promised a prize of eternal life, to be won by all who strive aright. So the soul that dies in the love of God has won a strict right to heaven. And likewise it has won a definite place in heaven. For it has reached a definite height or strength of love for God, and it is too late to win any higher, as it is also too late to fall any lower. Purgatory will not raise its love of God to a higher level, but will only let that love act continuously and remove all hindrances to its action. Its sufferings win no reward ; they only free it to enter into the reward already won. *They do not merit*

At death we had won the right to enter heaven. That must include the right to have removed everything that hinders us from entering heaven. By dying in the love of God, we won the right to have forgiven those venial sins that we had never repented in this life, and the right to be freed from those affections to sin that have taken root in our souls. As to the venial sins, we have indeed won the right to have them forgiven ; but none the less they can only be forgiven when the will rejects them. Our right, therefore, is to have from God the help to reject these sins by the act of the will, and this help he gives us when the soul at death sees his love and puts itself into his hands to be cleansed by suffering. This act of the will is the means appointed by God to win forgiveness of the venial sins that were unrepented at death ; therefore St Thomas sees no difficulty in saying that by this act the soul merits their forgiveness. For the soul is still on its way to heaven ; and though it cannot now earn a higher place in heaven, it must earn freedom from the hindrances that keep it out.

As to the sufferings that are to free the soul from the rust of its sins, from those affections that remain while the soul is quite resolved never to yield to them again, only God knows when and how far these sufferings can be replaced by the intercessions of the Church on earth for the soul. But this also was a thing earned by the soul in its lifetime on earth ; either to be helped by the love of friends on earth, or to pay the last farthing of its debt ere it may depart. So St Augustine says that the prayers and Masses offered on earth

benefit only those who on earth earned that they should be benefited by them.

*They do not
sin*

The Church had to condemn an error of Luther's, that the souls in purgatory sin ceaselessly, by desiring rest and shrinking from their sufferings. This error comes from not understanding that all sin is in the will, and in the act of the will ; the act whereby we choose definitely to do this and not that. Besides this act of choosing, there are many other desires in our nature ; and these may be the cause of sin, or the material of sin, or the effect of sin ; but they are not sin. Consider a man who has a long-standing dislike of another, which has often led him to follow trains of thought hostile to that man, and ending in finding further reasons for disliking him. Sin was committed in the act of consenting to follow these thoughts. Suppose some day he recognises that his dislike is unjust, and from that time resolutely shows outward kindness to the man, and turns away instantly from all thoughts against him. His will is acting rightly, but against the grain ; for the old habit of dislike is still in him, ready to break out into action at any moment if he would allow it. It is true that this dislike is a wrong one. And precisely because he sees that it is wrong, the man is constantly repressing it, doing all he can to wear it down and hoping some day to find that it is dead. The existence of the desire is therefore wrong, a result of sin, but not sinful. And it is no longer the cause of sins, but is now the material of virtuous acts every time that the will resists it and acts against it. Such as this are the habitual desires, attractions, and repulsions that the soul may carry with it to purgatory, because they have not yet been worked out of its being in this life. In purgatory they must be removed from the soul ; not now by work, nor by the soul's resisting them and acting against them, but merely by suffering.

In purgatory such a dislike could never lead to sin. For in this world it leads to sin because the soul is still in the body. Through the senses, through the humours and state of the body, the will is provoked or drawn to indulge these desires or dislikes ; and at the same time and for the same reasons, it easily loses sight of God and his love. In purgatory all the distractions of the body are gone ; and the soul's love for God absorbs it continuously and prevents it attending to any other desire. The bad desire or repulsion is latent in the soul, as it is in this life at the times when it does not trouble a man. But in purgatory there is no possibility of its ever breaking out into action. It is simply burning out slowly in the fire of suffering.

Luther did not suggest that the suffering soul could sin in this way, but in the very fact of finding its sufferings painful. We have seen that to the soul it is intensely painful to be held away from God, to know that it has insulted him and is unfit to approach him. Plainly it is right that these things should be painful to the soul ; it would be wrong if the soul could be satisfied with them. And the soul's act of will is to accept this pain because it is right. This act

of will is completely pleasing to God, but wins the soul no higher place in heaven. For its place in heaven was won during its life on earth.

When a soul departs this life in venial sin, it has two reasons to suffer for that sin: one because it has never repented the sin; the other because, after repenting and being forgiven, the soul will still owe a debt of punishment to atone for the sin. The meaning of saying that the soul is in sin, whether mortal or venial, is that the soul has consented to that sin and has never withdrawn its consent. The guilt of the sin therefore remains on the soul; for the soul's attitude to that sin is still just what it was when it committed the sin. If the sin was mortal, the soul in committing it rejected God and his love; and as long as it does not repent, it continues to reject God. If the sin was venial, the soul committing it did not in any way reject God or withdraw from his love; but it yielded unduly to the attraction of a creature. This undue yielding has the effect of hardening the will against God and making it slow to follow his guidance. As long as the soul does not repent the venial sin and withdraw its consent to it, this hardness and slowness of the will remains.

It is very evident that a soul in this state cannot enter heaven. For in heaven its whole nature must be prompt and instant at the service of God, whereas now its very will is hard and slow to obey. The change of will must be made in purgatory, by means of suffering. To trace out how this is done will require us to keep steadily in mind all the facts about the soul's state and about repentance.

We are speaking of a soul that at death was in the love of God. This love of God, more or less intense, is the sanctifying grace which makes it certain that this soul will ultimately be in heaven; and in heaven its nearness to God will be determined by the degree of love for him which it had reached in this world at the hour of death. With this love for God, there can and does coexist guilt, the guilt of venial sin, incurred by yielding to undue attraction to some creature. The sin was not in the attraction, but in yielding to the attraction. The attraction may have been there for years, or for a lifetime; the result of original sin, or of sins actually committed by the soul. This attraction, more or less deeply rooted in the soul by the soul's own acts of sin, will have to be slowly burned out of it in purgatory. But at present we are thinking of the actual sins whereby the soul consented to yield to that attraction. This wrong consent must be repented and withdrawn before the sin can be forgiven, even if the sin be one of the smallest. Now in this life this repenting and withdrawal is done in two ways—one, just as mortal sins are repented, by considering the individual sin and its offensiveness to God, and for his sake wishing we had not done it and resolving to atone for it. The other way that venial sins are forgiven is that our love of God is for some reason strongly moved—perhaps by Holy Communion or meditation or thankfulness. And this love, in action

in the soul, so stirs the will, that every remembered sin and everything offensive to God that could possibly come to mind would be hateful to the soul and rejected by it. In this way the soul, without counting over its venial sins, does yet truly reject them all and hate them all, and so is forgiven them. In either repentance, we see that the soul's love for God becomes active and destroys its previous consent to the venial sin.

When a soul comes to its death in the state of venial sin, it is easy to see that before it can enter heaven its consent to the venial sins must be undone and destroyed by its love for God. And it is easy to see that, once it is parted from the body and all its desires and needs, the soul's love for God will be ceaselessly active, longing for his glory, hating its own sins, desiring to be with him. In this way the soul will withdraw and hate all its consents to sin.

There have been discussions as to when this takes place. It seems unlikely that there should be any delay, that the soul should only gradually arrive at the stage of repenting its venial sins. If, then, there be no delay after death in repenting, and if too the repentance was not made before death (for we are speaking of souls that die with venial sins unrepented), there remains only the moment of death for repenting. The moment of death has two sides. On this side it is the ending of life, the surrendering of the soul into the hands of its Maker. On the other side it is the moment of judgement, when the soul in the light of God suddenly sees all things as God sees them; sees his love and its own sins, and judges of them as God judges. Some have said that in the act of dying men repent their venial sins. And certainly such a thing can happen, when a soul consciously and lovingly gives itself into the hands of God, as did the martyrs and some other saints. But St Thomas calls it frivolous to suggest that all men thus make their death a willing act: "Someone, after venial sin, might give no thought to it, either to reject it or to hold to it; he might think of the three angles of a triangle equalling two right angles, and with this thought fall asleep and so die." Moreover, such a repenting of venial sins, when it does take place, is made in this life; the soul does not die in them.

There remains the moment of judgement, which is the beginning of purgatory. At this time surely all the soul's love for God is stirred into action, and such strong action as to detest once for all its wilful disobediences to him. St Thomas, without defining the time, contents himself with concluding that "Venial guilt, in one who dies in the grace of God, is remitted after this life through the fire of purgatory; for by the virtue of grace, that punishment, which is in one way willing, will have power to atone for every guilt that can coexist with grace."

*Duration of
purgatory*

It is the constant teaching of the Church that all purgation will be completed when the general judgement comes at the end of the world. All the souls that are to go to heaven will at that judgement

be reunited to their bodies and enter into their everlasting reward. But as to the duration of the purgation of individual souls we know nothing from our Lord's teaching. He tells us in a parable, "thou shalt not depart thence till thou repay the last farthing."¹ This shows the need of perfect purity before we can enter heaven; but reveals nothing about the length of time of imprisonment. The Church allows perpetual Masses to be arranged for one soul. This is because she does not know how long that soul may be suffering, nor how much atonement God will accept on its behalf from men. We have to remember that all times are alike present to God. There is nothing unlikely in supposing that prayers and Masses now being offered for one who died before the Reformation were the means of that soul entering into heaven many hundreds of years ago, as our Lord's Passion was the means of saving Adam's soul. The visions God has allowed of souls begging for prayers many years after their death are evidence that these souls have been in suffering all that time. And if there are authentic visions where souls have also told that their purgatory was to last many years yet, these also may be believed without fear of contradicting Catholic teaching.

Those who are alive at the end of the world, and whose souls are stained with venial sin or owe a debt of punishment, must have their purgation like other such souls before they can enter heaven. About these, people have wondered over two questions, of which God has not taught us the answers. First, as to their bodies. Are they to pass alive into heaven or hell, or are they to die and rise again at once? And as to their souls, when are they to suffer their purgatory, since they are not judged till the general judgement, and after that judgement there is no purgatory? This is asking Almighty God how his doings are to be fitted into the tiny measures of time and space that he has made for our bodily life. He gives us glimpses to let us know how narrow is our vision, and that we must be content to know that he is infinitely above our understanding. We must not attempt to limit what he can do in what we call the "moment" of judgement. "Of this one thing be not ignorant, my beloved, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."² And on our side we know that a moment of intense anxiety, waiting to know will a falling stone crush a child, seems like an age. The work of purgation to be done in these souls is the same as in the souls of the martyrs. In the martyrs it is done in their sometimes brief dying. As easily can God do it at the last day.

§ IV: PURGATORY IN TRADITION AND SCRIPTURE

THE belief in purgatory is an excellent example of what is meant by *Tradition* in the Church. When the belief is challenged, when we are asked to cease praying for the dead, it is sufficient to answer,

¹ Matt. v 26.

² 2 Pet. iii 8.

“ But we have been praying for them since the time of the Apostles.” The mere fact of praying for them implies the belief that these souls are not yet in heaven, nor hopelessly lost in hell ; that they will reach heaven in the end ; that our prayers may help them. And this, duly weighed, is seen to imply further that the bond which holds together God’s spiritual family or communion is not mere justice, but love. Once we realise that the work of his kingdom is to spread in our hearts love for God and love for each other, it seems quite natural that those who have offended him should be helped by each other’s prayers. All this belief is embodied in the most effectual way in the practice of praying for the dead ; for by learning that practice and the meaning of it, and by doing it, we learn it not simply as a thing to believe, but as a fact to be dealt with, and calling for action. In the Church from the beginning there has been the practice of praying for the dead and offering the Mass for them. Very early we find recorded the custom of offering special prayers and Masses on the thirtieth day and on the anniversary of death. The writers speak of these things simply as the established traditional practice of the Church. This traditional practice of the Church is a running stream of witness to her belief. And when we find the earliest written references to it speak of it as the traditional and unquestioned practice of the Church, we have an argument to show that the doctrine has been believed and acted on from the time of the Apostles. When Popes and Councils are called on to define a doctrine that heretics are challenging or perverting, they demonstrate what the Church has always believed by examining the practices which the Church has followed or encouraged, and pointing out what truths are implied in these practices. The infallible declaration of Popes and General Councils is argument enough for a Catholic ; for the living voice of the Church teaching even in St Peter’s time was no surer nor holier than is the living voice of the Pope to-day, seeing that always it is the voice of the Holy Spirit, leading Christ’s Church into all truth, and bringing back to her mind whatever Christ taught her.¹ But it is sometimes an encouragement, and always a joy, to find St Gregory the Great or St Augustine talking of the prayers and Masses offered for this soul and for that, and the hope of benefiting such souls, in the same matter-of-fact and simple way as a school-child talks of them to-day.

Since the truth of God’s teaching can never vary, though it may become plainer and more fully known to men as time goes on, let us try to see the oneness of his teaching about purgatory, whether through his Church, or through his Scriptures, or through the visions and revelations of his saints. We will look first at the Church’s practice to-day, which embodies her teaching, brings it before her faithful, and enables them to carry it into effect. Next we shall see the same doctrine taught and acted on in the beginning of the Church.

¹ John xvi 13.

Then we shall consider passages in the sacred Scriptures, which either spring from the same teaching or give the grounds for it. And lastly there are private revelations which God may have made to saints and other holy souls. We must see how these stand to the Church's teaching: sometimes condemned by it, sometimes confirming it and throwing light on it.

First, the Church's practice to-day.

It would not be easy to make a list of the intercessions for the dead that make part of the Church's daily work. The moment a soul leaves the body the priest and the others who may be there begin praying for it. Before the funeral the body can be brought to the church, and the Office for the Dead, consisting of Vespers, Matins, and Lauds, can be sung or said for the soul. This Office is called in English a dirge, *dirige* being the first word of the Matins. At the funeral all the prayers are intercessions for the departed soul. Besides this praying for the soul of one lately dead, there are habitual prayers for all the faithful departed. The laity are taught to make these a part of their daily prayers morning and night, and even of their thanksgiving after meals. The clergy, in reciting their daily Office, recall at Prime the dead they specially wish to pray for that day, and pray for all the faithful departed at the end of most of the canonical hours through the day. In every Mass after the consecration the priest stops a moment to recall to mind the souls that he or others wish to be remembered, and then begs "a place of refreshment, light and peace" for them and for all that fall asleep in Christ. Above all this, the Church has drawn up the Masses for the dead, in which prayers for the dead occupy those places which on another day might be devoted to commemorating our Lord's birth or resurrection or for the feast of a saint. Of these Masses, there is one that can be said on the day of death or of burial; one for the third or seventh or thirtieth day after death; and one for the anniversary day. Further, there is an "everyday Mass" for use whenever the priest or the faithful desire to offer Mass for the dead on a day that is open for such Masses. Not every day is open, for the Church has provided Masses for the greater feasts and for Ember days and Lenten days, and these are not to be lightly set aside. One day in the year, November 2nd, is set aside as All Souls' Day. A full Office of the Dead—Vespers, Compline, Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None—is recited or sung by the clergy; every Mass that day is a black Mass, offered for all the faithful departed. On that day, too, every priest is privileged to say three Masses, as on Christmas Day. Later in the month, the religious orders of monks and nuns repeat this intercession for the dead of their own order.

All this is the official practice of the Church. It is her highest authority that arranges and regulates it all. No departure from this practice nor innovation may be made without her sanction. If, therefore, anyone asks what is the belief of the Church at this moment

The Church's practice to-day

about intercession for the dead, here is his answer: it is the belief that is embodied and implied in these practices. Some points may be noticed. First, how this fact that the dead must be prayed for is always with us, through the day, through the year. In our soul's life it is as common and familiar a fact as that prayer is heard or that Christ is God. It is bound up with the most practical problem we have to deal with—that our daily sinning does not cease, and that it will all have to be undone and wiped out ere we can enter heaven. *Peccantem me quotidie, et non me poenitentem, timor mortis conturbat me.* Praying for the dead, we foresee ourselves dead and needing to be prayed for.

We notice also that the Church's public prayers are made for the faithful only. Only a Catholic can have Catholic burial, or Masses publicly offered for his soul's repose. For living non-Catholics, the Church's one prayer is that they may be brought to know the Church that Christ sent to teach them. For till they know his will they cannot do it. Once they by faith accept his Church, she can give them all the other gifts he has put in her hands for his brethren. But it would be a breach of trust to give these gifts alike to those who accept and to those who refuse his first gift of faith, which is the foundation of all the rest. So she cannot pray publicly for those without, as if they were brethren. But God in binding his Church to her appointed work did not bind up his own mercy; and knowing this, we pray in secret for those dead for whom we cannot pray in public.

Again, we notice that the Church continues offering prayers and Masses for a soul indefinitely. One reason for allowing priests to say three Masses on All Souls' Day is that Masses may thus be offered for those who in past ages endowed monasteries, in the hope that Masses would be said for them till the end of the world. Again, the Church encourages us to intercede specially for those who are near to us, members of our own family, of our own religious order. For the charity of Christ, which extends our love to all whom he loves, does not wipe out but deepens the natural love he has given us for our near ones. Besides her own official intercessions, the Church approves and encourages practices that arise from the devotion of the faithful: confraternities that meet to pray for the dead, Purgatorial Societies whose members have Masses said jointly for themselves as they die.

Next, to get an idea of the belief and practice of the early Church, we will begin with St Gregory the Great, who was Pope from A.D. 590 to 604 and sent our St Augustine to convert the English. From him we will work backwards. Two hundred years earlier, St Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, the great doctor of the Church, was writing and preaching in Africa, and he shall be our next witness. Again, we will go two hundred years earlier to Tertullian. He is not a quiet witness like the others. He argues, where they simply

mention how they earnestly carried out the belief and practice of the Church in their day.

Tertullian was a convert to Catholicism, and later fell away into the heresy of the Montanists; and he writes to defend and justify the religion he holds. In his writings as a Montanist, he may be defending the parts of Catholic truth that he still holds, or he may be attacking the parts which he has rejected; but in either case he bears witness to what was the teaching of the Catholic Church in his day. And we find him justifying the belief in purgatory. Before him and after him there are the inscriptions on tombs in the catacombs and elsewhere, which show in the simplest and surest way the thoughts of the Catholic faithful about the dead.

As a specimen of St Gregory the Great's writing on purgatory, we will take the following passage from the fourth book of his Dialogues. The incident here related would seem to be the origin of the custom of saying Masses for a dead person on thirty successive days, which are sometimes called Gregorian Masses.

Here also I can not but tell you that which happened three yeares since in myne owne Monastery. A certaine monke there was called Justus, one very cunninge in physicke, and whiles I remayned in the Abbey, served me very diligentely, attending upon me in my often infirmities and sickenes. This man him selfe at lengthe fell sore sicke, so that in very dede he was broughte to the last cast. A brother he had called Copiosus that had care of him, who yet liveth. Justus perceiving him self past all hoope of life, tolde this brother of his, where he had secretly laid up three crownes of golde. . . . Which thing so sone as I understoode, very much grieved I was, and could not quietly disgest so great a synne at his handes, that lived with us in communitye, because the rule of my Monastery was, that all the monkes thereof should so live in common, that none in particular mighte possesse any thinge proper to him selfe. Being therefore much troubled and grieved at that which had happened . . . at lengthe I sent for Pretiosus Prior of the Monasterye, and gave him this charge: Se (quoth I) that none of our monkes do so muche as visit Justus in this his extremitye, neither let any give him any comfort at all: and when his last hoore draweth nighe, and he doth desire the presence of his spirituall brethren, let his carnall brother tell him, that they do all detest him, for the three crownes which he had hidden; that at least before his death, sorrow may wounde his hart and purge it from the synne committed: and when he is deade, let not his body be buried amongst the rest of the monkes, but make a grave for him in some one dunghill or other, and there cast it

in, together with the three crownes which he left behinde him, crying out all with jointe voice : thy money be with the into perdition, and so put earth upon him. In either of which thinges my minde and desire was, both to helpe him that was leaving the worlde, and also to edifye the monkes yet remayninge behinde, that both grieffe of death mighte make him pardonable for his sinne, and such a severe sentence against avarice, might terrifye and preserve them from the like offence : both which by Gods goodenes fell out accordinglye : For when the foresaide monke came to dye, and carefullye desired to be commended to the devotions of his brethren, and yet none of them did either visit him, or so much as speake to him : his brother Copiosus tolde him, for what cause they had all given him over : at which wordes he straightwaies sighted for his synne, and in that sorrowe gave up the ghost. . . . Thirty daies after his departure, I began to take compassion upon him, and with great grief to thincke of his punnishment, and what meanes there was to helpe him ; whereupon I called againe for Pretiosus Prior of my Monasterye, and with an heavy heart spake thus unto him. It is nowe a goode while since that our brother which is departed, remayneth in the tormentes of fire, and therefore we must shewe him some charity, and labour what we maye to procure his deliverye ; wherefore go your waye and see that for thirty daies following sacrifice be offered for him, so that no one day passe in which for his absolution and discharge, the healthfull sacrifice be not offred : who forthwith departed, and put my commandement in execution. In the meane tyme, my mynde being busied about other affaires, so that I tooke no heede to the daies how they passed : upon a certaine night the same monke that was deade, appeared to his brother Copiosus who seing him enquired of his state in this manner : what is the matter brother ? and how is it with you ? to whom he answered thus : Hitherto have I bene in badd case, but nowe I am well, for this day have I received the communion : with which newes Copiosus straightwaies comming to the Monasterye tolde the monkes : and they diligentely counting the daies, founde it to be that, in which the thirith sacrifice was offred for his soule : and so thoughe neither Copiosus knewe what the monkes had done for him, nor they what he had seene concerning the state of his brother, yet at one and the same tyme both he knewe what they had done, and they what he had seene, and so the sacrifice and vision agreing together, apparant it was, that the deade monke was by the holy sacrifice delivered from his paines.¹

Writing two hundred years before St Gregory, St Augustine in his moving story of the death of his mother St Monica says : " During

¹ From a translation by P.W. printed at Paris, 1608.

her illness one day a faintness came on her, and for a little she was unconscious. We ran to her ; but soon she came back to consciousness, and looked at me and my brother standing there. And she said to us, as if questioning, ' Where was I ? ' Then, gazing at us who were stunned with grief, she said, ' You will lay your mother here ? ' I was silent, holding back my tears. But my brother said something, that he hoped she would die not abroad, but more happily in her own country. Hearing this, her face grew anxious and her eyes smote him for wishing such a thing. And then she looked at me and said, ' See what he is saying.' And presently she said to us both, ' Lay this body anywhere at all ; the care of it must not trouble you. This only I ask of you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you are. . . .' And when now her body was buried, we went and returned without tears. For not even in those prayers that were poured forth to thee while the sacrifice of our redemption was being offered for her, with the body standing at the graveside before burial as is the custom there, not even in those prayers did I weep." ¹

Two hundred years again before St Augustine, Tertullian argues that it is right that the soul be punished alone before the body rises again, because even bodily sins are conceived and consented to by the soul alone before the body does them ; and he concludes : " No one will doubt that the soul pays some penalty in hell, while sure of full resurrection, resurrection in the flesh too." ²

About the same time, Abercius asks for prayers after his death from those who should read the epitaph he composed for himself, and had graven on a stone before his eyes. " These things I Abercius, standing by, dictated to be written here : I was actually in my seventy-second year. Let everyone who understands these things and sympathises pray for Abercius." And in the Roman catacombs are many inscriptions like St Philomena's *Pax tecum filumena* (Peace be with thee, Philomena), which in shorter words is exactly the same prayer as our *Requiescat in pace* (May she rest in peace).

The man who carved " Peace be with thee " on the tomb of the dead maid would be conscious only of his love for her and his trust in God. But he had in him all that the Catholic Church teaches about the souls of the dead, and a questioner would draw it from him by asking, " Do you think her soul still lives ? Do you think some souls are in peace and others not ? Do you love her so much that you care what happens to her now ? Why should you hope she is to have peace ? Do you think God will heed your wishing her peace ? "

Now let us turn to the Holy Scriptures.

In considering the passages of Scripture that bear on purgatory, *Holy* we must not imagine that the Church at some time noticed these *Scripture* passages, concluded from them that there must be a purgatory, and

¹ St Aug., *Conf.*, IX, chap. xi.

² *De anima*, n. 58.

thereafter began a new teaching and a new practice of praying for the souls there. For the Church had the Catholic faith and the Catholic religion complete from the beginning in all its substance. The doctrine of purgatory was not learned from the texts in the Scriptures. But these texts were written by men who, in the Jewish Church or in the Catholic Church, already knew this doctrine. That the dead are to be judged according to their works ; that their sins make it a terrible thing to be judged by God ; that the souls need his mercy if they are to enter heaven ; that we, their brethren in the family of God, ought to pray him to show them this mercy—these are the essential facts, known to the Jews before our Lord's time, and familiar to the New Testament writers. Judas Machabeus found concealed on the bodies of his men who had fallen in battle the offerings they had looted from a pagan temple. " And making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead ; " which leads the inspired writer to say that it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins.¹ Our Lord's disciples were familiar with this knowledge about sin and judgement ; and hearing his teachings, they would understand them just as we do, who are familiar with the same truths. They heard him saying that he will render to every man according to his works ;² that some sins are to be punished with many stripes and some with few ;³ that some people have many sins to be forgiven, and some but few ;⁴ that for every idle word we shall render an account in the day of judgement ;⁵ that some sins shall not be forgiven in this world nor in the next.⁶ All this would lead them to pray the more for their dead ; for while it deepened their sense of the holiness of God before which the dead are judged, it also kindled their hopes of his merciful forgiveness. He told them, indeed, the stern truths of death and judgement and hell ; that in this life must heaven be won : " Are there not twelve hours of the day ?⁷ Walk while you have the light ;⁸ the night cometh in which no man can work ;⁹ this night do they require thy soul of thee ;¹⁰ the rich man died and was buried in hell ;¹¹ there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."¹² But there was nothing to suggest that only the spotlessly pure can escape hell. On the contrary, the judgement, instant and strict, is also just. Each shall receive according to his works ; some shall be beaten with many stripes, some with few.

The Apostles have written some things which to us are mysterious, though they seem to have expected their readers to understand them. St Peter says that Christ preached to those spirits that were in prison, which had waited for the patience of God in the days of Noah. And

¹ 2 Mach. xii 40-46.

⁴ Luke vii 47.

⁷ John xi 9.

¹⁰ Luke xii 20.

² Matt. xvi 27.

⁵ Matt. xii 36.

⁸ John xii 35.

¹¹ Luke xvi 22.

³ Luke xii 47, 48.

⁶ Matt. xii 32.

⁹ John ix 4.

¹² Matt. viii 12.

for this cause was the gospel preached to the dead, that they might be judged indeed according to men in the flesh, but may live according to God in the spirit.¹ And St Paul says that some are baptised for the dead.² Though we do not see their full meaning, this much of it at least is plain—that there were souls of the dead waiting to be brought to heaven, and that Christians on earth were trying to help them. Our Lord speaks of the same mystery: “The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. . . . All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God.”³

St Paul, looking at the ministers of God working to spread his kingdom among men, sees them building their own mistakes and weaknesses over the foundation Christ had made. He sees this cockle growing with the good seed till the harvest time, in which our Lord had said that every planting that the Father has not planted shall be rooted up.⁴

And St Paul speaks of it under a parable of his own: ⁵ “Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man’s work shall be manifest; for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work, of what sort it is.” St Paul has in his mind the contrast between our working in blindness and judging as men judge in the dark, and the sudden blaze of God’s light searching like a flame through all our deeds, when he shall make his judgement known to each of us. By itself, this could apply either to the judgement after death, or to God’s bringing home to a man’s conscience in this life the true worth or worthlessness of his work. But as he proceeds with his argument, St Paul later says: “Therefore judge not before the time: until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise from God.” It seems clear that he is speaking here of the judgement after death, especially as he contrasts it with being judged by “man’s day.” So that it is reasonable to think that throughout he is speaking of the judgement in the next world. Continuing his parable, he says: “If any man’s work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work burn, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.”⁶ In the last words the thought seems to be of gold purified by fire from its dross, and the soul similarly purified from its rust of sins after death and judgement by God. This purifying is purgatory.

In the Lives of the Saints we constantly read of apparitions of *Private* souls from purgatory, or of revelations about them, especially about *revelations* the pains they suffer. We must distinguish two kinds of these

¹ 1 Pet. iii 19, 20; iv 6.

² John v 25, 28.

³ 1 Cor. iii 12-13.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv 29.

⁵ Matt. xv 13.

⁶ 1 Cor. iii 14-iv 5.

writings. Saints like St Thomas Aquinas and St Catherine of Genoa received in prayer a supernatural light or clearness of understanding, enabling them to see clearly and explain lucidly what ordinary minds find too deep to disentangle. Their conclusions are recognised by the Church as setting forth in a beautiful and convincing light the teachings which she received from God in the beginning. In the other kind of writing, men record the visions they have seen, of individual facts and particular persons. If these visions in any way conflict with the Church's dogmatic teaching, that there is a purgatory of suffering which purifies souls for heaven, the Church condemns them, and knows that they proceed either from evil spirits or from the seer's imagination. On the other hand, the Church recognises that God can, if he will, allow or command such apparitions and visions, and can make the seer know for certain that the vision is real. If he does so, it is right that the seer should believe the vision ; and likewise that any others who are convinced by the evidence should believe it. But however many may believe it and be convinced, even if the whole Church does so, as in the case of the apparitions of Lourdes, the fact remains that this is not part of the teaching God gave his Church when he made it. Consequently, these private revelations never become part of the Catholic faith. For the faith is that portion of truth which God committed to his Church to be taught to all mankind. If we receive any truth through these private revelations, we do not receive it from the Church, but from the individual witness whose word we accept. Consequently no one is bound to believe any of these revelations, unless because he is personally convinced that God has manifested some truth to the seer.¹

In practice, many of the saints and doctors of the Church have believed some of these visions. St Gregory the Great used them to confirm the Church's teaching that prayers and Masses help the suffering souls. St Thomas Aquinas, on the strength of these visions, is ready to believe that some souls are commanded by God to spend their purgatory in some limited spot on earth. And on the question whether the souls in purgatory suffer against their will, he introduces the argument drawn from the fact that they so often ask men to pray for their release.

When these visions show a bodily form, whether amid flames or any other bodily surroundings, we must remember that these forms are purely visionary. For the soul in purgatory is of course separate from its body, a spirit only. And if it take a bodily appearance, it is merely as the angels do when sent to show themselves to men. Whatever effects they produce on the eyes, ears, and other senses, all is mere appearance ; for there is no body there. So that the vision of souls in flames calling for our prayers is no more than a parable, a truth shown in figure to the eyes, as when we say in

¹ See Essay i, *Faith and Revealed Truth*, p. 33.

ordinary talk that a soul burns with love, or that the mind seems on fire with its distress, using the bodily figures to suggest spiritual facts that exist in the soul.

§ V: INTERCESSION FOR THE SOULS IN
PURGATORY

BETWEEN God and man, love is the only standard to judge by. There can be no asking what are the limits of our strict duty to God, nor any claiming from God of our just rights. For he owes us nothing, and we owe him all, even our very being. And the only weighing and measuring between us is, do we give him love in our measure, as he gives us love in his measure? Now, love calls in its own way for justice. Love will give to the beloved all that is his due, and think it but a small beginning of love's gifts. God's love for us can content itself in nothing less than making us as perfect as our nature allows—perfect in holiness, perfect in love. And our love for God requires that we pay to him every smallest and every greatest duty that a creature can render to his Maker. In setting right our sins, therefore, God's method is to bring us to act, as he acts, for love. In this love we intercede for the suffering souls. He has taught us to forgive our enemies, to pray for them, to try to win them to God when they sin. That is, we must learn to look with God's eyes of love on all who, through sin or through sorrow, need his help. We must wish as he wishes that they be delivered from the bonds of their sin and brought home to his love. In this way it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins.

*We share
God's love
for others*

From the other side, the wish to be prayed for in this way is also part of the spreading of God's love in souls. When we look at our own nothingness and our sins, we see that neither we nor all mankind can do anything to atone, and that there is no hope for us but in that love which God is spreading among men. "If thou, O Lord, shalt mark iniquities, Lord, who shall abide it?"¹ And just as, when he has forgiven us, the Scripture says, "All ye that fear God, come and hear, and I will tell you what great things he hath done for my soul,"² so when we want forgiveness, it is natural to call to all those who love God to pray him to have mercy on us: "I beseech all the saints, and you, brethren, to pray to the Lord our God for me." Thus we are forced into truth and humility by our knowledge of God's ways; we must flee from all thoughts of justifying or excusing ourselves or setting ourselves right, and take refuge in the world of love that God has made, to redeem the world of sin. The suffering souls in purgatory too will call in the same way for prayers from their brothers on earth, if it be God's will that this particular soul shall be aided by those prayers. For these souls are more

¹ Ps. cxxix 3.

² Ps. lxxv 16.

helpless than we ; they can do nothing whatever for their sins but suffer ; and their whole activity is concerned with God's love.

*Mutual
intercession*

Many Catholics ask the prayers of the suffering souls in purgatory, and believe that often they obtain favours from God through these prayers. But sometimes a doubt is raised whether this can be ; and this for two reasons. One, do these souls know anything that passes on earth ? For if not, then they do not even know that we are wanting them to pray for us. And secondly, since they cannot pray for themselves nor do anything to purify themselves but suffer, is it likely that they can pray for us ?

As to their knowledge. In this world the soul does not learn what is happening except by hearing, seeing, and the other bodily senses. Consequently when the soul leaves the body it has no natural means of learning anything that happens on earth. This is true alike of the souls in hell, in purgatory, in heaven. It is not difficult to believe that the saints in heaven, who like the angels " always see the face of my Father who is in heaven," in seeing God see all the happenings on earth that he wishes them to see ; which is also all that they wish to see, since they now wish only what God wishes. But we cannot say this of the suffering souls, for they do not see God. All these difficulties only amount to saying that we do not know any means by which the dead can see or learn what passes on earth. But if God wills that they should learn it, the difficulties are no difficulty at all. Our reason for expecting God to will it is the bond of love which he has set up between all the members of the Communion of Saints, which is his Church. We are praying for these souls because he loves them, and because for his sake we love them. It seems natural to expect that they will know of our prayers. As to their not being able to pray even for themselves, it is true, as we have seen, that their whole activity is a burning love for God, and the root of their suffering is that they are hindered in this love by the stains of their sins. That intense love will find food and cause of joy in seeing the bond of love that he had made between us and the suffering soul, in seeing how he has moved us to pray for it, in wishing that he will return good to us for the good we have done. And that wish, if God allows it to exist in the soul, is in effect a prayer for us. For all depends on the will of God. We only know that it seems, as far as we can see, worthy of God's holiness and goodness to allow these suffering souls to help us ; and therefore we know that if he will allow it, all the difficulties that we see in the way of doing it are due simply to the littleness of our understanding.

*Indulgences
for the dead*

The Church encourages us to gain indulgences and offer them for the suffering souls. But in doing so, she calls our attention to the essential difference between these and the indulgences she offers to ourselves. Over us she has the power of binding and loosing ; and she offers to loose us from some or all of the punishment due to our forgiven sins, on condition that we do the good works, prayer,

fasting and alms-deeds, which she prescribes. Not that she can guarantee that we shall do these works well enough to gain the offered remission, any more than she can guarantee that we shall make a good confession and be forgiven the guilt of our sins. But in either case, if we do our part rightly, she has power from God to loose us¹—first in confession from the guilt of sins, and then by indulgence from the punishment still due for those sins. But she has no such power of binding and loosing the dead. They have passed from the shepherding of Peter to the Good Shepherd himself, “God, to whom alone it belongs to give healing after death.” All that the Church can now do for them is to entreat him; to offer him prayers, sacrifices, penances, which may be accepted for some of these souls, in the same spirit of brotherhood in which his sacrifice was accepted for the souls of us all.

Many of the Church’s prayers for the dead refer not to purgatory but to the judgement—either to the general judgement at the last day or the particular judgement of the soul at death. These prayers never take for granted that the soul is sure of heaven, but they ask for its salvation; that the soul be delivered from the gates of hell; that at the rising from the dead it may breathe freely among the saints. In these prayers our own judgement is brought before our eyes, both to put us on our guard for ourselves and to make us realise the case of those we are praying for. “When thou comest to judge, where shall I hide myself? Woe is me, Lord, for in my life I have sinned exceedingly. Whither shall I flee, except to thee, my God?”

*The Church's
prayers for
the dead*

These prayers show the pleas on which we appeal to Almighty God—chiefly his own mercy; for he is a God of mercies, *indulgentiarum Domine*. His cleansing the suffering souls is pure mercy, *remissionis tue misericordia*. Though he has promised it, and the soul has earned it according to his promise, yet what he has promised is to be merciful. And the promise itself was mercy. To restore the soul from sin to holiness, we appeal to the same love and almighty power that “raised Lazarus when rotting in the tomb.” Another plea is that our own praying is done in love, *p̄is supplicationibus*, and so far is the work of his own Holy Spirit. Again, we plead the gifts he had given to these souls in life—the true faith, the desire to do his will, the apostolic office of the priesthood—not daring to say that the soul made good use of these, but knowing that he gave these gifts in order to bring the souls to the glory of heaven. But most of all we plead the sacrifice of the Holy Mass, which daily is offered for all the faithful departed, as well as for those in this world. The souls suffer for two reasons, to atone to God and to cleanse themselves; and the Mass is both a sacrifice of praise to God and of purification for men.

Our prayers ask that the souls may be cleansed, and may reach

¹ Matt. xviii 18.

their reward. For the cleansing of the souls, the Church asks God's indulgence: that they may have forgiveness of all sins, be made pure and disentangled from sins; that any stains clinging to them from contact with earth may be wiped away, God pouring on them the unfailing dew of his mercy. For their reward in heaven, we ask eternal rest, light perpetual, the company of the saints, a home of refreshment, of blissful calm, clear light. And all is summed up in "May they repose in thy love."

Some have thought that no prayer is made for the suffering souls by the saints in heaven. But the Church is against them. For she appeals for the help of the saints in her prayers for the dead as in all her other prayers: "That they may come to share eternal bliss through the intercession of Blessed Mary ever Virgin and of all the saints." Even in offering the Mass itself, we offer it in partnership with the saints in heaven, and we beg that our offering may be presented before God by his angel.

It is right to dwell on the power of the saints' prayers with God and compare it with our own unworthiness to be heard, as, again, it is right to dwell on the infinite value of the Mass, whereby, as the Church says, "thou hast loosed the sins of the whole world." But we must not pass on to imagine that the offering of the Mass for a soul, or the united prayers of the saints, ought to bring the soul to heaven far sooner than God intends. When we think of the sun, and the seed that under its rays grows to be a tree, it would be foolish to say that those enormous stores of heat and power in the sun ought surely to do all the work of developing the plant in an instant instead of taking years over it. The miracle of the distant sun for millions of years giving life to millions of living things on this earth is indeed great; but it does not blind us to the fact that each of these living things must be brought to perfection gradually, and in accordance with its own nature. So in thinking of purgatory: God is bringing each soul to perfection according to its nature. In this work his almighty power uses the virtue of the Mass and the prayers of the saints in heaven and of men on earth. It is folly for us to think we can know how the work should be done, and to wonder why it is not done in another way.

*Masses for
the dead*

Why are many Masses said for one soul, when the power of a single Mass is infinite? We can only see why this is when we have brought before our mind the full meaning of sin and redemption and atonement.

In every Mass our Lord himself is the chief offerer. There he continues to offer what he offered on the cross—his death, the sacrifice of his life, his body and blood delivered up and shed—for atonement to God and for the redemption of man. By making this offering, he wins for men all the grace and forgiveness and reward that will ever be received by each soul he has created. For each soul in purgatory, therefore, our Lord's own offering wins purification from the

stains of its sins and final entrance to heaven. The question therefore is, what difference will be made to this soul by my joining my mind and will on a particular morning with our Lord's as he makes his offering of himself? Clearly we must not think that his offering made by himself alone would leave the soul to suffer for years, but my joining with him will end the soul's suffering at once. We must remember that, had our Lord not offered his life for us, neither the soul's own sufferings nor the prayers of its friends would be of any avail towards purifying it from sin. Whatever these sufferings and prayers do for the soul, all is due to the Mass, in which our Lord offers his sacrifice. Again, we must remember that the spiritual good done to us by God's grace is limited by our willingness to receive it, and likewise by the state and needs of our soul. When we need purification, we cannot yet receive the graces that saints get. God is willing to give grace without limit, but we are not willing or able to receive it because we are attached to unworthy things. Consequently, some souls during their life on earth earned that they should be helped by the prayers of their friends after death; and others did not. For the former class, Almighty God has willed that their purification in sufferings should be aided by the prayers offered for them by the Church on earth. When we pray for them and offer Masses for them, we are not winning him to change his appointed plan for bringing those souls to heaven; we are simply carrying it out.

We feel instinctively and rightly that it is better to offer the Mass than any other good work, prayer, or penance; because these others are merely our own unworthy and faulty efforts, whereas the Mass is the immaculate sacrifice of the Lamb of God. We still want to know, then, what difference it makes to the fruits of the Mass when I join in offering it. It would be blasphemous to think that the Mass earns any more fruit from my joining in it. But our Lord does mean that our asking and our offering his sacrifice shall make some difference, not in the winning of grace, but in the receiving of the grace into souls. And first into our own souls. The whole reason he made Mass was in order that we might take into our souls his own high love, that longs to offer worthy worship to God, not only from his own heart, but from all hearts; and that having conceived this love, we might have a worthy offering to make to God. By this love we become his partners in sanctifying not only our own souls but the souls of others also. In this world he uses those who have his love to spread it to those who have not; to win our brother to God,¹ to preach his gospel to all nations.² But in making us partners in his love, he does not make us partners in his knowledge. "It is not for you to know."³ When we pray for souls in this world or in purgatory, we must not expect to know the results of our prayers, much less tell him what ought to be their results. He wants our

¹ Matt. xviii 15.

² Matt. xxviii 19.

³ Acts i 7.

prayers to help in his work : that is our sufficient guarantee that our prayers are not wasted. But to know the results we must wait for the day of the Lord. Meantime, he bids us keep asking, knocking ; pray without ceasing, and faint not. So we never cease praying and offering Masses for a departed soul till we have surety that it is among the blessed in heaven, through the Church proclaiming that person Blessed or Saint.

Therefore, when the Mass is offered for a suffering soul, the question is not what this most holy and spotless sacrifice will win, but what my offering of it will win for that soul. And this depends first on how far I am filled with divine love, our Lord's love for God and for men and for holiness. When this love entirely possesses a saint and moves him to pray, he is truly asking in our Lord's name, and his prayer will be granted.¹ Sometimes the saints have found they could not pray, when they were going to ask something that God did not mean to grant. We who are not saints know how poor are our prayers and from what an unloving heart they come, and therefore we ask again and again. He bade us continue knocking and asking ; and by constant trying to ask well, we hope some day to ask worthily. And, secondly, the fruit of my prayers for a particular soul depends on the fitness of that soul to receive grace or mercy. For it may be that some souls have on earth deserved to suffer the whole of their penance themselves and receive no relief through others' prayers, like the servant in the parable, who refused mercy to others and asked it for himself.²

We call them the Holy Souls because they are in the grace and love of God ; they have won heaven, are only waiting to enter. Their active life now consists wholly in that love between God and the soul which we call the supernatural life of the soul. God's love for them keeps their answering love on fire, ceaselessly yearning towards him ; and by the agony of that burning love " the almighty and merciful Lord looses them from the bonds of their sins."

Suffering for sins is twofold. First there is the sinless suffering of the Lamb of God, " who his own self bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live to justice ; by whose stripes we were healed."³ This suffering is shared by his sinless Mother and by many of his innocent saints. Because they are near to him, they are privileged to drink of the chalice of suffering that he drank of, and to be baptised in his baptism of blood for the sins of the world.⁴ Secondly, there is the sinner's suffering in this world or the next to atone for his own sins, a suffering we take up with shame as men who in the sight of heaven have wrought mischief against God and disfigured his image in their own souls. By this suffering we painfully restore our lost likeness to God. But, even in our misery, Jesus invites us in this world to join with

¹ John xvi 23.

³ 1 Pet. ii 24.

² Matt. xviii 32-34.

⁴ Mark x 39.

him in working and suffering for the souls of other sinners, and so to have some part with his holy Apostles and martyrs. This we can do by offering prayers and penances for the suffering souls in purgatory.

J. B. McLAUGHLIN, O.S.B.

XXXIII

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

§ I: INTRODUCTORY

Punishment PUNISHMENT is pain justly inflicted in consequence of evil done. It is purely medicinal if its sole purpose is to bring the evil-doer to repentance and to enable him to undo the evil wrought. It is purely retributive or avenging if its purpose is to vindicate and restore the glory and honour of one who has been offended by the evil deed, and thus to restore the balance of justice by placing the evil-doer in an evil plight on account of the evil done.

Retributive punishment Punishments on earth are, or ought to be, chiefly of a mixed character, partly curative, partly retributive. The punishment of hell is purely retributive. It has no medicinal purpose for the sinner undergoing it, though it has also a preventative purpose, by being a deterrent to others.

The righteousness of retributive justice is almost instinctively admitted by every reasonable person. When misdeeds entail no suffering for the offender, when crimes pass unpunished—the wicked prosper and the good succumb—there arises in every human soul the irresistible conviction that something is lacking, something wrong in the arrangement of the universe; also that such wrong cannot last for ever, and that in the end it must go well with the just and ill with the evil-doer.

This profound conviction is based on the idea that sin and suffering are correlatives; I mean that every sin committed necessarily entails the liability to a corresponding punishment, so that the balance of justice may be maintained. It is true that repentance obtains forgiveness. But repentance itself contains the will to make satisfaction, and satisfaction is a punishment which the sinner voluntarily inflicts upon himself in consequence of his sin, in order that the great Orderer of the universe may not inflict punishment, which has already been voluntarily endured.

Were, however, no evil consequence to follow the disobedience of an unrepentant sinner, man might rightly accuse the Supreme Guardian of the world of failing to vindicate the law of holiness, and might conclude that no holy intelligence was directing and controlling the order of created things. In strictly technical language, God wills the order of this universe, and must necessarily continue to will it, as long as it exists, for to maintain its existence is to will its order. Now the sinner rebels against this order. He cannot indeed disturb it objectively, for God's will is sovereign and

omnipotent, but he can pervert his own will and commit an act contrary to his final end, by adhering inordinately to an object of desire and enjoyment. If the order of the universe is to be maintained, the sinner's will must of necessity be contravened and thwarted in the same measure as he himself has contravened and thwarted the due order by God established. Now all thwarting of the will is sorrow, and if in consequence of sin, such sorrow is punishment.

Punishment, therefore, must follow sin as its shadow. Punishment is the counterpoise of sin, demanded by intrinsic necessity to restore the balance of righteousness. As water seeks its own level, so punishment succeeds sin. Sufferings may be self-inflicted, as when we do penance ; or inflicted by God, and then they are called punishment. *Its connection with sin*

Retributive justice, therefore, is in itself the maintenance of order. It is properly called avenging or retributive justice in the case of divine punishments, because God, who maintains the order of the universe, is a personal God, not an abstract force, and all the laws of the universe are enacted by his personal will. The sinner, therefore, not only attempts to break the objective order of the universe in which he lives, but he offends the personal God who created him. The sinner by his deed—as far as in him lies—deprives God of the honour due to him in the obedience of all created wills and their gratitude for the benefit of their own existence. Divine punishments, therefore, vindicate God's glory and in themselves are a manifestation of God's holiness.

When thinking of an avenging God we must eliminate from our mind any idea that God desires or thirsts to be satiated with the sight of suffering. God desires or thirsts for nothing. No sin, however great, can lessen God's happiness. No sinner can hurt God. God is not injured as we are injured on earth, smarting under the pain of the insult. Hence it is not a question of God paying the sinner back in his own coin—for every hurt received a hurt inflicted. God in punishing can have only one motive : his own infinite holiness and nothing else whatever.

Eternal punishment is the everlasting separation of God from the sinner, because the sinner continues to reject him ; it is the allowing creatures to torment the sinner, because he has turned to creatures instead of to God as his ultimate end. This punishment is everlasting, not because God can never be satiated with the sight of the sinner's pain, but because the sinner abides by his final choice, preferring a created good to God, and can no longer change his mind. He is eternally punished because he is eternally in the state of sin.

§ II: THE NATURE OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

A. *The Pain of Loss*

*Loss of the
Beatific
Vision*

As in many minds the word hell stands merely for some confused idea of endless horror and misery, without any precise conception of its nature and what the Catholic Church teaches concerning it, we must needs begin with a simple exposition of what the Church means by hell.

What, then, is hell ?

It is primarily the permanent deprivation of the Beatific Vision, inflicted on those who die in mortal sin.

Unbaptised children and unbaptised adults who were so mentally defective as to be incapable of choosing between good and evil will after life also lack the Beatific Vision. Such privation of Beatific Vision, when merely the consequence of original sin, is, however, seldom designated in English by the word "hell," though in Latin the technical term "infernum" is sometimes used for it. In this essay we are not discussing the state of unbaptised infants¹ or mental defectives, we are dealing exclusively with the punishment of those who die guilty of personal mortal sin, a punishment which primarily consists in the penal deprivation of the Beatific Vision.

The Beatific Vision is the sight of God face to face. This supernatural state of final bliss is studied in the essay on *Heaven*,² the reading of which will contribute much to a fuller understanding of what is here written on hell.

Here we can consider the Beatific Vision only negatively, because its punitive absence constitutes the very essence of eternal damnation.

The natural end of man would have been to know God indirectly through his creatures, and to love him with a love corresponding to such knowledge. For such natural end man, as a matter of fact, was never destined. God gave him only a supernatural end, which is the direct sight of God without any intermediary, the vision which the Scriptures aptly describe as "face to face."

*The chief
punishment
of hell*

To have lost this end through one's own fault constitutes the very nature of hell. It is called damnation, from the Latin word *damnum*, which means simply "loss." It is the Great Loss. It is a loss which nothing can replace. The supernatural end of man having been lost by actual sin, no other end or purpose of a lower or natural kind can be attained. The sinner who loses the Beatific Vision loses his all, for his soul, though endowed with never-ending existence, will never attain the end or purpose to which none the less it must by the force of his nature eternally tend. It is the final and never-ceasing frustration of the craving of an immortal being.

In one sense one might speak of it as an infinite loss. For the object lost is God himself—God as the object of human knowledge

¹ See pp. 355 ff., 779.

² Essay xxxv.

and love. On the other hand, the loss is subjectively and strictly speaking not infinite. The pain of loss depends on the realisation of the value of the thing lost. Even on earth two people may lose an object of intrinsically the same value and feel the loss unequally. All the damned lose God, yet the punishment of all, however great, will not be equal, for the loss of God will mean more to one than to another.

It is sometimes said that the damned at the judgement will for a moment see God and then be deprived of his sight for ever. This is, however, an incorrect way of speaking. Once God is seen face to face, the soul will love him eternally; once the Beatific Vision is granted, it will never be withdrawn. Though this particular expression, therefore, is incorrect, still it is prompted by a true idea. Unless the soul were granted a deeper and greater realisation of what God is than it had possessed on earth, the loss of the immediate vision of God would mean but little to it. Some flash of light must pierce the darkened mind, revealing to it the awful greatness and beauty of God at least in some indirect way in order that it may realise what it has lost. For us on earth God always remains something unseen and, as it were, abstract. He is the Great Unknown, at the back of the universe, he is its maker and its maintainer, therefore all creation proclaims him indeed, but at the same time hides him from our sight. His very existence is only an inference, a valid inference, a spontaneous inference of reason, but still only a conclusion. He is not in himself an object of mental sight. We understand that he must contain within himself all perfections of the universe, but in a higher, more eminent way. We know God indeed also by revelation, he stands revealed in Jesus Christ, but even this revelation is not direct sight. The Apostles saw Christ's manhood, not his Godhead, and what they have told us reveals the divinity indirectly but not in itself. Moreover, on earth even this indirect knowledge remains only a dim realisation, because of the thousand attractions of sense which interfere with our religious meditation. In consequence, to lose God does not in this life mean to us that unspeakable calamity which it in reality is.

The loss of the Beatific Vision is the great failure. On earth no failure is complete, because it is always retrievable, if not in itself, at least in some other way. Hell means total failure, failure of the whole of one's being, failure without any hope of retrieving what is lost. *The loss
definitive*

The impulse to re-start after failure is almost instinctive during this life. There will be no re-starting life after this final disaster. All is over, the soul is forced to face utter ruin, beyond repair. All that is left is blank despair.

In the life beyond the grave where all illusions about earthly goods have completely gone, where the turmoil of this material world has ceased, where the soul has outgrown the limitations of this mortal *Its grievous
nature*

life, and realises with a mental keenness unknown on earth the inner truth of things, the loss of God is a disaster exceeding in extent all that we can now conceive. We now know that we are made for God, and that the possession of God is our final end, but we realise it in a faint, obscure way only. Few people have felt an intense hunger for God. Some saints, indeed, have done so; they have at moments been driven almost beside themselves with a desire to see God, they have felt an agonising pain in the delay, and some have welcomed death, which would give them the object of their desire. Those instances, however, are rare.

The kaleidoscopic variation of earthly affairs distracts us, and the good things of the world satisfy us at least in part; bodily necessities interrupt our higher mental life continually. None of this happens in eternity. Man has come to his final state in which with all his mental power and the whole energy of his will he either possesses God or, losing him, is aware of the complete and everlasting failure of his existence. Every fibre of his being tends toward God by inward necessity; God draws him as a magnet draws iron, his innermost self thrills with longing for God, who is infinite goodness, beauty, and truth, yet he is intimately conscious that his nature is so warped, disfigured, and deformed that it can never be united to God. Between himself and God there is a gulf fixed which no bridge will ever span. Nor is God a distant object, which he might manage to forget. God is intimately present to him, but this presence is a torment, not a joy, for holiness is both an object of horror and of desire to those that are in sin. Every instant of his never-ending life he wants God and he knows that he wants him, yet every instant he feels an irresistible recoil, a disgust, a loathing and a hatred, which turns him from that which he wants.

To speak in a parable, he is like a shipwrecked mariner in a little craft on the open sea. He raves with maddening thirst, though surrounded by water. He lifts the sea water to his lips and then vomits it out, for it is salt. The salt is his sin. His sin has turned even the sweet waters of God's goodness brackish; it is a venom which he always tastes and makes him hate even God as poison, though at the same time he is mad with thirst for God.

If, perhaps, a reader in perusing the following pages feels inclined to think that this is all rhetoric, and not a sober and objective treatment of the problem, he must remember that hell is a matter of revelation, and that the source of our knowledge is what Christ and the Apostles have revealed. If they spoke in figures, our way to truth is by analysing and probing the full truth of what they said.

Christ speaks of hell as the losing of one's soul: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?"¹ This expression, "losing one's soul," does not mean cessation of

¹ Matt. xvi 26.

existence, for we know that the soul is immortal ; but it does mean the complete cessation of that supernatural life of grace, which God intended for it, and without which man has utterly failed of the purpose of his being. If a man—an adult, who has had the choice between good and evil and with complete deliberation has chosen evil and died persisting in his choice—fails to obtain the Beatific Vision, there is no substitute for it as the aim of his life. He has lost his soul in the fullest sense of the word. All that remains to him is eternal existence without purpose, or rather with a purpose that can never be achieved, never even be approached throughout eternity. It is the complete aimlessness of a never-ending life which is the appalling state of the lost soul. It is an asking never to receive, a seeking never to find, a knocking at a gate eternally closed, to hear for ever : “ Amen, amen, I know you not.”

In hell nothing of the supernatural remains except the marks of baptism, confirmation, and the priesthood, nothing except the bitter memory of graces once received, and these things remain to enhance eternal sorrow, the sense of the greatness of what is lost.

In contrast to “ the saved,” the damned are called “ the lost.” No word could express more precisely and almost technically their real state. They are lost. By creating us, God sent us on a journey, a journey towards himself, a journey which was meant to end in a home-coming. The home intended is a nestling in the very bosom of God, the complete possession, the closest embrace by mind and will of God himself. For the damned the journey will never end, home and rest will never be ; they are lost. For them is eternal restlessness without progression. They are wanderers, idly, foolishly, hopelessly wandering hither and thither, never making headway toward God. Although no belated traveller ever had a fiercer desire than they to be able to say : “ Home at last,” they will never say it ; it is for ever dying on their lips.

St Jude in his epistle has an inspired description of the wicked which because of its very divine inspiration is of the greatest value in understanding the state of the damned. He calls them : “ Clouds without water, carried about by the winds ; trees of autumn, unfruitful, twice dead, plucked up by the roots ; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own confusion ; wandering stars, to whom the storm of darkness is reserved for ever.”¹

A cloud pregnant with beneficent rain is a source of blessing, a steady cloud that is a shield to the glare of the sun is a cause of joy, but clouds without water, swept across the sky by a hurricane, are flimsy things of nothing, the symbol of the utterly useless, the utterly wasted, the thing that was and is gone, and has left no trace.

The wicked are like trees that had chance of bearing fruit, but have not done so. Their summer is over, and no second summer will be given them. They are dead in their innermost being, dug up by

¹ Verses 12, 13.

the roots, severed from all that lives by the Spirit of God, rotting alone in eternal corruption.

The wicked are as the raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own confusion. On the shores of eternity they are breaking the surging waves of their furious passions, but the roar of their turbulent yearnings will never cease and their utmost endeavour will for ever end in idle spray.

The wicked are wandering stars to whom the storm of darkness is reserved for ever. Some comets with a long trail of splendour approach the sun with incredible speed, but they swing round the centre light without touching it, and then start their path back into space and their parabola ends in infinity. Thus out of nothing did God create human souls, endowed them with a trail of glory, and sent them forward towards himself. But some abusing their free will, miss the divine Sun that is the centre and heart of all creation, then to start back into infinity, into a darkness whence they will never return. They are the "sidera errantia," the wandering stars driven into the empty void by the storm-blast of God's wrath.

Let no one set these things aside as mere metaphors, unfit for a scientific exposition; they are the word of God, and when God himself uses analogy and figure of speech, the study of God's metaphors is the most scientific treatment which the subject can bear.

Christ describes the state of the damned as one of outer darkness. Obviously physical darkness is not the only thing meant; it is also mental, spiritual darkness. As the eye is destined for the light, so is man's mind destined for the truth, but the truth is God. The inner desire to know is natural to every human being. Promise a man to tell him something new, and you will draw him from afar; he will submit to every hardship, if only he can come and listen. From the far-off days when Babylonian astronomers searched with naked eye the starry heavens till this day when a man bends over a microscope, the search for the truth is the dominant passion of humanity. Some degraded men may sink their being in sensual, sexual pleasures, but they are few, and even in them some desire for truth can never die. Satan well understood human nature when in Paradise he beguiled the first man with the lying promise: "If you eat from the fruit of the tree, ye shall *know*." God promised man as his supreme reward: "Ye shall know!" "This is everlasting life: that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." The reward is the clear unclouded sight of God in his own divine nature. This will completely satiate the human mind, which will rest in ecstasy on the object of its knowledge. The supreme Mystery will lie unveiled. But the damned are in darkness, and a cloud of ignorance clings to their intelligence. They know that they might have known, but they do not.

The raving madman is on earth an object of pity and horror to the sane-minded, but the damned are madmen of their own making;

deliberately they have drugged their own minds with the poison of sin and their delirium is always upon them. Though God is so close to them and the natural forces of their intellect so keen in the world beyond, yet God is the maddening mystery to them, the tormenting problem that will never be solved. The man in a foul, dark fog which stings his eyes and blinds them, feels his gloom the more, if he recalls to himself that somewhere the sun shines and the sky is blue. So the damned grope and stumble along in a mental mist that will never be lifted, though they know that somewhere the majesty and clarity of truth sheds its splendour and entrances beholders with its divine beauty.

The mind is darkened and the will perverted. Those whose work brings them to study the psychology of sin come across many cases of such incipient perversion even on earth. Final perversion is only an intensification, a fixing of a state by no means unknown here. The drunkard drinks, and inwardly curses himself for drinking. The debauchee wallows in sin, and detests himself for his loathsome cravings. The angry man smites in the moment of his anger, yet his own nature cries out while he strikes his friend. His cravings, his passions, his furies are upon him, they cling to him. Their grasp is more than an outward grip, they hold his will by inward compulsion. Sometimes in impotent remorse he cries out: "My tastes are foul, my desires are loathsome; I am a cruel beast, I know it, but I cannot, I will not change; I am what I am." When a friend or a priest comes and puts the horror of his conduct before him, he fiercely faces them: "You can tell me nothing I do not know. Preach to me? Man, I preach to myself every hour of the day, and then laugh in despair at my own eloquence! Matters have gone too far, I am what I am, better leave me alone!"

For a long time some vague desire for good remains, a tear sometimes wells up for the virtue that is gone, the innocence that is lost. Then even that state passes away, at least in some rare cases. There is a delight in evil, a wish to spread evil, a hatred for what is good. The victim of lust hates all that is chaste and wants to destroy it. The victim of anger detests what is patient and meek and wants to crush it. The proud man repels the humble and wants to trample upon him. The sight of moral beauty rouses inner antagonism. He wants a recasting of all values. Good must be evil; evil must be good. Someone recently wrote his impressions of Bolshevik Russia. He was no minister of religion, he was no Catholic, I doubt even whether he was much of a believing Christian, but he wrote that what struck him most in his contact with Bolshevik circles was the existence of an almost demoniacal hate of chastity. An English novelist, who must be nameless, writes for the purpose of destroying the sacredness of marriage, to tear the heart out of the sanctities of wedded life. His purpose is avowed. He glories in it. A Nietzsche writes, or rather screams, that meekness, humility,

purity are detestable evils, a morality only fit for slaves ; that all vice is really virtue, all hitherto esteemed virtue is the true vice.

If such things are possible on earth, is it not possible that such things happen in the world beyond ? Is it not possible that at last such state of mind is irremediable, that a man's heart becomes vitiated beyond all cure, that he abides by his choice and will never change ?

The Catholic Church teaches that the human soul remains in that state in which death finds it ; if averted from God it will remain so for ever. Two parallel lines do not meet, even in infinity. The lost soul has definitely chosen another end and purpose than God, an end which is incompatible with God. Because its self-chosen end lies outside God, it will not only never reach God, but will run its life in everlasting opposition to him.

It is difficult for us to understand that anyone should hate God. The perversity seems too monstrous ; no one can hate the Infinite Good. The answer to this difficulty, however, is not far to seek. If the Infinite Good were directly perceived by the damned soul, he could not, of course, hate it. The fact is that the mind of the damned is darkened ; though they are in eternity, they do not see God as he is. However vivid their imagination, however keen the realisation of his presence, it is indirect. It is still by reason and not by an act of intuitive intelligence that they perceive him. As such he becomes an object of their hatred and detestation because he stands in the way of what they want, what they have chosen by a final act of personal choice. He is their supreme antagonist. Of a friend they have made a foe. Not that God has changed, but they have changed. They have perverted themselves.

Now it must not be thought that the drunkard for all eternity will want drink, or the sexual sinner debauch, or the angry man eternal strife. In the changed conditions of the hereafter the precise objects of their choice will, indeed, differ. Alcohol has no attraction certainly for a disembodied soul, nor women nor vulgar brawling. But what underlies these vices is the inordinate desire of self, self-gratification, self-exaltation, of whatever kind it may be. All sin is self-seeking as opposed to God-seeking. Any particular vice indulged in on earth is only a manifestation of the preference of self before God. This self-seeking remains in the damned, and it is the very core of their damnation. The true centre of all things is God, but they are self-centred. The supreme happiness we know is love, but love means to love someone else. To love God is the supreme act of altruism which is rewarded by true happiness, because the Divine Other-One is infinitely good, and to possess infinite good is infinite happiness. The damned can love no more and therefore they are damned. Hell is the home of incurables. The disease that is beyond cure is their egoism. It is incurable because they everlastingly reject the only remedy that could heal them : the love of Some One Else instead of themselves.

B. *The Pain of Sense*

Although the punitive deprivation of the Beatific Vision constitutes the chief pain of hell, the Catholic Church teaches that, in addition to this negative punishment, there is also a positive pain afflicting the damned. This is commonly referred to as hell-fire. Strictly speaking, however, "hell-fire" is but an aspect of what is called the pain of sense as distinguished from the pain of loss.

For it must be well borne in mind that it does not suffice to say that the pain of sense afflicts the body, whereas the pain of loss afflicts the soul. According to Scripture, hell-fire was prepared for the devil and his angels, but angels have no bodies and therefore cannot be afflicted in them. Nor have lost human souls a body till the last day, yet they will be tormented by fire forthwith after the Particular Judgement. When speaking, therefore, of hell-fire we must keep in mind that we are not necessarily referring to bodily pain in contrast to mental pain, but to a pain which primarily affects the spirit or the soul, though after the General Judgement it will also affect the body. The difference between the pain of loss and that of sense consists in the fact that the former is caused by the absence of something, the latter by the presence of something. The former is negative, the latter positive. This hell-fire is something real, and it is something external to the sufferer who undergoes its tormenting energies. The malice of every sin has two aspects: it is a turning away from God, and it is a turning towards creatures instead of God. The everlasting loss of God is the natural punishment for the rejection of God. What is called the pain of sense is the natural punishment for the abuse of created things, involved in turning to them, embracing them, endeavouring to possess them rather than God. It is, as it were, poetic justice, if such a phrase may pass, that he who refuses God and embraces a created thing, should lose God and have a created thing to torment him for ever.

The reality of this "hell-fire," as the instrument of the pain of sense, has never been defined by a solemn decision of Pope or Council, making the denial of it formal heresy and punishing it by exclusion from the Church, but it is certainly contained in Holy Scripture, in the Fathers, and it is the practically unanimous teaching of theologians. It could no doubt be solemnly defined if occasion demanded, and had the Council of the Vatican not been interrupted, might possibly have been defined. Meanwhile no Catholic can deny it without grievous sin against the faith, though this sin could not as yet be described as one of formal heresy, but only one of wilful error and temerity. In consequence the Sacred Penitentiary at Rome, being asked whether a penitent who declared to his confessor that in his opinion the term "hell-fire" is only a metaphor in order to express the intense pains of the demons, might be allowed to persist in this opinion and be absolved, answered as follows: "Such

*Positive
torment*

*Real fire, not
metaphorical*

penitents must be diligently instructed and, if pertinacious, they must not be absolved" (April 30, 1890). This, of course, is a disciplinary, not a doctrinal decree, and obviously is not an infallible definition, but it certainly adds weight to what must be regarded as the traditional view.

Hell-fire, therefore, is not a metaphor for the intensity of mere spiritual or mental sufferings; it is a reality, objectively present outside the sufferer, and the objective cause of his sufferings. We may further ask: Are we bound to believe that God created this instrument of torture, as a new thing, called out of nothing by his omnipotence in addition to the other things he made, so that even if no devil or damned soul ever entered this fire, still it would go on burning, as if it were feeding on itself, though empty of spirits to torture?

*Various
views con-
cerning its
nature*

No, not necessarily. Fire, as we have it on earth, is produced by oxygen fed by carbon, and through the vibration of the atoms brings about the disintegration of the body that burns. Such fire hell-fire cannot be, for the bodies of the damned do not disintegrate, and we are not bound to believe that there will be an everlasting supply of oxygen and carbon. Moreover, "hell-fire" affects even the demons, who are pure spirits, and the damned, who until the General Resurrection are without their terrestrial bodies. In consequence, though hell-fire is a reality causing the pain of sense as distinct from the loss of God, and is some external agent whose action the demons and the damned undergo, yet this fire is only analogous to the fire we experience on earth. The instrument of this suffering is referred to in the New Testament no less than thirty times by the word fire, which word must therefore be the nearest analogy in our earthly experience to that which torments the damned.

Many theologians hold that the fire which torments the damned, though of course not an earthly fire like the fire in our grates, is yet some special creation of God, some external agent, specially called into being by God as the instrument of his avenging justice. It is, indeed, prepared for the devil and his angels, something, in fact, which would not have been but for the fact of Satan's sin; something which not only has nothing subjective about it, but is plainly merely an objective reality with which the demons and the damned come in contact and through which they suffer; something which would remain in existence, even though no devil or damned soul came within its power. They urge in support of this view the language of Holy Scripture in which hell is described as a lake of fire into which the damned are cast, described as a definite locality somewhere in the universe, a place which can be entered and left. They urge, moreover, with force that tradition has ever seen in hell, not only some external agent tormenting the damned, but something as it were designed by the justice and holiness of God for the specific purpose of inflicting punishment on those that deserve it. In consequence,

it must be something altogether distinct from the rest of God's creation, an awful reality distinct from all the other works of God. It cannot be denied that the reasons brought forward are weighty and appear to many grave theologians conclusive. We must, indeed, always keep in view that the fire of hell is certainly not a mere metaphor for the pain of the loss of God, but some additional reality which will accompany it for all eternity. It is a pain inflicted from without, inflicted by some external material agent doing the behest of God.

Scripture, however, nowhere says that God "created" this fire, but only that he "prepared" it. It would, therefore, not be against Holy Writ to hold that without creating any new substances God so utilised existing creatures as to form them into a fire for the devils and the damned. The lost have turned to creatures instead of God; God in consequence makes creatures the instrument of their punishment. St Thomas in discussing this matter most aptly uses the text: "The whole world will fight with God against the perverse,"¹ and he says: "Not the whole world would fight against the perverse if they were punished only with a spiritual punishment and not with a corporeal one. Therefore they will be punished with a corporeal fire."² As St Thomas, following the imperfect physiology of his day, regarded fire as an element, his explanation, however valuable, must be reinterpreted in the light of present-day knowledge, which does not accept fire as an all-pervading constituent element of all things in the universe. The essence of St Thomas's teaching seems to lie in this: that God has armed the whole universe to fight on his side against the devils and the damned. God may have made this visible universe itself a fire tormenting the devils and the damned.

Moreover, there may be a bond of intrinsic necessity between the rejection of God by the damned and their being tormented by fire. Hell-fire is, perhaps, not a punishment separately invented by the ingenuity of divine vengeance, a fierce after-thought as it were of God's wrath, to render the loss of himself more horrible, but the necessary outcome of man's nature in a state of sin, the inevitable result of the opposition between a perverted created will and the will of God, expressed in material creation.

In any case God is not merely the passive spectator of hell by simply allowing nature to take its course. God is no more a passive spectator of hell than he is of heaven. Nature has no being apart from God. God is active in all nature. It must ever be remembered that God is not an impersonal force, but a personal intelligence, and that the demons and the damned are in opposition to a personal Being, and that from this personal antagonism all their evil flows. It is therefore quite correct to speak of God inflicting punishment on his foes, though it is wrong to think of this in human fashion as if God sought the satisfaction of a desire for vengeance.

Whether, then, the fuel of this fire be specially created for the

¹ Wisdom v 21.

² *S. Theol., Suppl.*, xcviij 5.

purpose or whether it be the very nature of this universe, it is a fire which in its effects and mode of action differs greatly from earthly fire. Earthly fire can only burn bodies, hell-fire burns spirits. Earthly fire disintegrates and destroys what it burns, hell-fire does not dissolve what it burns, but is compatible with never-ending existence. Earthly fire needs a continual supply of new material fuel, hell-fire is everlastingly maintained by the will and the anger of God. Earthly fire is joined to some degree of light, hell-fire is compatible with outer darkness. Earthly fire is limited to some locality, hell-fire accompanies the damned wheresoever they are. Earthly fire burns equally all that is thrown into its furnace, hell-fire burns unequally the souls of the damned according to the greatness of their sin. When we thus multiply the points of difference between the action of earthly fire and the fire tormenting the damned, we realise that we are face to face with a mystery which is beyond all our experience in this world.

How a material fire can torment a purely spiritual being we cannot fully explain. St Thomas explains it by the spirit being hampered, hindered and tied to this fire, which thus limits its freedom of action. This very imprisonment and enchainment is suggested as the cause of the soul's torment. This explanation to some may appear inadequate. However that may be, all that we can, all that we *need* say with regard to the action of hell-fire upon spirits, is that by God's omnipotence fire will directly act upon a pure intelligence so as to cause it to suffer a pain to which the only parallel we possess on earth is the sensation of burning.

Hell a place

Hell is doubtless a place as well as a state. Such, at least, is the most natural inference from the texts of Scripture and was always taken for granted within the Church, though one could not say that it was held as a part of divine revelation. Where in the whole universe hell is, no one can say. Until the development of modern science, hell was spoken of as in the centre of the earth, and this mode of speech, referring to the realms below, or the lowest abyss, will no doubt remain for ever customary, but it does not mean that the speaker has any conviction of faith that hell is somewhere below the earth's surface. The place of hell is simply unknown to us, for it has not pleased God to reveal it.

From what has been said it will be clear that the pain of loss, the chief punishment of hell, is far more grievous than the pain of sense. Nevertheless, it is these latter torments of hell that have most forcibly struck the imagination of men, and our Lord, by speaking in the Gospels of "hell-fire," deliberately stressed this side of eternal punishment, for he knew human nature and knew that sensible imagination would be the strongest incentive to a horror of the dreadful fate awaiting the unrepentant sinner.

It is true that sometimes both in pictures or in carvings, in sermons or in books, the torments of hell have been described with a

crude realism which revolts a decent mind. Adversaries of Christianity have of recent years collected together many medieval prints and sculptures relating to hell, they have collected a number of descriptions of infernal tortures from patristic, medieval, and even more recent writers, and thus pilloried the ghastly ingenuity with which fantastic scenes of agony and cruelty were invented.

But the Christian, who peruses these tendentious works, must always call to mind that it is easy to collect from a vast literature extending over two thousand years quotations which in their accumulation give the impression that Christianity was a religion of terror and despair. It is only a deeper student with a more balanced mind who realises that such fantastic literature forms only an infinitesimally small part of the output of Christian letters ; that as a matter of fact the predominant character of Christianity is one of joy, confidence, and hope ; that the bulk of Christian literature expresses loving amazement at the goodness of God. The devout Christian sometimes pictures hell to himself, but he also has the tender sweetness of the crib of Bethlehem, the bright joy of Easter day, and he pictures the adoration of the Lamb and the saints in glory. Medieval architecture sometimes contains a carving of a devil, as a gargoyle tormenting a damned soul, but the whole creates the impression of majesty, might, and exaltation, not of dread and doom. No doubt in some very few instances the representations of hell may be excessively gruesome and in still fewer even betray an unhealthy spirit. For such morbidities one need offer no defence. Christian writers and artists may have been at fault, but in the main both their purpose and their execution have been wholesome and noble.

The pains of hell exceed in horror all that men can imagine ; it is therefore right and just that even the imagination should be called in to warn men against the supreme and last danger that besets all men. Passion and temptation to sin can be so blinding that nothing but an almost physical recoil from the punishment threatened can succeed in drawing the mind and will away from the false enchantment of evil. One might grant that the psychology of the twentieth century is not quite the same as that of the tenth, that what would be an effective dissuasion from sin in the Middle Ages may not be so effective now, but the human soul remains throughout the centuries substantially the same. The motive of fear will always be potent for good as well as for evil, and with many the threat of bodily pain will be a stronger bridle on such bodily passions as anger and lust than anything else. If all that were ever written or painted or carved expressive of the tortures of hell could be brought before us at a glance, it would certainly fall immeasurably short of the truth. Though the precise agonies dreamt of by a vivid imagination may not be the exact counterpart of the sufferings of the lost, they symbolise a reality exceeding the power of pen, brush, or chisel ; they exceed all earthly imagination.

*Degrees of
punishment*

As in heaven there are different degrees of happiness, so in hell there are different degrees of punishment. The least degree of punishment will exceed in horror all we can imagine on earth, but even in hell there are depths below depths. The soul is alienated from God in the very measure of its deformity. The deformity caused by one sin can be greater than that caused by another, and according to the number of sins the deformity increases. There are therefore degrees even in the loss of God ; the deeper the deformity the farther from God. The greater self-aborrence in the damned brings about the deeper aversion from God, whose infinite holiness holds up the mirror to the monstrosity of the damned soul. In the pain of sense likewise there must be degrees. The fiercer the sinful grip on creatures which the sinner had in this life, the more fiercely will the vengeful fire torment him in the house of his eternity.

Therefore Dante's play of imagination, when in his *Inferno* he describes all kinds and degrees of punishment, is not idle and useless, if it keeps before our mind that for the lost in some unique way the punishment will always fit their crime.

§ III: ETERNAL PUNISHMENT IN SCRIPTURE

*The Old
Testament*

As the Old Testament was a progressive revelation, the doctrine of everlasting punishment for the wicked gradually gained in clearness as the time went on and approached the fulness of revelation in Christ. The Jews began with an exceedingly vague idea of the world beyond the grave. Considering that the Jews stayed for many generations in Egypt, where the ideas about reward and punishment hereafter were worked out in such minute detail and with such terrible crudity, this mentality must be due to a deliberate refusal to entertain the thoughts of their fellow-countrymen and contemporaries, and it was no doubt the way of Providence to guard them from the fearful superstitions of the heathen world.

Moreover, as the gates of heaven were closed until Ascension Day, no immediate bright future could be promised even to the saints of the Old Testament. It would have been cold comfort to Abraham to promise him two thousand years of waiting in a realm of twilight before the dawn of day. God mercifully shrouded the details of the immediate future in after-life from the Jews of the Old Covenant. As the Patriarchal and Mosaic covenant was a tribal or national one, and had only indirectly to do with the individual, the prophets delivered their message usually to the nation as such ; they promised and threatened national welfare or national disaster as the immediate sanction of national obedience.

The existence of retribution beyond the grave was no doubt implied in the realisation of their responsibility before Jehovah, but no attempt was made to think out its details, and ultimate retribution after this life as a stimulus to well-doing was left to the individual.

Jehovah's rewards and punishments were terrestrial; they were bestowed or inflicted here, whatever happened hereafter. The Hebrew Sheol was apparently very much like the Greek Hades, just the Netherworld. That the good fared well, the wicked ill, in that abode was of course taken for granted, but seemingly one knew too little about it to give it special mention. The prophets predict a great day of judgement and final retribution. This great day of Jehovah, though often conceived as national rather than individual, does involve a final and irreversible settlement of human affairs some time in the future. Some prophets, especially Ezechiel and Daniel, clearly assert the eternal punishment of the wicked in a life beyond this earthly life.

The latter prophet writes: "At that time shall thy people be saved, every one that shall be found written in the book, and many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it always."¹ In the great Machabean struggle, the certainty of everlasting retribution steeled the wills of the martyrs: "It is better," so they said to the tyrant king, "being put to death by men, to look for hope from God, to be raised up again by him: for, as to thee, thou shalt have no resurrection unto life."²

Job certainly asserts the reward of the just after death, and this naturally implies the retribution of the unjust. In some Psalms, especially Psalm xlviii, the doctrine of eternal retribution after life is distinctly asserted. The shade of the wicked will be consumed in hell and have no other dwelling, but God will redeem the soul of the just from hell and take it with him. The Book of Wisdom deals with the lot of the just and the unjust in the world beyond. The first five chapters are directly devoted to the doctrine of everlasting retribution, and it is set out with unmistakable clearness. The lost, reflecting on their earthly life, groan in anguish of spirit: "Being born forthwith we ceased to be, and have been able to show no mark of virtue, but are consumed in our wickedness. Such things said the sinners in hell, for the hope of the sinners is as dust that is blown away by the wind, but the just shall live for evermore and their reward is with the Lord."³

There can be no doubt that a century before our Lord's coming the Jews, as a whole, were convinced believers in an eternal sanction after death. Even the Sadducees, who did not believe in angel or spirit or in the resurrection, will hardly have extended their denial to a survival after death and a consequent retribution. In any case, they stood outside the religious development of the vast majority of the Jewish people. The reader of the Old Testament must, however, be warned that the mere use of the word "hell" in an English translation of the Old Testament cannot be taken as a proof of a belief in hell, in the Christian sense of everlasting punishment.

¹ xii 1, 2.² 2 Mach. vii 14.³ v 13-16.

In most cases it represents Sheol, which is the Hebrew term for the world beyond, the pit, the tomb, or the Netherworld.

*The New
Testament*

The New Testament opens with the teaching of St John the Baptist. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire." Of Christ the Baptist prophesies: "His fan is in his hand, and he will purge his floor and will gather the wheat into his barn: but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." "He that believeth in the Son hath life everlasting, but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him."¹

This teaching of the Forerunner is in a most striking way continued by Christ himself. It is almost as if he takes the very words from St John's lips and endorses them. Christ comes to men to place them before an absolute alternative, either to accept his message or take the eternal consequence. "He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come. Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree evil and its fruit evil, for by the fruit the tree is known."² "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost shall never have forgiveness, but shall be guilty of an everlasting sin."³ "I go, and you shall seek me. And you shall die in your sin. Whither I go you cannot come. If you believe not that I am he, you shall die in your sin. Amen, amen, I say unto you that whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. Now the servant abideth not in the house for ever."⁴ Christ closes the Sermon on the Mount, which is a summary of the moral precepts of the New Covenant, with exactly the same eternal unchangeable alternative. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and cast out devils in thy name, and done many miracles in thy name? And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Evil-doers, therefore, will meet a final doom "in that day." These words are graphically brought home to Christ's hearers by the comparison between the wise builder, whose house stands because it is built on a rock, and the foolish builder, whose house perishes because it is built on sand. "It fell, and great was the fall thereof." It is utter ruin; suggestion of rebuilding there is none; it is an irretrievable calamity.

The rejection of Christ by many Jews, the acceptance of Christ by many Gentiles, involves for them a definite exclusion or a definite inclusion in heaven without mention of a possible reversal of this

¹ Matt. iii 10, 12; Luke iii 9, 17; John iii 36.

² Matt. xii 32-33.

³ Mark iii 29.

⁴ John viii 21, 24, 34, 35.

state. "Many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven : but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." ¹

When Christ sent out the Apostles to preach, he said : " That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light : and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye on the housetops, and fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul : but rather fear him that can cause both soul and body to perish in hell." ² Perdition in hell, therefore, is the death of the soul, and obviously a final verdict of damnation.

The Gospel of St Mark gives us the most explicit and fearsome warning from Christ's lips against hell-fire. " If thy hand scandalise thee, cut it off : it is better for thee to enter into life, maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into unquenchable fire : where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. And if thy foot scandalise thee, cut it off : it is better for thee to enter lame into life everlasting than having two feet to be cast into hell of unquenchable fire : where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. And if thy eye scandalise thee, pluck it out : it is better for thee with one eye to enter into the kingdom of God than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished, for every one shall be salted with fire." ³

On the one hand, therefore, is " life," " the kingdom of God," " life everlasting," on the other hand never-ending torment ; any hazard whatever on earth must be taken to avoid the latter and secure the former.

The word " hell " comes spontaneously to Christ's lips when speaking of the utmost penalty and the last stage of depravity. The greatest threat against the man who insults his brother is that he is in danger of hell-fire. The greatest crime of the Pharisees is that they make a proselyte twofold more the child of hell than they are themselves, and Christ's threat against them is : " How will you flee from the judgement of hell ? " In all these cases our Lord calls hell by the Jewish term Gehenna, which means literally " valley of Hinnom," and refers to a gorge outside Jerusalem, where rubbish was shot and burnt and where unclean animals fed on garbage. For about two centuries before our era, if not longer, this term had been used for the place of the reprobate, in contrast to Paradise, the place of the blessed. Our Lord used an expression, commonly used and understood even by the most simple, to express an idea of irretrievable final rejection and damnation. In the quotation from St Mark just given the term Gehenna is explained by Christ himself as " the unquenchable fire," and as the place " where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." These last words are a quotation of the final verse of Isaias the Prophet. In this passage God promises

¹ Matt. viii 11, 12.

² Matt. x 27, 28.

³ Mark ix 42-48.

Israel that "their seed and their name shall stand before him as the new heavens and the new earth, which he will make," "and all flesh shall come to adore before my face, saith the Lord, and they shall go out (of the holy city Jerusalem) and see the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be a loathsome sight unto all flesh."

This closing verse of *Isaias* describing the final consummation of Messianic times, the final triumph of the just and the punishment of the wicked, seems to have gripped the Jewish mind, for we find it twice quoted in later Jewish scriptures in *Ecclus.* vii 19 and *Judith* xvi 21. In the latter book it is said: "In the day of judgement he will visit them, and he will give fire and worms into their flesh that they may burn and suffer for ever."

Christ taught mainly by parables. Now five great parables end with the proclamation of eternal punishment for the wicked. Christ thus explains the parable of the tares and the wheat: "The field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom, and the cockle are the children of the wicked one. And the enemy that sowed them is the devil. But the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. Even as the cockle, therefore, is gathered up and burnt with fire: so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of Man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of the kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

The parable of the net catching good fishes and bad ends almost in the same words: "So shall it be at the end of the world. The angels shall go out and shall separate the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The parable of *Dives* and *Lazarus* also ends in this way. *Dives* in the Netherworld, being in torments, lifted up his eyes. "He saw *Abraham* afar off and *Lazarus* in his bosom: and he cried out and said: *Father Abraham*, have mercy on me and send *Lazarus* that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. And *Abraham* said to him: Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime and likewise *Lazarus* evil things, but now he is comforted and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you is a great gulf fixed: so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, nor from thence come hither."¹

The parable of the wedding feast ends² with the word of the king to the waiters concerning the man without the wedding garment: "Bind his hands and his feet and cast him into exterior darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

¹ *Luke* xvi 19 ff.

² *Matt.* xxii 14.

In the parable of the talents the servant who hid the one talent received the same punishment. The parable of the foolish virgins ends with a final exclusion from the feast by the bridegroom, who peremptorily answers the virgins who knock: "Amen, I say to you, I know you not."

The parable of the servant beating his fellow servants because his master delayed, tells us that the master "shall separate him and appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The Greek word "hypocrites," in this text as in several others, doubtless stands for the Aramaic and Talmudic term for the reprobate, the *haniphin*. Such servant is a final outcast, permanently separated from the good.

This ultimate separation of the reprobate from the good is graphically portrayed by our Saviour in his description of the last judgement. "All nations shall be gathered together before him: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats, and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Those on the right shall receive eternal bliss in the kingdom of the Father, those on the left shall hear: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting."¹ This is evidently a sentence without appeal, a definite verdict without possibility of reversal.

Although the Fourth Gospel represents a phase of Christ's teaching so deeply distinct from that of the three previous Gospels, yet on this point St John's Gospel is as emphatic, if not in fact more so, than the others. It is the everlasting alternative which is emphasised throughout. "Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting. For God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son: that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting."² "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me, and I give them life everlasting, and they shall not perish for ever."³ "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal." "He that . . . receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. The Father who sent me gave me commandment what I should say, . . . and I know that his commandment is life everlasting."⁴ "Father, glorify thy Son . . . as thou hast given him power over all flesh that he may give eternal life

¹ Matt. xxv 32, 33, 41, 46.

³ x 27, 28.

² iii 5, 14-16.

⁴ xii 24, 25, 48-50.

to all whom thou hast given him." "Those whom thou gavest me I have kept: and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition."¹ The whole Gospel of St John becomes unintelligible unless the whole of mankind stands before the irrevocable choice between death or life, light or darkness, everlasting life or everlasting perdition. If the acceptance or the rejection of Christ does not involve eternal, but only temporary consequences, if Christ came to save only from a limited punishment, not from a final doom, the words of Christ in the Fourth Gospel are a shameless deception or palpable nonsense. Then the closing command of Christ on earth is much ado about nothing: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned." If ultimate salvation is secure for everyone, and if no ultimate condemnation exists, these words are unworthy, I do not say of Christ, but of any truthful man.

Christ's teaching is echoed by his Apostles. St John's teaching is easily gathered from the Apocalypse. A few words must suffice. "The devil was cast into the pool of fire and brimstone, where both the beast and the false prophet shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. I saw the dead standing in the presence of the throne. The books were opened . . . and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the pool of fire. This is the second death."² St Peter writes: "Lying teachers shall bring in sects of perdition . . . whose judgement now a long time lingereth not, and their perdition slumbereth not. These men, as irrational beasts, naturally tending to the snare and to destruction, blaspheming those things which they know not, shall perish in their corruption."³

St Paul re-echoes his Master's teaching in these words: "Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of his power in a flame of fire, giving vengeance to them who know not God and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall suffer as punishment eternal ruin from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."⁴

It is indeed difficult to read the New Testament and maintain that it does not teach the eternal punishment of the wicked. An attempt has indeed been made to maintain that the Greek word translated eternal or everlasting really means only "agelong," designating, indeed, a long period, but not strictly an unending one. This, however, is untenable.

Our Lord, describing the last judgement, ends by saying of the wicked: "These shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just, into life everlasting." In both instances the same Greek word is used, and as no one holds that the reward of the just will come to an end, it is against all reason to suppose that Christ meant the punishment of the wicked to be only agelong, but not unending. Moreover,

¹ xvii 1, 2, 12.

³ 2 Pet. ii 1, 3, 12.

² Apoc. xx 9-15.

⁴ 2 Thess. i 7-9.

the word occurs in the New Testament no less than seventy-one times, of which forty times refer to life everlasting, some ten times to our heavenly reward, such as everlasting kingdom, salvation, redemption, glory, inheritance, dwellings, etc., once in the phrase "everlasting God"; if then we also read "everlasting perdition," it is in the highest degree arbitrary to translate it by "agelong but not unending."

§ IV: ETERNAL PUNISHMENT IN TRADITION

THIS Scriptural teaching has been continuously, unhesitatingly, and emphatically proclaimed by the Church throughout all ages. It would be difficult to find a Christian dogma which, historically speaking, is more undoubtedly an integral part of the Christian revelation than the eternity of punishment for the reprobate. The supreme alternative between final salvation and final reprobation constitutes, and has always constituted, the very warp and woof of the Christian ethical system. The work of Christ in atonement and redemption has always been taken as that of a rescue from eternal damnation, never merely from a temporary punishment. The rejection of Christ has never been regarded as something which involved, indeed, a terminable period of distress, but not a final condemnation by God. The awfulness of the Christian appeal has always lain in the final choice between life and death, not in a reversible choice of a more or less lengthy period of happiness or sorrow. The whole of its moral system, the whole of its soteriology or its scheme of salvation, is essentially, intrinsically bound up with the conviction that this life is a period of trial deciding an eternal issue.

Continuous and clear testimony as to existence and eternity of hell

One point, however, may be noted in reading the Fathers: that several, both Greeks and Latins, believed in a postponement of hell till the day of final judgement. Hell in the full sense of the word would begin, both for demons and damned, only after the sentence of Christ on the last day. Meanwhile the devils and the wicked would, indeed, undergo some punishment, but a punishment not complete, unchangeable, and final. In fact, some Fathers were confused in mind how to reconcile four points of divine revelation: first, the existence of purgatory, or the temporary punishment for some; secondly, the absence of the bodies of the damned till the final resurrection, and therefore the incompleteness of their damnation; thirdly, the freedom of the devils to roam about the world for the ruin of souls, and their subsequent inclusion in the pit of hell afterwards; finally, the exact bearing and purpose of Christ's sentence at the General Judgement and its relation to the fixing of a man's destiny at death.

Question of postponement till final judgement

In consequence, a few passages may be found which on first reading seem to involve a hesitancy or ambiguity about the eternity and immutability of a sinner's state after death. On second reading,

however, it becomes clear that there is no denial of the existence and eternity of hell as a final, unchangeable state for demons and damned.

*Question of
its possible
cessation*

There are but few names amongst those of the Fathers which can be quoted as in some sense supporting the possible cessation of hell. Clement of Alexandria seems sometimes to dally with the thought, but the matter must remain obscure. On the one hand he states in a great number of passages the eternity of hell for the wicked, on the other hand he speaks of the medicinal punishments of God, and it is not quite certain that in all these passages he refers only to punishments during this life or at least previous to the last judgement. Scholars are divided on this question. Tixeront holds that Clement was probably unorthodox, Atzberger holds that most certainly he was not.

Origen

Origen was undoubtedly in grave error, and in consequence his doctrine roused the most vehement opposition throughout the Church. Origen was not consistent in his teaching. On the one hand he held that there would be "a restoration (*apokatastasis*) of all things," a final triumph of Christ by the conversion of the wicked; on the other hand he held the permanent freedom of the will in its choice between good and evil, so that neither heaven nor hell were essentially eternal, but were subject to cycles. The restoration and completion of all was again followed by a fall, a trial, and a restoration, a conception which savours more of Buddhism than of Christianity. It must be marked, however, that even Origen does not give this as the teaching of the Church, but tentatively as his opinion on a question, discussion of which was still permissible. He gives it as a matter of possible speculation, and it seems that even he exempted some evil spirits from this general restoration or conversion.

About the year A.D. 300 Arnobius, a layman, in fact only a catechumen, wrote a defence of Christianity against the Pagans, in which he asserts the final annihilation of the wicked after long torments. His zeal made him rush into publicity before his knowledge of Christianity was very perfect. He founds his assertion not on any teaching of the Church, but on a philosophic theory that what is subject to fire must be composite, but that nothing composite can be eternal.

Origenism, which contained many errors besides that of the non-eternity of hell, caused the most violent disturbances everywhere. The great genius and the obvious sincerity of Origen, who had died in the bosom of holy Church, raised him many friends and defenders. Condemnation of an author after death seemed a graceless and unworthy thing to many. It could, however, not be doubted that the seductive talent of so great a writer was a danger to the integrity of the faith. Finally, the Emperor Justinian, at the request of Pelagius, the Papal nuncio, and Menas, the patriarch of Constantinople, published a condemnation of Origen, which they had

submitted to him. The Edict ended with ten anathemas, the last of which reads: "If anyone says or thinks that the punishment of the demons and the wicked will not be eternal, that it will have an end, and that then shall take place a restoration (*apokatastasin*) of the demons and of the wicked, let him be anathema." This was signed by Pope Vigilius, by the Synod of Constantinople of 543, and by the whole East, and in fact by the whole Christian world, at least within the dominions of Justinian. Ten years later Origen was condemned in the Fifth General Council, and the condemnation was renewed in the subsequent General Councils.

The doctrine of eternal reprobation is therefore one of those which has been held explicitly from the very beginning, and the unanimous assent to which was only disturbed during a short period when a few, led astray by the great name of Origen, dreamt of a possible cessation of punishment at least for some of the lost.

We must bear in mind that the solemn definitions and the unanimous consent hitherto mentioned refer to the existence and the eternity of hell. With regard to the precise character of the pains of hell, there exists no solemn definition of Pope or Council, but the teaching of the ordinary magisterium of the Church cannot be in doubt. The Athanasian Creed, which dates probably from the fifth century, and which within a few generations afterwards received universal recognition by its practically universal use throughout the Church, ends with the words: "Those who do evil, shall go into eternal fire. This is the Catholic Faith, which unless a man faithfully and firmly believes, he cannot be saved." There can be no doubt that the fire here mentioned was ever understood as some objective reality. The great Pope Innocent III, in his letter of A.D. 1201 to Humbert, the Archbishop of Arles, states that "the punishment of original sin is the lack of the vision of God, but the punishment of actual sin is the torment of everlasting hell." Although this letter was not issued with such formality as to make it formally an utterance of Papal infallibility, yet it was inserted in the *Decretals*, and by this fact became an authentic declaration of the ordinary teaching of the Church. This statement of Innocent III necessarily implies that the punishment of the damned does not exclusively consist in the mere lack of the Beatific Vision, but in something which is described as "perpetuae gehennae cruciatus." This same truth was implied in the approval which the General Council of Lyons (A.D. 1274), gave to the profession of faith of Michael Paleologus, which said that the souls of those who departed in mortal sin or in original sin only, forthwith after death go down to hell, to be punished, however, with dissimilar pains (*paenis disparibus*). And again Pope Pius VI in 1794 condemned the Synod of Pistoia for rejecting the doctrine concerning "the Netherworld, in which the souls of those who depart in original sin alone are being punished with the pain of loss to the exclusion of the pain of fire."

*Teaching of
the Church
on nature of
pains of hell*

It is therefore of Catholic Faith, though not as yet solemnly defined, that the damned suffer something else besides the mere loss of the vision of God.

Finally, the decree of the Roman Penitentiary ordering refusal of absolution to those who pertinaciously assert that the fire of hell is only metaphor for the mental sorrows of the damned, confirms the existence of a real punishment besides that of loss.

Beyond the assertion that hell-fire is a reality, distinct from the pain of loss, the official and authoritative teaching of the Church does not go. Of the views held by theologians concerning the precise nature of this fire, something has already been said in an earlier page.

§ V : ETERNAL PUNISHMENT AND REASON

*Eternal
sanction
reasonable*

COULD human reason, unaided by divine revelation, in all rigour of logic, prove the existence of eternal punishment? Possibly not. In a discussion which involves the appreciation of moral values, it is always difficult to construct an argument so compelling as to leave no loophole for doubt in those who are strongly averse to a particular conclusion.

In the case of all revealed doctrines, human reason can at least always show that they contain nothing contrary to right reason. In the case of the doctrine of hell, human reason can undoubtedly go much further. The human mind distinctly suggests, if perhaps it does not irresistibly prove, the necessity of an eternal sanction for good and evil. All weight of argument is really on one side, and the objections raised against the eternity of hell can be shown not to be the dictates of reason, but rather a darkening of the reason by feeling and sentiment. Human imagination is indeed appalled by the thought of endless suffering, there is an instinctive recoil in the whole sensitive part of man from the picture of ceaseless sorrow, but these spontaneous emotions of our nature are a very unsatisfactory guide to follow in matters of reason.

Though both infinite mercy and infinite justice are found in God, it is beyond the power of our mind to see how they are reconciled. In the hearts of men, mercy and justice are accompanied by contrary affections, which seem to exclude one another. The former is apparently a softening, the latter a hardening of the fibre of our being. In human experience, therefore, mercy often expels justice and justice mercy. We are apt to transfer such emotions to God, and to imagine that infinite mercy cannot co-exist with infinite justice. All this is a play of imagination, not of sound intelligence. We are influenced by it, because we realise that we stand in need of God's mercy for our eternal happiness and stand in dread of God's justice, since no man can think that he never did something amiss. It is therefore difficult in this matter to keep a clear head and let the intellect decide, and not the emotions.

Sometimes people express their difficulty in this way : How can we suppose that God will do what no earthly father would do ? No earthly father would punish his son for ever. His anger would at least relent, however much that anger was provoked, and at last he would forgive. *God's mercy and the eternity of hell*

A scoffer has said : Christ spoke the parable of the prodigal son, whom his father forgave, and for whom he slew the fatted calf, though that son had lived riotously and wasted his inheritance. Let God himself first forgive man, and then command us to follow his example.

There seems at first something plausible in this bitter remark, but on deeper reflection it is seen to be more sharp than true.

The father in the parable forgave his son because he repented. God forgives all those that repent and forgives them with a loving kindness that far exceeds that of any earthly father. The parable does not say that the father threw open his house to his son as long as he lived with harlots and wasted his goods. Had he given his son entrance to his house while unrepentant, it would have been an outrage on justice and a criminal condoning of vice, instead of a manifestation of paternal love.

God forgives all those that repent. There is a hell because there are some who do not repent for all eternity.

It is wrong to seek the explanation of hell in the divine desire or thirst for vengeance on the sinner, who has outraged the divine Majesty. God desires nothing. God thirsts for nothing. He is in the calm and full possession of his divine happiness.

No doubt there is a sense in which one can speak of the wrath of God wreaking vengeance on the sinner, and the Sacred Scriptures often thus express the punishment of evil-doers. When, however, we speak of God's actions in the language of men, we should never forget that God is not man, and that we can use human terms of him only analogously.

Let us suppose for a moment that there were no hell. What would this involve ? It would involve that God is indifferent to sin. God is the author and creator of nature. If, then, our nature were such that whatsoever evil we did and for however long a time we did it, it could make no difference to our ultimate state ; if for all eternity God would love us equally well whether we sinned or whether we did not, it would follow that God's nature is essentially indifferent to the morality of human actions. Let it not be said that God could punish the sinner for a time only, and so manifest his sanctity and abhorrence of sin. For there is no proportion between a limited space of time, however long, and eternity. No number of years, however extensive, can express a section or division, or part of an existence that never ends. Eternity cannot be divided by time. Hence a punishment which only lasts for a while is by intrinsic necessity no adequate consequence of a deed whereby the creature rejects his God. *Hell and the sanctity of God*

If one being can transgress the will of another being to any degree of intensity and during an indefinite length of time without thereby altering the relation between both, there can be no ethical bond between them. No law can exist without sanction. If the creature knows that notwithstanding his refusal to obey God's law he will be in the loving embrace of God eternally, then he must conclude that God is essentially indifferent whether we conform to his law or not. If God himself is fundamentally indifferent, why should the creature care? How can an action be evil, if the Supreme Intelligence and the Supreme Good is indifferent whether the action is done?

If it be retorted that in any case God is unchangeable in himself and therefore cannot be distressed by our sins, we quite agree, in the sense that no sin can rob God of his infinite happiness. But God expresses his will by the very order of nature, and if no sin can leave a permanent result on the human soul, then God, as author of nature, would thereby imply that nothing could permanently alter the relation of an intelligent being to his creator; in other words, that human actions had for him no ethical value whatever.

Again, to suppose that there is no hell and could be no hell would mean a denial of God's omnipotence. It would mean that God could not create man and put him on trial for an eternal prize. In other words, man's nature would be the measure of God's omnipotence. Once created, man could demand everlasting happiness, and that without being tested and tried, for trial without the possibility of failure is no trial at all.

But could not God have created a world without sin? Indeed he could, but he has not. Why he has not, is not ours to settle now. He has not, that is the truth that stares us in the face. Given then the fact that sin is, given the fact that men are on trial and some fail, it is a denial of divine omnipotence to assert the impossibility of an eternal sanction. It would make God the helpless tool of his own creation. The creature, once having been created, could make sport of his Creator, safe in the knowledge that whatever befell, the end was secure; even God could not change it.

*Annihilation
no sanction*

It may be suggested that instead of eternal punishment, God might have decreed annihilation. But annihilation is in itself no sanction at all. It is mere cessation of being; the non-existent cannot undergo any requital for past deeds. Such annihilation would presumably take place when the sinner was at the height of his sin, when he would suddenly pass away without any retribution whatever into nothingness. Perhaps the suggestion may be carried further that a period of punishment should precede the moment of annihilation. But this suggestion leaves the problem as it was before. Such period of punishment would either improve the sinner or make him worse, or leave him as it found him. If it had improved him, it is strange that it should be followed by annihilation; if it left him as it found him, or made him worse, annihilation is delayed without

rhyme or reason, for his state immediately previous to annihilation would demand retribution as much as, or more than the state in which he was before the first retribution took place. Moreover, annihilation of a being by nature immortal means a reversal of God's own plan ; it is a kind of stultification of his own work and a frustration of energy unworthy of the wisdom of God ; it would be, as it were, a confession of impotence. The root of the difficulty against eternal punishment lies in this, that people picture it to themselves as a satiating of a lust of vengeance in God ; they picture to themselves the damned begging eternally for mercy and God eternally refusing it in spite of their unceasing supplication.

Now this whole conception is faulty. The devils and the damned never ask for mercy. One moment's repentance would empty hell. But that moment never comes. The damned have made their choice and abide by it ; that is why their abode is hell. Hell is an appalling mystery, but let us at least place the mystery where it really lies. It lies not in any supposed cruelty of God, it lies in the wickedness of man. It lies in the power of self-determination, which man can abuse finally and irrevocably. No one suggests that the damned want hell because they enjoy its torments ; the damned want hell because they have once for all decided that they do not want God, and there is no heaven without God. They need God eternally, but eternally they do not want him.

*Common
objections
answered*

But this is madness, may be retorted. Indeed it is, but all sin is madness, all sin is unreason, yet men commit it, and freely commit it. The mystery lies in the abuse of the power of self-determination, not in the necessary sanction subsequent to its abuse. If we fully understood what sin is, there would be no difficulty in understanding hell, for hell is only sin continued. A man can fix himself in evil as well as in good. Human nature gradually sets and, if the word be permitted, solidifies. A humble comparison with plaster or cement or molten metal that sets and hardens may not be out of place. In fact, hell is an application of the true law of evolution. Man is a being in progress. He is for a time in a state of transition, in process of development towards his final state, whatever it be. He passes through a period of possible change, but this period is not indefinite ; there is a moment when he has reached the terminus of his possible evolution, and is in a final stationary condition.

In this matter man takes his place in the general evolution of all life. If man had no final state, he would be a contrast to the whole of nature. All life passes through the stages of birth, development, to its final state. Every flower is a germ, a bud, a complete flower. Every tree a seed, a young plant, a full tree. Every animal passes from the embryo stage, to youth, and ends in its final condition. Now injuries done to the plant in its stage of development have permanency of some kind. A tree injured or thwarted grows to final deformity, a deformity which is never reversed by nature till the tree

ceases to be. A gnarled oak is what it is through a number of causes during its agelong existence, but its process of evolution is to our knowledge never reversed or altered. In the end it will die, because it is material, and no matter can resist decomposition, but its life cannot be undone and its development rolled backward. If an animal's eye or ear, or hand or leg be destroyed, this destruction is final; it will be for ever blind or deaf or maimed or lame, as long as it is. Nature does not reverse her process. She does not give it another eye or ear or hand or leg, she does not undo the loss. In every life there are occurrences which are irrevocable as long as that life lasts.

Now the soul-life of man is no exception. Man by his actions can permanently and definitely affect his own innermost being, he can make or mar himself for good, and since his soul has a never-ending existence, he can do what can never be undone, even for all eternity.

What human reason itself suggests is made certain for us by Revelation, which teaches that the relation in which man stands to God at the moment of death is final, definitive.

If man had no final state, he would be an anomaly in God's universe. No act of his could influence his ultimate state, or produce an absolute and permanent result. If his will-acts are indefinitely reversible, then he flounders through an endless existence in helpless impotence. There is no ideal in the ultimate attainment of which he may find repose, no perfect achievement which renders his manhood complete. Buddhists seem at first to accept this strange and sad illusion. Their highest deities can still leave their heaven and sink back to earth in a new re-incarnation, after which they can rise again to some heaven and fall away again. But even Buddhists, though they delight in adding up innumerable *kalpas* of myriads of years each, still finally after billions and trillions of years let a man achieve arhatship and nirvana, that is, permanency of some kind.

Granted an immortal being with free will, surely heaven and hell, eternal conformity or opposition to God, eternal happiness or sorrow seem necessary deductions, unless free will be robbed of its only dignity, of that which alone constitutes its connatural purpose and value.

There may arise in the reader's mind the thought that one earthly life is not long enough to decide an eternal issue. It should be remembered, however, that eternity is not a multiple of time. A life of threescore years and ten stands to eternity in no more distant relation than an existence of a thousand years. The shortness of the time of trial may be regarded as a blessing as well as a hardship. Surely a saint on his deathbed would feel keen disappointment if told that one earthly life was not long enough to purchase a happy eternity. Even the sinner may gain by the fact that the trial is short; a lengthier trial might have ended in greater disaster.

Sometimes an all too imaginative preacher may picture how, after a long life of virtue, one mortal sin brings a man to hell. To such

flights of rhetoric we may reply that there is no certainty that such a thing has ever happened. Of this we may be sure, that God takes no delight in taking the sinner unawares, that he may hurl him into hell after his only mortal sin. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son unto death, yea, unto the death of the Cross. If we want to guess in any way who or how many go to hell, we must never forget that the lake of eternal fire is at the foot of the hill of Calvary, and that no one can go to hell without crossing the path that goes over that hill. As Catholics, we do indeed believe in an eternal hell, and our reason itself almost demands an eternal sanction for good and evil, but it is perversity of mind to forestall the judgements of God, as if we knew that the majority of men go to hell. Bethlehem and Nazareth, Gethsemane and Golgotha, do not tend to show that the bulk of mankind will be lost. To most men now it would seem a poor triumph for the Man of Galilee if at the consummation of the world Satan swept the majority of the children of men away with him into everlasting darkness.

On the other hand, it is equally foolish to indulge in the facile jest: "I believe in an eternal hell, eternally empty." Such words make a mockery of the Gospels, and especially of Christ's words to the wicked on the day of judgement: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels from the beginning of the world." God has left us no revelation concerning the number of the lost, and no guess of ours can take its place. If a man dies in mortal sin, if a man dies without sanctifying grace, he is eternally lost, so much we know; but who dies in mortal sin we do not know. Mortal sin requires full knowledge and full deliveration. It is not like some ghastly blunder which a man might commit before quite knowing what he was about. No one goes to hell except he march into it with his eyes open. Not, of course, that he must beforehand realise the awfulness of its pains, but he must fully realise that he chose evil and not good, and he must have persevered in his choice until death.

We know little of the secrets of the individual amount of personal guilt, we know little of the possibilities of repentance. Catholics have always felt it to be a kind of sacrilegious usurpation of God's prerogative to say of any person: "He has gone to hell." Leaving these things alone, our only concern is so to live and so to warn others, that neither we nor they be amongst those who receive Christ's curse on the last day.

§ VI: SPECIAL QUESTIONS RELATING TO ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

THE Scriptural word "fire," as we have seen, may not be taken as a mere metaphor. It has been asked whether we are also to understand literally "the worm that dieth not"; what, in any case, the meaning of the expression may be.

"The undying worm" The two expressions, "the unquenchable fire" and "the undying worm," are clearly not on the same level. The latter is used in the New Testament only on one occasion, when our Lord, according to St Mark,¹ thrice makes the obvious reference to Isaias lxvi 24, whereas the fire is nearly always mentioned in conjunction with everlasting punishment. Christ, in using a well-known expression of the ancient prophet on this one occasion, does not indicate precisely what is metaphorical and what is not, but both he and the Apostles by their constant and almost exclusive use of "fire" for hell give clearly to understand that this latter word indicates some physical reality. We are therefore free to interpret "the worm that dieth not" metaphorically. As a matter of fact, this is usually done. Some take it as a metaphor for the loathsome and foul state of the damned, which resembles the stench and corruption of the grave. Others have seen in it a symbol for the biting pain of everlasting remorse.

*The devils
and the
damned*

A question may be asked regarding the instrumentality of the devils in increasing the torments of the damned. From the earliest even to the most modern pictorial representations of hell it has been customary to portray the damned as undergoing the most excruciating tortures by demons. What have we to believe of all this? First of all let us remember that the devils are pure spirits, however evil they are. The use of chains, pitchforks, and pincers and of all material instruments of cruelty is obviously a mere play of the imagination. Moreover, it is rather a childish supposition that at the end of all things God should eternally maintain a store of such things for the purpose. Yet beyond doubt the power of the devils to be a source of affliction to the damned is real. This affliction will arise from the twofold source of their companionship and their dominion. Demons and damned are enclosed in the same hell, and the imagery of Holy Scripture leads us to believe that the perpetual and intolerable nearness of innumerable beings will be an added horror to the damned. Moreover, the devils, as angels, are mightier than the damned, who ever remain but men. These men, however, by sin have yielded to the temptation of evil spirits, and therefore chosen them as masters rather than God. They have surrendered to their dominion, and in consequence remain under their tyranny for evermore. How this tyranny is exercised we have no conception. Somehow, overwhelmed and mastered by giants in evil, the souls of the damned will be cowed and terrorised into everlasting submission.

Time in hell

A further question must refer to the existence of time in hell. Eloquent and ingenious preachers have thought of many similes in order to bring home the endless duration of hell, but it must be remembered that according to the Scriptures time then shall be no more. Time is the measure of change. But both the blessed and the lost have come to their final state, and are no longer beings in a

¹ ix 42-47.

state of progress. They have entered a changeless world. They are not, indeed, in eternity as God is, who possesses the whole of his infinite being at once, but they have entered upon a state to which there is no parallel on earth. To count hours and days and years is possible only where material things tend to corruption. What an immutable life implies we cannot imagine, and it is idle to conjecture. At the moment of the death of the damned the clock struck, and the hands will move no more.

The question has sometimes been raised whether everlasting punishment is a matter completely excluded from the mercy of God and abandoned only to the rigour of divine justice. Although we have not sufficient data in Revelation to answer this question satisfactorily, it has been almost universally assumed by theologians that the punishment of the damned is less than they deserve and less than in strict justice might have been inflicted, so that every sentence of the Great Judge is, in fact, a merciful one. It has further been asked whether some respite or some lessening of punishment could be admitted, at least sometimes, in hell, so that even after the sentence there still remained some play for God's mercy.

*Diminution
of punish-
ment ?*

There have been some ancient writers who held that there would be some lessening of punishment, as, for instance, the hymn-writer Prudentius. This Spanish Christian poet, born in A.D. 348, imagined that perhaps on Easter night some relief was granted to the lost. St Augustine, in a rather ambiguous though disapproving sentence, seems to allow prayer for the lost previous to the last judgement, though he most strenuously combats those who think that the punishment of the damned is not eternal, or that their state can be in any way changed after the judgement. In a medieval manuscript there was found a prayer for one about whose soul one is in doubt. This prayer asks that the Mass may obtain for him, "if unworthy to rise again to glory, at least that his torments may be more bearable." These slight indications of a hope to lessen the pains of the lost show by their exceeding insignificance and rarity that the spirit of the Church and the common feeling of the faithful are strongly against the practice of praying for the lost. Hence we may well endorse the words of St Thomas Aquinas: "The above opinion is presumptuous; inasmuch as it is contrary to the statements of the saints, it is worthless and resting on no authority. It is not in accordance with reason, first because the damned in hell are outside the bond of charity, by which the works of the living extend to the dead; secondly, because the damned have utterly come to the terminus of their life, receiving the ultimate requital for what they deserve even as the saints, who are in their final home."¹

A further question has exercised the minds of theologians, viz., whether the life of the lost is one of undiluted sorrow and pain, or is still capable of some natural satisfaction, the joy of attaining some

¹ *Summa*, Supplement, Q. 71, art. 5.

object of desire. The devils, so it is argued, must enjoy at least some malignant satisfaction in tempting men to sin and in succeeding in their endeavour. If, then, they are capable of such gratification, however wicked, it would seem that some joys are still left to them. It is difficult by merely philosophical arguments to disprove the suggestion; but, on the other hand, the scriptural description of hell in no way implies joy or satisfaction of any kind in the place of the damned. "I am tormented in this flame," cried Dives, and the petition that a finger dipped in water should be laid on his tongue was not granted.

So likewise it has been suggested that while the pain of loss is indeed never-ending, because it corresponds to that element in sin which gives it a certain infinity, namely, the soul's aversion from God, yet the pain of sense will sometime come to an end, because it corresponds to the turning of the sinner towards creatures, an abuse of creatures that can have only a finite malice and therefore a finite punishment. This suggestion cannot, perhaps, be proven *a priori* to be unfounded, but scriptural language gives no countenance whatever to the idea. The word "everlasting" is most often attached precisely to the word "fire," and it seems altogether contrary to the tenor of Holy Scripture to maintain that the fire should end but the punishment continue. It is therefore an idle guess, which is difficult to reconcile with the inspired Word of God, a guess which is prompted only by the mistaken feeling that the positive pain of the fire is greater than the pain of loss. It is a guess which finds no support whatever in tradition, and which even on the grounds of reason is very difficult to defend. It must therefore be definitely rejected.

*The case of
those raised
from the dead*

A few stories, of a legendary rather than of an historical character, have been current in bygone ages of people having died in mortal sin, who through the prayer of some saint have been raised to life and given another chance of earning heaven. This is not the place to discuss the foundation of fact which may possibly underlie some of these stories. Sober historians would say that it is very little. Be this as it may, were they even true, they cannot be alleged as exceptions to the eternity of hell; they would rather be instances of the suspension of the Particular Judgement normally succeeding death. The instances told in the Gospel of Christ raising the dead, the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Naim, and Lazarus, are such exceptions. Moreover, some dead have been raised to life since Gospel days.

Whether all consciousness ceased between the moment of death and the moment of resurrection we cannot say. In all probability it did. In any case, by a special ordinance of God the divine judgement on these souls did not take place at the instant of their bodily death, as their allotted time of trial was not yet completed. We may rest quite certain that if any return of unrepentant sinners to earthly

life has ever taken place, these sinners were not yet in hell. Both revelation and reason make this obvious.

The question may be asked what is the relation of the inmates of hell to those who still dwell on earth? Of the devils we know that they roam through the world for the ruin of souls. Until the last day in the providence of God the demons are allowed to tempt and to harm men. The fall in Paradise was caused by a devil from hell; no doubt many of the last sins committed before the final doom will still be the outcome of temptations from hell. The abyss will be closed only at the end of time. Do the damned similarly roam through the world for the ruin of their fellow men?

The relation of the damned to those on earth

No, the case of the devils is different from that of the damned. The devils, by virtue of their higher nature as pure spirits, can come into contact with us and with the material world, and they can use this power to tempt and harm us. Such power is indeed completely under the control of God's supernatural providence, but it is natural to an angelic being. It is not so with the discarnate souls of men. These souls are by nature the life-principle of a human body, and through this body they come in contact with the material world. In their discarnate state they are incomplete beings. It is not natural to them to act on matter in this incomplete state. They can be active within themselves by thought and will, as they can subsist in themselves even without the body, but there is no connatural means of communication between them and the outer world. Whatever they know of earthly happenings is conveyed to them by some special ordinance of God, whatever influence they possess on the material world is bestowed on them by some preternatural means. We do not know the details of God's dealings with them; we could only know them by revelation. Now revelation tends to show that no such communication, no such influence is normally granted to them. We pray, certainly, to be protected against the devils, we do not normally pray for protection against the damned. If some apparitions of the damned have taken place, they are so exceedingly rare that they must be classed as distinctly miraculous, and not the outcome of their normal powers. The power to manifest themselves and to influence the living is perhaps not infrequently granted to the blessed in heaven and also to the souls in purgatory, but it is apparently seldom, if ever, given to the damned. The few stories told about the damned appearing, speaking, or acting after death contain fearsome warnings to the living. Such apparitions seem to have been allowed by God as an act of mercy to those on earth rather than as a permission to those in hell to hurt the faithful. The claim, therefore, of spiritists that "beyond the veil," as they say, all the dead, whether good or bad, have on occasion the power to communicate with the living is not to be admitted.¹ Whatever power to manifest themselves to the living the departed may possess is a special gift of

Spiritism

¹ For another view see Essay xxxi, pp. 1120-1.

God, not a natural outcome of their state. If then at a spiritistic séance an evil spirit—an earthbound spirit as they would call it—really manifests itself, the presumption is that this spirit is a devil, not a damned soul, though God in his omnipotence could grant such power to the damned. Of this Catholics are quite certain, that if such manifestations really take place—a supposition not readily to be admitted—they are not those of souls in heaven or in purgatory.

*Hell and the
divine
wisdom*

A final difficulty is sometimes urged against the doctrine of hell in this wise: surely God would not do what is eternally useless, surely God would not concur in the maintenance of an eternal evil, thereby admitting the eternal failure of his own plans for man!

Hell is not useless. The fear of hell as a motive of sorrow for sin has been, and is, instrumental in making saints. Many a soul has been helped to heaven by a salutary fear of hell. Hell is not useless. The blessed in heaven do not rejoice in the pains of the damned as such, yet they do eternally rejoice that they are saved from so great an evil, and the very greatness of the evil avoided adds to the enjoyment of the happiness secured.

Hell is not an eternal evil. That the damned should be in heaven, the blessed in hell, would indeed be evil, but that every one should receive according to his works is not evil, but good. That man should have free will and decide his own eternity is no evil. Hell is indeed evil to the damned, but not evil to God, not evil in itself. Infinite goodness still remains infinite goodness, though some freely reject it.

Hell is no divine failure. If God willed that all men, whether they freely chose him or not, should go to heaven, then God would indeed have failed if any went to hell. God wills men to go to heaven if they love him, and this divine will is eternally triumphant. If a soul which did not love God above all things were in heaven, this would not be triumph, but defeat. Moreover, God wanted multitudes in heaven, not to increase his own happiness, but to bestow his infinite bounty on them. He carried out his plan to the full; the damned have deprived themselves of happiness, not him. He communicated his divine life of glory to as many as he would. Those that refused the proffered gift still glorify his justice, which withdraws his bounty from all that refuse it. Their very existence is still in obedience to his power and wisdom; they obey him not with their free will, but as irrational and inanimate creation obeys him, by continuing to be in that state which he has adjudged to them.

No one would deny that the doctrine of hell baffles the human mind, but it is a lesser mystery than the mystery of Bethlehem or Calvary. The human mind can understand more easily that God should punish everlastingly those that die in sin, than that God himself should die upon the Cross to save them from everlasting punishment.

J. P. ARENDZEN.

XXXIV

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

§ I: INTRODUCTORY

"I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting."—
THE APOSTLES' CREED.

THE doctrine of the resurrection of the body is an integral part of Catholic belief concerning the Last Things—that is, concerning death and the life after death. It is so intimate a part of this belief that to reject it is to reject a doctrine which was taught from the very beginning of Christianity, and which has been unalterably affirmed by the Church throughout the centuries. While other elements in Catholic belief concerning the Last Things have emerged only gradually into full clearness and obtained precise definition relatively late—as, for instance, the doctrine of purgatory—this element, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, is explicit from the outset, and has not been subject to the Catholic process of development. By this assertion it is not meant that the doctrine has not been contested and contradicted, for it became at an early date a subject of acute controversy within the Christian body. But notwithstanding such controversy, the faith of the Church has been plain throughout, and that faith has been a simple acceptance of the doctrine in its obvious sense.

The assertion that has just been made may easily be misunderstood. It may seem, that is, to be in conflict with the theological history of the doctrine, and to be belied by the fact that the theologians are not in perfect agreement in their exposition of it. The solution is to be found in a necessary distinction. In every doctrine we may distinguish between the doctrine itself, so to say the substance or core of the dogma, and the many subsidiary questions which may arise concerning its mode of realisation and application. Catholic theology, for example, is explicit in its general statement of the truths which concern the life after death; but it is not dogmatic beyond the warrant of the faith once given to the saints, and it refrains from much detailed assertion. So is it in particular with the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. About the fact of that resurrection, and that a bodily resurrection, Catholic theology has no doubts and there is no controversy; but about subsidiary questions which arise from the doctrine—as, for instance, the question of the nature of the identity which obtains between the earthly and the risen body—about such questions Catholic theology is not dogmatic, and there is room for a legitimate variety of view. In rough

and summary antithesis the matter may be stated thus, that there are these two distinct things, the *fact* of the resurrection of the body and the *manner* of this resurrection. Now about the fact of the resurrection there is no question : it is a revealed doctrine, set forth in unmistakable fashion in Scripture and tradition, and taught by the divine authority of the Church. But about the manner of the resurrection, on the other hand, there has always been, and there will probably always be, some variety of theological speculation. In the course of these pages some account will be given of this speculation, and an effort will be made to set forth the state of theological opinion in the matter. But it is important that the reader should not mistake the situation and conclude from this variety of opinion that the doctrine itself is indeterminate and uncertain. In the Apostles' Creed we say : " I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting." In the Nicene Creed that is used in the Mass : " And I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come." There is the substance of our faith, the fact of the bodily resurrection ; the further question regarding the manner of the resurrection—How shall this thing be ?—is subsidiary and relatively unimportant.

This distinction having been made, it is necessary now to explain the character and scope of the argument which this essay will set forth. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is a revealed doctrine, and in its acceptance we exercise faith. Although a reasonable doctrine, it is not a deduction from reasoning ; it cannot be established by reason, nor can it be disproved by reason. The fact which the doctrine asserts is a miraculous fact, and as such beyond the scope of natural reason. The doctrine is simply part of the deposit of the faith. When, therefore, we profess our belief in it, we are professing our belief in a revealed doctrine, we are accepting the testimony of God and making an act of divine faith. That point is primary, and from that point our argument must start. In the course of these pages we shall adduce the testimony of Holy Scripture and of tradition to show that it is part of revelation ; we shall also consider presently what natural reason may urge in support of the doctrine ; but throughout, in the end as in the beginning, we have before us an unmistakable revealed doctrine, and our effort is in fact confined to exposition and explanation ; no attempt is made to prove that which is in effect unprovable.

The subject of these sections falls naturally into three main divisions, corresponding to three principal questions. First there is the fact of the bodily resurrection, secondly there is the question of the identity of the risen body with the earthly body, and thirdly there is the question of the character of the risen body. In dealing with the first question we are in the region of dogma : the bodily resurrection is an article of faith. In dealing with the other two we are largely in the region of theological deduction and speculation. Much of this

deduction will appear necessary and inevitable, if we are to hold the doctrine at all ; while some of it has no such necessity. The matter is obscure and defies exploration. Let the judicious reader understand, therefore, that he is not asked to give the assent of faith to any such deduction or speculation, but solely to the doctrine itself.

§ II: THE POSITION AND MEANING OF THE DOCTRINE

THE doctrine of the resurrection of the body holds an important position in the Christian scheme of the life after death, and it will be well, before proceeding further, to determine its exact position in that scheme. The Catechism, in the familiar summary, speaks of Four Last Things : death, judgement, hell and heaven. There is in this summary no explicit mention of the resurrection of the body, although it is implied. Where, then, it may be asked, does the resurrection of the body come in, and what is its relation to the other members of this summary ? A brief outline of the whole matter will serve to make this clear.

When a man dies his body is laid in the grave and goes to corruption ; but his soul, the spiritual part of him, is not buried with his body. It is immortal—death can have no power over it—and it enters at once, or rather continues in, its everlasting life. What happens to it when it is separated from the body and becomes a disembodied spirit ? It goes immediately, in the instant of its release, before the judgement seat of God for the particular judgement. There it is judged, and there, according to its merits, it receives its judgement and is assigned to its eternal lot. If the man has died in a state of grace, without any stain of sin upon him or any debt of punishment unpaid, then the soul hears the happy summons, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,”¹ and enters into the joy of its Lord in that vision of the intellect and fruition of the will which is the supreme happiness of the rational creature. If the man has died in mortal sin, then the soul hears the terrible words, “Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels,”² and is banished at once to the pains of hell. But if the man has died in yet a third condition, so that he is indeed in a state of grace, but has still to atone for venial sin and to expiate forgiven sin, then the soul is dismissed to purgatory and there remains until its purification is accomplished and it is ready to be admitted to the Vision of God.

Now, so far, it will be noticed, we have been writing the history *The Last Day* of the disembodied soul ; we have not yet encountered the resurrection. It may be that many, as they think vaguely and indistinctly about death and the particular judgement, suppose in some loose

¹ Matt. xxv 34.

² Matt. xxv 41.

fashion that this process of the soul could be termed "resurrection." But plainly it cannot be so denominated. The soul does not die, the soul therefore cannot rise again; and if there were no more than this to the matter, then we could not use the term resurrection, and the doctrine would be without meaning. But there is more than this to the matter; the history of man's last end is not yet complete. Hitherto we have considered only the history of an individual man and the fact of the particular judgement; to this we have to add the history of the last end of the human race and the fact of the general judgement. For when the last day comes, at a time that is known only to God and fixed in his eternal decree, the whole of mankind is summoned to the judgement seat for the Great Assize of the general judgement.¹

But before the general judgement there comes the miracle of the general resurrection. It is here, therefore, at this precise point in man's secular history, that our doctrine applies. Here is the exact position of the resurrection of the body. At that last day all the dead will rise again to stand before the judgement seat. The souls of men will be reunited to their bodies. The particular judgement will be reaffirmed and ratified. Henceforth the complete man—soul and body—in full and perfect unity of nature, will undergo his lot of eternal bliss or eternal pain.

Man a compound of body and soul

Such, then, if we may so term it, is the historical setting of the doctrine of the bodily resurrection. Such is the hope which the doctrine enshrines. It is a doctrine which implies that simple and elementary philosophy whereby we regard ourselves as creatures composed of body and soul: of a material body and a spiritual substance which is the vital principle of the body. It is a doctrine which supposes that man remains finally, in the after-life as in the present life, a being of body and soul; and it implies that such an immortality, not of soul only, but of body and soul, is the proper and normal immortality for man. Pagan philosophers and heretics in all times, emphasising the spiritual part of man and despising and rejecting the body, have formulated another sort of immortality, which men should enjoy as disembodied spirits, released from the "prison-house" or "tomb" of the body and set free from its supposed degrading company. Ancient mythology conceived an after-life in which man became a frail and ineffective wraith; and something of the sort seems to be indicated by the highly dubious communications of modern spiritualism. But Christianity, taking a more complete and saner view, considers both body and soul as necessary to the full and perfect man, and therefore believes in an after-life wherein body and soul are once again united.

Their reunion after death

They are so united again after the painful separation which is death. The body is laid in the grave and dissolves by natural process

¹ See above, pp. 1134 ff.

so as to be indistinguishable from the earth around it. But such physical dissolution presents no obstacle to the omnipotence of God. No physical law or natural process can be invoked to explain the act of his omnipotence. His *fiat* goes forth, and the body that was dissolved into its elements is reproduced, endowed again with physical life and reunited with its soul. What manner of physical continuity, of identity of matter, obtains between the earthly and the risen body is a question that shall be touched on later. For the present it is enough to set forth the meaning and reality of the bodily rising, and to emphasise its single cause, the omnipotence of the Creator.

§ III: THE BODILY RESURRECTION REASONABLE

CHRISTIAN theology professes a larger and more complete view of the nature of man than that held by pagan or heretic. Nor is the Church disposed to abandon that theology because certain modern philosophers would revive the views of Plato or the Manicheans. The Christian theology holds that man was created a complete unity of body and soul, and that no mere accidental connection, but a close substantial union. In this creation, furthermore, by the grace of God, he enjoyed a perfect balance of his powers and faculties, the body being the perfect partner and docile instrument of the soul, and endowed with immortality. And so would man have remained, in an everlasting life uninterrupted by death, had not sin intervened. But sin came, the balance of man's nature was upset, and there came also the penalty of death to dissolve the union of soul and body. Yet not finally and for ever. Sin was expiated by the death of the Redeemer, and our resurrection achieved in his Resurrection. So the separation of death was not final. Body and soul were to be united once more, and that for eternity.

*Essential
union of body
and soul*

To such a theology, therefore, the body is not a prison-house or tomb, in which the soul is confined for a time, and from which it gladly makes its escape; but it is a real part of the man, united with the soul to form one perfect being. This union of the soul and body, says St Thomas Aquinas, is a natural union, and so close is the union of the two that human nature dreads and shrinks from their separation. "The loss of the bodily life is naturally horrible to human nature."¹ They are wrenched asunder violently in the agony of death. But, says St Thomas again, "It is contrary to the nature of the soul to be without the body; and, since nothing that is contrary to nature can endure, therefore the soul will not be for ever without the body. Now the soul lasts for ever, and so it must be conjoined again with the body. That is the resurrection. Therefore the immortality of the soul would appear to demand the resurrection of the body."²

¹ *Summa*, III, Q. xlv, art. 6.

² *Contra Gentiles*, iv 79.

*The
Incarnation*

Such is the spirit of the Christian philosophy. The liberal theologian may alter the natural meaning of the doctrine and maintain that the resurrection which Christians are bound to believe is no more than an immortality of soul. He may declare, for example, that "the form which the doctrine of the resurrection assumes in my mind is the survival of death by a personality which has shed its physical integument for ever."¹ It appears to him that that is a simplification, and that the doctrine is thus made easy to the modern mind. But such a simplification not only empties the doctrine of its meaning—for such a persistence of the personal life in a purely spiritual mode of existence has no just right to the name of resurrection—it is also out of accord with the spirit of Christianity. The central doctrine of the Christian faith is that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, not despising the Virgin's womb, became man and took a human body—*et Verbum caro factum est*. And that faith is only consistent with itself when it refuses to despise and reject the body, and claims for it a share in the eternal hope. If God so honoured our humanity, what right have we to despise it? What philosophy can excuse us for attempting to improve upon the nature which has been given to us?

*Christian
theology in-
carnational*

And the Christian theology, which has the Incarnation for its central dogma, is incarnational throughout its whole extent. Hence the liturgy and ritual of the Church, hence, above all, the sacraments. Man is not regarded as a pure spirit, but regarded always and treated as a unity of spirit and body. By visible and tangible means does God work his benefits towards him, and he uses always the visible and tangible body. The body is consecrated and sanctified by prayer and sacrament, and the Apostle bids us remember that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. Obviously the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is necessary and inevitable to such a philosophy.

*The ultimate
felicity of
man*

St Thomas Aquinas argues further that the reunion of body and soul is necessary for ultimate felicity. Without the body the soul lacks something, and to that extent its felicity is imperfect. Just as any part dissociated from the whole to which it belongs is incomplete and imperfect, so the disembodied soul is incomplete by itself and requires the restoration of the integral human nature. And this restoration, this ultimate reintegration, is very suitable on other grounds. For body and soul have lived and worked together; whatever the man has done or suffered, he has done or suffered as a whole; body and soul have shared indissolubly and indiscriminately in all the passages of his mortal life. It is right, therefore, and fitting that body and soul should share the eternal issue of that life, whether this be everlasting joy or everlasting pain.

"Ah, wretched body," cries the preacher, "too often have I had to complain of thy burden and of thy exigencies. But, if I have used

¹ H. D. A. Major, *A Resurrection of Relics* (1922), p. 90.

thee to dishonour my life in the eyes of God and of men, I have used thee also to rehabilitate myself. I have used thy knees to prostrate myself before the sacred Majesty which I have offended, thy ears to hear the merciful words that have given me back hope again, thy eyes to weep for my faults, thy breast to sigh and groan in my repentance, thy mouth to utter the lamentations and thanksgivings of my wretchedness, and all thy senses and all thy powers to acquire that knowledge and virtue and to perform those good works which have brought me near to God and made me worthy of him. And must I then bid thee goodbye for ever ?

“ O soul and body ! Was the love which united you two, spirit and matter, in a single life and a single activity, nothing but a deceit and a lie ? Must that divine marriage, which set you to share so intimately in all actions and in all merits, be dishonoured by an eternal divorce ?—No, no, that cannot be ! That community of actions and of merits demands a community of reward and punishment. And since there is not in this world either pleasure or pain which suffices for the reward of the just or the chastisement of the wicked, I must believe in the restoration and reconstitution of that human unity which is broken by death, I must believe in the resurrection of the body.”¹

The preacher in these words gives utterance to the natural instinct of our humanity, which everywhere and always has desired this complete immortality. And natural desire and instinctive feeling are not things to be despised and rejected. Although they do not establish the doctrine, yet they persuade it and confirm it. For our human nature is from God, and at its purest and best prepares us for the teachings of its divine Creator.

We therefore regard that philosophy as inadequate and that spiritualism as one-sided and false which despise the body and would allow it no lot or share in the eternal life. There is a delusive simplicity about the theory of those who would have an immortality of spirit alone ; but simplicity is no guarantee of truth, and it often means a partial and incomplete synthesis. St Thomas had to answer those who maintained that were we to become pure spirits without any admixture of body, we should become more like to God and better imitate his perfection. His answer is that there may be thus a closer superficial likeness, but that substantially and really ■ being is more conformable to the perfection of God when it eternally expresses the divine idea according to which it was created, and when there is nothing lacking to the completeness of its nature, just as there is nothing lacking to the nature of God.²

¹ Monsabré, *La Résurrection* (Carême, 1889).

² Suppl., Q. lxxv, art. 1, ad 4.

§ IV: THE BODILY RESURRECTION MIRACULOUS

Not self-contradictory, but beyond the powers of nature

BUT although the resurrection of the body be a reasonable doctrine, and although it would seem to be demanded by our human nature and by any complete philosophy of that human nature, yet the resurrection is in the fullest sense a miraculous event. Many objections have been raised against the doctrine, and are still being raised against it. It is not an easy doctrine. But we both admit this difficulty and supply its adequate solution, when we set it down that the resurrection is miraculous. For a miracle is an event which transcends the power of natural causes and is due to the direct action of the omnipotence of God. It is not an event which is in conflict with natural law, as involving in itself a philosophical contradiction, but an event which passes beyond natural causality and requires omnipotence. If the bodily resurrection involved any contradiction, then it could not take place, even by the power of God. But if it involves no such contradiction, and is in no way contrary to natural law, but only beyond the scope of our experience, then the bodily resurrection cannot be declared scientifically impossible. With God all things are possible.

Scientific objections

If it be said, for instance, that the discoveries of science regarding the constitution of matter and its behaviour make a resurrection of body inconceivable, it may be answered, first, that science has not yet made up its mind about the constitution of matter, and secondly, that the conclusions of science, whatever they may ultimately be, cannot really affect the case. For, if the bodily resurrection be a dogmatic truth, guaranteed by the authority of God, here is a piece of knowledge which science could never reach and which it is not in a position to criticise. So that the scientific difficulties commonly alleged against the doctrine are seen to be, when we realise its miraculous character, irrelevant and ineffective.

Some of the difficulties raised against the resurrection of the body are really concerned rather with the mode than with the fact of this resurrection: they are pertinent especially when we seek to determine the identity that obtains between the earthly and the risen body,¹ but they do not touch the core of the doctrine—*i.e.*, the revivifying of dead matter and its reunion to the soul. Physical science may fairly say that this is a phenomenon which lies outside its experience, but it cannot say that it is impossible or incredible. So that the essence of the doctrine—*i.e.*, the teaching that men will rise again with true bodies—this is independent of any scientific theory regarding the constitution or behaviour of matter, or any physiological hypothesis, and cannot be affected by such. It is difficult, of course, to imagine the reconstitution of the body after the dissolution of death, for no such process does or can come within our experience, or can possibly become a phenomenon which physical

¹ See below, pp. 1232-1242.

science may study. But the doctrine does not stand or fall by the limitations of our experience, nor does it imply that the resurrection is in any respect a physical process. On the contrary, the fact is removed beyond the range of our experience, it is regarded as definitely miraculous, it is attributed to the omnipotence of God as to its only and sufficient cause.

Such is the fundamental attitude of Catholic theology. That theology teaches quite simply and plainly that the resurrection of the body is a wholly miraculous fact, not to be explained by the operation of natural causes. There is nothing which can be called a causal continuity between the earthly body and the risen body. There is not, as Origen suggested, a reproductive germ in the dead body out of which the risen body develops. The resurrection is to be conceived, therefore, not as a process of generation under natural causes, but as a direct reproduction of the body by the power of God. The resurrection is therefore in the strictest sense miraculous.

The cause of the resurrection is the divine omnipotence

St Thomas Aquinas sets forth this teaching in plain terms. Asking whether the Resurrection of Christ is the cause of our resurrection,¹ he answers that the direct cause of our resurrection is the power of God, which effected also our Lord's Resurrection. But inasmuch as all divine gifts come to us through the merits of Christ, so may we say that Christ's Resurrection is the cause of our resurrection. His Resurrection, further, is the exemplar and model of ours. Proceeding, in the second and third articles of the same question, he discusses the efficacy of other alleged causes, only to insist that nothing but the power of God is the direct and adequate cause of the resurrection.

Moreover, much as St Thomas holds that soul and body belong naturally together, and that their reunion in the resurrection restores the integrity of human nature, yet he will not allow that that reunion is "natural"—*i.e.*, the effect of natural process—for there is no natural process from death to life. So that although the body may be said to have a certain passive inclination towards reunion with the soul, there is in nature no active principle which can cause the resurrection, and therefore the resurrection must be preternatural—*i.e.*, miraculous.²

Holding, then, that the resurrection of the body is a miraculous event, an effective exercise of the omnipotence of God, we shall not be disposed to set any limits of human imagination to God's power, or to confine it within the bounds of natural causality. As St Paul asked: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?"³ And the Fathers, on their part, are content thus to refer the objector to the infinite power of the Creator. Here, for example, is the argument of St Augustine:

"Therefore, brother, confirm yourself in the name and help of him in whom you believe, so as to withstand the tongues of those

¹ Suppl., Q. lxxvi, art. 1. ² Suppl., Q. lxxv, art. 3. ³ Acts xxvi 8.

who mock at our faith, out of whose mouths the devil speaks seductive words, desiring especially to ridicule the belief in the resurrection. But from your own experience, perceiving that you now exist although you once were not, believe that you will exist hereafter. For where was this mass of your body, and where was this form and structure of your members a few years ago, before you were born? Did it not come forth to light, out of the secret places of creation, under the invisible formative power of God? Is it then in any way a difficult thing for God to restore this quantity of your body as it was, seeing that he was able to make it formerly when it was not?"¹

This general answer to the objections raised against any resurrection of body will appear comprehensive enough, and, if its assumptions be granted, quite complete and decisive. It is the general answer of Catholic theology, basing itself upon the nature of God and upon his revelation. It may seem, indeed, that when we have so stated the matter, there remains no more to be said. But that is not so. It has yet to be seen that we are justified in regarding this doctrine as a revealed truth, and as such contained in the double source of Scripture and tradition. And, moreover, the doctrine has yet to be explained and defended in one very important particular, namely, the identity of the risen body with the body which we now bear. But this is matter for later consideration.

§ V: THE TESTIMONY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE IN GENERAL

THE doctrine of the resurrection of the body is set before us by the Church as an article of our faith, and that is sufficient for us so that we may give it full credence. Nevertheless, we are doing the will of the Church if we examine and consider the testimonies to her teaching which are contained in the sources of revelation. What are these sources? They are Holy Scripture and Tradition. By Scripture we mean the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments; by Tradition we mean that body of doctrine which is contained in the Creeds of the Church, in the definitions of the Councils, in the writings of the Fathers and in the constant teaching of the living Church. In the present section let us consider the general testimony of Holy Scripture to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

And first the testimony of the Old Testament. It may be said at the outset—and it is only natural—that we should be unreasonable to expect an absolutely explicit testimony to the doctrine in the books of the Old Testament. The revelation of the Old Testament was to be completed by the New, and in no one point did it need completion so much as in the doctrine of the life after death. For Jewish belief on this point was largely vague and indeterminate.

*Indications
in the Old
Testament*

¹ *De catechizandis rudibus*, c. 25 abbreviated.

Yet there are testimonies scattered throughout the Bible which imply the belief in the resurrection, and these we shall now set out.

The texts which are usually adduced are four in number. First comes the text of Isaias : ¹ "Thy dead men shall live, my slain shall rise again . . . the earth shall disclose her blood and shall cover her slain no more." Then there are the words of the Book of Job : ² "I know that my redeemer liveth and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin : and in my flesh I shall see God. Whom I myself shall see and my eyes shall behold, and not another." Next are the words of the Book of Daniel : ³ "And many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake : some unto life everlasting and others unto reproach, to see it always." And finally there is the text of 2 Machabees : ⁴ "After him the third was made a mocking-stock, and when he was required he quickly put forth his tongue and courageously stretched out his hands, and said with confidence : These I have from heaven, but for the laws of God I now despise them : because I hope to receive them again from him."

Of these four testimonies it is well to say that only the last is quite explicit and satisfactory. The passage from Job loses some of its force when the version which we have given is compared with the original Hebrew, and the texts of Isaias and Daniel do not clearly prove a general resurrection. This is to take the texts just as they stand and without making any allowance for subsequent Catholic interpretation. But considering their subsequent history in Christian use, we find that these Old Testament testimonies, and especially the text of Job, were used by the earliest Christian writers as direct proof of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The words of Job are thus used by St Clement of Rome in his First Epistle to the Corinthians ⁵ and by a long sequence of Fathers. In virtue of this passage Job figures in early Christian art as a prophet of the resurrection. His words found a place in the ancient liturgies, and they are still embodied in the Office for the Dead. So if we believe—as we must—that the Spirit of God watches over the Church, guiding her teaching, and that she is the authoritative exponent of the Word of God, we naturally find in these texts a real, though obscure, enunciation of the doctrine.

Turning now from the Old Testament to the New, we pass from comparative obscurity to clear day. During the last century B.C. Jewish thought was much occupied with the question of the life after death, and a considerable quantity of apocryphal writing has come down to us which endeavours to solve the problems of the after-life. In our Lord's time also, as is clear from the Gospels, the Jews were deeply interested in this question, and it was even a chief subject of controversy among them. So when our Lord, from his divine

*Clearly
taught in the
Gospels*

¹ Isa. xxvi 19-21.

² Job xix 25-27.

³ Dan. xii 2.

⁴ 2 Mach. vii 10-11.

⁵ xxvi 3.

knowledge, propounded a clear doctrine concerning the after-life, his audiences heard him eagerly and debated his teaching warmly. The Sadducees, that party among the Jews who refused to believe in a resurrection, naturally contested his teaching, and it is especially in answer to their objections that he made his doctrine plain.

We read in St Matthew's Gospel how the Sadducees, "who say there is no resurrection," came to our Lord and put before him the case of a woman who was married successively to seven men. "At the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven shall she be? for they all had her. And Jesus answering said to them: You err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married: but shall be as the angels of God in heaven. And concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken by God saying to you: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living."¹

In the Gospel of St John we find several explicit texts. After our Lord had healed the infirm man at the pool of Bethsaida, he speaks to the Jews in defence and explanation of his work and teaching. They marvelled at his healing the infirm man, but he says to them: "Wonder not at this, for the hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgement."² After the miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, when he discourses upon the bread of life, we have this further testimony: "Now this is the will of the Father who sent me: that of all that he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again in the last day. And this is the will of my Father that sent me: that everyone who seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have life everlasting, and I will raise him up in the last day."³ And finally, from St John, we have our Lord's words at the raising of Lazarus. When Martha came to him and expostulated with him for his absence, Jesus replied: "Thy brother shall rise again." To this Martha answers: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." But Martha wanted a present resurrection and not the remote resurrection of the last day. Before granting her prayer, our Lord, to purify her faith, speaks these words: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me although he be dead shall live: and everyone that liveth and believeth in me, shall not die for ever."⁴

*Not a mere
"spiritual"
resurrection*

From these passages of the Gospels, taken in their obvious sense and with proper appreciation of their context, it is clear that our Lord taught the resurrection of the dead in the plain and ordinary sense of that phrase—that is, a resurrection by which the living man

¹ Matt. xxii 23-32. Cf. Mark xii 18-27; Luke xx 27-38.

² John v 28-29.

³ John vi 39-40.

⁴ John xi 23-26.

is reconstituted in the everlasting life in the integrity of his human nature, body as well as soul. That was what the resurrection meant to his contemporaries, those Jews who so warmly debated it among themselves. That was the sort of resurrection exemplified in our Lord's own miracles, when he raised the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son of Naim, and Lazarus. That was the power given to his Apostles in the commission: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. Freely you have received, freely give."¹ Throughout the Gospels, throughout the New Testament, "raising the dead" means nothing less than this bodily resurrection, a real restoration of physical life. Some opponents of this bodily resurrection would have it, because the phrase "resurrection of the body" does not occur in the New Testament, that therefore they may interpret the resurrection in a purely spiritual sense. But this is bad exegesis. It is bad exegesis because it takes the phrase "resurrection of the dead" out of its context and gives it a meaning at variance with that context. Of the doctrine of a purely spiritual resurrection there is no hint in the New Testament.

So far we have considered the specific teaching of the Gospels concerning the doctrine, but have not considered the most striking evidence for the doctrine which is contained in these same Gospels—namely, the evidence of the Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of our Lord himself. As was suggested in a previous section of this essay, the Incarnation of our Lord, his literal assumption of our human nature, raises the dignity of that nature, and forbids the Christian philosopher from following the path of the Platonist or the Manichee in his rejection of one-half of that nature. The Incarnation of our Lord consecrates the complete human nature, body and soul together, and gives that integral nature, so to say, a second charter. It was divine in its creation, it receives now a reaffirmation of that primeval sanction. Not only so, but the whole Christian dispensation as instituted by our Lord is incarnational, and is inspired throughout by this conception of an integral human nature, a complete unity of body and soul.

But especially does the Resurrection of our Lord himself, the central fact of the Gospel and the climax of his mission, enforce the doctrine of a true bodily resurrection. The Gospels all record this Resurrection, and it is the Resurrection of his identical body in true physical reality. When our Lord appeared to his disciples in the evening of the first Easter Day, St Luke tells us that they were troubled and afraid, supposing that they saw a spirit. But Jesus, to convince them that it was really himself, in perfect physical reality, said to them: "See my hands and feet, that it is I myself; handle, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me to have. And when he had said this, he shewed them his hands and feet. But while they yet believed not and wondered for joy, he said: Have

¹ Matt. x 8.

you here anything to eat? And they offered him a piece of a broiled fish, and a honeycomb. And when he had eaten before them, taking the remains he gave to them.”¹ A like demonstration of the physical reality of our Lord’s Resurrection is given by St John: “He shewed them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord”²—that is, knew from this tangible proof that it was really he. And, for St Thomas: “Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered: My Lord, and my God.”³

If it be said of this that our Lord’s Resurrection is a thing apart and bears no relation to ours, it is answered that the New Testament does not regard it so. To St Paul our Lord’s Resurrection is the exemplary type and the guarantee of ours. The Resurrection of our Lord figured so largely in the preaching of the Apostles,⁴ not only because it was the supreme proof of Christ’s mission, but also because it was itself a book of doctrine, throwing a clear light upon the eternal destiny of man.

§ VI: THE TESTIMONY OF ST PAUL

PASSING NOW from the Gospels to consider the teaching of St Paul, it is proper to point out in the first place that his Epistles represent the belief of the first generation of the Christian Church. Some of the Epistles are earlier than the earliest of the Gospels, and their testimony has therefore a special value. St Paul claims to represent fully the mind of Christ, and the elaborate attempts of Protestant criticism to construct a Pauline Christianity alien from Christ’s teaching have been singularly unsuccessful. Concerning this special doctrine of the resurrection of the body, St Paul’s teaching is particularly explicit—it was for this in particular that he incurred the hostility of his compatriots—and we shall now consider his teaching in detail.

Christ’s Resurrection and ours

St Paul places the general resurrection on the same level of certainty as Christ’s Resurrection: “If Christ be preached that he rose again from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again, then is our preaching vain and your faith also is vain.”⁵ He preached the resurrection of the dead as one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity before the quick-witted Athenians, and by his teaching aroused their special interest.⁶ The same doctrine formed part of his discourse at Jerusalem,⁷ of his preaching before Felix,⁸ and before Agrippa.⁹ He insists on it often in his Epistles.¹⁰ And it is clear that he intended a real bodily

¹ Luke xxiv 39-43.

⁴ See Acts, *passim*.

⁷ Acts xxiii.

¹⁰ Rom., 1 Cor., 2 Cor., Phil., 1 Thess., 2 Tim.

² John xx 20.

⁵ 1 Cor. xv 12.

⁸ Acts xxiv.

³ John xx 27, 28.

⁶ Acts xvii.

⁹ Acts xxvi.

resurrection. If we would have his clearest and fullest exposition of the doctrine, it is to our hand in the "classic source," which has already been cited, the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. So clear, indeed, and full is the exposition of the doctrine in that chapter, that it must be given a detailed notice.

As has been observed already, St Paul argues the doctrine of our resurrection from the fact of the Resurrection of Christ, teaching that the two beliefs stand or fall together :

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose again from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have given testimony against God, that he hath raised up Christ, whom he hath not raised up if the dead rise not again. For if the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (12-19).

See how close he makes the connection between Christ's Resurrection and ours—so close that we may fairly argue that in St Paul's mind our resurrection was to be not only as real as Christ's, but also as complete; that it was in its own measure to be like to Christ's, in being a complete resurrection of the whole man, body and soul.

Proceeding with his argument, St Paul indicates that death was the punishment of original sin, and that the resurrection is one of the fruits of Christ's redemption.

"But now Christ is risen from the dead, the firstfruits of them that sleep. For by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (20-22).

And now we may pass to that part of his argument where he undertakes to define the manner of the resurrection. Although we cannot, if we deny the resurrection of the body, speak properly of any resurrection at all—for the continued existence of the soul is not to be called a resurrection—yet there are those who use words thus and who would interpret "resurrection of the dead" in a purely spiritual sense. We may expect, then, that when St Paul addresses himself to the explanation of the manner of the resurrection, he will give us the means of deciding this question. This is the way in which he approaches the problem :

"But some man will say: how do the dead rise again? or with what manner of body shall they come? Senseless man, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die first. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be; but bare grain, as of wheat, or of some of the rest. But God giveth it a body as he will: and to every seed its proper body" (35-38).

St Paul begins with an analogy from nature. The apparent death of the seed, and then its manifest resurrection into the new life of the

*The manner
of the
resurrection*

An analogy

plant or tree, provide us with an illustration of man's resurrection from the grave. The analogy has been a favourite one with all writers on the resurrection, and we find it developed by them with great elaboration. It is clear already that St Paul is supposing a real continuity and identity of nature between the dead man and his risen self. But he passes on from this introductory analogy to come to closer grips with the question. God gives this human seed its proper body, as he gives its appropriate body to the acorn or the grain of wheat ; but of what nature, in the case of man, is the body which he gives ? It is not, says St Paul, just the natural body which he had in this world, but a spiritual body. Does he mean by this to empty "body" of all meaning ? Assuredly not. We shall see later what are the special characteristics of the risen body and how this may be called a spiritual body. Yet it remains body none the less. Here are St Paul's words :

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body. . . . In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible : and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. And when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written : Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory ? O death, where is thy sting ?" (42-44, 52-55).

Such is the final testimony of St Paul. It will rise a body—he does not cast aside that word—but a body which is spiritual, glorious, powerful, incorruptible, immortal. Had St Paul intended any mere immortality of spirit, was this the way in which to inculcate such a doctrine ? "It is sown in corruption ; it shall rise in incorruption," and so throughout his argument. What is this mortal that puts on immortality, and this corruptible that puts on incorruptibility, but the real human body ? We may fairly summarise his faith under two main heads. The first is this : that there will be a real bodily resurrection of men, and that in their own bodies. The second is this : that this bodily resurrection is not to be conceived in a crude and material manner, but that the risen body is, as later theology puts it, a "glorified" body. It should be noted also that St Paul fixes the time of this resurrection : it is to be at the last judgement.

"Spiritual"
body

Here, then, we have the *locus classicus* for the doctrine ; nowhere else in the New Testament is it so explicitly stated. Nor can it be claimed that St Paul's words teach no more than a "spiritual" resurrection. Such an interpretation is precluded by two considerations. In the first place, as has been indicated already, we must take account of the meaning which the resurrection of the dead would bear for his hearers. There is no hint that St Paul was teaching any new kind of resurrection, and he emphatically correlates our resurrection with the true bodily Resurrection of Christ. In the

second place, if we admit this "spiritual" interpretation, we shall have to conclude that the Church from its earliest days embraced an erroneous doctrine, and that it has been obstinate and pertinacious in error for the twenty centuries of its existence. This conclusion cannot be harmonised with our Lord's promise that he would be with his Church "all days, even unto the consummation of the world," nor with his assurance that the gates of hell would not prevail against it.

But it may be objected further that the teaching of the New Testament, whatever its purport, is certainly not so precise and detailed as the teaching of later theology. The objection is true, but unimportant; for the precision of later theology adds nothing to the substance of the doctrine, but is occupied in defining its circumstances and consequences. It is to be remembered that scientific theology was yet far distant when St Paul wrote, and, on the other hand, that exact formulation does not imply distortion or misrepresentation. It is to be remembered also that the written documents of the New Testament do not contain, or profess to contain, a complete and scientific account of the Christian revelation. The Church existed before any part of the New Testament was written, and the Church possessed already and was already teaching the revelation committed to her by her Founder. The Church has never intermitted this teaching office. From her, as from one who lived with Christ and whose continuity of life has never through all the centuries suffered interruption, we learn the full teaching of Christ. She speaks as one having authority to teach. The testimonies from the New Testament which have been adduced in these pages receive from her their full explanation and exposition, and her teaching is the true canon of their interpretation.

Little now remains to be said about the witness of the Scriptures, and this section may end with that vision of the resurrection which is given in the last book of the New Testament. The Seer of the Apocalypse "saw a great white throne, and one sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which was the book of life: and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them: and they were judged every one according to their works."¹

¹ Apoc. xx 11-13.

§ VII: THE TESTIMONY OF TRADITION

THE tradition of the Church—so far as it is a written tradition—is embodied in the Creeds, in the decrees of the Councils, in the sacred liturgy, and in the consentient teaching of the Fathers and the theologians. Upon this subject of the resurrection of the body the witness of tradition is so abundant, that to assemble it would require not an essay but a library. The present treatment will attempt only the briefest of summaries.

*Creeds and
Councils*

The most ancient document of the faith is undoubtedly the familiar statement of belief which is denominated the "Apostles' Creed." This Creed was probably first formulated in Rome in the first century of Christianity for use in the ritual of baptism. The exact date of its composition cannot be determined precisely, but it has been traced back to the end of that first century, and we are free to hold that it is, what its title implies, of apostolic date and origin. The early Church in Rome was Greek-speaking, and this Creed in its earliest form was therefore in Greek. Now it is important to observe that here, at the earliest point at which we can test tradition, our doctrine is expressed in the most explicit and unquestionable form. For this earliest Creed expressed the doctrine in the two Greek words *σαρκὸς ἀνάστασις*, of which the exact Latin equivalent is *carnis resurrectionem*, and the English "resurrection of the flesh." There is no ambiguity here, but a plain and explicit assertion of the bodily resurrection. Tradition, therefore, at its earliest point, is clear and unmistakable.

Besides the Apostles' Creed, the Church recognises two others as of primary authority, those known as the Nicene and Athanasian respectively. It is unnecessary for our purpose to discuss the history of these Creeds, and we shall be content to give their evidence for our doctrine. The Nicene Creed says: "And I look for the resurrection of the dead." This Creed, in the form in which it is used in the Mass, is supposed to date from the Second Oecumenical Council, held at Constantinople in A.D. 381. It will be observed that the formula is not so clear and unmistakable as that of the Apostles' Creed, but there is no ground for supposing that it may be understood in any different sense. Whatever truth there may be in the hypothesis that the vaguer expression was chosen under the influence of Origenist teaching—a mere hypothesis—the article did not in fact suffer any change of meaning, but was understood by the Church throughout in one and the same sense. If any proof were needed of this, it would be sufficient to point to the fact that the Apostles' Creed maintained its position alongside the Nicene, its "resurrection of the flesh" marching harmoniously with the Nicene "resurrection of the dead"; nor is there the least evidence that the Church recognised any difference of meaning in the two formulas.

The third of the three primary Creeds is that which goes by the name of the "Athanasian" (fourth or fifth century). In this Creed, again, the doctrine is presented in unmistakable form. Christ our Lord, affirms the Creed, is to come to judge the living and the dead. At his coming "all men are to rise again with their own bodies."

Confirming the witness of these Creeds is the Canon of the Fifth Oecumenical Council (Constantinople, A.D. 553) condemning the opinion of Origen that the risen body shall be "ethereal and spherical" and that neither Christ our Lord nor men shall have material bodies.

Leaving these Creeds and passing from the era of the Oecumenical Councils, we reach the Eleventh Council of Toledo (A.D. 675) and the explicit pronouncement: "We confess the resurrection of the flesh of all the dead. And we believe that we shall rise again, not in any ethereal or different flesh (as some have foolishly supposed), but in this flesh in which we live and move and are." The Creed of Pope Leo IX (A.D. 1050), still used in the ritual for the consecration of bishops, says: "I believe in the true resurrection of that same flesh which I now bear." The Profession of Faith prescribed by Pope Innocent III for converts from the errors of the Waldenses (A.D. 1210) has the clause: "We believe with the heart and profess with the mouth the resurrection of this flesh which we bear and not of any other." And, most definite of all, the Fourth Lateran Council (A.D. 1215), in its decree against the Albigenses and other heretics, declares that men "shall all rise again with their own bodies, which they now bear, to receive according to their works."

There is no need to produce further evidence from Creed or Council. The doctrine is clear and unmistakable: the true resurrection of all men in true bodies.

When we pass to the witness of the Fathers and theologians we are met with such an abundance of testimony for this particular doctrine that it is very difficult to represent it at all in a brief summary. All that shall be attempted here is to give a few examples of traditional teaching at widely different dates in the Church's history.

At the very beginning and before the era of the apologists, we have St Clement of Rome (who died about A.D. 99) in his Epistle to the Corinthians teaching the doctrine quite explicitly, basing it on the authority of Scripture, on the example of our Lord's Resurrection, and on some curious analogies from natural history. The Epistle of St Polycarp to the Philippians, as also the authentic Acts of his martyrdom (A.D. 155), provide further testimony. But we are now in the second century and the era of the first Christian apologists. The philosopher and martyr St Justin in his *First Apology* thus states the Christian faith: "We expect to receive again our own bodies, though they be dead and cast into the earth, for we maintain that with God nothing is impossible." He expects, we may note, a literal identity of bodily substance.

*Apostolic
Fathers*

Athenagoras The apologist Athenagoras (c. A.D. 180) devoted a special treatise to the resurrection, and goes very thoroughly into the matter. In him we meet the famous problem that was afterwards to exercise the minds of the Scholastics: What if certain particles of matter have served several persons? He is content to appeal to the omnipotence of God.

Irenaeus We come next to the testimony of St Irenaeus, and it is testimony of the first importance. Irenaeus was born in Asia Minor, and had when young seen and heard the martyr St Polycarp, himself a disciple of St John. He is thus closely linked with the apostolic age, and as one born in the East, familiar with the Church in Rome, and then bishop of the great Christian see of Lyons, he had an exceptional acquaintance with the Church of his day. His teaching may be safely regarded as representative of the faith of the Church in the second century. Unfavourable critics describe it as "materialistic," a very literal raising again of the flesh. Such, then, was the belief of the Church in the second century. Out of very many passages that might be quoted from Irenaeus, here is one brief sample of his teaching:

"Just as a cutting from the vine planted in the ground fructifies in its season, or as a corn of wheat falling into the earth and becoming decomposed, rises with manifold increase by the Spirit of God, who contains all things, and then, through the wisdom of God, serves for the use of men, and having received the Word of God becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ, so also our bodies, being nourished by it and deposited in the earth, and suffering decomposition there, shall rise at the appointed time, the Word of God granting them resurrection to the glory of God, even the Father, who freely gives to this mortal immortality, and to this corruption incorruption."¹

Passing over the emphatic witness of Tertullian and the doubtful speculations of Origen, it is sufficient to say that the recognised theologians both of East and West in the succeeding centuries, such men as St John Chrysostom, St Epiphanius, St Gregory of Nyssa, St Cyril of Jerusalem, St Ambrose, St Jerome, St Augustine, devote themselves to the exposition and defence of the orthodox belief in a bodily resurrection. From St Augustine alone enough might be quoted to form a treatise on the doctrine; but there is really no need to assemble this abundant witness. There is no question that the Fathers of the Church, with complete unanimity, teach the true resurrection of the body.

*The
scholastic
theologians*

When we turn to the scholastic theologians we find that they accept this orthodox teaching and discuss its implications with elaborate care. St Thomas Aquinas, for instance, devotes to it thirteen Questions of his *Summa Theologica*² and eleven chapters of his

¹ *Adversus Haereses*, Book V, chap. 2.

² Suppl., QQ. lxxv-lxxxvii.

Summa contra Gentiles.¹ The modern critic recognises in this exposition, and in that of the scholastic theologians generally, a complete acceptance of the traditional belief; his only complaint is that these theologians discuss the implications of the resurrection with a too elaborate nicety. However that may be, a quotation from the first article of St Thomas's first question² will show clearly the nature of his belief. After setting forth some objections to the doctrine he proceeds as follows:

"But against (these objections) is the text of Job: 'I know that my redeemer liveth and in the last day I shall rise from the earth and again be clothed in my skin,' etc. Therefore there will be a bodily resurrection. Furthermore, the gift of Christ is greater than the sin of Adam, as is clear from the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. But death was introduced by sin, for if there had been no sin, there would have been no death; therefore by the gift of Christ man shall be restored again from death to life. Furthermore, the members of Christ's mystical body ought to be conformable to the Head. But our Head lives and shall for ever live in body and soul, because 'Christ rising from the dead dieth now no more' (Rom. vi 9). Therefore men also, who are his members, shall live in body and soul. And so there must be a resurrection of the flesh.

"I reply generally that the opinions of those who affirm or deny this resurrection vary with their views on man's last end. The last end of man is happiness. Now some have maintained that a man can attain this end in this life, and so they were under no necessity to posit another life after this in which a man should attain his final perfection. They therefore denied the resurrection. . . . Others have required another life after this, in which man should live after death, but in his soul only; and they held that this soul life was sufficient to meet the natural desire of happiness. . . . And so they also denied the resurrection. For this opinion some had one false reason, others another. Certain heretics, for instance, held that all bodily things were from an evil principle, and spiritual things from a good principle. Wherefore the soul could not attain blessedness unless it was separated entirely from body. So all those heretical sects, who believe bodily things were created or formed by the devil, deny the resurrection. We have shown the falsity of this fundamental theory elsewhere. Others again have held that the soul was the whole man and the body a mere instrument which the soul employed, as a sailor uses a ship. And so with them too the man is perfectly blessed if his soul is blessed. Therefore they also had no use for the resurrection. But their opinion is refuted by Aristotle, when he shows that the soul is the form of the body, and is united to it as form is united to matter. And so it is evident, that if a man cannot attain beatitude in this life, we must necessarily assume the resurrection."

¹ Lib. IV, cc. 79-83.

² Suppl., Q. lxxv.

In the specific answers to objections with which he concludes the article, St Thomas argues (*inter alia*) that man is a real unity of body and soul, no fortuitous or accidental compound; that all his deeds are the deeds of this unitary agent; and that therefore the complete man, both body and soul, should receive the meed that his deeds have earned. And further, that the soul's state is more perfect when it is in the body, because it belongs to a whole of which the body also is an integral part; that this is its nature as assigned to it by God; and that therefore it is more conformable to God, more fully in his likeness, when it is united to the body.

With this brief extract in illustration of the teaching of St Thomas, this section may conclude. The evidence of tradition is overwhelmingly plain and does not need further emphasis. Creeds, Councils, Fathers, Liturgy: all these agree in proclaiming the doctrine in its literal sense. The ancient belief of the Church in the bodily Assumption of the Mother of God stands out as a practical affirmation of it. And such as was the doctrine to St Irenaeus, to St Augustine, to St Thomas, such is it to the Catholic Church of the present day. With the modern tendency outside the Church to interpret it in a "spiritual" fashion she has no sympathy. She would belie her claim to divine guidance were she thus to reverse the teaching of the centuries.

§ VIII: IN THE SAME BODIES

*Identity of
bodily sub-
stance—the
common view*

HITHERTO these pages have dealt with the doctrine of the resurrection of the body in a general way, setting forth its meaning and reasonableness, and assembling the scriptural and traditional evidence for it. It has been seen that the doctrine implies no mere immortality of the soul, or persistence of personal life in some purely spiritual mode of existence, but a real and complete resurrection of man in the fulness of his nature. It has been seen that only such a rising again can properly be called a resurrection, and that reason persuades this redintegration of the human whole. But nothing has been said so far about a matter which would seem to be of great importance in the interpretation of the doctrine—viz., the question of the identity of the risen body. The voice of tradition appears to be unanimous in favour of a very literal identity of material substance. The texts have been assembled in the previous pages, and all, it would seem, are of the same tenor as the profession which every Catholic bishop has to make in his consecration: "I believe in the true resurrection of that same flesh which I now bear." What do these formularies mean? What are we by the rule of faith required to believe regarding this point? Certainly, and obviously, the formularies imply that there is a relation of identity between the earthly and the risen body. But what sort of identity? That is the question.

For there are, among Catholic theologians, two rival views on this matter. There is the classical view, the view of the vast majority of the theologians, which maintains a real identity of bodily substance; and there is the view of a minority, which regards such material identity as unnecessary. Both parties agree, of course, that there is complete identity of soul; and both parties agree that the soul is the "predominant partner" and is the chief factor in the determination of personal identity. But, while the minority would make it the sole factor and effective cause of personal identity, the majority require along with it a coefficient of identical material substance. Let us illustrate the matter from ordinary human life.

A man preserves, throughout his life, his personal identity. That identity rests, in the first place, on identity of soul. The conscious life, knit together by memory, is continuous from beginning to end, and the man himself recognises in this continuous experience his identity with himself. But such *spiritual identity* is not the whole of the matter, just as man is not a pure spirit, but a being composed of body and soul. So that there is also a psycho-physical identity, based on the life of the senses and on every vital process of the organism. Let us call this, to distinguish it from the other, *vital identity*. It is true, of course, that the soul vitalises and controls the whole human energy, and yet it will be useful here to distinguish between purely spiritual activity and the mixed activities of the human complex. We recognise, then, in a living man, not merely an identity of soul, but an identity of his complete self, an identity not only in the functions of his mind, but in every function of his sensitive organism. Physiologists say that the substance of which the body is composed is continually changing, and St Thomas Aquinas also recognises a constant flux of matter. But it is a plain fact of experience that this process, however constant and however complete, does not interrupt the vital identity. Though atoms and molecules may change, yet the unitary life persists, and the organism goes on uninterrupted to the dissolution of death, preserving a continuous vital identity, while apparently wholly indifferent to the material "stuff" which it now appropriates and now discards.

Thus there are spiritual identity and vital identity, these two being in effect in the human life no more than distinct aspects of the same force. But, of the two, that which we call vital identity is the more characteristically human. For we are not disembodied spirits, or spirits using a physical mechanism in a merely external and instrumental way. On the contrary, the spiritual principle is enmeshed in a complex train of sense activity. The soul functions thus in the sense organism, and it is intimately and necessarily conjoined with it. Moreover, in each man as he lives his life, it is not any pure activity of soul that distinguishes him from his fellows, but rather this manifold psycho-physical activity. He is born with a sense life and already with certain characters which distinguish him from his fellows.

The cells which form his body, in their mysterious and wonderful fashion, strive towards and achieve a living structure which is original and unique. A vital formula or pattern dominates the process. And then the man acquires further characteristics, and the experience of life registers itself upon his organism, as well as in his memory. And so we get the unique person of unmistakable individuality, unique not only in the outward and visible features of his body, not only in the central life of the spirit, but in every pulsation of his vital energy. Such an identity and continuity of bodily life is a matter of everyday experience. To the scientist who knows nothing of soul, this vital energy in its manifold manifestations is all that he understands by life, and he recognises fully this vital identity.

*Atomic
identity*

But there is conceivable yet a third component of personal identity, which we may be allowed to call *atomic identity*. Natural science, it is true, has discovered elements more ultimate than the atom, and even the latest ultimates, proton and electron, now find their position threatened; but *atomic* identity will serve to convey what we intend, an identity of material substance.

For though the substance of our bodies is in constant flux, and though the organism would appear to be indifferent to the stuff which it uses, yet this change and alteration in our material composition is not catastrophic and instantaneously complete, but gradual and piecemeal. A man does not suddenly change his whole material substance. Take him at periods wide apart and there may be no atomic identity whatever, although this is one of those assertions which are far from proven. But even if we grant that the boy has no atomic identity with the man, or that our bodies—according to the current opinion—change entirely in a space of seven years, this does not dispose of the necessity of atomic identity in the personal life. For that life is a continuous process, and the material transformation is continuous also. It is not sudden and abrupt, but gradual. So that we cannot say that atomic identity, because of this flow of matter, has nothing to do with a man's personal identity. On the contrary, it would appear more reasonable to suppose that this identity makes its contribution to the complete human identity. And such is the spontaneous view of common sense, which, while quite ready to accept the metabolism of the physiologist, yet is not disturbed in its belief that there is a real continuity of material substance. The fire of life is passed on from day to day, until it is extinguished in death. And if the torch which carries that fire—the human body—is from day to day repaired and renewed by a marvellous vital chemistry, yet it remains really one and the same to the end of the race.

Such is human identity, not a thing of soul life alone, nor of soul and sense life, but the complex product of three: of soul and sense and body.

Now this is the sort of identity which the majority of theologians *The majority view* suppose to obtain in the resurrection. They point to the fact that the resurrections recorded in the Gospels were of this sort: the widow's son of Naim, the daughter of Jairus, Lazarus. Each of these rose from death to life in a body which had this full identity with the body of his previous life. And our Lord's Resurrection, which is the model of ours, was just such a resurrection, in his own body in the full sense of identity. The theologians do not suppose that there need be any absolute atomic identity, because such a condition is not verified in the successive stages of the earthly life. But they ask for such an identity as is certainly characteristic of the earthly life. They suppose that God will make good any defects in the body and remedy all imperfection. They conjecture that all men will rise again in the age of perfect youth, so that a child will be brought forward to this and an old man back. But in this process they believe that God will make use of the material substance which has been the man's in his earthly life. There is no need that he should use all of this, nor is there any objection, where such substance is lacking, to its being supplied from elsewhere. For exact material identity is not necessary. Ferrariensis, commenting on St Thomas's *Contra Gentiles*, speaks thus of this identity: "A man remains one and the same man throughout his life on account of a numerical identity of form (the soul) and on account of some identity of matter. For though there is continual change in his material constituents, yet there remains always some matter in hand to which the new is added. And so it is with the risen body. If by God's power there be given to this some substance that was lacking, yet absolutely and simply speaking the man remains one and the same, though he may be considered as different in an accidental way because of this foreign substance." ¹

And the theologians maintain this theory of identity, not because they suppose that the matter which may have formed our bodies retains in itself any natural inclination to one human body rather than another, but because they believe that God wishes our resurrection to have this completeness. It is his will, and he has the power to carry it out. Nor is it more difficult for him to raise in identical bodies those who have been dead for centuries, and whose bodies have long been dissolved into dust, than it was so to raise Lazarus or the son of the widow of Naim. And they believe that God wills this sort of resurrection, because it appears to them that the documents of the faith, Scripture and Tradition, persuade this resurrection and no other. It is not necessary again to refer to these documents, for they have been assembled in previous pages, but the reader will admit that this teaching regarding the identity of the risen body is the apparent meaning of the very explicit conciliar decrees, as for example the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council which declares

¹ On *Contra Gentiles*, IV, 81.

that men "shall all rise again with their own bodies which they now bear, to receive according to their works."

But it is argued by the theologians who do not accept this view that the decrees of the Councils are patient of another interpretation. It is urged that these definitions are concerned primarily with the reality of the bodily resurrection as against those who either denied this resurrection outright, or contended for such a "spiritual" body as emptied the doctrine of meaning; but that they do not give unquestionable and decisive testimony regarding the identity of the risen body. It is true that they use such phrases as "that same flesh which I now bear," and that these phrases seem plain enough; but they may be interpreted, it is urged, not of identity, but of similarity of flesh, as asserting, that is (in scholastic terms), not a numerical, but a specific identity. Such is the argument. However, if we compare these definitions with the teaching of tradition in the Fathers and schoolmen, it would appear that the plain meaning of the formularies is the true one. Some of this teaching has already been cited, but we may here assemble a few definite and explicit sentences.

The authority of the Fathers

St Justin Martyr says: "We expect to receive again our own bodies, though they be dead and cast into the earth, for we maintain that with God nothing is impossible." Athenagoras says: "It is impossible for the same man to be reconstituted unless the same bodies are restored to the same souls." Tertullian teaches that the particles of the body, wherever they may be, will be collected again and the man's proper body thus reproduced. Moreover, when the apologists grapple with the famous problem of the cannibal, the son of cannibals, we get plain evidence of their belief that identity of bodily substance was required for the resurrection.

Again, the Fathers (*e.g.*, St Jerome) commonly point to our Lord's Resurrection in an identical body as the type of our resurrection. As was the resurrection of the Head, so shall the resurrection of the members be. Our Lord was at pains to demonstrate to his disciples the reality of his body, and he showed that it was that body which had suffered and died for us. Our resurrection shall be like to his, in those bodies with which we have lived in the world, and with which we have merited either reward or punishment.

The weighty witness of St Augustine is entirely on the side of this bodily identity. He argues that it is not necessary that the material of which the body has been composed should in the reconstitution of the body occupy the same parts and perform the same functions as before. But he is quite clear that the body will be reconstituted from the same material. He likens the process to the melting down and recasting of a metal statue. All the metal is used again, and the new statue is identical in material with the original one, but the material is bound to be "shuffled" in the process and so differently arranged.

When we turn from the Fathers to the Scholastics we find no

difference of belief. St Thomas discusses the point with considerable care and pronounces definitely for the resurrection of an identical body.¹ After discussing Platonic and Pythagorean views regarding the relation and fate of soul and body, and pronouncing these and all similar views contrary to the teaching of Scripture, he affirms that the resurrection, since it means "rising again," demands that the soul return to the same body. If the soul does not return to the same body, then we ought not to speak of resurrection, but rather call the fact the assumption of a new body.

In his *Summa contra Gentiles* St Thomas considers at greater length the objections to this manner of conceiving the resurrection of the body. One objection is that, if this be true, we must suppose that all matter that has at any time belonged to a man must rise with him, so that he would be of a portentous magnitude. Another is that some men have no other food than human flesh, and beget children who also eat this food. So several men will have a right to the same flesh. St Thomas is not dismayed by these objections. Pointing to the fact of metabolism in the earthly life and the continual change that takes place in the material substance of the body, he argues that a man preserves his identity of body in spite of this flux and reflux of its elements: "What does not bar numerical identity in a man while he lives on uninterruptedly can clearly be no bar to the identity of the risen man with the man that was." So there is no need to suppose that the risen body must have all the matter that has belonged at any time to the man; it is sufficient that it have as much of it as will make a perfect body, repairing loss or mutilation and perfecting the aged or the immature. To the second objection he answers that it is based on the same false supposition, that a man must receive again all the matter that has ever been his. He adds that, if there should be any lack of bodily matter, we may trust God to supply the deficiency.

It is abundantly clear from these citations—which could be multiplied indefinitely—that traditional teaching favours a real identity of bodily substance. It might indeed be urged against this conclusion that the Fathers and Scholastics, had they possessed our modern knowledge of the constitution and behaviour of matter, would have spoken differently. But that is a rather doubtful supposition. For in the course of their arguments they faced objections which anticipated the difficulties of the scientist, and they were not turned away thereby from their insistence on corporeal identity. To all such objections they were content at the last to oppose the omnipotence of God as the all-sufficient solution. Nor is the attitude of the generality of modern theologians any different.

¹ Suppl., Q. lxxix; *Contra Gentiles*, IV, 81.

§ IX: OBJECTIONS AND ANOTHER VIEW

BUT if the resurrection of the body seems to the modern objector a hard doctrine, the resurrection of an identical body seems to him quite impossible and incredible. Indeed, it may be said, roughly speaking, that most of the "scientific" objections brought against the doctrine are objections to the theory of material identity, and concern this special aspect of the doctrine, rather than the doctrine in itself. The difficulty is not in any sense a new one, for it was evidently felt in every period of the history of the doctrine. But since the modern objections as they are commonly stated appear to many to persuade another view of the resurrection, and since such a view has been propounded, this section must set forth some of these objections, the view in question, and the general theological criticism of the whole.

"The indifference of the atom"

The chief objections to the theory of material identity may be reduced to three and stated as follows. The first objection is based upon what may be denominated the indifference of the atom. It is not an objection of great weight, for the theologians are quite prepared to admit this indifference, and they set the determining cause that requires material identity not in matter but in God. Yet since this objection is urged and is plausible, let it be here set down. Our bodies, then, are composed of atoms of various elements: carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, etc., in various number and proportion. These atoms are taken up into the cell life, are controlled by what may be called the psycho-physical formula of each individual man, and thus the individual, living body is formed. But of themselves these atoms have no personal characteristics or differences whatever. One atom of carbon is exactly like another atom of carbon, and one atom of nitrogen exactly like another atom of nitrogen and so on. (We refrain from carrying the analysis as far as the further ultimates, the proton and electron, though the absence of differentiating character becomes there more evident still.) Therefore when the body dies and the cell life is extinct, there would seem to be no satisfactory ground whatever for identifying any particular atoms with any particular body. It would seem, therefore, to be a matter of indifference what atoms were chosen to form the material substance of the risen body. And so the theory of material identity would seem unnecessary. And if miracles should not be multiplied without cause, why insist on this atomic identity?

The circulation of matter

The second objection is based on the doctrine of the incessant circulation of matter. The particles of matter of which our bodies are composed, it is alleged, have previously belonged to other bodies. And this matter is now, and has been from the beginning, in constant circulation. As the theologian Billot quaintly expresses it, this is a process *per quam ex quolibet quidlibet fit, et rursus quidlibet transit in quodlibet*.

Moreover, since man appeared on the earth untold generations have lived and died, and the question of property in particular atoms of matter has been rendered infinitely complex. And then there is the ancient, yet not unreal objection, based on the practice of cannibalism. So, in the general resurrection, it is asked, how can this universal problem of disputed ownership be settled?

And a third objection, which is really a particular case of the last, *Metabolism* points to that metabolism which is an admitted phenomenon of the individual bodily life. The physiologists do not allow any constant material identity in the living man. To them the fundamental fact of life is the incessant transformation of living substance. Life, they say, is constant decomposition and reconstruction. There is really no stability of material substance, and therefore no such thing as material identity. My body to-day may be substantially the same as what it was last week; but it is wholly different, in its material constituents, from the body which I had some years ago. So that it would appear that a genuine identity of bodily life in this world does not require any such material identity. Why, then, insist upon it in the resurrection?

Such are some of the objections raised against the theory of material identity. The general answer to them has already been made when it was said that all such difficulties will not be difficulties to the omniscience and omnipotence of God. And if we grant that the documents of revelation require such material identity, then there is nothing more to be said. But we may press these objections and refuse to make such appeal to God's power. To this the theologian would answer that all the difficulties may be reduced to one, namely to the supposed case where a man can claim no material substance as his own, because it has previously belonged to others. This is the crucial question, and it is a difficulty which is almost as old as the doctrine. What is the solution? We may either deny the probability of the hypothesis—certainly it cannot be shown to occur—or again we may leave the matter to God.

But some few theologians have met these difficulties in another way, and it is only fair to the reader that we should expound their view. It is rather an eccentric view and has not received great countenance among the general body of theologians; but it has been propounded both in the Middle Ages and in our own day, and it therefore deserves mention. According to this view, then, we are wrong to insist on material identity of bodily substance. That may be characteristic of the resurrection, but it is entirely unnecessary. It is sufficient that there should be identity of soul. Such is the view propounded in the scholastic period by Durand (died 1332), known from the quality of his temper and opinions as the *Doctor Resolutissimus*, and such is the view propounded more recently by the distinguished Jesuit theologian and former Cardinal, Billot.

This opinion has the advantage that it destroys the force of the

objections which have just been considered : they no longer apply. It is argued further, in its favour, that St Thomas himself pointed the way to this solution when he observed that a man preserved his numerical identity throughout his life, although the elements of his body were in a constant state of flux. From this Billot argues that the real principle of identity in a man, when we consider him at successive points in his life, is his soul and not the changing body ; and therefore also in the resurrection the soul can provide all necessary identity. If it be said that this view is contrary to the plain sense of the formularies, Billot's answer is that they do not contradict it. What the formularies insist on is reality of bodily substance and not identity. They are concerned to condemn errors such as that of Origen, but not to insist upon atomic identity. They wanted to make sure of *flesh*, but not of this particular flesh. And, argues Billot, if their words are to be pressed so as to connote material identity, then this identity ought to be complete. What ground, he asks, is there for saying that there must be some identical matter, but not all ? And if we adopt this complete material identity, then all the old problems face us : With what body shall a man rise, for he has tenanted many in the course of his life ? And what of the resurrection of cannibals ?

But if we neglect this atomic identity and cease to pursue it, how much easier everything becomes. Even in the earthly life how unimportant it is compared with the vital identity of the animated organism. The personal identity of the living body, with all its vital endowment, depends very little, if at all, upon an identity of atomic substance. And shall we insist upon it for the risen body ? That body will be identical with the earthly body with the vital identity of which we have spoken. When God raises up a living body in the resurrection, when he restores the bodily life, and sets up again the living organism, he does not restore any bodily life, a sort of standardised product ; but he restores that personal and individual life which you had on earth and which was arrested by death. When the soul takes up that life again it returns to intimate union with a familiar vital organism, and does not start a fresh life in a new environment. Your organism with all its special characters and individual traits, with all its experience of life, and with its unique history and unique achievement as the partner of your soul : this is the living body that God will restore to you at your resurrection. And with this vital identity—a very true and genuine identity—why ask for a further and unimportant identity of atomic substance ? You have not such identity in your earthly career, why demand it in the resurrection ?

Critique

Such, in brief, is the argument of those who deprecate insistence on material or atomic identity, and prefer to hold that identity of soul is sufficient ; for from soul identity flows that full vital identity which is proper to man. And, undoubtedly, their theory has its

advantages. It is obvious that, by dispensing with a literal identity of bodily substance, it does remove some of the difficulties which are brought against the bodily resurrection. It is definitely an "easier" view; nor can we say that it is not a permissible view. But, if it is more acceptable to the scientist, it is not so attractive to the theologian. For it is not, in spite of all argument to the contrary, in harmony with the tradition. It is at best a forced interpretation of the language of the formularies. And, if our whole business in this matter is to interpret the tradition truly, then it would seem that we must abandon this theory and hold to material identity. While as for the argument that material identity is not characteristic of the earthly life, this is untrue. For although the matter of the body is in constant process of change, yet there is a real continuity of material substance.

And so the view of Durand and Billot, with all its advantages, *Conclusion* has not been generally adopted and cannot be said to enjoy great favour among the theologians. It is true that some Scholastics have admitted the possibility of a resurrection in which there should be no material identity, but they have done so only by way of exception and hypothesis. The general attitude towards the view is well stated by Suarez:

"Therefore, although that manner of imperfect resurrection imagined by Durand may be conceived and understood as possible, yet the true resurrection, as the Scripture and the Church speak of it, requires an identity not only of soul, but also of body."¹

To the "scientific" difficulties which are alleged against material identity, it is answered that there is nothing very new about them. The difficulty arising out of the circulation of matter was contained, in a crucial form, in the old cannibal problem. Nor was St Thomas, for instance, unaware that the matter of our bodies is in a continual state of flux, and we may claim for him that he anticipated the metabolism of the physiologist.

So a man may well prefer to disregard these objections, reflecting that he has hardly any greater difficulties to face than those which were faced by the apologists, the Fathers and the Scholastics. And what was their general answer to all such objections? In its ultimate form it was simply this: that difficulties which seem to us, with our limited knowledge and limited intelligence, almost insuperable will be no difficulties to the omniscience and omnipotence of God. There is really nothing more to be said.

So that our conclusion is this: that, of the two modes of conceiving the true bodily resurrection, that more precise mode which requires some material identity is the one generally taught by the theologians, and is the one which best accords with the tradition. It may be said further, in favour of this view, that this is the sort of bodily resurrection which the ordinary Christian man has always

¹ *De mysteriis vitae Christi*, Disp. 44.

expected. St Thomas aptly expresses the attitude of the plain man when he says that if there be no material identity, we ought not to call the occurrence a resurrection of the body, but the assumption of a new body.

§ X: THE RISEN BODY

THIS essay has now dealt with the resurrection of the body and the manner of this resurrection; it remains to say something about the qualities of the risen body.

The work of theologians on the subject

The subject is a highly speculative one, and there is very little certainty about it. We know that we shall rise again in true bodies, and that these bodies will be in some way spiritualised. So much is the teaching of Holy Scripture and Tradition, and it is the faith of the Church; more than this is theological deduction and speculation. It may seem to some readers of this essay that it is idle to attempt any further precision in this matter, and that it would be far better to abstain from speculation and abide by the grand, if mysterious, language of St Paul. But Catholic theologians in general and the schoolmen in particular have not so regarded the matter. And indeed, apart from the fact that the subject of itself provoked the scholastic temper to exercise its gift for metaphysical speculation, these theologians had a very practical purpose. For the doctrine of the resurrection had encountered from the earliest times a criticism which sought to empty the risen body of all corporeality. Origen, for example, so emphasised the spirituality of the risen body that he was understood to deny to it any bodily character. Hence the condemnation of the Fifth Oecumenical Council: "If anyone shall say that the future judgement signifies the total abolition of bodies, and that the end of the story is immateriality, and that there will be nothing material in the future world, but only naked mind: let him be anathema."¹

Therefore the task before the Catholic theologian was to insist on the corporeal reality of the risen body, and at the same time to assert those spiritual characteristics which are proper to it in its glorified state. He had to construct such a theory of the glorious body as would preserve its bodily character and yet emphasise its spiritual transformation. It is obviously an exceedingly difficult thing to do, and the theologians would not claim to have achieved it satisfactorily or finally. Let us consider their tentative conclusions.

Resurrection of the reprobate

To begin with we must note that although we shall be chiefly concerned—as was St Paul—with the bodies of the blessed, yet the wicked also rise again. The wicked too shall live for ever, though it be to be punished everlastingly. So the bodies of all men, both good and bad, are now immortal and incorruptible. But that which is the foundation of the blessedness of the good is the supreme

¹ Canons against Origen, No. 11.

torment of the wicked, that they shall know no respite in their pains. For the rest, apart from this attribute of incorruptibility, the bodies of the blessed and the wicked differ as glory from utter dishonour, as beauty from vileness, as joy from misery. Their very incorruptibility is, in St Augustine's phrase, an incorruptibility of continuous corruption.

Turning from their lamentable state to consider the condition of the blessed, we set it down as the fundamental quality of their bodies that they are now immortal and incorruptible. In this especially does the risen body differ from the earthly body. The earthly body is subject to change and corruption; the risen body is immutable and incorruptible. When the Sadducees confronted our Lord with difficulties against the resurrection, he answered them: "The children of this world marry and are given in marriage. But they that shall be accounted worthy of that world and of the resurrection from the dead shall neither be married nor take wives. Neither can they die any more; for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."¹ From these words of our Lord, reported also in St Matthew and St Mark, we see that the life of the world to come is not a repetition of the life of this world, and that the risen body is body with a difference. To those who think otherwise, "You err," says our Lord, "not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God." In the resurrection we become like unto the angels of God.

Starting, then, from these data, that we have true bodies and that these bodies are now immortal and quasi-angelic, and basing their exposition upon St Paul's description in First Corinthians, the Scholastics attribute to the risen body four chief qualities—namely, impassibility, clarity, agility and subtlety. Let us consider these separately, and first the quality of impassibility.

We have already said that immortality is the first essential characteristic of the glorified state and that it is intrinsic and fundamental. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Following directly from this quality, and indeed hardly more than an aspect of it, is the quality of impassibility. By this it is meant that all defect is excluded from the glorified body. Incorruption reigns supreme, and the forces of corruption, waste and change have no more power. From this it follows that all the activities of generation and nutrition, or whatever others are bound up with the nature of a mortal and passible body, are excluded from the glorified body. St Thomas says that the risen body is perfectly subject to the soul and the soul to God. The body, therefore, is assimilated to the nature of the soul and shares its impassibility: it is as the angels of God.

We may revolt against this doctrine as contradicting all our conceptions of the nature of "body," of which constant change,

¹ Luke xx 34-36.

waste and repair, seem necessary characteristics. Yet we know very little of the real nature of body and its inherent possibilities ; and we know less of the power of God. But here is the explicit doctrine, imparting to us a piece of divine knowledge, and from this doctrine the impassibility of the risen body is a necessary deduction.

In connection with this quality we may refer briefly to the speculations of the Scholastics with regard to minor points. St Thomas lays it down that men and women will rise with bodies which are perfect in every member and every organ, although the functions of the physical life are no longer performed. If there were defects in the earthly body, these will be repaired in the risen body. And, furthermore, all will rise "in juvenili aetate," in the state of youth. The child who has died before attaining this state, and the old man who has passed through it to decrepitude : both alike will be established in the perfect age. And so they will remain, without change or alteration, immortal and impassible.

Clarity

The second quality of the risen body, according to the Scholastics, is "clarity"—that is to say, beauty, glory and splendour. "It is sown in dishonour," says St Paul, "it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body." Our bodies, he says, become celestial and possess the glory proper to the celestial. For "one is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars. For star differeth from star in glory." And even so our bodies, when risen and glorified, shall possess a proper glory and beauty. Of this glory we can say little. The soul enjoys the beatific vision, and that infinite beauty irradiates and transforms it. "Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what things God hath prepared for them that love him." The glory possessed by the soul in the beatific vision overflows, says St Thomas, and transforms the body. "Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."¹ St Thomas says that the glory of the soul shines through the body, even as a glass vessel shows the colour of that which is contained in it. So the whole body will be lightsome (*lucidum*), and display in every part the glory of the soul.

Subtlety

The third quality of the risen body is the quality of subtlety, by which is meant that the body, while remaining a true body, is yet assimilated to the spiritual soul, to which it is now utterly docile. "It is sown a natural body : it shall rise a spiritual body"—that is to say, like to a spirit ; and this quality of subtlety is especially characteristic of spirit. Yet we must not, with some ancient heretics, push the "rarefaction" of body so far as to abolish the distinction between body and spirit. Body cannot be transformed into spirit, however "subtle" it may become. The risen body shall remain as true a body as was our Lord's when he said, "See my hands and

¹ Matt. xiii 43.

feet, that it is I myself ; handle and see : for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see me to have." ¹ The risen body, says St Thomas, is subtle through completest perfection of bodily nature, and not through lack of that nature. And he derives this perfection from the dominance of the glorified soul over the body, which is now entirely subject to it.

And we are not to think that this quality violates in any way the proper nature of body. Some theologians suppose that this subtlety enables the risen body to pass through other bodies, just as our Lord entered the room, "the doors being shut." But St Thomas regards this as a special exercise of divine power, as a miraculous event, and not as the natural behaviour of a glorified body. For he holds that the glorified body must still have dimensions and must still have its own exclusive locality. And not even two spirits, though infinitely subtle, can be in the same place at one and the same time.

The fourth quality of the risen body, as specified by the theologians, is denominated "agility." By this is meant again that the body becomes a perfect instrument for the glorified soul. It is able to pass from place to place with great quickness, according to the will of the soul, and to move other bodies with a like velocity. "It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power." St Thomas here, as in the case of the other qualities, derives this agility from the perfect subjection of the risen body to its soul. The body becomes a perfect instrument, alert and quick to obey the spirit in all the activities of the blessed life.

Such, then, are the qualities of the risen body as expounded in theological speculation. There is no need to regard this exposition as exhaustive, or to claim for it any finality or absolute certainty. But some such speculation is certainly legitimate and no unreasonable illustration of the effort of faith to seek fuller understanding of its object. And let those note, who impute to the Catholic theology of the resurrection the character of crude materiality, that the whole effort and trend of this exposition is to emphasise the spirituality of the glorified body. The keynote of the whole teaching is the dominance of the risen soul over the whole man. In the earthly life the spirit was trammelled and thwarted by its partner. There was a continual conflict. The balance of man's nature had been upset by original sin, and as a consequence he found "another law in his members fighting against the law of the spirit." But the effect of the resurrection, won for us by Christ our Lord, is to restore the integrity of human nature and to make the body the perfect instrument of the soul. If in the earthly life it was very really and unmistakably an animal body, subject to the necessities and the desires of the animal life, now it is as really and unmistakably a spiritual body, completely obedient to the soul and perfectly fulfilling its behests. In the life of glory, therefore, all conflict and friction have ceased.

¹ Luke xxiv 39.

The soul now expresses itself in a perfect medium, and being most intimately one with the body and with every part of it, is able now, as never before, to exert its proper psychical energy to a degree only limited by the limitations of a finite being. It is here, in this enfranchisement of the soul's energy, in this enlargement and intensification of its power, that we must find the dominant characteristic of the glorified state. And the purpose of the qualities which have been specified above is no other than to depict and emphasise this dominance of spirit.

*Preservation
of the glori-
fied body*

Let us say one word more about the potency of the glorified spirit and its efficiency in the glorified state. The glorified body, as has been said already, preserves every part and every organ of the earthly body. Yet cells and tissues and organs are to be conceived as maintaining their perfection without those processes of waste and repair, that metabolism, which is characteristic of the earthly organism. This is a hard saying, and what scientist can hear it? To justify it, we may be content to appeal to that omnipotent power which is the cause of the resurrection itself. But is it not possible also, short of invoking the omnipotence of God, to set forth this effect as the direct result of the dominance of spirit? Modern psychology has come back from its mechanistic wanderings to admit a real psychical force, a force which dominates and controls the material coefficients with which and through which it works. It is shy of using the word "soul," but none the less it has returned to a belief in some such thing. Now modern psychology on its experimental side has also made it more and more clear that the mind exercises a very powerful influence over the body. It has shown that this influence extends even to very profound modifications of the organism. The controlling influence of mind is clear even in the normal functioning of the organism, but it has become especially manifest in those abnormal states which have been elaborately studied by modern investigators, as in the phenomena of hysteria. We now know that there are many bodily affections which are mental in their origin and that they yield to skilled treatment. The mind has the power to disturb and alter the physiological functions of the body, and it can produce all the material effects of genuine bodily disease. This power of mind is admitted by the psychologists.

Now if such is the power of mind in this life, if it so permeates and controls the bodily organism, what will be its power in the future life, when, according to our faith, the soul is raised to such a height of power and glory? It is a source of energy here and directs the body, though with difficulty and interruption; in the future life it will exercise a higher power, and will have no obstacles in its path. This soul-action, therefore, this effective psychical energy, is to be conceived as the cardinal fact of the glorified life.

*The Beatific
Vision and the
glorified body*

Nor should we omit another word about the effect of the "beatific vision" upon the glorified body. In the Gospel account of our

Lord's Transfiguration we read that he was "transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow."¹ It is the traditional teaching of Catholic theology that this splendour was the normal quality of Christ's body. His human soul, by reason of its hypostatical union with the Eternal Word, enjoyed the beatific vision. But the connatural effect of this vision is the glorification, the transfiguration of the body. However, Christ as man, for the purposes of his Incarnation, restrained this effect, and once only, in his Transfiguration, allowed that glory to be seen.

So is it with the risen body as it was with the body of Christ in his Transfiguration. By virtue of the gift of glory the Blessed enjoy the beatific vision, and the power and splendour of the vision embrace not the soul only, but also the body. St Paul says: "We all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."²

And now enough has been said about our doctrine. It will be abundantly evident that Catholic theology is wholly faithful to tradition. It insists on a genuine resurrection of body. It inculcates a complete view of human nature, and provides for a truly human immortality, an immortality of the whole human person. Firm in the faith once delivered to the saints, the Church looks forward confidently to a resurrection which is promised and prefigured in the Resurrection of her Lord.

JUSTIN McCANN, O.S.B.

¹ Matt. xvii 2.

² 2 Cor. iii 18.

XXXV

HEAVEN, OR THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

§ I: INTRODUCTORY

FOR God the creation and the final consummation of all things are ever present to his eternity. For men who exist in time, their creation and their consummation are separated by the slow sequence of change measured by many days, many years, and many ages. God created us by an act of thought; he willed, he spoke, and we were. We are, because he knows us. On the impossible supposition that we should ever pass out of his sight, we should instantaneously cease to be and sink back into nothing from which we came. Our creation meant that we entered into the sight of God, and our continued existence means that he keeps us in sight; our very being depends on his mind. Our consummation will be when we know God even as we are known, when we see him, who has ever seen us, and whose sight is our life. God knew us in order that one day we might know him; such is the alpha and omega, the beginning and end of all human history.

The Church of God, in the full sense of the word, is the multitude of those whom God has called to eternal life. "We know," said St Paul, "that to those who love God all things co-operate unto good even to those who, according to his purpose, are called to be saints. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to become likened unto the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. But those whom he predestined, he also justified, but those whom he justified, he also glorified."¹ In this sense there is but one Church of God from the days of Adam and Eve until the day when the whole multitude of the saved will be glorified around the throne of God. The Church of God began in Paradise and continues in heaven. On earth it is divided into the church of the primitive covenant, that of the Mosaic and that of the New or Christian covenant, but these three divisions can be united under the one name of Church Militant, for man's life on earth is a warfare, as the Scripture says. To this warfare there is but one final alternative, either heaven or hell.

Hell is complete defeat and everlasting loss. Those that enter hell completely pass out of the communion of the Saints and the church of the Redeemed; they are outside the bond of charity and the benefit of the Atonement of Christ. Those who enter Purgatory not only remain within the Church and the communion of the

¹ Rom. viii 28-30.

Saints, but are its holy and privileged members, who have made their salvation sure. Their state, however, is not a permanent one, and while it lasts it combines the joys of security and the calm of resignation with the most intense pain of being deprived of the sight of God. Hence the multitude of those waiting souls is called the Church Suffering.

Heaven is the only decisive and ultimate victory of which man is capable, hence the company of those who have fought the good fight, won the battle, and entered into the land of their conquest, is called the Church Triumphant.

We shall study the nature of that ultimate triumph, that celestial consummation which awaits those who persevered unto the end and have received from the eternal King the reward that never passes away. In heaven man will achieve the perfection of his manhood in the supernatural order as God intended it. This will mean the complete satisfaction of his faculties of mind and will by the sight and possession of God himself; it will mean the glorification also of his body and its faculties, because the body will be the handmaid of his soul in the perfection of his celestial life.

We must therefore consider his heavenly happiness first in regard to his mind, then in regard to his will, and finally in regard to his body. We shall conclude by considering some of the consequences and implications of his eternal bliss, and by studying some special questions concerning heaven.

§ II: THE VISION OF GOD THE SATISFACTION OF THE MIND

HEAVEN is essentially the sight of God face to face.

Almost eighteen hundred years ago St Irenaeus wrote: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. For man indeed of himself does not see God. But God of his own will is seen by those whom he wills, when he wills, and as he wills. For God is mighty in all. He was seen then (by the Prophets in the Old Testament) through the Spirit of prophecy, he is now seen in the New Covenant, by adoption also, through the Son; but in the kingdom of heaven he will be seen even as Father. Man will be prepared by the Spirit in the Son of God. Man will be brought to the Father by the Son: man will be endowed with incorruption by the Father unto everlasting life, which comes to everyone by the fact of his seeing God. For as those who see the light are in the light and perceive its brightness, thus also those who see God are in God, perceiving his brightness. This brightness gives them their life; hence they that see God, see life. God is beyond created grasp, intelligence, and sight, but he will put himself within human sight, intelligence, and grasp for the purpose of giving life to those who perceive and see

*The essence
of heaven*

him. God's greatness is indeed unsearchable, but so also is his loving kindness unutterable, even that loving kindness by which, being seen, he gives life to those that see him."¹

*Joy of the
Beatific
Vision*

At first it may seem difficult to realise that our happiness in heaven can possibly consist in an act of contemplation and love. On earth the common idea of enjoying oneself consists in some gratification of the senses: a sumptuous banquet, sweet music, healthy exercise, a beautiful landscape; or the company and praise of our fellow men, the achievement of some great work through the exercise of our brain and skill, the discovery of something fresh and new, the travelling through unknown and sunlit lands. These and a thousand other things flit before the human mind when it imagines supreme happiness, for this happiness is thought of as an endless variety of such things as our own experience on earth suggests. A life of contemplation may seem a pale and attenuated existence, holding little attraction for us. On reflection, however, it becomes more and more evident that the highest and happiest life must be the complete satisfaction of mind and will in the sight and possession of an infinite personal Being.

Even on this earth the greatest known joy is intimacy—*i.e.*, knowledge and nearness with another intelligent being. Imagine a mother, after the Great War, gazing again on the face of her son, and hearing his voice, and then clasping him in her embrace, and holding him as her very own possession, of which the battlefield had almost robbed her! The first moments of their mutual happiness contain a joy so intense that all other so-called enjoyments are as nothing in comparison.

Or imagine a husband and a wife, who have been long parted by strange misfortunes, and after years of separation meet again. As a matter of fact, this theme has ever been elaborated in all human literature, and we may rest assured that it will remain so as long as man lives here below. No doubt this theme of story-tellers, poets, and songsters has been degraded times out of number because of the carnal and sexual element which so often is intruded or, rather, intrudes itself. But nobler minds, at least, can realise that the sensual side of this earthly affection ought not and need not be the dominant factor in true human love, that the knowledge and spiritual possession of one another can be the source of a quasi-delirium of pure joy even on earth. True, this does not often last long, but at least as long as it lasts it is supposed to outweigh all other things. Pain, poverty, and distress only provoke a smile, and the very comparison of such joy with other earthly goods is disclaimed as a degradation. "Strong as death is love and many waters cannot quench its fire." Given the infinity of God, God must be infinitely beautiful and infinitely lovable. So far from a pale and extenuated existence, heaven is the romance, the never-ending love story of the soul and God.

¹ *Adv. Haeres.*, iv 20, § 5.

Holy Scripture certainly makes it perfectly plain that our eternal happiness will consist in seeing God.

"We know in part: and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But, when I became a man, I put away the things of a child. We see now through a glass in a dark manner: but then face to face. Now I know in part: but then I shall know even as I am known."¹ "We are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is."² "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom thou hast given me may be with me: that they may see my glory which thou hast given me, because thou hast loved me before the creation of the world."³ "Despise not one of these little ones: for I say to you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven."⁴ "In the midst . . . was the tree of life . . . , the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it. And his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more. And they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them. And they shall reign for ever and ever."⁵

Some people speak as if the sight of God after death were the natural reward for those who have led good lives. This is a great mistake. It is not natural to any created being, however good, to see God. God is infinite: a created being is finite, limited, circumscribed, and it is not natural to the finite to perceive the infinite. Not that the infinite merely exceeds the finite in extent, and that therefore the finite could only see a part or a portion of it. The infinite has no parts. The infinite cannot be divided. One cannot see the half of it, or a third, or a tenth; one either sees it as a unity in its entirety or one does not see it at all.

The infinite exceeds the finite not in extent, but in innermost being. God does not belong to the same category of being as the creature—in fact, he does not belong to any category of being at all: he is unique. There is nothing with which to compare him. He stands utterly by himself. His essence, his life infinitely exceeds ours. Hence it cannot be natural to any creature to see God—that is, to know him as he is. We are indeed like God, but not as one human being is like another; we are like him, as the image in a mirror is like the man who stands in front of it. God is the Reality, we the image. Created reality consists in this very imagehood, and is of necessity infinitely distant from the self-subsistent Infinite Reality that is its Creator. So far is it from being natural for a

¹ 1 Cor. xiii 9-12.

³ John xvii 24.

⁵ Apoc. xxii 2-5.

² 1 John iii 2.

⁴ Matt. xviii 10.

Its super-natural character

created being to understand, to grasp God, to see him face to face, to know him in the way in which he knows himself, that the human mind could never have known, but for divine revelation, that such vision was possible.

*Nature of the
Beatific
Vision*

Even after divine revelation, the human mind cannot understand how it is, though it humbly believes God's word. The "how" of it, I mean the core of this mystery of the Beatific Vision, completely escapes us; it remains as utter a secret as the Blessed Trinity, or the Incarnation, or the Blessed Sacrament. The Beatific Vision is the crowning mystery of Christianity, a mystery which leaves the human mind aghast, and is acceptable only by the power of faith. The Beatific Vision is a free gift of God to man exceeding all natural merit of virtue by an absolute measure, and not only the merit of human virtue, but that of any angels and archangels, cherubim or seraphim; nay, even of Mary the Mother of God. God, infinite though he be, could not, even by an exercise of his absolute omnipotence, create a being to whom it should be *natural* to enjoy the Beatific Vision.

Let us study the workings of our mind a little.

Here on earth we have one and only one definite mode according to which we know things. By our five senses we come in touch with the outer world, and through them we form sense-images. These sense-images we have in common with the animal world, but, being men, and not animals only, by the action of our spiritual soul or mind we abstract the essence of things from them—that is, we regard not merely *this* tree, *this* house, *this* dog, *this* man, but transcending their concrete individuality we refer to a tree, a house, a dog, a man, abstracting completely from all those special characteristics by which they are constituted as concrete units; in other words, we form their concept, or general idea. Moreover, we can conceive their abstract relations; we conceive length and breadth and height and measure, and we compare them. Nay, we ascend to such high abstractions as right or wrong, virtue or vice, holiness or sin. Then we can combine our many ideas into judgements, and chain these together into arguments, and reason from truth to truth.

In this way we come to the supreme conclusion that God is, that some infinite, eternal, self-existent cause must have made this world, and thus in a supereminent way contain within himself all the highest perfections of the world he has made. During this life we have no other means of knowledge, no other means of access to reality except the way we have thus described. It is an indirect and discursive way, incapable of leading us to God directly, incapable of bringing us to God as he is in himself.

Now after death, though our body is separated from our soul, our mind does not change its nature. Some are under the impression that death acts like magic and changes our innermost being; but this is not so. If God did not intervene, if God left nature merely

to itself, the human mind would possess no further knowledge beyond what it had gained by inference and reasoning. It would know God in an abstract and merely analogous way ; it would never know God directly and immediately ; never by sight. It might still have been rewarded by some happy life in reward for its virtue ; this life would have been endless, but it would not have been the Beatific Vision. There would have been a quasi-infinite difference between that state and the blissful direct sight of God.

What, then, will this vision be ? It will be a vision without any sense or any thought-images. Obviously no sense-image can intervene, for God is in no way corporeal. Moreover, there will be no thought-image or idea. What do we mean by this ? The mind will not form an abstract representation or idea of God ; it will have no "mental picture" as it has in the case of all other things here on earth. The sense-image on the brain is grasped by the mind. It sinks into the mind ; the mind grips it and holds it and transforms itself accordingly : it conceives it, as we say. A thought is a concept, a mental impression, by means of which the thing that is without us is seen by the mind. It is, as it were, a lens between our mental eye and the reality. We know a thing by the idea we form of it ; without such ideal medium our mind knows nothing.

Or perhaps instead of the comparison of a lens it may be better to use that of a seal imprinted upon wax. The schoolmen speak of a *species impressa* and a *species expressa*. Every act of thought modifies the mind. It is as if external reality impressed itself on the mind and shaped and moulded it. There is, however, this difference. The metal die forces itself upon the wax and causes its conformity with the engraving on its surface. In thinking it is the mind which is the active principle and which holds and conforms itself to the external reality and absorbs it, in a sense, by taking it into itself. Now a created thing is understood by us precisely because we thus mentally grasp its outlines, those limitations of a being which make it that being and not another. It is clear that God cannot be understood in this way, because God is essentially infinite and has no limitations. No "idea," since it is necessarily limited, can adequately represent the infinite God.

It remains, therefore, that God should, in some mysterious way, fulfil the role which, in our natural cognitive processes, is played by the "idea." God will render himself immediately present and intelligible to our minds.

In this way we have never as yet known anything on earth. All things remain, as it were, outside us ; they only enter into our minds by way of an "idea." God will not remain outside us. He will be within our mind itself, and there we shall see him. The nearest approximation to such knowledge on earth is our knowledge of ourselves. We know ourselves because we are ourselves ; we are present to ourselves in our innermost being. Hence Holy Scripture

uses this knowledge as a means of comparison : " Then I shall know even as I am known."

We must not, therefore, imagine God in the Beatific Vision as some outside Object to look at, but as dwelling within the very essence of our soul, and thus being perceived from within by direct contact. Of course, even of our earthly life it is true that " in him we live, we move, we have our being." God not only created us in the past, but maintains us in being in the present ; our whole being continually rests upon him. We exist only because he incessantly inwardly sustains us. We are kept in being by God as the image in the mirror is kept in being by the person continuing to stand in front of it. Our innermost self is in God and by God, but we do not realise it. We do not perceive God. Our being is in contact with him, but not our knowledge ; when our knowledge also attains him directly, then we shall possess the Beatific Vision.

The principle that rules all intelligence and understanding is that we can know things only in the measure in which we are similar to them. A thing which has nothing in common with us, we could never understand, but inasmuch as we resemble them can we grasp them with our mind. So is it also with regard to our understanding God. We shall know him, and therefore, says the Scripture, " we shall be like unto him." Our life will be in conscious contact with his, and his life will, as it were, overflow into ours and pervade us through and through, and thus we shall know him.

A humble comparison may help us : throw a bar of iron into a blazing furnace and leave it there till it is molten metal in the midst of the fire, and the eye can no longer see the fire. As that iron knows the fire, so shall we know God. Our innermost being will thrill and throb in unison with God's life, and we shall be fully conscious of it. True, by grace we are on earth already " sharers of the divine nature," as St Peter tells us, but the effect of that participation of divine life is in some sense suspended, because our soul is still in our mortal body. Its mode of knowledge is restricted and restrained by our earthly conditions. Set it free from this mortal body and grace changes into glory ; the soul enters into its supernatural birth-right.

*The Light
of Glory*

God, in order to make this apprehension possible, creates in us a new faculty, which we call by the technical name of *lumen gloriæ*, " the light of glory." By this our cognitive faculty is raised to a supernatural state, being thus enabled to perform an act which exceeds not only the normal human mode and measure of knowing, but the mode and measure of any creature whatever.

But here we are faced with the difficulty that the finite can never grasp the infinite. The difficulty would be insuperable if the Beatific Vision involved that the human mind encompassed God with its knowledge. This indeed would be impossible. The Blessed will see the whole of God—for God has no parts—yet they

will not exhaust his infinite intelligibility. God alone can know himself as fully as he can be known.

As in heaven faith and hope cease and only charity remains, the Blessed in heaven will cease to *believe* the Blessed Trinity; they will cease to accept it on faith, for faith will be replaced by vision. The great mystery will be mystery no longer, for they will see the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost face to face.

The Blessed contemplate not merely the divine nature as such; by a mental abstraction distinguishing it from the threefold personality as we do on earth, they see God as he is, therefore they see the Three Persons in the Trinity. Their understanding of the mystery will, of course, not be infinite and comprehensive; it will be only finite apprehension, the intensity and depth of which varies with the measure of the *lumen gloriæ* which they receive. Their understanding of it will be none the less direct and intuitive, and thus completely satiating their intelligence, so that all further searching into the truth as into a mystery entirely ceases.

Thus will be fulfilled the words of Christ: "No one knows the Father except the Son and he to whom the Son wills to reveal him." The Blessed know the Father through the Son in the Holy Ghost. They see the Unbegotten Source of the Godhead, who is the Father, through the Son whom he eternally begets. They perceive him through his Word and Utterance, through him who is "the splendour of his glory and the figure of his substance." They see both Father and Son in the Holy Ghost, who dwells within them, and in whose light they participate through the light of glory.

The Blessed are adopted sons of God, brothers and co-heirs of Christ, and will therefore rejoice in eternity in love and worship of the Second Person of the Trinity as united to them in a brotherhood through grace and glory. They rejoice in the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, whose temple they are. They rejoice in the adoration of the First Person from whom all good things flow and to whom they have learnt from Christ to say: Abba, Father.

As by baptism they were baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost when first they received the gift of sanctifying grace, so when grace is changed into glory, they will be hallowed and sanctified in that Name. Their heavenly life will be one continual *Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto*.

In the souls of the just on earth the three Divine Persons dwell, according to the promise of Christ: "If any man love me . . . we will come to him and will make our abode with him."¹ Of this indwelling, however, the just on earth are not normally conscious. In heavenly glory this indwelling will be consciously perceived and enjoyed by the Blessed. In consequence the Blessed stand in a threefold conscious relation to God whom they contemplate and possess within themselves. When they re-echo the threefold "Holy, Holy,

¹ John xiv 23.

Holy" of the Cherubim they will understand the full meaning of the Trisagion, and ascribe this triple song of praise by love and adoration to the Triune God within them whose unveiled presence they hold and embrace.

§ III: THE LOVE OF GOD THE SATISFACTION OF THE WILL

*Embrace of
God by know-
ledge and love*

THOUGH we describe our eternal reward as "blissful sight," yet this description does not exhaust the reality; it is not, as it were, a definition, a complete designation of it. Even in eternity we shall have not merely mind, but also will. Not only our intelligence, but our human desire will be totally satiated, for in knowing him who is the fount of all truth we shall possess him who is the Infinite Good. As God is infinite he can belong to endlessly many creatures, but still be to each one of them totally his. "I am thy reward exceeding great," said God to Abraham, the patriarch; but this saying in strictest truth is applicable to each one of the Blessed.

Seeing God and possessing God are in a sense the same thing, or, rather, they are the obverse and reverse of a medal. To see is to enjoy; to enjoy is to possess. God is infinite beauty, but to embrace infinite beauty by knowledge is to possess it. God will give himself to us. A friend gives himself to a friend by throwing himself into his arms and being pressed to his bosom. A spirit embraces not with material fleshly arms, but by the power of thought. We shall clasp God to our bosom spiritually, and we shall be united to him with closer bonds than ever joined a lover to his beloved.

These are not mere expressions of poetical exaggeration or mere emotional piety; they are endorsed by strict philosophy and theology, they are almost technical in their value. To possess God is supreme happiness, for God is infinite beauty and lovableness.

If a man wishes to call his imagination to aid—and it is not unlawful in this matter—he should recall the greatest and grandest scene of beauty he has ever gazed upon, the most entrancing melody he ever heard, and remember that God created nature, and that nature is a feeble reflection of God. He should think of the person he most dearly loves or loved on earth, the dearest face, the tenderest heart he knows of, and then say to himself that all human goodness, the sum of all human lovableness is as a drop in the ocean of God's love and magnificence.

Mutual love

A further thought which will aid us is that the love between God and ourselves will be mutual. God is not merely a picture to be looked at, a scene to be contemplated; God is personal, and he returns the gaze we cast upon him. God is a living God, not a mere effulgence of impersonal glory, however great. Our soul will be joined to God in mutual affection; he will ever whisper in our ears: "I have chosen you," and we shall answer, however humbly, "and

I have chosen you." Our union in heaven is the outcome of our free deliberate acts on earth, continued in eternity. These transports, of course, will be mental, spiritual, without any physical emotion, and without that exhaustion which on earth follows the outpouring of mere natural human affections ; but they will on that account be only the more intense. When after the Resurrection we shall possess our bodies again, even our glorified flesh will no doubt share in the exaltation of our spirit, and experience a sweetness, indescribable to us now but corresponding to our state of soul, and unaccompanied by that fatigue which is caused by continued emotion here.

All love is essentially an act that goes out from one being to another. It is the precise opposite of selfishness or self-centredness. It is benevolence towards another ; it is complacency in the good of another ; it is return of affection for a good received from another. All love is union of some kind, but union is impossible except there be at least two parties, and each of these communicates with the other, or gives itself (or at least something of itself) to the other. The more perfect the love the more complete the surrender of the lover to the loved. In consequence the love by which the Blessed love God is one of supreme altruism. On earth we often say that the more a man goes out of himself, the more he leaves himself behind and forgets himself, the more perfect is his love. This is true in the highest manner of the love of the Blessed in heaven.

It is sometimes objected against the Christian conception of an eternal reward in heaven that it is a selfish ideal. This objection rests on a complete misunderstanding. The Blessed in heaven are indeed supremely happy. But this happiness is the necessary consequence of their love of God. They are happy, not in loving themselves, but in loving God. Heaven is the highest act of self-surrender of which a creature is capable. Each one of the Blessed is eternally conscious that he belongs to another, and this very consciousness is the source of his happiness. Heaven is the absolute cessation of self-love, if by self we understand something separate and independent of God.

Do the Blessed, then, "forget" themselves in God? Have the Blessed no love for themselves? Of course. The Blessed know that they are themselves the objects of divine love, and in loving God, they love all that God loves, including themselves. The precise reason why the Blessed love themselves lies in that they are conscious of being the objects of God's love. They know themselves as the image and likeness of God, and they see in themselves a partial mirroring of the infinite perfection of God. They love God in themselves, for whatever perfection or excellence they possess is a gift of God, and the effect of his creative will. They love it because it is his work. They love themselves because they are his. Heaven is no home for mock humility. St Paul wrote: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and the grace of God in me has not

No selfishness

The love of the Blessed for themselves

been void." So the Blessed say: "By the glory of God I am what I am, and the glory of God in me is not void." This is not in discord with their former song on earth: "To the King, immortal and invisible, to God alone be honour and glory throughout the ages of ages." The only difference is that the King once invisible is now seen face to face. To him alone indeed be glory, for our glory is his.

Imagine for a moment that a sculptor could make statues, not of dead marble, but endowed with life and thought; imagine, further, that the life and thought of these statues remained continually dependent on the active will of the sculptor who first fashioned them. Imagine, thirdly, that each of these statues was a self-portrait of the sculptor, portraying him in different attitudes and with different charms. Imagine, lastly, that these living statues knew and loved the sculptor who made them and keeps them in being. You will have then imagined something resembling the Blessed in heaven. The more these living statues loved the sculptor the more they would love themselves as portraying one or other of his perfections. The Blessed love themselves, but their love does not rest ultimately there, but in God, whom *alone* they love for himself. Their self-love is but an aspect of their love for God. A very telling though imperfect parallel of this celestial love is sometimes found in the utterance of lover to beloved: "The only reason why I care for myself is that you love me."

*Complete
satisfaction*

The sight and love of God will constitute the complete satisfaction of all our desires. During our mortal life we are beings in progress, in process of evolution towards our final state. The Beatific Vision is that final state. Our mortal life is a tending towards the perfection of our being.

We Catholics are, as a matter of fact, great believers in evolution, but we do not trouble ourselves so much about the evolution of the past, for, whatever it has been, it has only historical interest; we cannot change it now. What has been, has been. We believe in the only evolution that really matters, the evolution which we are actually undergoing, and in which our own freewill plays a part. Because on this earth we are evolving beings, evolving according to God's supernatural plan towards a life in union with him, our mortal life is essentially imperfect. Because we are imperfect, our life here is one of longing, seeking, hoping for the future. All this will one day end. We shall not always be dissatisfied with what we have and are. Our eternal existence will not be one of endless craving, and not yet possessing, a waiting for something beyond; the fulness of our being will come at last, and our life will be one of tranquil possession. That sacred restlessness which necessarily marks even the holiest life on earth, precisely because it has not reached the term and purpose of its existence, will pass away. We cannot picture to ourselves a life without some unfulfilled desires, yet reason tells us that, in the consummation of all things, unful-

filled desires are an impossibility for those who have received their reward exceeding great, in the possession of God. Their whole being is satiated. The question: "Do you lack anything? Is there still anything you need?" would, if put to the lowliest of the saints, provoke a smile and the answer, "How could I, since I have God!"

In heaven we are at the end of life's journey; we are in God's Paradise; we need not, indeed we cannot, travel beyond. Heaven therefore is in a sense something stationary, since it is the complete fulfilment of our being. We have reached God, and we can reach no further. Striving is over; there is now only the unchangeable joy of possession, of repose in God. It is, indeed, the "eternal rest" which we so often pray that God may give to the souls in Purgatory.

Yet this complete repose and satisfaction of our being is no mere passive state. It is the most intense activity. God himself, as we know, is called in Catholic philosophy "pure activity," and in the measure in which we approach God the intensity of our life increases. Heaven is all activity.

The Love of the Blessed is always active. On earth our acts of love towards our neighbour last for a while; they last while we think of them; they cease when the necessities of our daily life force us to think of something else. Even our love of God, which we exercise on earth, is manifested by intermittent acts. Great saints may, indeed, in their waking moments, make an almost continuous act of the love of God, but even they must occasionally interrupt their communion with God to attend to other things. In heaven, as the Beatific Vision is but one unceasing act, so likewise the act of love is one single uninterrupted act which lasts throughout eternity. This act of blissful love not only never ceases, but it never varies, whether in intensity or in the object to which it is directed; for the soul's power of loving is unchangeable and always exercised to the utmost, and God, the object loved, is always clearly seen in all his loveliness as far as the particular soul can apprehend it. On earth we can exercise our love for God on different grounds, loving him now for his justice, now for his mercy, now for his wisdom, now for his tenderness. In heaven we shall see that all God's attributes are identical with his being. This one act of supernatural human love will contain within itself all aspects of love: love of benevolence, love of complacency, love of gratitude—*i.e.*, the will that God should be what he is, the Infinite Good, a pure delight begotten of the contemplation of his infinite goodness, and a realisation that our share in his happiness is due to his generous bounty.

Shall we never tire of the very intensity of our love towards God? Will the transports of joy and love never create any fatigue throughout eternity? No. All fatigue arises from the use of bodily organs by the thinking subject; spiritual activities in themselves are not subject

to any fatigue, hence the act of loving will not engender any weariness in the Blessed throughout eternity.

*Heaven is
"life"*

Since our ultimate happiness consists in this perfect satisfaction of the faculties of our spiritual life, we can well understand why the term most commonly used in the Scriptures for heaven is "life." It occurs in this sense about one hundred times in the New Testament, in the majority of cases followed by the adjective "everlasting." It is remarkable that it occurs in this sense in every book or epistle of the New Testament, even in the short letter of St Jude, with the sole exception of the Epistle to Philemon. It must have been the standing expression on the lips of Christ and his Apostles. In St Matthew, St Mark, and St Luke the term "kingdom of God" is more usually employed, whereas St John almost exclusively uses "life," and only speaks twice of the kingdom. St Paul uses "life" more frequently than "kingdom." What is the origin and the bearing of this term "life" for heavenly bliss, and why is it so often characterised as "everlasting"? The origin lies beyond doubt in the Old Testament. In the Garden of Eden was planted the tree of life. The penalty for sin was death, and after the fall God sent Adam out of paradise "lest perhaps he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever."

The New Testament closes with a distinct reference to the opening of the Old: "The Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb: that they may have a right to the tree of life." In the Psalms the way of the just is called the way of life. In our Lord's day the current expression for man's celestial reward was already "everlasting life." This current expression was used by Christ and the Apostles, and endowed with greater fulness of meaning. St John especially, and also St Paul, elaborate this theme of life everlasting. The Fourth Gospel says of the Word: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men: and the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." This life which is in God the Word will be bestowed on men. "He who heareth my word and believeth him that sent me hath life everlasting, and cometh not into judgement, but is passed from death to life. Amen, amen, I say unto you, that the hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For, as the Father hath life in himself, so he hath given to the Son also to have life in himself."¹ "As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven."²

According to the Gospel of St John this life has indeed already begun in the hearts of the faithful on earth, though it comes to completion only when Christ raises those that believe in him on the

¹ John v 24-26.

² John vi 58-59.

last day. It consists in sharing the very life which the Father has in himself and gives to the Son, who bestows it on those that are united to him. This life is light, mental light. "This is everlasting life that they should *know* thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."¹ The knowledge of the Father and the Son is the light of men, their ultimate end and everlasting life. It is called everlasting life, clearly, not merely on the ground that it will never come to an end, but that from its very nature it cannot come to an end. It is the fulness of life without the germ of death. The Greek adjective *aionios*, which is translated "everlasting," implies more than that it never ends; it suggests another kind of life than that which we naturally live on earth. It is the life of the *aion* ("the age") to come; it is eternal life or the life in eternity, as Christ promised: "There is no man who hath left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who shall not receive an hundred times as much, now in this time . . . and in the world (*aion*) to come, life everlasting" (*aionios*).²

It is distinctly stated that the life hereafter will be not only endless, but timeless. "The angel lifted up his hand to heaven and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever: that time shall be no longer."³ The reward therefore foretold in the New Testament is a timeless and changeless life akin to that of God, who "dwelleth in eternity (*aiona*)"⁴ and who said: "Yea, I lift up my hand to heaven and say: I am living for ever" (unto the *aion*).⁵ This timeless divine life is in Christ, and Christ communicates it to others through the truth, which, when possessed, issues in life. Hence Christ said of himself: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the light of the world: he that followeth me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

§ IV: SECONDARY SOURCES OF HAPPINESS IN HEAVEN

IN heaven we shall see Christ, not merely in his Godhead, but also in his manhood. Christ in his human nature will constitute, after the Beatific Vision, or, rather, in the Beatific Vision, the chief delight of the Blessed. The three years' companionship of the Apostles with Christ on earth will be as nothing compared to the companionship of the Blessed with Christ in heaven. In meditating on heaven one is apt to think of Christ as some great King in his glory sitting at the right hand of God the Father, a King to be worshipped with all due honour. No doubt in a sense this is true. The Angels and the Blessed hold court around his throne. In a way of which we cannot now form any conception, all the host of heaven will pay obeisance

*Christ in
his Human
Nature*

¹ John xvii 3.

² Mark x 29.

³ Apoc. x 5.

⁴ Isa. lvii 15.

⁵ Deut. xxxii 40.

and homage to Christ as King. Some analogy to what on earth we call ceremonial is certainly suggested by the description of heaven in the Apocalypse of St John. But these state occasions, if such one may dare to call them, do not exhaust celestial delights. Though Christ is the Great King, he will also be the intimate personal friend of each of the Blessed.

How this will be achieved we cannot say. On earth in Holy Communion each recipient receives him whole and entire, though thousands receive him at the same time. If this multiplication of Christ's real presence is a fact during the state of our probation here below, we may infer that in heaven Christ will find some means, now unknown to us, to be in close intimacy and individual companionship with each person in that multitude that no one can number. In Holy Communion we only perceive his presence through the act of faith; hereafter, when faith has ceased, the real presence of his manhood in immediate proximity to each one of the Saints must be immediately perceptible, and after the General Resurrection, no doubt in some way sensible to human eyes. We have Christ's promise: "If any man hear my voice and open to me the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me."¹ If this is true during our mortal life, it must be truer still in our glorified state.

Christ himself compared the kingdom of heaven to a wedding-feast prepared by a king for his son, and on several occasions Christ refers to himself as the bridegroom. It is plain from the Scriptures that Christ's bride is the Church, which he loves and for which he delivered himself to death. This is true of the Church whether suffering, militant or triumphant, but especially so of the Church Triumphant. St John in the Apocalypse² heard one of the Seven Angels say to him: "Come, and I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb"; whereupon the Angel showed him the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. The Lamb signifies beyond doubt Christ in his humanity, for only in his humanity was he slain and became the victim for our sins. Heaven is therefore described as the eternal nuptials of Christ in his humanity with the community of the redeemed.

This close union, however, is fully achieved only by the union of Christ to the individual Blessed. On earth the Church has always designated the individual soul as the spouse of Christ, for the kingdom of God is within us. The banquet of this wedding-feast is here below the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. This is a pledge of future glory when Christ in his humanity will be united with each of the Saints in an everlasting intimacy and mutual friendship. We may, perhaps, have envied Mary the thirty years of hidden life that she spent with Jesus in the holy house of Nazareth, but in a sense this

¹ Apoc. iii 20.

² xxi 9-10.

privilege will be surpassed when we are risen with Christ and possess the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God; when we mind the things that are above and no longer the things that are on earth; when we have died to this mortal life and our life is hid with Christ in God, though we appear with him in glory.¹ This hiddenness does not involve any secrecy towards our fellow-Saints, but it means a uniqueness, a separateness of our own intercourse with Christ, an intercourse which is in no way troubled by the intrusion of others. The Humanity of Christ is hypostatically united to the Person of God the Son, and the Beatific Vision, which shows us God the Son, shows us the glory and loveliness of the manhood which he assumed. The intercourse with the Sacred Humanity of Christ is the first and foremost thing mediated through the Beatific Vision. After the General Resurrection, even our bodily eyes will rejoice in the sight of God incarnate, and our ears delight in his voice. By what divine ingenuity this Sacred Humanity will be rendered quasi-omnipresent in heaven we cannot at present say. We know only that the Saints will "stand before the throne (the unveiled Godhead) and before the Lamb" (God incarnate), that their songs will perpetually rise "to God and to the Lamb," that the Lamb, standing before the throne, "will shepherd" the Saints. We know that the heavenly city has no temple—*i.e.*, no limited or in any way defined or circumscribed place—in which God wishes to be worshipped. "For the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof and the Lamb. And the city hath no need of the sun or the moon to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it and the Lamb is the lamp thereof."²

After the sight of God in his divine and in his human nature comes the joy of eternal companionship with the citizens of heaven. To enter into heaven is to enter into a real community life, into social intercourse and permanent association with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and with the angels and the Saints. Conceivably God might have made the eternal happiness of all spirits a merely personal, self-contained, and isolated state of bliss; he might have left celestial joy and eternal life a merely individual joy and individual life. But he has not done so.

It is the deep conviction of all Catholics that Mary, the Mother of God, was on Calvary made the mother of all the faithful whom her Son redeemed. This spiritual motherhood is exercised not merely by her perpetual intercession for us, while we are working out our salvation in fear and trembling, but continues in heaven, when our love for her and her love for us is the cause of our principal joy, after that of loving her Son. The whole angel world also will enhance our happiness.³ It is commonly accepted that the Blessed will

*Mary, the
Angels, and
the Saints*

¹ Col. iii 1-3.

² Apoc. xxi 22-23.

³ See also Essay viii, *The Angels*, pp. 282-285.

occupy the thrones left vacant by the fall of Lucifer and his followers ; this means that we shall enter into fraternal intercourse with Cherubim and Seraphim and all the members of the heavenly host. Our contemplation of these mighty first-born sons of God, the splendour of their intelligence and the greatness of their love for him and for us, will fill us with joy.

According to Catholic teaching each of the faithful on earth has his Guardian Angel. This angel, by perpetual guidance and intercession, is a ministering spirit to the soul entrusted to him for everlasting salvation. The bond of affection and intimacy between this celestial guardian and his ward will surely be transformed into a bond of special love and gratitude during eternity.

We know that God has arranged the angel host in "choirs." This means they are related one to another in some definite ordered way, having different and distinct rank and status, dignity, and special powers. They combine together into one great harmony of divine praise. They are not mere units ; they are fellows in a divine college. So it is likewise with the blessed Redeemed. They form "a church," the Church Triumphant. They are not a crowd, but a heavenly army. Each redeemed soul has its post and position assigned. Heaven is a commonwealth where divine order reigns. "The Jerusalem which is above" is a city-state, and its inhabitants are citizens. "Our citizenship is in heaven," wrote St Paul. Amongst the Blessed themselves there will be the fellowship begotten of mutual respect, admiration, and intimate intercourse.

Moreover, human nature in heaven is still human nature, however glorified. There will be ties of friendship between the Saints. St Augustine has met St Ambrose and rejoiced. St Francis has met St Clare, and found delight in converse with her. We also shall find among the Saints in heaven our friends whom we loved and venerated on earth. Christ on earth formed friendships, though he possessed the Beatific Vision. He loved John, and Mary and Martha and Lazarus. So, too, among the Blessed friendships will persist. And again : after the Resurrection the Blessed will possess their bodies. This implies that they will have eyes to see, ears to hear, lips to speak, and so on. There must therefore be in heaven something to see, to hear, and some persons to speak to, and these faculties are best and most fully exercised in a community which will enjoy heavenly bliss in fellowship. The unbroken comradeship with those of our own nature and race is part of the complete development of our manhood. In the centre of this fellowship is Christ in his human nature, for the Incarnation remains for ever the link by which men are bound together. In Christ we are all brethren, not merely on earth, but throughout eternity.

Besides the sight and love of God and Christ, the company of Mary, Angels, and Saints, the Blessed will enjoy all the wonders of creation. Until the last day they will know this present world ;

after the last day, when this heaven and this earth shall have passed away, they will know the new heavens and the new earth that will be the everlasting abode of the Saints of God. In the Revelation of St John we find set forth in exuberant imagery the glories of the New Jerusalem, the city of God. Perhaps the streets of gold and the crystal sea before the throne of God, the gates and the walls of precious stones, the crowns and the palms, and the costly robes are metaphors, and not to be taken literally. But, if so, they must be metaphors for a reality that far exceeds our greatest expectations. St Paul says that "all creation groaneth and travaileth in pain . . . waiting for the adoption of the Sons of God."¹ The material creation which will be the eternal home of the Blessed will be a universe at least not less marvellous than the vast universe in which we now live. God has in Christ united with himself a material body, in which for ever Christ will sit at the right hand of his Father. God has decreed the resurrection of man's body, and thereby determined the eternal existence of a material universe in which the Redeemer and the redeemed will live and move for all eternity.

If it may be said of this present world: "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night showeth knowledge";² this must be true in an unspeakably higher degree of the world to come. Questions have been asked about this new earth, whether it will have a silvery sea and a starry sky; whether it will contain rivers and mountains, animals and plants. To all these questions we have no answer, for God has not deigned to reveal it to us. But one thing we know, that it will be a real world and a fit abode for men and women to whom are restored the days of Paradise when God walked with man in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the evening. Though the essential happiness of heaven lies in the sight and enjoyment of God, we may also say of such lesser joys as the enjoyment of the marvels of creation that "no eye hath ever seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those that love him."³

We must remember, however, that our enjoyment of the glories of nature will differ in heaven from our enjoyment of natural beauties now. Now we find it difficult to see the Creator in the things he has created. Our reason, indeed, tells us that all creation is but a manifestation of God, but owing to the limitation of our minds and our natural inability directly to see God, our very attention to the grandeurs of nature may obscure our realisation of God. It will be different in heaven. All things will be seen and admired in the Beatific Vision as in a mirror. The thought of God will never be absent from our minds even for a second, though our mind and body may be occupied with the beauty of the things he made. The whole of creation will be as a constant song praising him, who called it out of

¹ Rom. viii 22, 23.

² Ps. xviii 2-3.

³ 1 Cor. ii 9.

nothing into being. Every created thing will be as the fragment of crystal in which a ray of the infinite light is reflected.

The glorification of the body

The glorification of man's body has been treated of in greater detail in another essay of this volume. Suffice it here to say that its glory will be the natural consequence of the glory of the soul. The body was intended to be the handmaid of the soul, ministering in every way to its spiritual life. This relation between body and soul was disturbed through the Fall. The dominion of spirit over matter was rudely shaken, and the flesh became the unwilling partner of the mind. Its sluggishness and its passions were a continual hindrance to the full development of the soul's life. This will completely cease in heaven. Man's body will then be a furtherance to his spiritual joys. The joys of the soul will overflow and fill the material side of his being with the most exquisite happiness. Great mental happiness sometimes even on earth buoys up man's physical frame, and gives it a feeling of vigour and lightsomeness, and is the cause of maintenance or restoration of bodily health, even as sorrow is the cause of disease and death. The supreme bliss of heaven proceeding from the soul will pervade the body to such an extent that its physical well-being will exceed anything we have known on earth. Moreover, by special ordinance of God the body will be so exalted that it will become a worthy companion to the soul in possession of the sight of God. As Christ was transfigured on Mount Thabor, so that his face shone as the sun and his garments were white as snow, so shall all those, who are co-heirs with Christ, be glorified in body as well as in soul. The body will receive those preternatural gifts, of which the gifts to Adam in Paradise were but a foretaste. But the description of these gifts will be found in the essay on the Resurrection of the Body.¹

§ V: IMPLICATIONS OF LIFE IN HEAVEN

Heaven a kingdom

HEAVEN is frequently described in the Scriptures as a kingdom. "I dispose to you, as my Father hath disposed to me, a kingdom; that you may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom."² "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."³ "At the end of the world the Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."⁴ "The Lord God shall enlighten them and they shall reign for ever."⁵ "To him that shall overcome, I will give to

¹ Essay xxxiv, *The Resurrection of the Body*, above, pp. 1242-1247.

² Luke xxii 29-30.

³ Matt. xxv 34.

⁴ Matt. xiii 40-43.

⁵ Apoc. xxii 5.

sit with me in my throne : as I also have overcome and am set down with my Father in his throne.”¹ “In Christ all shall be made to live, but every one in his own order : the first-fruits Christ : then they that are of Christ, who have believed in his coming. Afterwards the end : when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father : when he shall have brought to nought all principality and power and virtue. For he must reign until he hath put all his enemies under his feet. When all things shall be subdued unto him, then the Son also himself shall be subject unto him (the Father) that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”² Hence also St John in his vision of heaven saw thrones set, and the ancients with crowns on their heads, and he said : “The prince of the kings of the earth . . . hath made us a kingdom and priests to God and his Father, to him be glory and empire for ever and ever.”³

This kingship promised to the Blessed in the Scriptures involves first of all a manifest triumph and undoubted victory over all adverse powers, over the devils and the damned that tempted them and endeavoured to hinder them in the attainment of their final end, over the obstacles that stood in their way through the frailty of their own nature and the greatness of their task. The Blessed will be like Alpine travellers, who have at last reached the dazzling heights. They have attained the very summit of their desires notwithstanding the storms that raged, the foes that waylaid them, and the steepness of the path they climbed. It includes, further, an untrammelled freedom during eternity, a full liberty and immediate fulfilment of their wishes, and a complete disposal of all the riches of their royal inheritance without any possibility of being thwarted or gainsaid. It includes, lastly, a real dominion over all creation. At the final consummation, after the resurrection of the body, they will have a complete mastery over all material things, and all nature will obey them, and submit to their sovereignty. Even in the spiritual world of Angels and fellow-saints they will reign, for they will be as princes amongst princes, all of whom in celestial courtesy will pay honour one to another. With utter spontaneity and eagerness all will serve God, to serve whom is to reign.

When St Paul says that at the end Christ will deliver up the kingdom to the Father and be subject to him, he means that Christ in his manhood, as head of the human race, with all his brethren, with all those redeemed by his Blood, with all those who were saved in him and through him, will proclaim the full achievement of the Father's will. Before his Passion Christ declared : “Father, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do ; and now glorify thou me, Father, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made. I pray for them, whom thou hast given me out of the

¹ Apoc. iii 21.

² 1 Cor. xv 22-25, 28.

³ Apoc. i 5-6.

world ; I pray for those who through their word shall believe in me that they all may be one, as I in thee and thou in me.”¹ At the final consummation Christ will proclaim in regard to his celestial life what he said at the end of his mortal life : “ I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, and now glorify thou me.” This handing over of the Kingdom means the public acknowledgement of the completed work of Christ. The first petition of the Lord’s prayer : “ Hallowed is the Father’s name, his kingdom has come,” has now been fully granted.

After the final consummation one phase of Christ’s activity will cease. Christ’s life in heaven is now one of perpetual intercession for us.² Then no more intercession will be needed. Christ’s daily sacrifice of the altar is one of propitiation and impetration for the living and the dead ; in heaven, it will be offered for those purposes no longer. The sacraments are the channels of Christ’s Precious Blood to the souls of men ; they will require these channels no longer. Christ is on earth the teacher of men through the infallible authority of the Church ; they will need that authority no longer. Christ is the Captain of salvation in the great warfare of the militant Church, but the soldiers will then need their general no longer, for the war is now over. In one sense, therefore, the final consummation is an abdication of Christ, and a handing back of the emblems of office to his heavenly Father.

On the other hand, Christ continues to reign in a higher sense. Christ continues eternally the head of the human race, and in their life of glory he is their leader. All the Blessed are what they are through him. On earth to be in grace means to be in Christ ; in heaven to be in glory means to be in Christ in an even more complete sense. The Church Triumphant is still Christ’s mystical body. The Blessed are in glory through their unbroken union with him. What Christ said on earth remains true in heaven : “ I am the vine, you are the branches.”³ The Beatific Vision is given to the Saints because of Christ and in Christ. They need a mediator of propitiation or intercession no longer, for they are eternally sinless and have no wants for which such prayer need be offered. But if they are heirs of God, they are also co-heirs of Christ, and their inheritance is not bestowed upon them independently of Christ. They are heirs of God—that is, they possess the light of glory because their human nature is the same as that of Christ and supernaturally united with it.

The hypostatic union of God the Son with the human nature of Christ is the fountain of all honour and blessings that come upon men, who are brethren according to the flesh of God incarnate. Christ, on the eve of his Passion, said to his Father : “ I also have given unto them the glory which thou hast given unto me, that they may

¹ John xvii 4 ff.

² Rom. viii 34 ; Heb. vi 25.

³ John xv 5.

be one, as we also are one : I in them and thou in me ; that they may be perfect in one.”¹ The glory which the Father gives to Christ is the glory of divine Sonship. This glory the Father gives to the Son in the Blessed Trinity by the communication of his divine nature, for the Son is the splendour of the Father. This glory the Father gives to the humanity of Christ by the hypostatic union of Christ’s human nature to the Son of God. And, again, the Father gives it to the human mind of Christ by the Beatific Vision. Neither the divine Sonship in the Trinity nor the hypostatic union is communicable to us creatures, but the Beatific Vision is. This is the glory which Christ obtained for us from the Father. It is given to us both by the Father and the Son, hence the words of Christ : “ I also have given ” ; for in giving them sanctifying grace Christ had already given them the seed of glory. Christ could say this not merely as God but also as God incarnate, for his human nature is the link which binds us to him and him to us ; hence he could say, “ I in them and thou in me,” that thus through Christ we may be perfected into one and God may be all in all.

Is heaven a real place ? Yes. Christ ascended into heaven and from thence he shall come to judge. Numerous texts of Scripture, ^{Heaven a place} which it would be tedious to quote, make it plain that heaven is a locality into which one enters and from which one can depart. The description of heaven as a city with walls given by St John in the Apocalypse is no doubt imaginary and metaphorical, but it would be altogether deceptive unless heaven were a place in some way circumscribed and limited. Moreover, Christ, who has a real material body, is in heaven. This body, however glorified and capable of moving with the speed of light, is a real extended, measurable, visible body, and therefore in some physical relation to space.

Now Christ has prayed : “ Father, I pray that where I shall be they may also be.” He said to Peter : “ You cannot follow me now, but you shall follow hereafter.” It is therefore, and always has been, the universal conviction of Catholics that heaven is a definite place in the universe. In this place at present are at least two material bodies, those of Jesus and of Mary his mother, and there will be the saved in their glorified bodies after the General Resurrection. A difficulty naturally arises with regard to the presence of the Angels and of the disembodied souls of the saved previous to the Resurrection. For an explanation of the presence of angels in a particular place we must refer our readers to the treatise on the angels ;² with regard to the presence of disembodied souls this may be said : they cannot be localised by material extension, as if they could be measured and had length, breadth, or depth, or could be divided into parts. For these souls, although they are the animating principle of material bodies, are themselves spiritual. They are therefore in a place in a similar way to that in which angels are in a place : they

¹ John xvii 22, 23.

² See p. 261.

are present in virtue of their activity. The Blessed, therefore, even before the Resurrection, are with Christ who is in heaven. This has to be understood in a local and spatial sense. How precisely that presence is effected and what it implies escapes our experience and knowledge.

*Ties of
kinship in
heaven*

In heaven the Blessed will see all things in God and God in all things. They will see all things in that divine order in which they stand in God's mind. Their place and position in the universe that God created will be understood, for the outlook of the Saints on all things will resemble that of God.

The same principle governs also the love of the Blessed for all the creatures of God's hand. They love them in God, and for God's sake. Their love for them is only a particular mode and application of their love for God. Now in this divine law of charity they observe due order. On earth there is a double principle which rules the due measure of charity towards one's neighbour. First, the neighbour's own goodness—that is, his own share in the goodness of God or his proximity to God. Secondly, his proximity to ourselves; thus we must love parents, children, our kith and kin, our countrymen more than strangers. Such is the law of nature and the law of God. In that Beatific Charity, which is the counterpart of the Beatific Vision, there can be but one principle which rules the measure of love, and that is the share in divine goodness which each Saint possesses in his own particular degree. But this Beatific Charity is supernatural, and the supernatural does not destroy the natural, but perfects it. Hence the Blessed will feel greater natural affection towards some persons than towards others. A son will be moved with love towards his mother, a mother will thrill with joy at the sight of her child. Nature in heaven is hallowed and made perfect in charity which, as a simple proverb says, "begins at home."

Our Lord on earth ever possessed the Beatific Vision in a higher degree than any of the Saints; yet he had a disciple "whom he loved"; he had a home at Bethany where lived Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, who were above others beloved. Our Lord now in heaven loves his mother supremely in the Beatific Vision for her holiness, since, indeed, she is the holiest of all creatures. But in addition to this, he also loves her with a perfect natural love because she is his mother, and in the natural order also his love for her is supreme. Our Lord will be the example for all the Saints; they also will love their parents, their brethren, as he loves his.

The Blessed, then, will still love creatures, but their love will be as pure and as sinless as Christ's own. The Saints are of necessity impeccable. They can sin no more. To sin would be to prefer some created good above God, and this is utterly impossible to them. They actually see and possess the Sovereign Good itself. Their will clings to him as a magnet to iron. Once in heaven they leave all sin and all consequence of sin behind; their wills are con-

firmed in glory ; every act, word, and deed must needs be holy, and holy with absolute ease and spontaneity.

The Saints, then, will love their fellow-Saints with an intensity and tenderness beyond any love we can experience on earth, and they will love them each in his proper degree and be loved by them in return to the utmost extent conformable to their sanctity and kinship.

Heaven will not be the same for all. As in the firmament star differs from star in glory, so also is it in the heavenly abode of the Blessed. The principle of celestial happiness will always be the same—viz., the sight of God face to face—and the happiness even of the lowliest Saint will immeasurably exceed what we can now imagine. Yet their glory and happiness will differ. *Degrees of happiness*

The gift of the Beatific Vision will be bestowed on the Blessed in unequal measure, according to their merits. It is sometimes asked whether those who upon earth were gifted with great intelligence or who possessed great erudition, and therefore great stores of knowledge, will in heaven have some advantage above those who on earth were dull and ignorant. The answer is not far to seek. Neither natural genius nor acquired knowledge will in itself have any influence upon the degree of glory bestowed by God as a supernatural gift. Our Blessed Lady, as far as her mere natural powers go, is far inferior to the Angels of God—the angelic nature is higher than the human—yet no one, not even the highest of the Seraphim, has such a deep knowledge of God as his Blessed Mother, for her knowledge is the fruit of the grace received. St Thomas well remarks : “ He shares more fully in the light of glory who possesses the greater love ; for where love is greater, there is greater desire, and desire in some way renders him who desires apt and ready to receive the object desired. Hence he who has more love will see God more perfectly and be more blessed.” ¹ This inequality of heavenly glory has been solemnly defined by the Council of Trent ² against the Reformers, who sought the root of justification in the imputed merits of Christ and, as these are equal for all, could not admit varying degrees of reward in heaven.

Moreover, the knowledge of creatures obtained here on earth, even by the greatest mind, is of an inferior kind to that obtained by the humblest Saint in the Beatific Vision. In the Beatific Vision they are seen in a higher and more perfect way : they are seen in the cause which produces them, in God who conceived them and gives them existence. In comparison with this intuitive knowledge, earthly sense knowledge and discursive reasoning will be as a candle-light in the presence of the noonday sun.

If the glory of the Saints is unequal, will not regret enter the hearts of those Saints who have received less because they merited less ?

¹ *Summa Theologica*, I, Q. xii, art. 6.

² Sess. vi, can. 32.

Will they feel no pang and bitterness of soul in having through their own fault lost a higher degree of eternal happiness? No, for each will receive to the utmost of his own capacity. They will all drink from the fountain of life, though some will have but a tiny cup and others an ampler vessel. Regret and sorrow is possible only where there is frustration of desire. There can be no such disappointment in heaven, for God will make every soul happy to the utmost of its power, though the power of one soul for happiness will be greater than that of another. Even the humblest Saint will so love God that he will rejoice that God is known and loved by another Saint with greater love than his own.

*The Blessed
and those on
earth*

First of all, do the Blessed know what happens on earth?

We must distinguish the state of the Blessed before and after the General Resurrection. Before the Resurrection these souls are without their bodies, and therefore without the natural means of communication with the outer world. Whether a soul purely in the natural order would, by its own power, be able to know something outside itself during its separation from the body, we cannot say with any certainty. We are dealing, however, not with the natural order, but with the supernatural; we are dealing with souls that have received the Beatific Vision.

What knowledge does God, as a matter of fact, grant them according to his good pleasure? We have to guide us, first of all, the fact that the Church authorises and encourages prayers to the Saints, not only to Saints canonised by the Church, but to any persons of whom we have reasonable hope that they are in heaven. This directly involves the truth that those in heaven know when they are addressed by those on earth; it also implies that they have sufficient cognisance of all those circumstances which alone can make those prayers intelligible to them. When a person on earth utters a cry for help to any Saint, it is obviously not required that he should first mentally or verbally explain what particular distress is the cause of his cry. We have, further, to guide us the fact that the angels know in detail what happens on earth. "There is more joy before the angels of God upon one sinner that does penance than upon ninety-nine who need not penance."¹ Christ threatened those who gave scandal to the little ones, "for their angels ever see the face of my Father who is in heaven." The angel-world, therefore, has cognisance of earthly affairs, as they are "ministering angels sent to help those who have received the inheritance of salvation." As the Blessed share the Beatific Vision with the angels and are their companions, it is unnatural to suppose that they should be in ignorance of what their companions in heaven know. It is an axiom in theology that grace does not destroy nature. It is true still more that glory does not destroy but exalts and sanctifies nature. It would be unnatural if the departed had no wish to know at least some

¹ Luke xv 10.

matters connected with those they loved and still love on earth. It cannot be supposed that God, who grants them the Beatific Vision, would hide from them what they must naturally desire to know.

The Saints, therefore, know, and the Saints care for the welfare of those on earth. They care for their temporal welfare, their health and their sickness, their poverty and their well-being, their honour and dishonour. But they care for these things only as a means to an end. That end is the eternal salvation and the higher glory of those whom they love. The Saints see all things from the standpoint of eternity. If bitter sufferings, even in those who are nearest and dearest to them, are God's instruments for the purification and sanctification of their souls, the Saints will not ask for their removal, lest the everlasting happiness of their future companions be lessened. The Saints love their own, but with a spiritual, supernatural love, that does not shrink from seeing suffering, if suffering is the path to glory.

The Saints, then, desire the good of the souls of those who are their kith and kin on earth. What if they see them in spiritual danger—if they see them sin? They continue their intercession for them at the throne of God. But is there anxiety and sorrow in heaven on account of temptation and of sin on earth? No, there cannot be. God has wiped all tears from their eyes; they can feel sorrow no longer. They have so completely surrendered to God's blessed will, their resignation is so complete, their loving jubilant adoration of God's Will so perfect, that nothing can disturb their souls' happy calm. Perhaps a reader might think: But Christ suffered; Christ had his agony in the Garden, though his resignation was utterly perfect. Why, then, cannot Saints suffer still at the sight of sin on earth? The answer lies in the mystery of the Incarnation. Though Christ's soul ever saw the face of his Father in heaven, yet his body was still mortal and passible on earth. Christ, then, as regards the fulness of his manhood—I mean body and soul together—was still a wayfarer on earth, though his soul saw God in the Beatific Vision. The Saints are no longer wayfarers; they have reached the land of the living where sorrow cannot enter.

Let us remember, however, that though the Saints cannot suffer, they can, until the final consummation after the Last Day, still increase in what theologians call their "accidental happiness." They can truly and really long and intensely wish for the salvation of those who are near and dear to them—in fact, for the salvation of all men. Hence they can pray, they can plead with God, and the doctrine of the communion of the Saints makes us certain that they do. When men sin on earth, do the Saints feel angry with them and call down punishment on the offender? They indeed hate sin, but they do not hate the sinner, for the sinner on earth, however vile, is never beyond God's mercy, and until the moment when God himself has uttered the verdict of eternal damnation against the sinner, the Saints

cannot but continue their prayers for those for whom the blood of Christ still speaks better things than that of Abel.

*The Blessed
and the
reprobate*

It is often asked how the Saints can be happy when they know that some, even perchance those who were near and dear to them, are in hell. Will a mother lose the love for her son, and be indifferent to his loss? The difficulty is one not so much of logic and reason, but of sentiment.

The love of mother for child has its first beginnings in mere animal nature. Even the beast of the field "loves" its young. This instinctive tendency in man is lifted to the rational plane. A human mother loves her son because, though his soul was directly created by God, yet his human nature, a compound of body and soul, is derived from her. She collaborated in the building up of that manhood, and his very substance is derived from her. He is her own image and likeness, committed for many years to her care, and thus in another way also her own handiwork. This natural rational love can remain, as we have seen, even in eternity. But as the Blessed are sinless, all their rational acts are in perfect conformity with God's Will. The love of God is the one dominating power in their eternal life. The very greatness of that love casts out every sentiment incompatible with it. Nothing can become the object of love except in as far as it is good and lovable. Now the damned have nothing good or lovable in them, since they deliberately and everlastingly reject God, the Sovereign Good. Hence they have ceased to be possible objects of anyone's love. They are utterly unlovable. Perhaps it will be pleaded that at least mothers do not cease to love ugly and unlovable children, however repugnant to strangers. But in this objection lurks an ambiguity. True, a mother loves a child in spite of its external ugliness, because looking below the surface she sees some lovable characteristics which escape the notice of others. When, however, we deal with moral depravity the case is somewhat different. The knowledge of inner moral depravity normally lessens even a mother's love. Agrippina's love for her son Nero, when she succumbed to his second attempt of assassination, had obviously lessened.

However, it is true that on earth even the moral depravity of the son does but rarely extinguish a mother's love completely. The reason of this is twofold. The depravity is never total. A mother's ingenuity will discover a redeeming trait even in a monster of iniquity. Furthermore, the depravity is not beyond the possibility of change. The mother hopes that her son's better self will one day triumph, be that hope ever so faint, that day ever so distant. Make the depravity total, make it everlasting, and even a mother's love dies, for there remains nothing more to love. The damned are outside the bond of charity.

Opponents of Christianity often consider it horrible that the Saints are said to rejoice in the punishment of the damned. But

here, again, we are dealing with an ambiguity. The Saints do not rejoice in the pains of the damned as such. The agony of the lost, viewed in itself, cannot be the cause of pleasure to any right-minded creature, least of all to the Saints in heaven. But they rejoice in the fact that justice is being done, that God should withdraw himself from those that hate him, and thus cause the pain of loss; that those who prefer the creature to the Creator should find in the creature their torment and undergo the pain of sense. They see in this the manifestation of infinite holiness, and they rejoice that it is so. God wills it, and they will it with him, for all that God wills is right and everlastingly to be praised. Moreover, they, the Blessed, know that they themselves were once on trial and in danger of being lost. Having triumphed, and being in everlasting light, they are not afraid to gaze into that darkness from which they are saved. Lastly, the damned are not merely the foes of God. In hating God they hate all the good, because they are good and united to God. Hence the good in union with God are united with him in eternal opposition to the wicked.

§ VI: THE BLESSED BEFORE THE GENERAL JUDGEMENT

IN earliest times there were some who, misled by certain texts in the *Millenarism* Apocalypse and by the strange fancies of Jewish-Christian circles, exemplified in Papias, early in the second century, imagined that after the General Resurrection a reign of Christ with the risen Saints would be established here on earth for a thousand years. Only after the expiration of this period would the Saints enter heaven in consummated bliss. At the first resurrection only the just would rise and enter this earthly kingdom, in which they would be prepared by Christ for the final consummation, when they would contemplate the Father in his divine glory. These ideas were held by some in East and West. Tertullian, Victorinus, and Lactantius amongst the Latin Fathers, St Irenaeus amongst the Greeks, were affected by them; but their very words betray that these fancies were not shared by all Christians. In fact, they were strongly opposed by many from the very beginning, and after some intermittent vogue during the first four centuries, were universally and definitely set aside within the Church. They would have been for ever relegated to the curiosities of ancient literature, were it not for some revival of them amongst Protestant sects in recent years.

Quite apart, however, from this question of "the thousand years," or *Millenarism*, as it is called, there remains the uncertainty and ambiguity of some of the Fathers regarding the state of souls between death and the General Judgement. It was indeed realised that neither their punishment nor their reward was full and complete until the Last Day, but wherein this incompleteness consisted was not clearly *Felicity before the Resurrection*

understood. The incompleteness of the punishment is discussed in the treatise on Eternal Punishment ; ¹ here we deal only with the incompleteness of the heavenly Reward.

The point is not whether a definite judgement on the soul's eternal future immediately succeeds death—on this all were agreed—but whether this judgement is forthwith completely carried out. In reading the early Fathers, who speak of a delay after death, even for the Saved, before they enter eternal bliss, we must remember that in many instances they are speaking of the Holy Souls in Purgatory, though they may not use this technical term, but refer to them as the Saints, the Blessed, or the Saved. Still, even after making allowance for such cases, there remain undoubted instances, especially of Greek Fathers, who postpone the bliss of heaven for the Saved till after the General Judgement. They are not unanimous in their description of this state, whether it be a sleep, a rest, or some beginning of celestial happiness.

The bulk of Christian writers has always admitted some beginning of celestial happiness for the Blessed immediately after death. The majority, again, of these admitted that this happiness consisted in the sight of God face to face ; but even amongst these there remained the question whether the Beatific Vision was of equal intensity before the resurrection of the body as it will be afterwards. This question is not peremptorily settled even to-day. St Augustine, and after him St Bernard, St Bonaventure, and also St Thomas in his earlier writings, held that before the General Resurrection the natural craving of the Blessed for the possession of their bodies, and for the reconstitution of their complete human nature, involved some inhibition or retardation of the completeness of their union with God. Their soul not being completely at rest within itself is supposed to lack its utmost concentration upon God ; the attention of the mind and the fervour of the will are supposed to be in some degree still capable of increase and lacking perfection. St Augustine, in his *Retractationes*, towards the end of his life felt not so certain about an affirmative answer to this question as he was in his younger years. So likewise St Thomas seems to have changed his mind in later years. The Beatific Vision, he finally held, was always of equal intensity. The increase of happiness after the resumption of the risen body was one of greater extent, not intensity. The soul rejoiced that its glory extended also to the body. The fact remains, acknowledged by all theologians, that the happiness of the Blessed increases in some way after the General Resurrection, though they possess the substance of their eternal bliss before.

*Question of
the deferment
of the
Beatific
Vision*

Altogether apart from these questions debated amongst orthodox theologians, there was a minority of Christian writers, especially in the East, who did not even grant to the Blessed the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision previous to the General Judgement. Some

¹ Essay xxxiii, p. 1197.

few of these would use language which would suggest a state of sleep, or unconscious rest for the Saved until that day. They wrongly transferred the rest or sleep of the body in the grave to a supposed rest or sleep of the soul. The greater number, on the other hand, would admit a real active life in these disembodied souls, but they invented a kind of intermediate state between earth and heaven, consisting not in the Beatific Vision, but in the enjoyment of the company of Christ. The dead were in Christ and with Christ, possessing a happiness far exceeding any happiness known on earth, yet not in possession of the Beatific Vision in heaven. Moreover, in the Liturgy of St Chrysostom and in the Syriac liturgy, an ambiguity of expression occurs which would easily lead to the mistaken conviction that prayers were offered for the Saints, and even for our Blessed Lady, in company with the other faithful departed. This verbal ambiguity seems to have existed even in St Augustine's time, who, in Sermon 159, says: "According to the discipline of the Church, as the faithful know, when the names of the martyrs are recited at the altar, no prayer is offered up for them, but prayer is offered for the other deceased whose names are mentioned. It would be an insult to pray for a martyr, by whose prayers we ourselves have to be commended to God." Our prayer for the Saints, therefore, asks not that they may obtain eternal happiness, but that their glory amongst men on earth may increase, that everywhere they may be recognised and honoured as Saints. For this "accidental glory" we may pray. Perhaps also we pray for the glorification of their bodies, which they will possess in the General Resurrection. This last prayer we may offer in the sense in which we say in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come." The Father's kingdom has not come until all are glorified in heaven in body as well as in soul.

Unsound views, however, about the state of the Blessed previous to the Judgement increased to a great extent in the Greek-speaking world. At the Council of Lyons, held in 1274 for the reunion of the Greeks with the Catholic Church, the opinion that heaven is delayed till after the Judgement had become predominant amongst those schismatic Christians. They were required to subscribe the following dogmatic formula: "The souls of those who, after receiving sacred baptism, have incurred no stain whatever of sin, and also those who, after contracting the stain of sin, have been purified either while still remaining in their bodies or divested of them, will be received forthwith into heaven."¹

The question, however, was not completely settled by this decision, for it remained possible to discuss the precise meaning of the word "heaven" in the decree. Forty years later it was Pope John XXII who raised this question, and for a short time it was fiercely debated in Western Christendom. It was maintained by some that the souls of the Saints were indeed with Christ in heaven,

*John XXII
and
Benedict XII*

¹ *The Profession of Faith proposed to Michael Paleologus, Denzinger, 464.*

and that their heavenly happiness had begun, but that until the Last Day they saw God only in the Sacred Humanity of Christ, and knew him only as in a mirror, and by abstraction. The vision of God face to face was reserved to the final consummation after the General Judgement.

For two or three years the Pope himself seemed inclined to favour this view, though, even as a private teacher, apart from his supreme teaching office, he never held it or taught it definitely. He did, indeed, gather patristic opinions in favour of it; he often referred to it in public sermons, and for a time regarded it as the more probable alternative. As this roused the bitterest opposition in Europe, he seems gradually to have changed his mind, and on his deathbed, on December 3, 1334, he called the Cardinals together, and told them that he had drawn up a bull, of which this was the vital passage: "We confess and believe that the souls separated from the body and fully purified are in heaven, in the kingdom of heaven, in Paradise and with Jesus Christ in the company of the angels, and that according to the common law they see God and the divine Essence face to face and clearly, in so far as is in accordance with the state and condition of a separated soul." His successor, Benedict XII, in an Apostolic Constitution issued January 29, 1336, set the whole matter at rest by defining as follows: "They (disembodied souls) see the divine Essence with intuitive vision and face to face, no creature acting as a medium by way of object of vision; but the divine Essence shows itself to them directly, nakedly, clearly, and plainly, and thus seeing they enjoy this very divine Essence, and through such vision and fruition the souls of the dead are verily blessed and have life and rest eternal."

The reader will note that the qualifying final clause, which John XXII still thought it necessary to add in his dying declaration, is omitted. Benedict XII no longer says: "In so far as is in accordance with the state and condition of a separated soul." He states it absolutely and without qualification whatsoever. There is, in fact, no reason for any qualification, as the soul, even without the body, is completely capable of receiving the Beatific Vision.

*The "souls
under the
altar"*

In the light of this question, the following text of Scripture requires some elucidation: "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given, to every one of them one. And it was said to them that they should rest for a little time till their fellow-servants and their brethren, who are to be slain even as they, should be filled up."¹

The martyrs here referred to, having died for Christ, are in heaven and in enjoyment of the Beatific Vision, yet they are portrayed as

¹ Apoc. vi 9-11.

praying that God may vindicate their blood. They are told to wait and to rest till the number of martyrs is filled up. What does this mean? Are they in some distress, or is anything lacking to their happiness? Why are they under the altar? No altar, indeed, is mentioned in the preceding text, yet the meaning is not far to seek. Before the throne stands the Lamb, as it were, slain. This divine victim is Christ, the Lamb that took away the sins of the world. The martyrs are slain because of him. He is portrayed as standing, though slain, because, having died a victim for sin, he is risen and his glorified body, still carrying the wounds, stands on the altar before the throne. The martyrs, like him, are slain, and slain for his sake, but not as yet risen from the dead. Hence they are portrayed as under his altar awaiting the resurrection of the body. Though dead in the body they are living in soul, hence a robe of glory is given to each one of them, the "light of glory" of the Beatific Vision. They are told to rest and wait till the final consummation of all things, when the last martyrs shall have died for Christ, and, entering into heaven, complete the number of the Saints. Then at the General Resurrection their bodies, once slain for Christ, shall enter also into glory, and their blood be fully vindicated. It would be a mistake, therefore, to see in this text an indication of the delay of the Beatific Vision till after the day of the General Judgement. The judgement here prayed for and the vindication of martyrs' blood is indeed the Last Judgement, and the manifest triumph of all the martyr-host on the Last Day. But it is not a request for their own personal and essential reward. This is symbolised by the white robes at once bestowed upon them, and by the "rest" into which they enter. This "rest" is evidently the living, active rest of those who have entered everlasting life, that rest of which the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks (iv 7-10), when the Blessed rest from their works as God did from his on the seventh day.

It is quite true that some Scripture texts imply that the bestowal of the final reward or punishment takes place at the Second Coming of Christ in the General Judgement.¹ They do not, however, show that the Beatific Vision, and therefore the essence of heavenly bliss, is not granted to disembodied souls. It is indeed true that final blessedness and consummated glory are bestowed only when the soul rejoins the body. Only then, and not before, will our complete humanity receive its ultimate perfection and joy, and our blessed Lord's words will be fulfilled: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." On the other hand, it must be remembered that Christ on Good Friday was asked: "Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom," and answered: "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." It is noteworthy that Christ did not use in his reply the phrase "in my kingdom," as the request of the

*Beatific
Vision im-
mediately
after death*

¹ See Matt. xxv. 31.

Penitent Thief suggested. The fulness of Christ's kingship and the complete establishment of his kingdom takes place when, as Man, he will rule over men in heaven. His sway over disembodied souls is not the full manifestation of his royalty. Nevertheless, before that day the Blessed will be with him in Paradise. The precise extent of this paradisaical bliss with Christ the Scriptures do not define, though they suggest that it includes substantially and in essence man's great reward.

The immediacy of the celestial reward after death for those who are free from sin and its penalties clearly results also from these words of St Paul: "If our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven . . . we groan, desiring to be clothed upon with our habitation that is from heaven, yet so that we be found clothed, not naked. . . . We, who are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burthened; because we would not be unclothed, but clothed upon, that that which is mortal may be swallowed up by life . . . we have confidence knowing that while we are in the body we are absent from the Lord, for we walk by faith and not by sight; but we are confident and have a good will to be absent rather from the body and to be present with the Lord."¹

The passage becomes clear when once the somewhat unusual phraseology is understood. Our earthly house is this mortal body; our heavenly house our glorified body; the naked soul is the disembodied soul, possessing neither its earthly nor its celestial body. Here on earth we groan at the thought of death because we would wish to exchange our mortal body straightway for our glorified one, and not to pass through our naked state, divested of any body at all. Yet though we dread death, we have "a good will to be absent rather from the body and to be present with the Lord." It is better for us to be with Christ, though in a disembodied state, than to be in our bodies here away from Christ. To be away from Christ is to walk only by faith, to be with Christ is to walk by sight. The disembodied soul, therefore, has ceased to walk by faith, and sees God face to face.

Hence St Paul could write: "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death, for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. And if to live in the flesh, this is to me the fruit of labour; and what I shall choose I know not. But I am straitened between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better. But to abide still in the flesh is needful for you."² St Paul did not know what to desire, whether to die and be with Christ or to remain on earth where he was so much needed by the infant Church. Clearly he expected immediate heavenly bliss after death. The same thought is embodied in those famous words, which it were well that we might all make our own when the

¹ 2 Cor. v 1-8.² Phil. i 20-24.

course of life is over: "The time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord the just judge will render to me in that day: and not only to me, but to them also that love his coming."¹

APPENDIX—THE SEVEN HEAVENS

A QUESTION has been raised regarding the plurality of heavens, which at first sight seems indicated in some texts of Scripture. Christ is said to have ascended above all heavens.² St Paul was taken up to the third heaven.³ Christ is said to have passed through the heavens, and been "made higher than the heavens."⁴ Christ and the faithful are to be together "in the superheavens," for such is the real meaning of the Greek word *epourania* in Eph. i 3, 20; ii 6; iii 10; vi 12. In the Old Testament also God dwells in the heaven of heavens.⁵

In medieval times the theory of the three heavens was commonly accepted. These heavens were called either the aerial, sidereal, and the empyrean, or the sidereal, the crystalline, and the empyrean. According to the first theory, the first heaven is the air in which the birds and the clouds move; the second is the firmament of the stars; the third the heaven in which God and the Blessed dwell. According to the second theory the starry sky or sidereal heaven is the lowest; upon this follows the crystalline—*i.e.*, the blue transparent dome, apparently beyond the stars; and finally the empyrean or "fiery" heaven of God and the Angels. Neither of these explanations of the term "third" heaven can be traced to the first century, and they give the impression of being suggested by the text of St Paul rather than being genuine explanations of it. St Thomas and the Scholastics suggested purely philosophical explanations of the third heaven. It might be an intellectual vision, as distinguished from a mere corporeal or even an imaginative one. It might be a knowledge of God himself, as distinguished from the knowledge of celestial bodies or celestial spirits. It might be a vision equal to that of the third and highest hierarchy of Angels. These speculations, however, have no root in tradition or history.

Some of the very early Fathers imagined that the sevenfold division of the heavens was a fact and by implication taught in Holy Scripture. The idea of Seven Heavens is certainly one which goes back to extreme antiquity. It probably arose in early Babylonian or even Sumerian times, and was connected with the sun, the moon, and the five planets then known. This purely material conception of seven concentric revolving spheres developed apparently in Jewish

¹ 2 Tim. iv 6-8.

² Eph. iv 10.

³ 2 Cor. xii 2.

⁴ Heb. iv 14, vii 26.

⁵ Deut. x 14; 3 Kings viii 27; Ps. cxlviii 4.

circles of our Lord's time into a sevenfold abode of spirits and super-terrestrial beings. The third heaven is not always described in the same way in Jewish literature ; it was certainly sometimes described as Paradise or the Garden of Eden. It is remarkable that St Paul, having spoken of the third heaven, immediately afterwards refers to the same place as Paradise. It must be remembered also that our Lord himself used the term "paradise" for the unconsummated bliss promised to the penitent thief on the Cross. It seems most likely, therefore, that St Paul makes use of a current expression without necessarily endorsing contemporary Jewish fancies, out of which the use of the word had grown ; in the same way as we ourselves speak of being "in the seventh heaven" without in any sense thereby expressing approval of any theory of seven heavens. The third heaven and Paradise were simply terms commonly understood of a state and place of bliss bestowed by God on the just after death. Our Lord on the Cross used toward the common brigand by his side a word which he would readily understand.

So likewise St Paul, in speaking of a third heaven, may have used a phrase intelligible to those whom he addressed, without in any way endorsing the theory of seven or of any other number of heavens. The question whether St Paul on that occasion received a momentary glimpse or some approximation to the Beatific Vision has been variously answered, and cannot be settled through lack of information. It is, however, more commonly held that the Beatific Vision as such is withheld from those who are sojourners on earth.

J. P. ARENDZEN.

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