

THE KINDNESS OF GOD



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A NEW LOOK AT CATHOLIC DOCTRINE
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FOREWORD

As a result of the Second Vatican Council, many people are more actively interested in questions about the Christian faith, and in particular about Catholic teaching. New questions are being asked, old questions are being repeated, and at times the old answers seem no answer at all. If we were to change too many answers, we would change Christianity too, in order to supply the answers we want—the ones we would *like* to be true. But this, too, would be no real answer at all. Can we, perhaps, take a new vantage-point from which we can see that, while nowadays some of the old answers are no longer satisfactory, many of them are more to our liking than we were prepared to admit? From this same vantage-point it may also appear more clearly that even the things not to our liking fit, in perfect symmetry, into the plan of God. This book seeks to present a synthetic view of Christian doctrine which takes into account the honest needs behind this modern questioning.

This “new look at Catholic doctrine” will not be new to many. All that is given in these pages can be found (more fully developed—but never combined in a popular synthesis) through the writings of men like K. Rahner, E. Schillebeeckx, J. Lécuyer, Y. Congar, M. Chenu, H. de Lubac, P. Anciaux, and the many other fine thinkers in the vanguard of theological studies. But often it has not got through to our pulpits or our popular presentation of Catholic teaching. Certainly it has been ignored by those

whose thought is represented by, for instance, the book published in Britian when this Mss was almost completed, *Objections to Roman Catholicism*. And also it was unknown to some who attempted to answer the objections. To take but one point: without having to believe in an eternal *punishment*, a Christian must hold the doctrine of hell, and if he is prepared to do a little serious thinking, he can quite easily see how it fits into "God's gracious design":—which is but one example of what this book is about.

E. J. Cuskelly, M.S.C.

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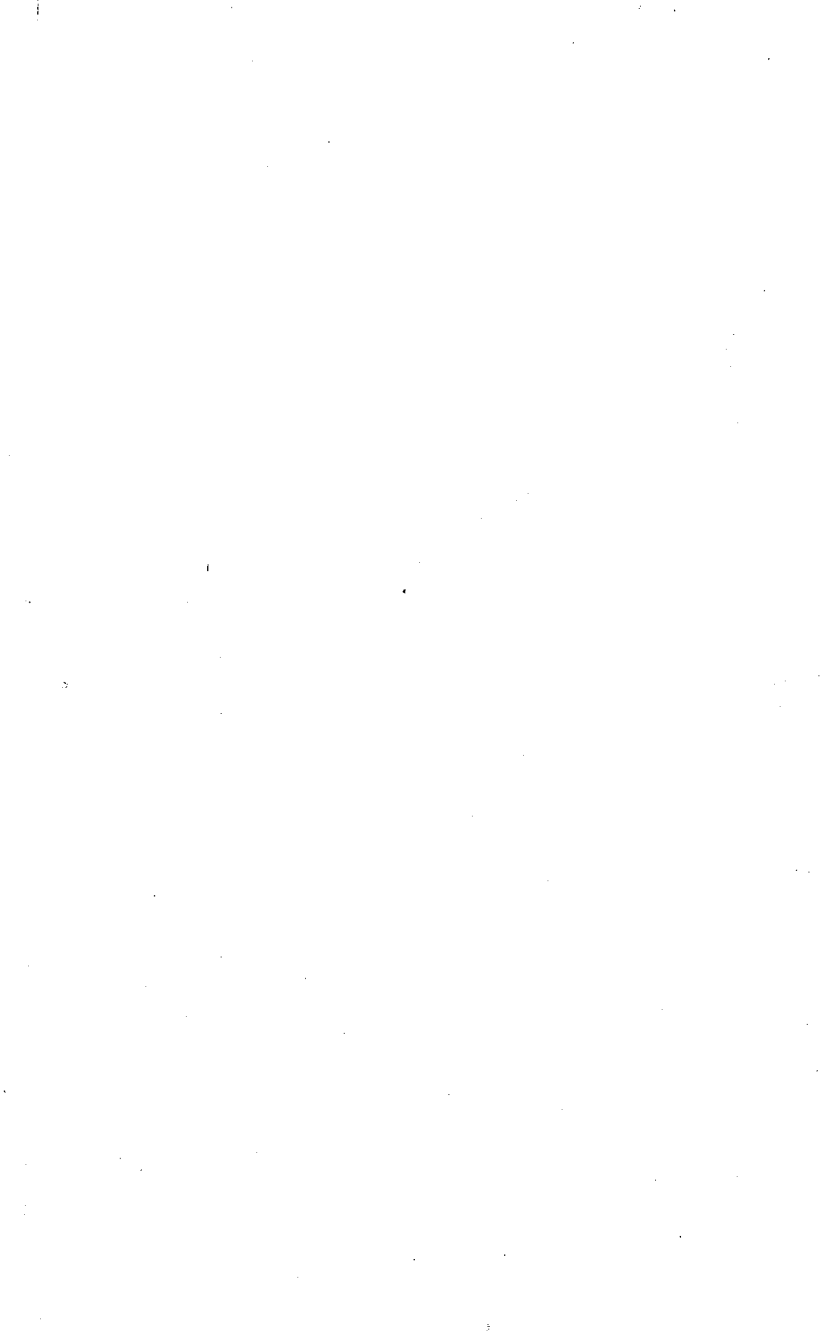
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PART I

EVERYMAN AND HIS GOD



DISCOVERING GOD

Our life is a search for God. Even when we have found him, we must seek him still. Faith forever seeks further understanding of the God who will be fully "dis-covered" only when he reveals himself to us "face to face" in the beatific vision. The discoverers of God thus fall into two main categories:

- 1) those who are seeking to find God in faith (*intellectus quaerens fidem*)
- 2) those who, having been given the faith, seek a fuller knowledge of the God whom they have met (*fides quaerens intellectum*).

These pages are written with the conviction that they can help many, of both classes, to "discover God," and in the belief that much can be gained from a synthetic view of Christian doctrine which takes a starting point different from the more traditional ones of that proceed in "logical" or in "historical order." This is not for a moment to contend that mine is a better way. Rather would I say that there is a time in the lives of most people when this can be the most effective view of the Christian religion. The starting point is man with his personal psychological needs; if he sees these truly and understands them aright, they will lead him to God.

This work could, then, be called an essay in personalist theology. It proceeds on the supposition that today most people are interested in the psychology of the human personality and have some knowledge of it. It proceeds also

on the principle that we should begin with the known in order to understand what was not previously known. This means that, in the present application of this principle, we can begin with St. Augustine's advice on finding God: "Return to your own heart and find him." In other words man's psychological needs and personal longings show that they are all given us to lead us to God and help us know him.

Let it be well-noted, however, that 'personal' does not mean 'individualistic.' A person has been described as a being capable of entering into relations with others; and it is only through recognizing and living these relations that the human personality develops.

Such an approach to Christian doctrine would seem to be particularly useful.

- a) It explains the faith to the prospective convert, and also it shows to others how religion is in perfect conformity with their 'natural knowledge,' and thus brings them to their first thoughts about conversion. As a matter of fact, this book has been written in the order it has, so that such people could read and understand all but a few chapters, which are for those already well-acquainted with Catholic teaching.
- b) It should also be useful for those engaged in catechetical work, especially for those dealing with teenagers. "A doctrine 'acceptable' to the young cannot be a complete list of theses and precepts; it must be vigorously welded into a coherent synthesis showing the same divine thought of mercy (or the kindness of God) through all the data of a unique 'mystery of salvation.'" ¹ It has been said that "every Christian is a convert." As boys and girls grow to adulthood, they are called upon to re-affirm and ratify their religious allegiance. They face up to an adult choice for Christ as they go through the critical, questioning period of adolescence.

Religion—an adult faith—begins with man's encounter with God. The convert—to the faith or to a truly adult faith—must meet God in the present: God as the living personal God who confronts me here and now. Both Adam in the Garden of Eden and God 'in light inaccessible' seem a long way away. God is not met at the end of a logical process, nor at the end of an historical account—even salvation-history. That is, many people will not be influenced by a presentation of doctrine which begins: "Once upon a time, God made Adam and Eve." Neither does the logical order of "God, as he is in himself—One God, Trinity of Persons, Creation, etc.," constitute a presentation of doctrine which helps him as much as another will in his *first* real discovery of God. He will return to these later, of course, to his own profit.

Meanwhile, "anyone seeking to bring God to souls ought to start with modern man as he is, not as he ought to be, and not as he was a century ago. . . The modern soul is not going to go to God through order in nature as he did a generation ago, but through his disordered self; he is looking for God, not through a search for the cause of the cosmos, but through a yearning for redemption from his own frustration. It is one of the marvels of grace that God can start there despite the fact that we too often feel that he must work on our souls the way we start in our text-books." ²

- c) All of us, all our lives, are 'discovering God.' Our ideas, our knowledge of God will always be imperfect. There are a good many people who have the faith, yet whose ideas about God and religion are such that they are a source of unnecessary difficulty to them. This often has its root cause in human psychology. It is sometimes caused by the way we present the faith. The student of theology can too easily miss the theology for the theses. He learned his theology out of

text-books. In spite of all its advantages the usual theology text-book or manual has one very definite disadvantage: It gives an "anti-error theology" which, by that very fact, has little evident positive unity in it. By this I mean that if you take the theses or propositions in most of the standard manuals, you will see that they are nearly always theses that are proved to combat some error—of Nestorius, Pelagius, Luther, Jansenius, Gunther, etc. At the end of all this, while you have refuted the errors, you usually have not a clear synthesis of unified Catholic teaching.

Another factor which can cramp us in our presentation of the teaching of the Church is our care to "conserve the deposit of faith." This is a God-given duty. But since we learned what is "the deposit of faith" from our text-books, handing it on integrally will often mean that we try to give people another text-book (albeit broken down) version of doctrine.

Most important of all, however, in this matter of presenting doctrine to people of our day, is that we can often fail to distinguish between the revealed doctrine and its later expression. While we must teach the revealed doctrine, it will not always be necessary, nor will it always be wise, to repeat older ways of explaining it which do not have much meaning for the modern mind. This principle we all accept. But, in practice, it is not always easy for the priest to examine his text-book and see what he can rephrase in modern terms without having doubt cast upon his orthodoxy, or without omitting essential truths. Some recent attempts to write a 'theology for the layman' have been efforts to translate the philosophical developments of theology into ideas the laity could grasp. Yet not every Christian is expected to be a philosopher, even an amateur one.

Because there will be some who, as they read, will

wonder whether this approach sufficiently conserves all the important things of traditional Catholic teaching, I have added certain sections for the theologian in which I think it is clearly enough shown that it does.³

STARTING POINT

Theology is defined as the study of God and of all other things in relation to God. Such a study begins with God as he is in himself. It might seem very un-theological to begin with man, even though there are sound psychological reasons for doing so. While the scientific study of theology starts with God, there are sound reasons in theology which allow for an approach such as this one, particularly since its purpose is to help to a personal discovery of God rather than to a scientific knowledge. Fr. Karl Rahner says that theology is the study of God in his relations with man. Furthermore, we have in mind the exposition of doctrine which is made to lead people to faith and charity (or to a deeper faith and charity). Now, as St. Thomas says, it would be impossible to have a love of charity for God if he were not *our* final good. We could not love him in charity, or believe in his love (which is justifying faith) if we did not believe that he fulfils our deepest needs for personal happiness. This means that we know more than what God is, or what God says; we must know something of what God is for us, and what he means to us.

OUTLINE

Hence we begin with man as he is (without analyzing him into 'natural and supernatural'), with his wants and desires, his basic psychological or personal needs, especially:

- a) Assertive—the need to be somebody, to assert oneself, to amount to something. This is sometimes called the Personal Constructive Drive.

- b) Affective—the need to love and to be loved.
- c) The need for security—which is closely tied up with the other two needs.

In taking this starting point we do not imply that the process of reasoning and logical argumentation is not important. One of man's needs is the intellectual justification of his position, and to know the *truth* of the facts of revelation, historicity of the Gospels and so forth. But he needs more than that. The human "heart has reasons that the mind will never know," as Pascal wrote. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to bring a man to intellectual conviction on a point which he does not want to be true. Many things are obstacles to a man's intellect because they are, even more basically, obstacles to his heart and will. This is why Catholic Evidence speaking proceeds along the lines of nine-tenths exposition and one-tenth proof, and why, if you make a man want something to be true, you will not have much trouble getting him to see the force of the rational arguments for it.

Taking these personal needs, we point out how they are partially fulfilled through human love and interpersonal relationships, and how a man finds himself and develops his personality through acceptance of, and adjustment to, these personal relationships. To come to true love, friendship and altruism man must conquer selfishness and renounce himself. Special stages in this natural development are: i) family life and his relations with his father and mother, brothers and sisters; ii) marriage. All this is part of human knowledge. Religion says that both of these special instances of human love (Eph. c.3 and c.5) are, in the plan of God, meant to teach us two things:

- 1) They are meant—by what they give of happiness, and by the way they perfect a man in his own human personality—to give him some imperfect and analogous knowledge of what his own eternal happiness will be,

and of how it will bring him to the full personal perfection of which he is capable.

- 2) On the other hand—by their imperfection and their inability to satisfy him completely—they help him to the realization of his need for eternal personal union with the Perfect Person of the Trinity. This union gives him perfect happiness and brings him self-fulfilment.

Thus the doctrine of the *Trinity* is presented not as something which baffles the mind, but as a truth which satisfies our personal longings. It is something that we might have suspected: that the perfection of personal happiness which exists in God is found in the interpersonal life of the only perfect Persons. The Beatific Vision—the goal for which we were created as personal beings—is our entry into this personal life of God, and our sharing in the ecstatic happiness which it gives.

Love, friendship and personal union are gifts which we can possess only if we freely accept them when they are offered. God offers (*Revelation*); we are free to accept the offer (*Justification*.) If we refuse to accept, and continue through life in that refusal, what do we make ourselves? Here you have the doctrine of Hell.

Heaven is what God can make us if we surrender to him.

Hell is what we can make ourselves if we refuse to surrender to his love. The whole of theology can be worked out as God's plan to bring us to find him (and in so doing, to be ourselves), and to save us from our own selfishness.

In one sense, the exposition of Catholic doctrine, which aims to help people to the faith (or to a fuller living of it), aims at getting them to "recognize the love which God has in our regard; to recognize it and to make it our belief" (I John 4, 16). To this end, they must be brought

to see that "it is good for me to adhere to my God," as the Psalmist says. Hence the order of exposition is chosen with an eye to common difficulties in this line, rather than according to strict logic.

PROVING GOD

At first sight what will probably strike many a reader will be the lack of "proofs," in the sense of proofs from reason. This omission is deliberate for three reasons. First, this aspect of Christian doctrine is amply catered to in many writings on the subject. If anything, there is possibly a tendency to appeal too much to reason alone, rather than to the whole man. While it would be fatal to underestimate the importance of the role of reason in coming to the faith, and in defending the faith, it can also be harmful to underestimate the importance of other factors.

Further (although the worth of this book is not dependent on this), I would agree with Fr. de Lubac when he argues that "belief in God is a spontaneous affirmation of the human mind, for this is made in the image of God and is therefore in itself a sign of God. It is a belief which does not have to wait on the pondered proofs of his existence. Indeed the purpose of these proofs is not to engender certitude of God's existence but to protect that certitude from the vertigo of the imagination."⁴ To some extent the truths of the faith are in the same category. They respond to the needs and aspirations of man, and in this, invite his assent.

This means, thirdly, that implicit in this whole way of presenting the doctrine is an argument which has been used by Christian apologists from the time of the Fathers—that the internal excellence of the Christian teaching and its harmony with all that is best in man is an argument for its own truth.

PSYCHOLOGY

Although psychology 'is far from being a unified science,' it can, with due precautions, be very profitably pressed into the service of a theology which seeks to get itself across to the person who is not a theologian.

For one thing, psychology has made most people of our civilization aware of the fact that they cannot afford to ignore their deeper personal needs without doing serious harm to themselves. They are thus more conscious of these needs, and this consciousness presents a starting-point which is of interest to them. It also provides a neutral 'authority' which non-Catholics, and non-Christians, will accept, whereas 'the Church says' or 'the Bible says' will make no impression on them at an early stage of discussion.

"In psychology there are many schools of thought distinguished by their characteristic preference for one or other style of interpreting the facts that are common to all schools."⁵ Some of these systems cannot be accepted by Catholics because their basic assumptions are wrong. Others must be rejected, at least in some of their conclusions.

My norm in utilizing conclusions of psychology has been to use only what clearly fits in with theological teaching, or to allow as a working hypothesis only what does not contradict such teaching. (Many modern psychologists would probably be rather surprised to find how much of what they have 'discovered' fits in with the teaching of the Church; 'psychology' was taught by the masters of the spiritual life, and often enough by the Bible.) Any other procedure would seem to be risky: the shifting sands of psychological opinion would not be a very firm foundation on which to build. Still, sound psychology must not be regarded as made up mainly of uncertain conclusions. As a science it is made up of truths about a fairly constant thing—human nature. Cardinal Tisserant has an observa-

tion which fits well into this context: "Even theology, guiding man with supernatural light and power, and drawing as it does from the very fountainhead of Divine Wisdom, must yet borrow from the human sciences to aid and further its acceptance and effectiveness in leading men to the things of God. Consequently the Christian apostle cannot be unmindful of science, especially of the psychological and social sciences." ⁶

NOTES:

- 1) R. Guelluy, "What kind of Christianity should be put before Youth?" *Lumen Vitae* XIX (1964), 88-89.
- 2) Fulton Sheen, *Techniques for Convert Makers* (New York: Paulist Press, 1949).

Fulton Sheen is speaking in general. Authorities in the field of catechetics indicate a special application of his principle to teaching religion to adolescents, v.g., Josef Jungmann in *Handing on the Faith* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1959): "They expect much from it because they feel that it deals with questions which affect them deeply . . . while interests are mainly objective during the early years, the beginning of puberty is accompanied by a subjective phase. . . ." (p. 368)

"A good plan will first of all take into consideration the psychological make-up of the pupils in the various stages of their development." (p. 373)

- 3) Cf. particularly Chapters 5 and 9, and notes at the end of several chapters.
- 4) J. J. McGreevy, *Irish Theological Quarterly* 27 (1960), 342-3, a review of de Lubac's book *The Discovery of God*.
- 5) G. Allport, *The Individual and His Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 102.
- 6) In the Preface to *Counselling in Catholic Life and Education* by C. Curran (New York: Macmillan, 1951).

BE YOURSELF!

a) *The Religious Sentiment*

It is very interesting, and sometimes slightly amusing, for the man who believes in God to read the explanations that psychologists give of "the religious sentiment." Recognizing that almost all men experience this sentiment, the psychologist tries to analyse and explain why it arises. Different causes are suggested:

- a) *Man's feeling of absolute dependence:* dependent in many things, man expresses his dependence on religion by which he acknowledges that he is dependent upon God.
- b) *Man's need for security:* we all seek for security. Much of man's effort, individual and national, is to insure against anything which could threaten our continued welfare. However, no human efforts can avert all disaster; created things can fail us. But an unfailing God to whom we can look for support and protection gives us a wonderful sense of security; and thus religion helps satisfy man's need for security.
- c) *Man's sense of longing:* "we look before and after and sigh for what is not"; we long for life and happiness. The thought of a God who will give us eternal life and everlasting contentment is itself a cause of contentment and peace.
- d) *Man's need to love and be loved* is a natural need. When it is directed towards God, the result is the religious attitude. Not far removed from this idea is C. Jung's assertion that

- e) God is the "*projection of the Father-image*": we tend naturally to think that above and beyond us is someone whose relation to us is similar to that of our human father. God is the one from whom we receive life, on whom we depend, who makes laws which we must obey, who has authority and the power to enforce his commands, whose strength and protection and love we need.

The psychologist is concerned with human realities. The religious sentiment, which exists in the majority of men, is one such reality. Its existence must be recognized even by a man who may not admit the existence of God. Of course, if he does not recognize the existence of God, the psychologist should logically conclude that the majority of men are suffering from a delusion and are therefore psychologically unbalanced! Not many draw this conclusion. Most prefer to say that the religious sentiment does something for man, whether it be founded on fact or not. It would seem that the apologist could find here a new way of formulating an argument for the existence of God—the old argument from the universality of belief. If so many things in the depths of a man's personal makeup point upwards to a personal God, then, if a personal God does not exist, man is a strange contradiction, and life, a complete illusion.

It can, at times, be slightly amusing to read discussions of why all these things point upwards to someone people call God. It is as if people discussed seriously why a lot of sign-posts read "To London," and, in their discussion of the possible answers did not consider whether there might actually be a place called London.

However these points have been raised not to prove that God does exist, but to try to understand more about the God in whose existence we believe, and about our right relationship with him. The God who made us created

us dependent on him. It would have been impossible to create us any other way. He created us with a need for security, for happiness, love, and a never-ending life so that these needs might lead us back to him. They are to lead us to him, not for his sake but for our own, so that in finding him we might find our perfect happiness and our complete fulfilment as human persons. God is our strength, our security, our happiness, and our love. We can not find these things apart from him, at least in any way that is fully and permanently satisfying.

In the plan of God—and therefore according to the nature of man—there should normally be a two-fold stage in the fulfilment of our basic personal or psychological needs:

- a) their ordinary natural, or human, satisfaction. Man needs his measure of human love, natural security, self-fulfilment. He needs to achieve something, to amount to something worthwhile. In the satisfaction of these needs, he experiences a certain sense of well-being; he develops as a human person. Religion is not meant to frustrate these needs, nor to provide a substitute for them. God, who gave us these needs, wills their natural satisfaction; but this is not meant to be the final stage. They point upwards to
- b) a fuller satisfaction in God. They do this
 - i) by their own incompleteness. No human agency can insure us beyond the grave nor save us from the loneliness of death, when we leave behind our human loves and friendship, and in the eyes of men we count for nothing thereafter. Even during life, there are definite limitations and imperfections in all that we gain from living. It cannot be otherwise. It is only in God that we are meant to find the perfect fulfilment of our desires after this life is done.
 - ii) by what they give of happiness and a sense

of well-being, the natural satisfaction of our personal needs is meant to give to us some faint idea of the happiness to which God wills to bring us.

Furthermore, our relationship with God even now (or our religion) is one of the ways which God means us to find security, love and peace, and a human sense of well-being.

These aspects of religion will appear more clearly through the course of this work. You could, in fact, say that religion is God's way (and the only way) to bring anyone to the full realization of one's human possibilities, to a rich personal life.

This is an extremely important consideration. Most people who have no time for religion regard it either as cramping and frustrating, imposing obligations, or as frittering time away on something which is not very important, although harmless enough if it leaves other people alone. A wise God would not create us to frustrate us.

b) *Be Yourself*

No healthy or expansive religious attitude has a deep sense of frustration with it. It would be possible for us to practise some form of religion out of moral compulsion—freely, but only because of fear of the consequences were we freely to choose to ignore God and disobey his commands. Were we to do this, the best we could hope for would be to “grin and bear it,” as we often grin and bear the effects of government policy we do not like. Some people accept religion as hard, and hardly to their liking, feeling that they would be a lot better off if the Lord would allow us to be ourselves. But they will hardly avoid real frustration with what they regard as the ‘repressive’ elements in religion. There are, of course, some ‘Christians’ who have succeeded in ridding Christianity of most of its repressive

elements. The disadvantage of this is that it has left them with precious little Christianity!

In the biblical account of the typical sin, the tempter plays on this age-old human difficulty, and makes capital of these ordinary psychological stirrings. The process of thought is a very familiar one—whatever be the allegorical form used to dramatise it: “Do you mean to say that God has forbidden you to eat of the fruit of this one tree? How frustrating, how petty on the part of God! Why does he curtail your liberty in this childish way? Because he says that it will cause you harm and bring you death? He says that his command is only for your good? And you believe that? Well, look! You would be much better off if you did not obey that command. If you eat that fruit, as well as being free and independent, you will really be somebody—you will be like God himself!” And, in order to be somebody, to be themselves in their own independent way, they rejected their dependence on God. But they discovered, through the effects of their rebellion, that no created person can be himself fully in complete independence.

That is the lesson of the third chapter of the first book of the Bible written centuries ago. Psychologists have ‘discovered’ in recent years this same truth which many a man learns the hard way (although some do not learn it at all), that to be yourself as a person, you must renounce trying to be yourself in selfish ways, independent of other persons.

Every man does want to be himself, fully, properly, personally. His drive to assert himself arises early in life, and he discovers as he grows that he finds himself and develops his personality by learning to respect and esteem other persons with whom life brings him into contact. When he does so out of love for them, he enjoys their love and friendship; and in this enjoyment, he finds himself at his best.

'Being ourselves,' for us who are human persons, is the same thing as growing up, coming to maturity, developing our personalities. Now we develop as persons, through human relationships and our right adjustment to them. If I try to 'be myself' and assert myself in any way which ignores other persons or fails to respect them as persons, or which falsifies my relations with them, then I am not true to myself; I fail to become the developed human personality I am called to be. The main stages in the development of human personality, from this point of view, are the following:

1. First of all there is the infant stage of life. For the infant, self is the center of existence. A baby is aware only of its own needs, its own wants and its own desires. All other persons are seen from this one point of view: whether they satisfy its wants and desires or minister to its needs.

2. As the child grows, he awakens to a consciousness of others as individuals, the purpose of whose existence is not merely to satisfy him. He begins to regard them as persons with their own personal rights and demands which he must learn to respect. His father and mother, brothers and sisters have their personal needs and desires which conflict with his own. He is brought to realize—and this is often a painful process—that he is not the center of the whole universe, not a law unto himself. In accepting the personal rights and demands of others, he makes the first step forward in the development of personality. Some of the demands are those of duty which he is forced to accept. These are, at first, respected more from various emotions—such as fear of punishment—rather than from the use of reason. There are also demands of love from the other members of the family, which he is urged to accept out of generosity and love. Of course, by good education, these two are shown to him as one. He is taught to accept the

demands of duty out of unselfishness, and with love and respect for other persons.

3. The third major step in personality development is adolescence. The youth then becomes conscious of a certain freedom and independence. He is able to exercise his own free choice in making friendships and in entering into personal relationships with others. Hitherto, in his friendships outside the family, he either accepted as his friends the children of his parents' friends, or at least needed parental approval for the friendships he made. But now he is free to choose his own friends and companions. He becomes aware of his liberty to respect the rights of other persons (and of society which is a moral person) or to disregard them. In other words, he now finds it possible to assert his ego, to live selfishly if he so desires, with little respect for other people. But he develops towards personal maturity only if he acts unselfishly, and with regard for the rights of other persons.

4. For most people marriage is the next decisive step. The young man when he marries enters into exclusive personal relationships with another. The center of his universe, of his life, is now no longer himself: it is a common center—common to husband and wife, and later to the children too. All of these are persons whose needs and welfare are placed first in his thoughts and plans for life. It is a well-known fact that selfishness and self-centeredness are certain to ruin a marriage, or at the very least to reduce its happiness and to stunt the personal growth of the partners to it. (There are some people who do not marry, but who live for others in the work they take on). Thus, for all men, "altruism," or thoughtfulness for others, and self-forgetfulness measure the extent to which they develop a mature and full personality.

5. Even in the family, there must not be, according to

psychologists, a closed and selfish family circle, but an "interested" attachment to the human enterprise," and thought for the brotherhood of men.

As these various interpersonal relationships open a man's mind and heart to the demands of love or duty towards others, he achieves his fulness as a human personality, i.e., he does so in proportion to his self-forgetfulness. He really finds his own good by striving for the good of others, by respecting the worth of other persons. It is interesting to see that psychologists require for maturity "a giving rather than a receiving attitude"; "leaving egotism and competitiveness behind, . . . realizing that hostile aggressiveness, anger, hate, cruelty, belligerency are weakness (as is trouble-making and childish criticism), and that gentleness, kindness and good-will are strength."

If you wish, you may try to "be yourself" by centering your life on yourself, riding rough-shod over others, getting your own way as much as you possibly can. But if you do, you will—according to the professional students of human nature—be so much less a man: you will never attain any real maturity or richness of human personality. It is very important to remember that to "be ourselves" we must "deny ourselves." Every step in the development of personality involves some sort of self-renunciation—giving up much that the 'self' tends to cling to. When the child is first taught to respect the rights of others, he is often desolate; he cannot have what he wants, but must give up his own likes and preferences, renouncing his own will and his own way. He goes through many tragic moments—to find, eventually, a greater good and a deeper happiness in growing up to a more unselfish love. When a man is about to marry, he must give up his 'liberty,' and, often, quite a few of his old ways. If his marriage is to succeed, he cannot approach it, determined that he is going to have his own way, do what he likes, and seek his own satisfaction. He will, rather, have

to forget himself to live for his wife and family. He will have to be thoughtful for others, for their happiness; he will do many things for them he did not do for himself. Yet, he will be wrong, of course, if he regards marriage as cramping, frustrating, making him give up things, destroying his independence, preventing him from being himself. He will find his greater good, his deeper happiness, in an unselfish love. By accepting the self-renunciation involved he will grow to greater maturity and come to fuller personal perfection.

So far we have been considering only what every responsible person would admit, what psychologists, welfare workers and doctors insist on as being vitally necessary for a sound personal life and for the welfare of human society. Further, it is something which is realized by anyone who has made even a partial success of that period of life he has lived.

Religion does not, after all these things, float off into the vague atmosphere of "religious sentiment." It faces up to the reality of God and our relationships with him, knowing that discovering them and accepting them will be for our own greater good.

The Christian religion insists that the last step in the interpersonal relationships that regulate a man's life and help him to be himself, is the meeting with a personal God. Faith is a meeting with God in the Person of Jesus Christ; recognizing him as the Person he is, accepting into our lives the demands of love and duty towards him, understanding and accepting the personal dignity of all men as brothers and as children of God. Thus it is that St. Paul could write to the first Christians—in perfect harmony with modern psychology—that the Christian faith makes us "realize our common unity through faith in the Son of God, and fuller knowledge of him. So we shall reach per-

fect manhood, that maturity which is proportioned to the completed growth of Christ" (Eph. 4, 13). This final step into a personal relationship of personal love and friendship with God is the heart of the Christian religion. As St. John phrased it: "We have learned to recognize the love God has in our regard; to recognize it and to make it our belief" (I John 4, 16). This last step is in perfect harmony with all man's development as a human person.

c) *Someone to Love*

It does not take a great deal of reflection to make us realize that there is nothing very solid or lasting about our human happiness. Families grow and disperse, friends die, and fortunes vary. Yet we all know that we do want to live, and we would all like to be happy forever. "They married and lived happily ever after" is a fairy-tale ending which we all know, and which, as children, we accepted quite naturally. G. K. Chesterton used to say that it was the truth in fairy-tales which made them appeal to the children of changing generations—the truth which responds to the unchanging aspirations of human nature. In this ending there is a two-fold truth: firstly, that we are made for everlasting happiness, and secondly, that we shall find such happiness in a personal knowledge and love which unites us to other wonderful persons.

Religion says that we dream of these things because we are made for them. The human happiness that we enjoy through love and friendship and personal union is given us in order that we might have a faint foretaste of the unalloyed happiness which is in store for us. These human joys are given to us to help us along the way, but it would be a mistake to think that they are all that life is meant to give us.

The Christian religion teaches that Christ came to make known to us certain truths about God and our own

relationship with him. He made known the doctrine of the Trinity—which really means that perfect personal happiness, which exists in God, consists in interpersonal relationships. This doctrine is that, in God, there are three perfect persons. We are not told this in order to mystify us, nor that we might make an act of humble submission to a truth which we do not understand, accepting it on God's authority. We are asked to accept it that we might understand better our nature and our destiny. It is as if God has said: 'You find that human happiness consists chiefly in personal knowledge and love, and in the intimate union which is lived between people who love one another. Well, this personal life and happiness is found at its most perfect level in God himself. God is not a lonely being in splendid isolation. But within the unity of the divinity, there is an intimate personal relationship existing between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the three divine Persons. These three are Perfect Persons, possessing the perfection of personality, because they live totally for one another, completely devoid of anything like selfishness or egotism. Their whole personal life is to live for one another; and since they do this to perfection, there is, in God, unblemished personal union and ecstatic happiness.'

Since this is the 'personality of God,' it is in perfect harmony with his character that he should wish to create other personal beings to whom he might communicate something of his own abundant happiness in love. In revealing the doctrine of the Trinity, God tells us something of his own personal life. In so doing, he gives us the ultimate explanation of our own deepest desires, and of the way in which they will be satisfied. He made us to share in his own perfect personal happiness; we are to be taken, after this life, into a heart-warming union with the three Perfect Persons of the Trinity. This will be an absorbing, thrilling union with God, in eternal ecstasy. We

shall be filled with endless delight and wonder as we share in the intimate personal love and knowledge which unite Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This sharing will satisfy all our need of personal knowledge and love and give us eternal rest. And then, in this union with God (technically called the Beatific Vision), in the fulness of personal surrender, we shall be fully and truly ourselves. This is what St. Ignatius of Antioch, one of the early Christian martyrs, meant when he said that when he got to heaven he would be fully a man.

It is not hard to see what he meant. A line of a modern song goes something like this: "You'll never be anybody, until you've got somebody to love." We do want to be somebody, and various things can contribute to the satisfaction of this need. But it is through being loved, and through giving love to others, knowing that others value our love, that we have the deepest assurance of amounting to something. In heaven, when we give ourselves fully and gladly to the infinite love which floods in on us, our need of loving and being loved will be filled completely, and we will, at last, be fully ourselves.

In making these things known to us, God does far more than reveal to us a distant destiny—making an appointment for some future date. For, through Christ, God tells us that our relationship with God in this life is not to be a distant and detached sort of respect such as we might have for the queen. It is to be, even now, an intimate relationship of love and friendship. When God tells us, through Jesus Christ, that his will for us is to share in his intimate life of personal knowledge and love, he is stating more than his intention for the future. He asks us to accept an invitation to enter into a special relationship with him here and now.

God's revelation of what he has in store for us has been compared to a marriage proposal. This is much

more than a statement of intention with regard to a *future* personal relationship. When a young man's proposal of marriage is accepted, then immediately a special relationship of love comes into being between himself and his fiancée. Their decision and agreement to share, in the future, the intimate personal life of marriage is already a mutual trusting love which is very real, although not as stable or complete a union in love as marriage will be. When God, through Christ, reveals to us his desire that we should share his intimate personal life in heaven, this, too, is an invitation to accept God's love here and now. Christianity means recognizing the personal love God has for each of us (the love behind his creation and all he does for us). This love is revealed to us through Christ, especially. Faith is our response to it—recognizing it, and accepting it, and thus entering into a personal relationship of friendship with God now, with the determination to live according to the demands of his love, in order that we may be fully transformed by it when we are taken into God's fuller love in the next life.

Although God establishes this relationship of friendship, he is not our equal. But, Lord and Creator though he is, he does not will that we should be merely his subjects and servants, but that we should become "members of his household," and his children. Christ reveals that God is our Father in heaven; but the question is: what kind of a Father?

CHAPTER 3

WHAT KIND OF A FATHER?

a) *Our Childhood Inheritance*

The psychologist works out a number of truths about human ways of thinking. His conclusions are often interesting and useful to the theologian, for, when they are sound, they underline and help understand some aspects of religious truth. Let us take Jung's assertion that many a man's idea of God is "a projection of the father-image." This is not at all surprising; it is, in fact, what, according to God's plan, is "a projection of the father-image." This is not at all surprising; it is, in fact, what, according to God's plan, is meant to be. St. Paul wrote of God as, "the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that Father from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth takes its title" (Eph. 3, 14-15). It is God's will that all men should become his children; that all should be united in the "family circle" of the people of God, living in brotherhood because conscious of their common fatherhood. Since this is his plan and his purpose, it is not by chance that we begin our life as children of human parents, that we grow to adulthood within a human family circle. It is part of the perfectly harmonious divine plan that our family atmosphere should be the natural climate in which we grow towards love and confidence in our heavenly Father, and in which we begin to learn what it means to be brethren in Christ. Here, too, grace is meant to build on nature, and the two should blend into a relationship with God which perfects our natural life.

In the statement we have quoted, St. Paul does much more than use a useful metaphor in which he points out an interesting resemblance between human and divine fatherhood. He is speaking of the very nature of things. He says that human fatherhood "is named after" (or "takes its title from") the fatherhood of God. The "name," in biblical parlance, indicates the very essence of things. It is the nature of human parenthood to be made to the image of the divine; it should be a sign giving a true knowledge of the fatherhood of God. If it does not do that, it is false to its own nature, and the father fails his children. This fact indicates at once the great dignity and the heavy responsibility of human parenthood. Parents are meant to be the mirror in which the child sees reflected the love of his heavenly Father who cherishes him and who wills only his greater good and happiness. They should convey to their child some idea of the warmth, strength and tenderness of the divine love in which they are to find their security. Both father and mother, although in slightly different fashion, are meant to help their child know something of God's great love: strong, protecting, yet uplifting; understanding and tender, yet not soft or indulgent in ways which would not be for the child's greater good. Although St. Paul speaks only of fatherhood, God himself says, through the prophet: "Can a woman forget her infant so as not to have pity on the child of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Is. 49, 15).

It is from our parents that God has willed us to gain our first experience (and the knowledge which comes through experience) of what it means to be loved, and of the security which real love brings with it. In childhood we first experience our need to love and be loved; we should then experience the happiness which should come to us through the fulfilment of that need. If all

goes well in his early years, the child gets off to a good start in his attitude towards his Father in heaven. He is well on the way towards a true appreciation of the nature of God and of the love which God has for his children. He must grow in these things, of course, but with a good human beginning, he will, under grace, grow naturally and easily.

Within the family circle, the child, created by God his Father, takes his first step back towards the God who made him. His first experience of loving and being loved should help him live:

his *faith*—belief in the love of God, his Father, given him through Christ;

his *charity*—the filial love of friendship which springs from this conviction of faith;

his *hope*—the security which follows from such a conviction.

And in these three things, you have the essence of the Christian life.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, . . . and thy neighbour as thyself." This is how Christ himself summed up the religion he taught. In a certain sense, then, the whole of religion consists in right personal relationships with God and with other men. By the gift of his grace, God enables us to live these relationships as we should. But the gift of grace builds upon what is right and good in our natural way of accepting and living these attitudes towards other persons. Although it can and should liberate us from what is defective in such attitudes, grace does so only slowly and gradually. Self-knowledge will help us submit to the healing power of grace and to rectify our own naturally faulty attitudes.

b) *What Kind of a Father?*

Nothing created is perfect, and in the work of educating

children, it is especially difficult to approximate to perfection. Fortunate, but probably relatively few, will be those people who come from a home where all their emotional relationships were very sound indeed. It is, of course, well-known that these relationships can have a profound effect in later life, affecting especially our attitudes towards other persons. But religion is essentially a matter of attitudes towards other persons: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbour." Our religious attitude and our whole religious life will, for a long time at least, be colored by our early emotional experiences and adjustments.

There is no need to go into all the possibilities of emotional maladjustment in childhood. It is sufficient, here, to consider the two needs stressed by all writers on this subject: the need for affection and the need for self-assertion. These are the two characteristics which William James used to classify persons into the Tough and the Tender. "Thus the child, for example, needs support and affection (contact) whilst at the same time he wants to 'be somebody' amongst others (self-preservation and self-development)." ¹ He wants to live, to be, to develop his possibilities, to amount to something, to subdue other things and other persons, imposing himself on them, and making them serve him. In hundreds of ways he asserts himself. But he soon finds that this need to assert himself appears to clash with the other need—the need for love and affection. There are some ways of asserting himself which he likes, but which displease his parents. Since he needs their love and their favor, he is submitted early to the conflict between these two drives. It is a conflict that not all children succeed in resolving happily.

The solution is normally reached when the child discovers that the conflict is more apparent than real. "You'll never be anybody, until you've got somebody to love." He finds that real love enables him to be himself. "It

is only by feeling that he is loved and surrounded by affection that he can acquire confidence in himself, feel himself to 'be someone' and preserve and develop himself psychologically. The opposite is also true; being oneself and having confidence in oneself are indispensable conditions for being able to make contact with others."² The child who has had healthy family relationships will go out to meet other persons with confidence—in others and in himself. But, if his home life has not been really happy, he will neither trust himself nor others.

In normal development, the child will not harbor the feeling that his parents prevent him from being himself, frustrating his assertive need. He will come to realize that he finds his greater good by "identifying with them," enjoying their friendship, and being led by them to be himself in a fuller and better way.

It is the parents' task—and their responsibility before God—to bring their children safely through this early conflict. They do it above all by an understanding love, a parental love, which has been defined as a "capacity to make friends with one's children." A. Hesnard writes of "the childhood bond with the father, indispensable to the child, useful to the adolescent for his apprenticeship to life . . . progressively transformed, becoming weaker, and finishing up as a comradeship marked by deference and confidence."³ The same author states that this ideal development of the father-son relationship is by no means universal.

Two things should be noted with regard to this love of parents for their children. Firstly, it is not enough that the parent love the child; the child must know that he is loved, feel that he is really the object of affectionate regard. Some parents, although not lacking in love for their children, do not have the gift of "getting it across." As a result, the child feels that he is not loved. From the

point of view of the effects it can have on his life, what he is made to feel is the important thing. Secondly, he must be loved *for his own sake*, and feel that he is so loved. Hence, if the child feels that his parents love him and regard him only for the credit he brings to them—by being good at studies, sport, music, etc.—his need for affection is not satisfied, and he feels cheated.

Should a child feel that he is not loved by his parents, he will feel that he is not worth much, that he does not amount to much. The thought-process is an obvious one: if he were worth loving, his parents would love him. But since he thinks, rightly or wrongly, that his parents do not really love him, he concludes that he is not, in himself, worth loving. Such a child will often (unconscious of his motivation) do a lot of things to prove that he is worth loving: he will study hard, try to win at athletics, etc. In later life, too, he will make many efforts with the aim of proving—to himself and to others—that he has real worth. He experiences a need to prove himself, for his own self-confidence, and in order to win the esteem and love which he needs. But, in all this, he is fighting a losing battle, for, at the end of it all, he will still feel that he is esteemed and respected for what he has achieved, and not loved 'for his own sake'. Such a person can go through life never understanding what motives really lie at the root of his drive and his discontent.

Other errors are possible, too, on the part of the parents. Some err on the side of over-affectionate indulgence. The child then develops the attitude: 'if you refuse me anything, you do not love me'. He thinks that if other people love him they cannot possibly ask him to make sacrifices.

There are possessive parents who make their children overdependent. This possessiveness can breed an inferiority complex in the children; it often leads to strong re-

sentment, later, as a reaction against what they feel was 'being smothered'.⁴

Hence many a childhood inheritance will have something of insecurity, inferiority, feeling of helplessness, or, on the other hand rebellion, hostility, resentment, or at times a combination of both sides of the picture. There can be fear and distrust of other persons, especially those in authority. To people such as these, it is said: 'You must love the Lord your God, your Father in heaven, and you must love your neighbor as yourself'; you must live all these personal relationships. An easy command for some can be, for others, so dreadfully difficult.

We come before God as the persons we are, and our initial attitude towards him will be, to a certain extent at least, colored by the family background from which we came. Some of the emotional maladjustments mentioned above will creep over into our religious attitude, often unknown to ourselves. Even where we have been educated to sound emotional relationships, these are not necessarily carried over into our relationship with God. The type of religious instruction given to us can influence us here. If God has been portrayed as a type of superior "bogey man" to get children to be good, he may remain that sort of person for a long time: the God who "will be offended, who will not be pleased with us if we fail, the God who will be angry and punish us."

c) *Human Love and Divine*

It may be well to recall that other human loves, as well as those of our parents, are meant to give us some idea of the love of God for us, and to help us to a trusting love in return. As a man grows, he leaves behind much of his childhood love. He leaves it with longing as well as with memory, a longing for the love of "that Father from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth takes its title." He

goes forth to find other loves, dreaming of one which will fill his heart and transform his life. But even the greatest love which can come his way will not be able to satisfy his heart completely. "Thou hast made us for thyself, O God, and our hearts are ever restless until they rest in thee." And marriage, too, according to the plan of God is a symbol of a greater love: "The love Christ showed his Church" (Eph. 5, 25).

It is God's plan that, as children of our human parents, we should learn something of the love of our Father in heaven, and begin to live as his children. We do not remain children all our lives—though all our lives we do remain dependent upon God. We grow out of our childish dependence on our parents, and as we do, we should grow up in our attitude towards God. We discover that God is more than the Father from whom we came. He is a personal God who confronts us in adulthood, and we are asked to meet him again under different guise as we grow to manhood or womanhood. And any love of man or woman that comes our way is again something which is not meant to satisfy our hearts completely. It is to be accepted as God's gift, as his way of telling us something of the eternal joy and complete content that his love will bring us when, at the end of life, he takes us to himself.

Behind us and before us, beyond us and above us, is a personal God whose love we need above all others. All human love is his gift, and human loves are given us to lead us beyond themselves to him who has "loved us with an everlasting love." This does not mean, however, that a man's love for God is dependent on, and limited by, the human love which comes his way. God's grace is the gift of his love which draws our hearts to himself. It was when he was rejected by his human father that St. Francis of Assisi claimed to have discovered what it really meant to have a Father in heaven. "Grace builds on

nature," and grace helps us use our natural loves to rise to the love of God. And God can use the lack of a love in a person's life to make him know his need for God and help him look to God. Sometimes he makes people see so clearly that all human love is a reflection of the divine that they are drawn to give him their love directly and be satisfied with his alone, in the religious life or the priesthood.

All of us seek to grow to fuller love of God. All of us will have our difficulties in doing so. To say that some have difficulty as a result of their psychological conditioning from childhood is not to suggest that the grace of God and their own efforts should not be able to surmount these difficulties. Nor does it imply that they cannot, in the long run, love God as much as others. God does not permit evil nor any defects, except for the reason that he can draw good from them. For some people, precisely these defects help them avoid the mistake that others make—of thinking that human love and the joys of friendship are all one can reasonably expect from life.

d) *Adopted Children*

No matter what may be our human family background, all of us are "adopted children of God," as St. Paul repeatedly reminds us. This 'adoption' image is a very instructive one. I know a little girl who was adopted when she was about eight years old. Prior to that, she had gone from a broken and unhappy home to an orphanage. Now let us consider what adoption means for her. The first step (as far as she is concerned) is that she is asked to believe in the love of the couple who come to adopt her. She does not know them, and coming from an unhappy home, she thinks of new parents with a mixture of feelings conditioned by her past experiences. She will want love and affection, but she will be afraid that she will not be loved "for her own sake."

She will find it hard to believe that these people want only to love her, care for her, and receive her love in return. She may think she detects a note of severity in their voices or facial expressions. Furthermore, she has gotten used to the life of the orphanage, such as it is. She has become accustomed to her companions with whom she has struck up some sort of a friendship; she has developed a deep liking for Sister who has been like a kindly mother to her. She is asked to forsake all this, and she may be asked to do many things that are new to her, to live a different sort of life, about which she knows nothing as yet.

She faces up to the unknown and she is asked to believe in a love that wants her, asked to trust these people who say: Leave all that you know behind you, and come away into a life which we will show you. To them she is asked to entrust her life and her future. The first step is only the beginning. Often along the way she will think she has made a mistake, especially when things are very different from what she expected and hoped for. Then she will still have to try to believe in their love. If she succeeds in doing so, she will enter upon the rewarding years in which she will grow in trusting love and confidence, as an understanding friendship develops between her and her parents.

For all of us faith is belief in the love of God which comes to us inviting us to leave behind our old ways, and to entrust ourselves to his love wherever it might lead us. Acceptance of that invitation is our first act of charity (our answering love), and it presupposes the trust which is hope in its first stages. Our faith, as it grows, will be belief in God's love in spite of our fears and our failure to understand, in spite of being asked to do what we did not expect. Our charity will develop into a climate of warm friendship which grows between God and ourselves.

Our hope will be the security which comes from the deep conviction of the love of God which is given to us. Our whole religious life will be inspired by the central core of being "at home with" God.

e) *What kind of a God?*

In different ways we can go wrong—or at least fail to develop a proper religious relationship with God. These are very similar to the ordinary ways in which people fail to adjust in their other personal relationships; they are mixed up with the same personal needs and conflicts. Wanting to live, and be ourselves, we can make the mistakes mentioned earlier—those of failing to see that self-renunciation out of love is a way to fuller life, in which we find ourselves more truly and enter into richer personal life. Failing to realize that this is a defect in our own way of thinking we can imagine that God is an obstacle to our happiness. Some reject God. It would be interesting to ask them what kind of a God they reject!

With others, we would ask, what kind of a God do they serve? We meet with many different views:

1. Religion will appear to some (no doubt to most, at certain stages) as cramping and frustrating, preventing them from following their natural inclinations, and from developing and asserting themselves in freedom and independence. Some shake off any relationship with God, as they leave behind their dependence on their father. They claim that they are thus really becoming men and growing up. Some even claim to be religious still, although not in a Church-going way. They serve God in their own way (it is always interesting to ask what this consists in), but can't stand 'being dictated to' by a Church or priests or parents—or even a Father in heaven. Some find it more convenient and more liberating to deny that God exists. If they get rid of God, they get rid of any

'frustrations' which his existence would impose on them.

2. Others—influenced likewise by the basic assertive drive—also feel frustrated and hemmed in, to some extent, by the demands of God and religion. But because they do believe in God, and are moved by a fear of his punishments, they submit to his laws. They serve a severe Father, not with any great love, or happiness, but as their necessary obedience to an almighty Being on whom they are dependent, and from whose domination they cannot escape. They will have the feeling that many of his demands are unreasonable and not quite fair, but they accept because they feel they must. Such people can easily develop into those in the next class.

3. Those inspired by fear and anxiety and who serve a God whom they regard as very easy to offend, as ever ready to judge them guilty of sin in practically any matter whatsoever. This anxiety sometimes generates scruples and a fear-ridden religious life in the service of a very sensitive sort of Father who is displeased at the slightest provocation, and whose friendship it is almost impossible to win or retain.

4. Still others will feel that they must "win God's love." While wanting, at times almost desperately, to be loved by God, they are weighted down by a feeling that they do not amount to much, and are not worth loving for their own sake. Therefore, they set about "winning God's love" by prayer and good works. These, of course, are the things in which we can be most conscious of imperfection, and the more we try to "please God and win his love," the more we realize that what we do for God is not worth a great deal in itself. To proceed along this way is to walk an endless road, for before we do enough to feel that we are worth God's love, we will do something which will re-enforce our conviction that we are not worth loving.

5. There are some who feel that God does not really love them if he does not give them whatever they want, if he does not prevent suffering, or if he forbids them certain things they feel like doing. This is the spoilt-child attitude transferred to God.

6. Lastly for many a man God remains a distant God—all-powerful, and even wise (although some are not prepared to admit the wisdom of all his ways). He has made certain rules, and obviously they should be obeyed. Some of these rules are harder than they need be, but since he is "the boss," that is his business, and he has promised a reward. Religion is thus a sort of business proposition—man respects God and his laws, keeps the commandments, and observes his side of the bargain as best he can. He confidently expects (perhaps with a bit of self-righteousness) that God will, as a just judge, give him his promised reward after this life.

Living persons do not fit neatly into categories; most will have something of one or other of the above attitudes mingled with their religion.

We come before God as the persons we are, and our attitude towards him will be affected by the ordinary development of our personality—until our relationship with him helps our personality develop as it should. The grace of God, the light of faith, common sense, and reliable self-knowledge help us to grow out of much of the imperfections in our attitude towards God. And common-sense will tell us that a bit of study of religion will be a help, too. (It is extraordinary how many people, especially those who consider they have no need for religion, consider themselves authorities on the subject, or at least take for granted that their ideas are very sound, even though they have merely thought them up themselves).

Often our way of viewing religious truths will hinder us in our idea of God and religion. For example, many

people can not "accept the idea of a God who would punish for all eternity; of a God who would permit suffering, who does not stop wars, etc." Some of the popular misconceptions should, we hope, fall by the wayside in the next few chapters.

NOTES:

- 1) Nuttin, *Psychoanalysis and Personality* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1954), p. 220.
- 2) *Ibid.*, p. 226.
- 3) A. Hesnard, *Psychanalyse du lien interhumain* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), p. 107.
- 4) A rather good and fairly thorough treatment of the development of psychological attitudes in childhood is given by D. Ausubel in *Ego Development and the Personality Disorders* (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1952).

Evoy and Christoph have drawn out some important implications of these attitudes in their work *Personality Development in the Religious Life* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962).

WHAT YOU CAN MAKE
YOURSELFa) *Hell*

If we believe in and surrender to God's love, he will bring us to the fulness of personal life, in which the essential happiness of heaven consists. He will bring us, too, to the full development of our personalities. However, as we have seen, it is not easy to surrender in trusting love to someone who is regarded as a rather severe, harsh sort of Father. The very thought of hell gives some people such an idea of God. In consequence there is a tendency to shy away from this subject, and to talk and act as if really there could be no hell. This is of no use at all, for if one refuses to examine the question, one is left with an uncomfortable fear that actually there might be a hell after all. A *Handbook of Christian Theology* was published recently which purported to be "a record of the theological situation of the twentieth century." It covers almost every point of Christian teaching—but hell is not even hinted at. Obviously, its editors regarded our century as having no place in its theology (at least in the theology people like to think about) for the doctrine of hell. The same sort of attitude is evident in these sample questions and comments written to a popular religious session on the radio: "Why base religion on fear?" "I find hell an awful proposition." "I prefer to believe in a good God." "God,

who is all-merciful would not wish to torture anything for all eternity."

These are all understandable reactions to the thought of eternal punishment inflicted by God. They stem from a very genuine difficulty: If you believe in the kindness of God, how do you reconcile this with eternal punishment for sin? Before going further, it may be as well to state clearly the two points around which this section revolves:

- i) If you accept the teaching of Christ, you must accept it all; and he certainly taught—clearly and repeatedly—that there is a hell.
- ii) However, the usual reaction against hell is really a reaction against an older explanation of the doctrine, and not the doctrine itself.

Taking the first point for granted, we shall proceed to examine the second.

In a different age, a different popular presentation of Christ's teaching was quite acceptable and conveyed the central issue quite clearly. In past centuries people were accustomed to the rule of kings with absolute power and authority. The monarchs could judge, pass sentence, and inflict capital punishment if important laws were broken. They could decide on and impose whatever penalty they judged fitting. Within the family, parents had an authority which was undisputed, and, in the home, the father's word was law. Naturally the mentality of the times was shaped by this order of things. The idea of God, supreme Lord and Master of the universe, just in all his ways and imposing an eternal punishment for the violation of his laws, was perfectly acceptable: 'God, the supreme lawgiver has promulgated certain laws which he expects to be obeyed. In order to see that they are carried out, and for the general good of humanity, he has imposed certain penalties. If you break the laws, knowingly, then your punishment is justly inflicted even if it be eternal. There is some-

thing so serious about violation of the laws of God that eternal punishment is perfectly just if you do not repent. After all, it is said, an offence is measured by the dignity of the person against whom it is committed. It is much more serious to insult publicly the ruling sovereign than to insult your next-door neighbour. Since God is of infinite dignity, there is an infinite malice in a serious sin against God. Justice demands a punishment in proportion, which can be only of infinite duration, and therefore eternal.'

Now, on what is essential to the whole question, I doubt if explanations of this type are the most helpful, or even the most exact. They contain more of our human ideas of law and punishment than they do of the biblical concept of God's justice. So let us see whether we can find a way of putting this doctrine which makes it appear more harmonious with the other things we know of God and Christ.

God, as some objector said, does not take delight in punishing anything for all eternity. He has said: "I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction." Laws he certainly gave us, yet the supreme law is love, and God himself is love, as St. John tells us, who has created us that we might find our eternal happiness in a union of loving friendship with him. We all believe in eternal happiness, in the doctrine of heaven; and we are consoled by the fact that Christ taught this doctrine so clearly. However, in the New Testament, the doctrine of eternal *unhappiness*—as a result of unrepented serious sin—is taught just as clearly, and more frequently. Christ spoke of everlasting fire, and of the exterior darkness into which sinners would be cast. The apostles, too, were very explicit in their teaching that, if you rejected Christ, and persisted in sin, you would not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now, if we reflect on what we know of human nature, it is not hard to see that the possibility of eternal loss

does not clash with the idea of a God who is kind and merciful. We must first of all realize that a 'penalty' for sin is not the same as a punishment inflicted by someone else (although the idea of punishment may be useful in explaining things to children). If you foolishly take unnecessary risks with your eyes and lose your sight as a result, you suffer the penalty for your own foolishness. You might even say that you are being punished with blindness—but you cannot say that God is punishing you. You might say that he allows you to suffer the punishment you have brought on yourself. With the sufferings of hell it is much the same sort of thing, yet with one important difference: God could, by a miraculous cure, restore your lost sight (and there will be no blindness in the next life), but not even a miracle could put an end to hell, except by putting an end to the existence of everyone there.

The doctrine of heaven is Christ's teaching on the transforming power of love: what God's love will make you and the eternal delight he will give you, if, freely, you let his love possess you, surrendering to the demands which his love makes on you. Heaven is what God can make us. Hell is what we can make ourselves. In its essence, hell is, rather than God's punishment inflicted on us, the misery to which we can condemn ourselves forever by refusing to surrender to the love of God, by persisting in sinful self-love. As St. Teresa of Avila said, hell is the place where there is no love.

The popular picture of Christian teaching on hell is something like this: In hell there are the condemned sinners in torment, wanting to have a share in eternal happiness, holding out their arms and pleading for mercy and forgiveness, while God says: "It is too late now. You had your chance during your life on earth, and you are not getting another one. You broke my laws, sinned

gravely, deliberately and knowingly; and now I am going to punish you forever. Justice must be upheld, and my honour and sanctity vindicated." This sort of thing, which used to be very popular with a certain class of preachers, was often very effective in getting the wayward to their duty. It is correct in its aim—that of getting people to face up to the fact that they must choose between the way to heaven and the way to hell. But it is quite wrong in most respects. Nearer the truth is the picture the Gospels give us of another scene: that of Christ who, in divine helplessness, laments over Jerusalem: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones them that are sent to her. How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not. Behold your house is left to you desolate."

The New Testament teaching on hell is God's way of warning us of the irreparable damage we can do to ourselves—damage which even the power of God cannot undo. It is God's way of teaching us the frightening power we possess in our own free will: "How often would I . . . but you would not!" God cannot make a square circle, for this is a contradiction in terms. Nor can God force your free will, for freedom which is forced is equally a contradiction in terms. You must have freedom if you are to be a person, but once it is given to you, it is yours to use for good or ill. Without freedom it is impossible to love or possess the delights of friendship. With it, it is possible to turn against God in hate and refuse his friendship. In hell man's will refuses to turn to God. It is too late then, not because God won't give man another chance, but because even if a thousand chances were given him, he would not turn back to God. God can restore sight to the blind, but not even God can force a free will to friendship. Yet despite his obstinate refusal, in his heart

man will know his crying need for God if he is to have the least happiness.

We do not have to look far to find examples which give us some understanding of this hardness of the human will. It is seen, early in life, in a child who obstinately wants his own way. When he can't get it, he rebels against his parents, gets a fit of the sulks and refuses to take part with his brothers and sisters in any fun which is going on. He isolates himself in his own wilfulness. Yet, in his heart he knows that he can find happiness only by being taken back into his parents' arms and into the love and companionship of the family. He knows that he is being selfish and wrong, and yet, for a time, he *cannot* bring himself to ask for forgiveness. He makes himself miserable, tries to put the blame on everyone else, and temporarily hates them all. Yet, while his will is set, while he insists on making himself unhappy, nobody can do anything about it. His parents can't "forgive" him while he does not want forgiveness; they can only wait until his stubbornness weakens, until he comes in sorrow to ask to be taken back into the love of the family. Even at this early age we can see something of the hard obstinacy of the human will condemning itself to temporary misery.

Another example is found in every romantic story—the chapter on lovers' quarrels, where two who love each other and need each other for their own happiness, obstinately refuse to ask or grant forgiveness for some wrong—real or imaginary. The story writer plays up the agony of soul: the longing for love which they need for happiness conflicts with the proud inability to bend their wills. Again, this is an example of the hardness of the human will condemning itself through a refusal of the love it longs for, to temporary misery.

Now it is not hard to imagine (what God makes quite clear for us in his revealed doctrine) that this hardness

of the human will is such that we can condemn ourselves to *eternal* misery through a refusal to love him. If we die with our wills refusing to surrender to the love of God, then, for all eternity, we will be unable to surrender to the love we need for our own happiness. At the same time, with a clearness of vision which we never had before, we shall know how much we need God and his love for our own happiness. This fact is in perfect agreement with what we know of the human will—merely from our experience. As we grow older, we become more set in our ways, and we find it more difficult to change. We see broken friendships which harden into hatred or, at least, into life-long aversion, when the former friends just *can not* bring themselves to meet again in friendship.

There are, of course, people who do not deliberately turn against God during life; but neither do they deliberately turn to him. They ignore him, or refuse to give any serious consideration to the thought that his love might ask more of them. Often it is because they are afraid of what this love might ask, and therefore of what they might have to give up, that they do not think about it seriously. They please themselves about what they do during life; they form their own opinions about what they will do in the way of religion—if anything at all. And whoever chooses to serve God on his own terms, without taking the trouble to find out what God's terms might be, does not serve God at all but follows his own good pleasure. What will happen when, after death, they are confronted with the God whom they have chosen deliberately to ignore? They would like to think that they will then turn to him in love. But that is not the way human nature works. What happens when a spoilt and selfish child, used to doing just as it pleases, is suddenly asked to give up its selfishness in favour of someone else's wishes? Or take a man who is being constantly selfish, and who feels somewhat guilty about it;

tax him with his selfishness, and see whether he will love you or hate you. Or tell a married woman who is having a love-affair with another man that she is being disloyal to her family, and see how hard she can become. Something similar will happen when men are confronted with God whose very presence will be a reproach.

Speaking about hell, some people say: "But God is love and will forgive." It is this sort of thinking which made the New Testament writers insist on the doctrine of eternal loss—to save us from the consequences of wishful thinking, in which we are so prone to indulge. We dislike facing up to real issues, hoping that somehow everything will be all right—without our doing anything about it. "God is love and will forgive"—but can a father, for all his love, forgive a child as long as that child insists on sulking in rebellion? Forgiveness means taking someone back into your friendship. But can you forgive someone who has offended you and readmit him to your friendship as long as he persists in having his will set against you in hatred and opposition? God cannot square the circle; nor can he force the human will. And because he cannot, those who refuse to love him condemn themselves to "exterior darkness." In their own wilful isolation and rebellion they remain outside the light and love of the eternal household of God.

God is not a severe judge who waits to pounce in punishment on those who break his laws. In a sense, there is but one law of Christ: that of the love of God and of our fellow men. God is love, and ever ready to forgive. He is the Father who waits for the return of the prodigal. Even God must wait for man, since love is a mutual affair. Even God cannot forgive you, i.e., receive you back into his friendship, if you refuse to go. God cannot forgive while our hearts are hardened against him, while we cannot bring ourselves to bend our human wills and

ask the forgiveness we need, acknowledging our fault in any wrong we do. Even God must wait for man. But he told us that there comes a time when he can wait no more, not that he will have exhausted his infinite patience, but that all further waiting is pointless. You do not wait for the dead.

b) *The Fire of Hell*

We have, so far, limited our consideration of hell to its essential aspect, to the suffering which is called "the pain of loss." A question naturally arises then about the image of fire which is used so often in the New Testament to describe hell as a state of eternal suffering. Fire is certainly an image which can convey effectively to all men an idea of real suffering. Is it only an image, a mere metaphor?

In this, as in most matters of religion, it is necessary not to let the less important and often rather difficult questions perplex us to the extent that we lose sight of the clear-cut central issue. Hence we treat this question very briefly. We shall take for granted that in this image of fire it is taught that a further element of suffering is the pain inflicted by "some created agent." This is usually called the "pain of senses." However, in regard to this suffering, too, there seems to be no need to think of it as God inflicting some further punishment because we have broken his laws, offended justice in such a way that some punishment is necessary to restore the balance of justice.

Let us recall an illustration we used earlier—that of a man who has lost (as least temporarily) the love of the girl for whom he longs. Because of some quarrel or misunderstanding he has broken with her, and is suffering because of his loss. He comes home, and he sees her photo smiling at him from his desk. He seizes the photo and throws it into the dust-bin. He switches on the radio, and

over the air floats her favorite song; so he hurls the radio on to the floor. In short, everything which speaks to him of her causes him further suffering, reminding him of his loss. Now all this will be magnified for the man who is suffering the infinite loss of the God whose love he needs, the man who cannot blind himself to the irreparable hopelessness of his position, but who as yet cannot bring himself to surrender to his need for love. The whole of created nature reflects the beauty of God and points upward towards him. The condemned sinner has tried to make himself the center of his own universe, to make his *self* the supreme being which all other things must serve. He thus succeeded in falsifying his whole relationship with all created things. He is now out of tune, and out of harmony with all other created things which point towards God. He reacts against them—as the man in our example reacted against all that spoke of the one he loved. He turns in hate against all the things which remind him of the love of God; he rejects them and is rejected by them. They gail him by their very goodness—because of what he has made himself.¹

It should be fairly evident that to admit the doctrine of hell is not “to base religion on fear.” It is facing up to the reality of the nature of man and the possibilities of his own free will. Even fear has its rightful place in our lives. St. Paul told us to work out our salvation in fear and trembling, and St. Augustine prayed that he might fear himself, lest in his blindness he should turn away from the God whose love alone could give rest and peace to his human heart. “Fear is implanted in us as a preservative from evil.” (Johnson).

We do no great honor to the infinite love of God if we use it to escape from considering the very real possibility of the consequences of our own foolishness. To accept and consider the Christian teaching on eternal loss

is to remind ourselves of the vital need for God's love in our lives. Even the teaching on hell is a revelation of the love of God. Like all things which Christ has taught, it is truth and light, to save us from our own weakness, to guide us to our Father in heaven, with whom alone we can find the happiness and peace for which he created us. It is a further way of insisting that "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole soul and thy whole mind . . . This do and thou shalt live." But if we don't do this, then there is no other way of life.

c) *Sin*

We have all heard of criminals who seem to have no sense of guilt, and certain cases apall us because of the obvious inhumanity of this "crime without guilt" in its extremes of callousness. At the other extreme, well-known to psychiatrists is the fairly frequent case of "guilt without sin," in which people are haunted by feelings of guilt without any real fault to cause them. The common human judgment is that the balanced human attitude lies somewhere between the two.² Religion must take account of sin without breeding anything like a haunting guilt-complex.

A classic definition of sin is: "any thought, word or deed against the law of God." One can hardly quarrel with a definition given by St. Augustine and taken up by St. Thomas. However, it is necessary to ensure that we do not falsify this notion through the application of any imperfect human attitudes towards human laws, law-givers, law-enforcers and those who punish for breaking the law. One sometimes meets people who have the feeling that they can break God's laws without knowing it, and therefore sin and incur God's displeasure without adverting to the fact. They half expect God to range up beside them like a traffic policeman and say: "I'm booking you for a

breach of the traffic regulations. You may not realize it, but you exceeded the speed limit going through that last intersection. You broke the law, and you must pay the penalty."

The law of God for man is reflected in man's own nature; and if a man acts against the eternal law, he acts against himself. God's laws, or the commandments, have been compared to the "maker's instructions." If you buy a new car, you get a list of instructions with it. You may choose to ignore these 'laws' if you wish, on the plea that they hinder your liberty and independence. You may say that it is your car, to use as you wish. But should you ignore the directives, you may well ruin the motor. Now man is made by God, and if he chooses to disregard his Maker's instructions, he may bring ruin upon himself. In Scripture, sin is spoken of as a lie, a false step, an error, treason. All of these words indicate something of the same idea: that by sin you are untrue to God, and by this very fact, untrue to yourself. And sin is also spoken of as a wound, an illness, whereby a man is harmed in himself.

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, a man is true to himself and to his own personal nature only if he tries to be unselfish. In the Bible, sin is also spoken of as self-seeking, self-assertion, self-indulgence. Quite apart from what we might wish to call it, we are all aware that in every human nature there is something of this tendency to seek self, to be selfish, or self-assertive. It is a general human tendency, stronger in some than in others, and likely to break out in different ways. Human nature, as we know it, always has this tendency within it. Whether you wish to say that it is natural to man, or that it is the effect of an original fall of human nature, matters little for us at this point. And when we say that man has sinful tendencies, we mean, in fact, no more than this.

This inclination to assert or indulge oneself can break

out in various ways—at times to the great surprise of the people involved. We read of or meet with cases, in which a respectable citizen has suddenly yielded to the temptation to embezzle large sums of money, or is unexpectedly unfaithful to his wife, or even commits murder. All these things happen because of a man's *self*-ishness. Because he finds himself threatened in the esteem of others, one man kills the person who could take away his character. Because a man wants to give himself the pleasures of an association with another woman, he abandons his wife and family. Because he cannot bear to find himself in disgrace or poverty, another man steals. In the first steps towards the ultimate tragedy, none of these people "meant any harm"; it was "just a mild flirtation, just a few dollars on the races . . ." And before any of these men was faced with his crisis, he may not have appeared as 'selfish'; but the force was there which urged him to protect 'self' even against the lawful rights of others, and at the expense of his duties towards them. Our duties towards others, as we have seen, demand a certain amount of self-renunciation. And such renunciation leads to a fuller personal life and enables us to find ourselves in our truer worth. Nevertheless, it often appears to us in the starkness of self-renunciation, of death to ourselves in what we would like to be. When we feel that we cannot accept it, we strike out against those who are threatening 'death'; and we sometimes strike in violent ways, inflicting real harm on others. Yet in so doing, we do even greater harm to ourselves. At times we may not do much harm to others, but what harm do we cause ourselves?

A short character sketch may help us at this point. I know a family who used to be rather well off. The parents gave their eldest son practically anything he wanted. When he was ready to leave school, his father used his influence to get him a good position in a business firm. For his

twenty-first birthday, his present was an expensive sports-car. He was a very pleasant young man and popular in his own circle. He was out with his friends on week-ends, and most of the nights of the week. He believed in having a good time, and, although he enjoyed life to the full, he never did anyone any harm. But, of course, he was so busy enjoying himself that he did not have time to do anything for others. Through the years, he did very little in the way of self-renunciation.

A couple of years ago the father got into financial difficulties and went bankrupt. At present he and his wife are struggling to make ends meet and to educate their younger children. Their eldest son has done practically nothing to help them. He has been heard to say that: 'He would like to help the family, but surely they would not expect him to sell his car, give up his friends and the way of life he has got used to. He has his own life to live, and he might as well die as cease living in the way which means so much to him . . .' This is really a way of saying that he is going to live as he wants to, putting himself first and everyone else lower down on the scale.

During the years in which fortune favored his family, this young man did not appear to be very selfish. He was even generous in his own way. But through those years of self-indulgence (not in any sinful sense) he became attached to his pleasures, his way of life and the position he enjoyed in his own circle of friends. He became so attached, in fact, that this attachment now appears as real selfishness and self-centeredness. He cannot really blind himself to the claims his family has on him—out of piety, gratitude, and a sense of decency. But he ignores those claims and tries to justify his own attitude. Although his lack of interest in them has hurt his own family, it does more harm to himself. What does he make himself through his continued refusal to be unselfish? What sort

of man will he be, if he ever succeeds in being a man in the full sense of the word? His parents do not take him to task for his lack of gratitude and real love, for they know that to do so would be to provoke a strong reaction and make him break with them completely. They wait and hope that, for his own sake, their son will be true to what is best within him.

Instances such as this can help us to understand the reality of sin. An important question is: what does sin do to you? or, what do you do to yourself by sin? This is particularly important in view of our final meeting with God at the end of life. Then, as we have seen, a man will either surrender to the transforming love of God or, refusing his love, be filled with hell's hatred of God. "Explicit hatred of God may be rare (during life), but there is a form of self-love which is equivalent to it. Thus a man may go through life ignoring God . . . building up such a love of self that he has only to be confronted with God to hate him." (F. Sheed).

Sin is such a love of self that, if it persists and grows, it will make us reject God and hate him when confronted with him. To some people this may seem a strong way of putting things. They prefer to put their own failings down to weakness. Certainly there is more weakness than malice in mankind, and God is more ready than man to make allowance for human frailty. But many people who plead the excuse of 'weakness' have great strength and determination to find ways of indulging their weakness. And should anyone try to prevent them from being 'weak' he will discover how strong they are in their self-indulgence, how hard in their selfishness.

A classic description of sin is "turning away from God by turning to some created enjoyment." There would be, I suppose, very few people who set out deliberately to turn away from God. Such an intention is not generally

in the forefront of their conscious thought. Their attitude is much more like that of the young man we have considered. There are certain things which they like doing, pleasures which they enjoy. On the other hand there are some efforts which they find it hard to make. They do not want to break with God, or 'offend him', but, "surely he would not want us to give up these things; he would not expect us to renounce this or that, to make this great effort; he would not hold it against us if we couldn't face up to these hard things." Now really, this is all a way of saying that there are certain things that we want to do, and a way of life we find comfortable; we are not prepared to give serious thought to the possibility that God might really expect something different from us.

Such people "would like to be friends with God and on good terms with him," but at the same time, they want a lot of other things as well. They want God-and-something-else. And when they know that they cannot have both together, they choose—regretfully perhaps, but deliberately—to have the 'something else', and to forego God's friendship, at least for a time. Since God does not tax them with disloyalty, they may go on fostering the illusion that they have not broken with God at all. They reason that "really God would not expect this . . . after all, a man has got to be reasonable." What they fail to see here is that they are really making their own terms on which they are prepared to accept God's friendship. And accepting God-on-my-own-terms is accepting God not at all. In this way I put *myself* first. I may convince myself that I am being religious, but it is *I* who decide to give God only that portion of my life which *I* consider reasonable. I may even expect God to underwrite my decision and be grateful for what I have decided to give him.

In this case, what does a man make himself? Religion is a personal love for God, which means complete sur-

render, putting Someone else first. In the attitude just mentioned, who does come first—God or I? And if I put myself first continually through life, when at last I can no longer blind myself or pretend, what then? I shall be what I have made myself. Surrender to God will mean admitting that I have been wrong, that I have set up a false ideal of self, that what I have made myself is worthless. This will be to consent to the 'death of the self' I have worshipped. To admit God, to surrender to his love, will be to die to my independent self. And I will have become so used to being myself in my own independent way, so attached to self that I shall be unable to accept this 'death.' By inviting my surrender in love, God will be asking for my 'death,' will be threatening my 'self'. And I will turn against him in a self-defense which becomes hatred of him who 'threatens me'.

The death of Christ manifests something of the nature of sin. As St. Thomas says, the sinner by his sin tries to harm God, to deprive him of his prerogatives of supreme Lord and man's final end. The sinner wishes to decide for himself what is good and evil, and to make himself the supreme rule of his own life—his own final end. Hence, in all sin, there is at least implicitly a desire to be like God, a refusal of one's condition as a creature dependent on God. Implicit in sin, then, is this attempt to suppress God, and to get rid of him, or to 'cause his death'. When Christ the Son of God came into the world, he asked for man's total allegiance and love. He met with men who were prepared to serve God—on their own terms. They were satisfied with themselves in what they were doing for God, and with what they could keep for themselves in the way of honor, esteem and power. Christ, with his absolute demands, appeared as a threat to their own idea of self, to which idea they had become accustomed. Hence it was in "*self-defense*" that they struck out against Christ who demanded their total love, and they killed him.

As Scripture insists (Jer. 7, 19; Job. 35, 2-8), sinners harm themselves, not God. Yet sin is rightly called an 'offence against God.' We must not let this expression give us the idea that God is touchy and easily offended. But sin is a rejection of God's love; it is opposed to his will, and a wrong way of acting. Hence it is something to which God cannot remain indifferent. Sin is not merely our own private affair; we cannot consider it merely as a personal mistake. It is a failure in our personal relationship with God, and it can be rectified only by our admitting first of all that we "have sinned against heaven and before Thee."³

d) *Conversion and Repentance*

These are words which can conjure up a great deal of slightly distorted imagery of breast-beating, penance, tears and self-humiliation. They must be purified of all emotional overtones. Conversion means, quite simply, turning to God. This is the positive side of it: man discovers God as a living, personal God who asks for his love and loyalty, and man responds. Negatively, conversion is seen as the opposite of sin which is turning away from God. Real sin means preferring self-love to the love of God. Conversion signifies the decision to let the love of God rule our life; we surrender to whatever his love demands. After sin, conversion requires repentance and sorrow for sin. But here we must avoid any notion of God wanting to "get even," to humiliate us, or to withhold his friendship until we have made abject apologies.

In trying to understand the place of repentance in religion, we must make a distinction between an *act* of sin and a *state* of sin resulting from the sinful action. Both of these must be examined in their relation to friendship and love. Let us think of a young couple who have had a quarrel. The young man storms out of the house and

goes off for an afternoon's fun with his friends, when his wife wanted him to do a few jobs around the house. Suppose that her request was perfectly reasonable, and that he really should have done those jobs to save her some real inconvenience. But, wanting to have an afternoon's enjoyment, he chooses to brand her request as 'unreasonable'. His action could be called 'sinful', in that it is self-indulgence, having his own way when love for his wife should get him to renounce himself and give up his afternoon's pleasure. He 'sins' against his love for her, acts in opposition to the reasonable demands of that love, and in so doing, prefers himself and his own pleasure. He will, during the afternoon, justify his position in his own mind: "He was right and she was unreasonable; after all a man has a right to relaxation." He will harden himself in his own self-justification. (This hardness in insisting that one is right is an element which must be noted carefully). As long as he remains in this state of self-justification, this man remains in a 'state of sin,' i.e., a state in which he refuses to admit what an unselfish love really obliged him to do. If he is honest with himself, and true to his better self, he will repent, i.e., admit to himself that he was wrong. And as soon as he admits it to himself, he will know that he must admit it to his wife as well. He cannot return home and carry on cheerfully as if nothing had happened. He must apologize and admit that he was wrong; and in that humble admission, he destroys the attitude of self-justification which he had previously taken. His wife will know that he ought to make such an admission; not that she might have the satisfaction of knowing that she was right and he was wrong, but she will instinctively sense that the truth of an unselfish love demands this; that if he refuses to make such an admission, he is being untrue to himself in the love which he should give. Usually such incidents finish up with both admitting

that they were selfish, and this helps them both grow to a purer and more unselfish love. Then the husband will feel the need to make amends; he will give up all his next free day to do the jobs he neglected, and a few more besides. This is the equivalent of 'doing penance' or 'making satisfaction.'

Before applying these considerations to sin against God, we can get some further understanding of these matters from a comparison with a child's fault and its forgiveness. If a child does wrong through disobedience and selfishness, his parents, before they forgive him, must ask him to say that he was sorry. This they must do *out of real love* for the child, and they owe it to their child not to be satisfied with a light-hearted "so sorry!" for what has been a serious fault. In all disobedience, temper, laziness, etc., there is always some self-assertion or self-indulgence. Now what does a child do to himself through such a way of acting? What would he make himself if he were allowed to harden into selfishness as he grows? He is true to his real self only if he admits that he was wrong, if he is ready to make amends and to break down the self-assertion in which, in his wrong-doing, he has indulged. He does more than offend his parents by his disobedience; he does something to himself. And, for his own good, he must undo this harm.

Now sin against God has the same qualities as these human 'offences', as has the necessity of repentance for forgiveness. By sin and selfishness, we harm our true selves. In doing anything that is sinful, opposed to God's will and incompatible with real love for him, the sinner will try to justify himself. He will harden himself in his self-justification, in his refusal to let God's love prevail over his self-love. As long as he does so, he remains in a "state of sin." And in his heart he will know, although he may not let himself admit it, that he is doing wrong.

(Unless he does know this, he cannot sin, for sin is in the will, a deliberate choice. No one can sin out of mere ignorance, nor unwittingly break God's laws in a sinful way. If, unknowingly, we do what is forbidden by God, there can be no sin in such an act. For sin is a deliberate choice of what we want to do even though we know, in our hearts at least, that it is opposed to God's will for us. Or—and perhaps this is more often the case—it is a failure to make the effort which we know true love for God would really oblige us to make).

God demands that sinners repent before he forgive them. Any talk of forgiveness without repentance would be mere pretence. If you sin, you have asserted yourself, or indulged yourself in a way which was not worthy of your true self; you have rejected God's love which you need. What have you done to yourself? You have set yourself up in your own self-justification and self-righteousness—and you were wrong! You have to destroy this 'false step', break the hardness of your self-justification and pride, if you are to be true to the love of God. You have to admit that you were wrong: "I have sinned against heaven and before Thee." This is a necessity if you are to enjoy God's friendship again—not that he refuses to give it to you otherwise, but that you, by your sin and obstinacy in sin, isolate yourself from the love of God, living with yourself and for yourself.

"Contrition" is a word frequently used for repentance, or sorrow for sin: "a humble and contrite heart thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 50). The word means to smash something to pieces—to break the hardness of independent self-assertion which is an important element in sin. This 'breaking' is done by admitting that you were at fault and by asking God to take you into his love again. And, as we have seen in our human parallels, this will take with it a readiness to make amends, or to do penance—not

that God will not be satisfied unless you suffer a little, but this will be the expression of your own need to undo the harm you have done. You are not the same after sin, for in sinning you have exalted yourself and indulged your selfishness. You must be prepared, if you are sincere, to rectify this. Through acceptance of 'penance' or self-denial you balance the self-indulgence, and show that you are sincere in turning back to God. This is a psychological necessity when anyone feels that he has failed in the love he should have given; he needs to make up for his failure by an extra expression of love. We shall see more of this point later when treating of aspects of the Christian life. The main point is that sin should be considered as a failure in love and personal loyalty. This is necessary lest considerations in terms of "breaking God's laws" should, because of our limited human examples of law and punishment, give us a distorted view of sin and penance.

NOTES:

- 1) For further reading on these matters, we recommend:
 R. Guardini, *The Last Things* (London: Burns & Oates, 1954).
 R. Gleason, S.J., *The World to Come* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1958).
 A. Winklhofer, *The Coming of His Kingdom* (St. Louis: Herder, 1962).
- 2) Cf. A. Schneiders, *The Anarchy of Feeling* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963).
- 3) For further reading on the nature of sin:
 P. Riga, *Sin and Penance* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1962).
 P. Anciaux, *The Sacrament of Penance* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1962).
 A. Dubarle, O.P., "Original Sin and God's Justice," *Scripture* (1957), 97 ff.
 T. Worden, "The Meaning of Sin," *Scripture* (1957), 44 ff.
 L. Johnston, "Sin and Repentance," *Scripture* (1961), 1 ff.

CHAPTER 5

GOD'S JUSTICE

We are now in a position to consider a matter that is vital in any attempt to "weld a coherent synthesis showing the same divine thought of mercy through all the data of the unique mystery of salvation." Serious thought must be given to the idea that we have formed of God's justice. This is really a crucial issue, for it affects our view of many important parts of Christian doctrine. Although quite a few writers express themselves strongly against false ideas of God's justice, probably slightly incorrect notions do color many views of religion, and not a little theological writing. Such a coloring can affect the whole of Christian teaching, as it does if you express things in the following outline:

God, the Supreme Lord and Lawgiver, legislates for the good of the universe. Men are subject to his laws. If they break God's laws, then, since God is infinitely just, he must, if he is true to himself, punish for the sinful violation of his laws. Good will be rewarded, evil punished. To cancel sin, man must make satisfaction for his sins, balancing the scale of justice.

Adam sinned and in punishment for his sin was driven from the garden of Eden; the gates of heaven were closed to the human race.

The Son of God became man, and

- a) negatively, made satisfaction to God's justice by suffering for our sins;

- b) positively, merited grace and God's friendship for us, so that the gates of heaven were reopened. (Redemption by way of merit and by way of sacrifice).

Each individual, if he sins, must make satisfaction for his sin. At the end of his life he will be judged by the just judge, and all his deeds will be carefully weighed in the scales of justice. The good will receive their just reward; the wicked will be punished according to their deserts. Some will be punished for all eternity; others must balance the scale of justice by suffering in Purgatory.

Put as bluntly as all that, it is a rather stark picture, and most people turn from it to thoughts of God's mercy. But what does mercy mean? Does it mean that God decides not to apply too strictly the just laws which he has made, that "God is just, but not too just"?

Obviously, we can't leave a blind spot here; we must endeavor to fit together both justice and mercy in God. The righting of perspectives must run through all our considerations of sin, hell, redemption and so on. But, because it is a key-point in the whole synthesis, this short chapter emphasizes it with careful thought. The matter is not very difficult, but it is one which must be clearly focused if the whole picture is to be seen in its right proportions.

a) *Justice and Judgment*

God, said St. Paul, is a just judge. As Scripture teaches, we shall, after this life, appear before God to be judged worthy of eternal life, or unworthy. The general idea is clear; but here too, it is very easy to let our notions of human judges and justice influence our thinking and darken our ideas of God. This is quite natural, for we think of the criminal courts in which men come before the judge on trial. It is the judge's duty to decide whether you have broken the law. If you have, he must impose

the penalty sanctioned by law. Even though he may consider a plea for leniency, extenuating circumstances, etc., the real point at issue is whether you have broken the law or not. If you admit that you have, it makes no difference to say that you are very sorry. The man who is genuinely sorry for what he has done is just as guilty before the law as the hardened criminal who has no regrets for his crime. Hence the man on trial has to justify himself if he is to avoid condemnation.

When we come before God in judgment, the situation will be quite different. Most of us will not be able to plead our innocence; the best we can do is to plead repentance, hoping for God's mercy and forgiveness. As we think of this, we must realize that God is in an altogether different position from the judges in our courts of law. They must administer justice according to the laws by which they, too, are bound. Power is given them to judge only according to the law. But God is above all laws that could constrain him. This does not mean that he will act capriciously, but there is no law that says that God must punish someone who is sincerely sorry for his fault. The supreme law is love; and the supremely important fact is whether we come before God with love for him or without it. If we come to him in sincere love, it will matter little whether we have been true to him always, or whether we have found our way to his love through weakness, sin, and repentance. God judges according to truth; his judgment declares the truth about ourselves—what we have allowed ourselves to become.

In older days when the king exercised supreme power in the realm and was the sovereign judge, his supreme act of justice was to pardon. When he bestowed forgiveness, this supreme act of mercy was also considered the action of the sovereign judge, dispensing justice. Of course,

this supposed that the one pardoned was not a hardened criminal intending to continue his life of crime, but a man repentant for the wrong he had done. And no one said that justice demanded that the king inflict punishment. He was the sovereign judge, and hence could judge whether or not a man could be justly pardoned.

This older idea of justice is more akin to the justice of God, and more easily reconciled with his mercy and love. It shows that his mercy is not in closing his eyes to sin and pretending that it does not exist or does not matter. It is the loving kindness of God which wants our love in return, and which attends to this supremely important reality and rejoices when one who was a sinner finds his way back to his Father's house.

Scripture does speak of God's punishments, but we must not think of these as a vindictive punishment, i.e., as if he says: "Since you have broken my laws, justice demands that you pay the penalty." The scriptural idea of God's punishments in this life is well-expressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There God is spoken of as a father who punishes his children only to correct them, in order that they may learn what is best for them, learn to restrain their selfish tendencies and to 'be themselves' in the only true sense, i.e., through living in the love of their father. Even God's punishments are an effort of his love to bring us to find ourselves and find his love before it is too late.

Although Scripture speaks mainly of the General Judgment at the end of the world, it is Catholic doctrine that there will be a particular judgment for each individual at the end of his life. Of course, with God there can be no question of his reversing his initial judgment at a later date, as if the General Judgment were a higher court of appeal in which the particular sentence might be altered. This teaching was made clear by Pope Benedict

XII in order to settle a question which was being very much discussed. Doubt had been expressed as to whether, when a man died, he was immediately admitted to his eternal destiny—of happiness or sorrow. Some thought that all people had to wait until the last day and the General Judgment before receiving their reward. Although this is a question which does not worry us today, it was, in the time of Pope Benedict, a fairly vital issue, and one in which it was judged necessary to declare clearly the correct Christian teaching of immediate reward for one's life. And this is all that is meant by the doctrine of the particular judgment.

b) *The Tribunal of Truth*

One of the early Christian martyrs, Carpus, explained the Christians' strength in suffering by the fact that they could "fix their eyes on the tribunal of truth." It is perhaps in reflecting that "justice is fittingly called truth" (*Summa Theol.*, III. q.21, a.2) that we can best see how justice and mercy meet in God. Mercy or a kindness that wants to benefit others in love is, in a sense, most characteristic of the divine nature. And so St. Thomas says that when he acts according to his own nature, God acts in love and kindness; but it is because of what we are that he punishes (*De. Ver.*, q.28, a.3, 15m). God judges us according to truth—the truth of what we are, the reality of what we have let his love make us, or what we have made ourselves. In a sense, when we come before God, it does not matter what we have done. What matters is what we are. In the divine tribunal of truth, no matter how great the love of God, or his mercy, he cannot, in either justice or truth, declare that we are anything else than what we actually are.

Justice also means dealing with things according to their nature. Hence, since spiritual beings are of their

nature immortal, God deals justly with those who are damned when he conserves them in being in a state of eternal torment.

Because God deals with men according to the truth of their being, according to what they choose to make themselves, he is just in his dealings with them. Several conclusions follow from this which obviously affect our relationship with God.

God is not bound to punish sin or demand satisfaction for it, if man repents of his sin. But man, if he is true to himself and to God, must feel the need to make satisfaction. Hence God must exact from man a sincere desire to make satisfaction, since he cannot forgive the sin for which a man will not repent, for which he is not ready to make satisfaction.

This has an important bearing on other points which will be treated in due course: redemption, the sacrament of penance, Purgatory, indulgences. None of these will be properly understood as long as one entertains notions of God exercising a vindictive justice, more or less bound to punish.

c) The Justice of God in Scripture

"Justice" in Scripture, of course, has a wide range of meaning. We must avoid the error of reading into the Bible what are really later theories on justice and punishment. It is obvious that many passages of Scripture should not be taken too literally. Images and metaphors must be used when human language is used to express divine realities. The Bible speaks of the jealousy and the anger of God, but these are ways of stressing the intensity of God's love, and the fact that he is not indifferent to man's sin—not because sin affects God in himself, but because man deprives himself of the wonderful happiness of being embraced by God's love. Any 'punishment'

is inflicted to make men come to their senses, and find their own good by finding God in love and obedience.

The "justice of God," in fact, in its biblical sense, means the saving activity of God, whereby he "justifies" man, delivering him from sin and bringing him into a state of friendship with God.

NOTE:

1) Fr. S. Lyonnet has written several good articles on the justice of God in Scripture: *Verbum Domini* 25 (1947); *Biblica*, 1955, and 1957; *Verbum Domini* 42 (1964), 121 ff. For further bibliography on the subject, cf. this last article.

Also, two numbers of *La Vie Spirituelle* deal with this question: "Dieu de justice et miséricorde," (April, 1962); "Tristesse de Dieu et miséricorde," (May, 1962). These latter provide useful reading which is not over-technical

THE KINDNESS OF GOD

There is no faith without belief in God's love for us, no healthy religious attitude without a conviction of the "kindness of God" in the typical scriptural phrase. This is why we have, in these early chapters, tried to eliminate those vain fears which often hinder a man in his approach to God. Fear has its place in religion, but it should be a fear which is regulated by reason: a fear of ourselves and of the possibility of failure. Yet there are some who hold as a grievance against God that it is possible for us to fail or suffer: How can I believe in a God who allows suffering, wars, the possibility of eternal loss? We have all heard questions like these, asked by people who are ready to blame God for all the 'evil' in the world, but not prepared to give him credit for the good.

a) A Perfect Creature?

Much has been written on "the problem of evil." However, while, for some, it is a real problem, it is a pseudo-problem for the many who use it as a lame excuse to justify their lack of religion. Underneath the 'difficulty' there is often a basic assumption which is wrong: that God could create a perfect creature, and that therefore he should. But only God is absolutely perfect. If God in his goodness does will to create other beings, since they are created, they must of necessity be imperfect and dependent on him. There are ways in which God could

have made us free from suffering, but they are not ways which we would like. We would have been free from physical pain had God made us inanimate. A stone does not suffer, nor a piece of clay, but none of us would like to be statues that we might be free from suffering. Life is a gift we value, yet if we are to have living bodies, it is natural for them to be able to be hurt and to suffer. God has made living beings which are free from all mental anguish: pigs do not worry, and horses are free from anxiety. But even if we could, we would not rid ourselves of worry by choosing a carefree animal existence. Our spiritual nature, our existence as persons, is our great dignity; it is what we want to be. We want to be ourselves, men and women as God made us. We do not want to go down the scale. Neither—as we shall see later—do we want to go up the scale. It is normal and natural to want to be ourselves, and to thank God that he made us the way we are.

b) *Freedom and Failure*

We can think that it would be wonderful if we were free from the possibility of sin, and therefore from the possibility of the most terrible and most fatal of failures. There are some people who cannot sin: the mentally defective, and those who never reach the age of reason. But they are incapable of a free act of personal love; and none of us envy them. It is the teaching of the Church that, if baptized, such people are certain of heaven. In one way they can be considered fortunate; yet who amongst us would want to be favored with 'fortune' such as theirs? The exercise of our free, adult, personal choice is something we value. We must be free if we are to have a personal love. However, inherent in created freedom is the possibility of choosing in different ways. The wonderful thing about love is that it is a free personal gift which

someone does not *have* to make. Free to give love, we are also free to refuse it; and there is not one of us who would renounce his full personal freedom to be insured against all possible risk of failure. God gave us the gift of liberty to make love possible for us. But it is natural for a created free will to be able to refuse love as well as to give it—to sin as well as to surrender to God's love. If we sin, we know it is our own fault, and we can blame only ourselves.

Nevertheless, God has not left us to our own devices. He helps us in many ways, and one of these ways we must turn our attention to now.

c) *Revelation.*

We have seen that a man can be himself

- i) in the right way, which means that he gets into heaven
or
- ii) in his own independent way which means that he will be untrue to what is best within him, as he yields to the force of sin and selfishness. By sin he can cause irreparable harm to himself.

Since this is so, it is fairly obvious that some very vital questions are:

How are we to know the right way?

How are we to avoid the wrong way which leads to ruin?

How can we be saved from ourselves, from the consequences of our own selfish activity?

Phrasing the question in these terms, it is not hard to see the need we all have of "salvation." We need to be saved from ourselves. If we have a realistic attitude towards our tendency to want to get our own way (and in so doing, to blind ourselves to the fact that we are really being selfish), we will have little confidence in our own ability to know clearly what is right, or knowing it,

to do it honestly and constantly. If we have any true idea of the limitations of our own knowledge and wisdom, we will not be too ready to trust our own judgment as to what are the ways of God for us. And, as we go through life we, learn that other men are not, as a rule, any more reliable than we are. Certainly, we do learn by experience and by our mistakes; but in some fields this can be too costly a way to learn. Furthermore, few can afford the time and study which would be necessary if we were to go into the many debated religious issues; v.g., divorce.

Now if God were to tell us the important and necessary truths about life, pointing out the right road, indicating the danger spots, this would be a wonderful help to us, and give security about the most important venture in life. Most religions claim some measure of revealed knowledge, i.e., they believe that God has, in one way or another, made known certain truths about himself, about our conduct and our salvation. Within these religious bodies some make a special study of such truths and become, in turn, teachers of others who seek religious knowledge. This is all indicative of the fact that most of us feel the need to be taught, not only by other men, but ultimately by God himself, if we are to have any really reliable knowledge about our way to happiness, and if we are to avoid the pitfalls into which we all might stumble.

If God has made known any religious truths, these will be in harmony with what we know of our own human nature and our own personal needs. Sometimes, certainly, what he says may seem to demand a "death to self." But this, too, is a necessity in any religion which is going to perfect us, and bring out what is best in us. God's revelation will appear as worthy of man, and in accord with his personal dignity. Hence, it will not, for instance, promise a man—as some religions do—a multitude of wives in the next life. This would be opposed to his own

dignity, and to that of his 'wives' as well! Nor will a true revealed religion contain anything else of this childish sort of imagining.

Being a revelation of what we must do in order to bring out the best in ourselves, God's revelation will not be concerned with those trivial and unimportant things which are not connected with the real values of life. Hence those alleged revelations stand self-condemned which promise eternal salvation for something relatively unimportant, such as selling a number of tracts in order to be assured of eternal life. It will not be magic; it will not be merely nor mainly 'taboos', nor the sort of religion which guarantees salvation to a select few who cannot lose their souls no matter how hard they try. It will be a revelation which enables us to be true to ourselves and to humanity in a way that otherwise few, if any, of us could be.

We need God's guidance, then, or his revelation, for our own security. In this vital matter of making either eternal success or irreparable ruin of our lives, it is scant comfort to be able to think, hopefully, that we are "probably" on the right road. The mere probability of being right means that there is a definite possibility of being wrong.

Revelation is even more necessary if our dreams of personal union with God are not to remain only dreams. Friendship, love, personal union come to us as free gifts, spontaneously offered by another. We can dream about an eternal personal union with the perfect personal God as something which would satisfy all our desires. But no man can tell us that it will be given to us. Only God can do that. Christian revelation is concerned chiefly with man's personal destiny, to which God invites him, and towards which he helps him.

Before going further into what God has revealed it may be as well to note that "God reveals himself in many ways," and his special religious teaching will be in harmony with what knowledge we can gain from other sources. From nature we can learn something of the God who made all things:

"What folly it argues in man's nature, this ignorance of God! So much good seen, and he, who is existent Good, not known! Should they not learn to recognize the Artificer by the contemplation of his works?

"Indeed they have pointed us to fire, or wind, or to the nimble air, wheeling stars, or tempestuous waves, or sun and moon, and made gods of them to rule the world! Perhaps the beauty of such things bewitched them into mistaking it for divinity? Ay, but what of him who is Master of them all; what excellence must be his, the Author of all beauty, that could make them! Or was it power and power's exercise that evoked their wonderment? Why then, how many times greater must be he who contrived it! Such great beauty even creatures have; reason is well able to contemplate the Source from which all these perfections came." (Wis. 13, 1-6).

"The knowledge of God is clear to their minds; God himself has made it clear to them; from the foundations of the world, men have caught sight of his invisible nature, his eternal power and his divineness, as they are known through creatures. Thus there is no excuse for them; although they had the knowledge of God, they did not honour him or give thanks to him as God." (Rom. 1, 19-20).

Furthermore, in his own nature and his personal needs and aspirations, man can find much of the explanation of why he is made, and for what he is made.

Our main concern, however, is to put forth briefly the chief points in the revealed teaching of Christ. Much

of that will be contained in the following chapters, of course. And here we shall take for granted as known, or able to be studied elsewhere, the arguments for the credibility of Christ's revelation. Briefly, we take it for granted that Christ existed as an historic figure; that he claimed to be a teacher sent by God; that he proved his claims beyond all shadow of reasonable doubt. While not underestimating the importance of this 'apologetic', I do not judge it necessary to delay on it here. It is more in accord with my purpose to show how the fact of revelation through Christ fits in with our needs and aspirations; and how the contents of his teaching, although at times mysterious, are soul-satisfying.

The Gospels are accounts of the life and teaching of Christ. These, together with further writings of his early followers, go to make up the New Testament, in which is contained the main part of God's revealed teaching made known to us through Christ. We are also taught that the Old Testament—the story of God's preparation of his people for the coming of Christ—is a collection of books in which God reveals religious truths to men, by inspiring the prophets to speak on his behalf. He reveals himself, his love and his power through the history of salvation, i.e., through his action on behalf of the people he has made.

The collection of these writings is called the Bible, the Word of God, or Sacred Scripture, that is, the holy writings. It has always been held that, in order to ensure the accuracy and the permanency of his teaching, God inspired the authors of these books to write down what they did. Hence the message contained in them is regarded as the Word of God, even though it is expressed in a human style and employs human ways of expression, and even though the authors chose different literary forms and ways of expressing their message.

We shall see more fully later that Christ established a teaching Church to guard his essential teaching, to pass it on to all men, and to explain it through the centuries. For, although Christ lived a short human life, the impact of his life and teaching is timeless, and his message is for all men.

d) *The Kindness of God*

We exist only because God created us. But why did he want to create us? In Scripture, an image frequently employed is that we are adopted children of God. This image is used often, in order that, through careful consideration of what is involved in it, we might be able to obtain easily a really profound appreciation of religious truth. Adopting a child is one of the very fine things which many people do, yet one which never hits the headlines, and one which most people think very little about. The majority of people who adopt a child do so, I suppose, because they have no children of their own, or because they feel that it would be better for them to have a child or children in the house. But this is not always the case, by any means. Many couples adopt someone after having gone through quite a different process of thought. They have their own children. In their own love—for one another, and for their children—they have found deep happiness. Their family life has become for them a very splendid thing. So much happiness has been given them that they feel something like an obligation (or at least a call to do the nobler thing) to let someone else share in their family life. The thought of orphan children, without a home or the happiness it provides, without the possibility of rich personal development which can be found only through love, friendship, and the sense of belonging—this thought moves them profoundly. They look for some less fortunate

child to whom they may give a share in the life and happiness of their own family.

We would do well to think over the personal attitude and action of these human parents—an attitude which will color all their later dealings with the child whom they adopt. For we have here an example which will best help most of us to appreciate God's attitude towards us, both in deciding to create us, and in all his dealings with us. We can't afford to forget this; forgetting it has led to all the harsh and distorted notions of God and religion which have frequently cropped up through the centuries, and which influence the thinking of many individuals.

In the Bible, and in Christian tradition, the word most characteristic of God is one which tries to express this attitude. It is called "love," "agape," "mercy." In recent years, it is being translated as "kindness," which probably gets as near to it as any one word can. Mercy (with its Latin derivation *miserum cor*) is a good word too, meaning that one's heart is moved by the needs of others, so that one is urged to do something to take away their misery, wretchedness or want.

i) *The Personal Life of God*

In the example we have just considered we saw that there is a force in love and happiness which can urge people to give others a share in their family life. We said that it can be felt as something like an obligation—although we know that the action of adopting a child is a free gift of generosity to which the child had no claim. Now this is an image of the creative love of God which springs from the infinite love and kindness that is his. The nature of an infinite God must remain ever mysterious to our limited human minds, but in a

sense, it comes as no surprise to us to learn that within the divinity there is a wealth of personal life. Three Persons in one God, the doctrine of the Trinity, is a truth which surpasses our understanding, but which throws much light on many things. This doctrine is basic to the Christian religion. Christian apologists have written much over the centuries to show that it cannot be proved that it is a contradiction to have three Persons in one divine Nature. However the purpose of this work is not to delay on the proof or defense of any doctrine, but to show its import for our life and religion. The three Persons of the Trinity are Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Holy Ghost is a term retained from old English in which Ghost and Spirit were equivalent words; cf. modern German *Geist*).

"Personality" is a word which is defined in different ways. Here we shall limit ourselves to our ordinary common ideas about personality. We often ask what sort of a person is he? And the reply always indicates his attitude towards others, and his relations with them: he is kind, hard, shy, thoughtful, generous, etc. This is connected with a well-known truth: the truth that a person develops his personality through proper adjustment in his personal relationships, through altruism and love. One of the qualities which psychologists give for a mature personality is "a giving rather than a receiving attitude." Now, if we take all these fine qualities which we meet in human personality and multiply them to the infinite, we approximate to an idea of what is the personal life of God, in love, kindness, generosity, self-forgetfulness. The entire personal life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is love and self-giving, living for one another, completely self-forgetful in ecstatic knowledge and love. The very names which we learn from Scripture indicate that. A father is a father only in relation to his son. In the Trinity, the Father gives himself completely to His Son who is "the

image of his splendor," and between these two equal divine Persons flows a love and complacency which is the Spirit of Personal Love. The three distinct divine Persons are united in the one divine Nature. This is a deep mystery, of course, which must be the object of our frequent meditation and study.

Leaving further study to a later time, let us note here that some writers consider the human family as a reality which can help us to appreciate something of the personal life of God: where "the father and mother form a complete principle of generation, where the child, born of this generating principle, is united with his parents by a spirit: the spirit of the family. This spirit . . . proceeds not only from the love of the parents for their children, but comes from the reciprocity of affection, of the circulation—if we may use this too material term—by reason of which a goodness which goes out of itself and takes on all the shades of a love open to others, returns to its source under the aspect of confidence, surrender, and respect. The spirit is thus an admirable force luminous with rich and varied love. Towards their children, parents feel pride, ambition, pity and tenderness. It is paternal and maternal. It is completely understanding and divines even the most secret thoughts. It puts up with everything, and raises a life of work to the level of a gift . . . Towards their parents, the family spirit in the children is like the offering of flowers and the song of thanks and praise. . . The greatest good of the parents is to feel their love thus rejuvenated when it is given back to them under the form of filial love. This family spirit is as indispensable to the family as is generation. For you cannot speak of a family where the spirit does not bind the members together." ¹

In this image an attempt is made to give us some understanding or appreciation of the personal life of the Trinity. Theology says that the Father is the principle of

generation of the Son, and that the mutual personal love which unites them both is the Holy Spirit. The author, quoted above, says that the human father and mother—the one principle of generation—are the image of the Father. (Recall what was said in Chapter 3, about both maternal and paternal love being able to give us an idea of the love of our Father in heaven, both strong and tender). The Son is the image of the Father from whom he proceeds, and in the Godhead, the “spirit” that binds Father and Son to one another in love is so real that the divine Spirit is a divine Person.

ii) *Creation of Personal Beings*

Even among human persons, we find that deep personal happiness will often urge people to share it with others less fortunate than they. An example of this is a couple adopting an orphan so that he can share their family life and happiness. In God there is the fulness of personal life and joy. Nothing could add to it, for it is infinite. Yet, because it is infinite, it can be shared with other persons. But outside of God there were no other persons with whom to share it. Only personal beings can know love and friendship—persons endowed with intellect and will, or ‘spiritual’ beings, at least in part, as man is by his immortal soul.

However, as Scripture repeatedly teaches, God first extends the possibility of sharing in his own personal life and happiness to purely spiritual beings, the angels, who are more perfect than man in the scale of being. But Scripture goes on to tell us that such is the kindness and generous love of God that he extends further the possibility of sharing in his life, and creates man, a composite being of spirit and matter.

Once there exist created persons destined to share in the life of God, the scene is set for drama: created freedom

and divine love meeting or failing to meet. Created freedom takes with it the possibility of failure. Friendship is not forced on anyone; love is freely given and must be freely accepted. It can be freely refused. Scripture tells us of the early rebellion against God of some angels, and of men. The possibility—and even probability—of such events follows from the nature of created persons. We want to live, to be ourselves, to be independent. But we must not fail to see that no creature can be independent of the God who made him. We can be ourselves truly only by surrender to God's love. Hence all creatures are faced with the choice between trying to be themselves in complete independence (which only God can be), or being truly themselves through loving acceptance of their dependence on God, from whom they receive the possibility of being anything at all.

iii) *No Angel, Thank God!*

None of us want to go down in the scale of being, for we want to be ourselves. Neither do we want to go up in the scale for this, too, would be a desire not to be ourselves. Furthermore, being an angel has its disadvantages. Such is the power of a purely spiritual being, and such the perfection of its free will, that it has one choice: for God or against him. This is not because God decides to give angels only one chance, but because such is the perfection of their created wills that they, by one act of the will, do what man does in a lifetime. They set their wills irrevocably—in love for God, or in hatred and opposition. And God's revelation tells us that there was a division among the angels: between those who were true to God and thus to themselves, and those who wanted to be themselves in independence. These latter became, for all eternity, the evil spirits, demons or devils. Naturally, since they have rejected the love and kindness and out-

going charity of God, they will not share in his desire to see this divine happiness extended to men. Hence they work to enlist others in their cause of hatred, to obstruct God's work of spreading love and goodness through creation.

Man, being a less perfect creature than the angels, does not commit himself irrevocably by one act of the will. He may fall and rise again; he may fail and repent, and "while there is life, there is hope." We are given our whole life on earth to grow towards God, and no failure need be fatal. And as St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote: "The finest aspect of our mutability is the possibility of growth in good, and this capacity for improvement transforms the soul, as it changes more and more into the divine." If at times we think that it would be nice to be an angel, let us think also of the comfort we can draw from the fact that our lesser perfection gives us the consolation of second chances.

iv) *What Might Have Been*

In creating man free, God gave him the possibility of wonderful happiness. But, in his very nature man carried the possibility of failure. God did not want him to fail; since God had created man in order that man might grow to greatness through free, continued acceptance of God's friendship, God gave man extraordinary helps to save him from the consequences of his own weakness. The story of man's beginnings has left us with many words such as 'paradise' and 'Eden' which remind us that "happiness is not only a longing but a memory, and we are all kings in exile."

To the first couple into whom he breathed human souls, Adam and Eve, God gave, as well as his own love and friendship, extra gifts whereby, in that loving kindness of God our Father, he would save them from suffer-

ing and death, and make it easy for them to find their way home to their Father's house. By giving them a personal nature, he gave them the possibility of sharing his own happiness forever. But having made them his children, he wanted to free them from the imperfections and limitations of their human nature. It is natural for man—a creature of intellect, emotion and body—to find that he has to fight himself to be true to himself. God gave him the gift of intergrity whereby he was in perfect control of all his emotional life and physical urges. It is natural that a man should be able to suffer and die. But the harmony which God had given man in himself was to be extended to his control of the universe, and after he had served God on earth, he was to be taken, without passing through death, into the eternal joys of heaven. To all their children these first parents of the human race would have passed on the perfected nature which they possessed. Had they remained loving and grateful children of God, their children would have been born into the family of God. In this atmosphere, free from the darkness and doubt and pain that we know, conscious of their dignity and brotherhood as children of God, leaning on the divine love that had uplifted them, they would have gone together their peaceful way to God.

e) *The Fall and Original Sin*

No matter how highly endowed a created person may be, he must still play out the drama of his own liberty to accept or refuse the love that is offered him; to be faithful to it, or to turn aside from it. He will still be what he makes himself. He must choose to be himself either in his own independent way, or in loving acceptance of his dependence on God. Great and numerous as were the gifts they had received from God, Adam and Eve still had to face up to this choice. We do not know how much

imagery and adaptation to simple minds is present in the Genesis account of the first sin. But the story contains clearly the psychological elements of the choice between

- a) being oneself, and asserting one's dignity in complete independence even of God; and
- b) surrender, in loving dependence to the God whom we need even to be ourselves in truth and happiness.

The first head of the human race chose the former of these two ways, and his wife with him. Then they found, to their sorrow, what a man can be when he chooses to let go of God who is life and light and strength. "It was through one man that guilt came into the world; and since death came owing to guilt, death was handed on to all mankind" (Rom. 5, 12). We do not need to list the consequences of Adam's sin for his descendants, for we know through our own experience; we know how far we are from what might have been, both as individuals and as members of what should be one human 'family.'

The question is often asked as to why God, if he is all kindness and love, should let us suffer for another man's fault. One answer is that God is not bound to keep offering free gifts which have been rejected. This is true, of course, and should be considered, even though most of us feel that we would not mind being given a chance to see how we would fare with the gifts Adam had.

If a rich man were to give your father a fortune "for himself and his descendants," he could, through speculating and through gambling on increasing his possessions, lose all that he had. In such a case, you suffer from your father's foolishness and you will, to some extent, have a harder life than you would have had otherwise. But you cannot say that the rich man has done you any harm. Nor can you consider that he is in any way obliged to treat you as he did your father. He certainly

cannot be considered ungenerous, especially if he gives you a job which has great possibilities for improvement.

In the next chapter we shall see the way in which God has made it possible for us to regain all that Adam lost. The true Christian attitude is to thank God for the splendor of the way in which he has restored to us what was lost; it is not to grumble that God did not make our way easier. We must remember that we are given far more than we deserve.

It is natural for a human person to die, to suffer, and to struggle. We know that with his free will and his manhood it is possible for a man to rise superior to circumstances and difficulties. God gives to everyone the possibility of eternal happiness and special gifts to achieve the goal of life. He does us no injury by not making us immortal, unable to suffer, free from all inclination to evil. He does us only good by giving us existence, inviting us to friendship with him, and giving us all sorts of gracious help to win our way to him through our darkness and weakness.

There is also a danger in supposing that an easier way would be a better way. It is through overcoming obstacles, through supporting difficulties that a man develops and comes to his full growth. Then, too, are we correct in supposing that God could have done things differently and better had he chosen the way which to us, with our limited knowledge, seems better? Is it correct to suppose that God could have restored all the gifts which Adam lost? God cannot force a free will. Now in this case, too, the nature of free will has much to do with why God did not restore all the gifts which Adam lost. Man can destroy what he cannot restore. He can blind himself, but he cannot restore his sight; he can kill, but he cannot raise to life. In these instances God could

step in and repair the damage done, but it would be an intervention which is not demanded by the laws of nature, and cannot be expected.

It is a law of nature that man passes on to his children the kind of nature which he possesses. It would have been 'natural' for Adam, had he not sinned, to pass on to his children a nature endowed with the same wonderful gifts which he himself possessed. But his nature after his sin was one which had lost the gifts of integrity, immortality and impassibility, and such is the nature he transmits to his descendants. These gifts were his in the first place as connected with the grace of friendship with God. God, in creating him, held him close to himself in a surrender of love to the life-giving will of God. The vital influence of the divinity, to which he was so closely united, permeated his whole being, lifting him beyond the weakness which was natural to his human nature. But in his freedom he let go of God's life-giving hand to assert himself in independence, wanting to be what he could make himself. This was his sin, and its penalty was that he should suffer, and struggle, and die.

The only way back to God was through full self-surrender. Yet the nature of man is such that, once it has been deliberately subtracted from full surrender to God, it has to fight its way back again through death to self, through acceptance of being nothing-in-oneself in complete surrender to God. It is only through death—which is the final end to all that a man can make of himself—that a man comes to the *complete* acceptance of his own nothingness. When accepted in faith and hope, death will be the full surrender of self into God's hands. Hence, it was only through death that Adam and Eve or anyone else who had sinned could find their way back to the full transformation of the divine influence freely submitted to. For only death was full "self"sur-

render. They passed on the nature they possessed; no longer the nature perfected by its complete submission and surrender to the divine influence, but a nature which had rebelled and which suffers its own inner rebellion as a consequence; a nature which, in its selfishness, gets a man to fight against his brother and destroy further the harmony which should exist in himself and in God's creation.

God is just in his dealings with men. This means, among other things, that he deals with them according to their nature. It is according to the nature of humanity that each individual is, to a large extent, what his parents and others make him. He is not an isolated unit, but a member of the human race, receiving from his parents his own nature and many of his own special qualities. It would have been very fitting for Adam and Eve, had they retained all the gifts of original justice, to have passed them on to their children. But there would be a strange lack of harmony, and an "un-natural" state of affairs, in having mortal parents giving birth to children who were so much more perfect than they, immortal, unable to suffer and so on. It would be unnatural for an individual to be taken out of the common mass of humanity to live his life apart, in splendid isolation. And so, without any detriment to the love and mercy of God, we need to find ourselves and work out our destiny in union with our fellow men. Together we must find our way back to light and life, and God gives us wonderful helps to do this.

NOTE:

- 1) T. d'Eypernon, S.J., *Le Mystère Primordial* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1950), p. 57.

Note for the Theologian on Original Sin and Redemption

In our theological considerations of human nature and human behavior we may, perhaps, be inclined to blame too many things onto Adam and the Fall, thus putting down as "results of original sin" what are, in fact, defects necessarily inherent in created human nature. It is with this thought in mind that I have consistently tried to base doctrinal explanations on the nature of man rather than on any consequences of original sin. And this, too, is in accord with what theologians teach when they say that, compared with what he would have been if created but not elevated, Adam after his sin was as a "*nudatus*" compared with a "*nudus*." Theology thus makes a distinction between

- a) *historic fact*—namely that Adam, by his sinful act, caused us to be subject to many troubles from which we would, otherwise, have been free and
- b) *the nature of man*—according to which it is natural that we should be subject to these same defects and weaknesses.

Redemption, too, can be considered from a twofold point of view:

- a) As undoing the harm which resulted from the sinful act of Adam; or
- b) As delivering a man from the weakness and sinfulness which are defects that one must expect in human nature, and from which man can be saved only through a force outside himself. This force is the grace of God brought to us through Christ, which brings us to a perfection for which we long, but which we are powerless to achieve by our merely human forces. (This is the aspect that features most largely in the next two chapters).

These distinctions could be of paramount importance

in enabling us to pass judgment on an opinion which has been advanced recently—v.g., by Dr. A. Hulsbosch, O.S.A., in *De Schepping Gods: Schepping, zonde en verlossing in het evolutionistische wereldbeeld*,” (Roerman en Maaseik: J. J. Romen & Zonen, 1964).

It is suggested that it may be possible to hold that there never was an actual original sin of our First Parents. In view of what are regarded as certain scientific facts on evolution, the author says that we may have to admit the evolution of the human race from more than one original couple. What then of original sin? What of redemption?

In this view the “state of original sin” remains: it is the natural condition resulting from man’s imperfection, from the abuse of his freedom in his independent rebellion against God. This condition involves the whole of humanity in the division and strife which we all know only too well. It is, furthermore, man’s inability to be himself fully, to reach the perfection he desires unless God lifts him to union with himself. Of his very nature, man is a being in the stage of becoming, looking forward to the perfection for which men as individuals and the human race as a whole were created.

It is only in Christ that mankind is brought to this perfection, only by Christ that man is saved from his own powerlessness to surrender to God and to achieve true happiness. Thus “redemption” remains the same as it has always been expressed, but with the accent on ‘bringing to perfection’ (cf. Epistle to the Hebrews) rather than on ‘restoring what Adam lost’. It is still salvation and liberation, still looking forward to its final stage of perfection.

This is, of course, a way of explaining original sin that differs from the one which has been generally given in Catholic doctrine. It would, I feel, fit in perfectly with

all other items of Catholic teaching; it is one that would fit in perfectly with the whole approach of this book and make for an even more harmonious synthesis. However, since as yet it has only been put forward as an opinion, I have preferred to deal with it in a footnote rather than in the text itself. It remains for the theologian, subject to the decision of the Church, to see whether it safeguards the doctrine that has been taught under the heading of "original sin," and in particular the teaching of the Council of Trent. It would seem to me that here we could have another field of doctrine in which we need to make a clear distinction between:

- a) *Doctrine* (in this case, the doctrine of man's imperfection and sinfulness, and his need of grace and redemption for that union with God in loving surrender which is necessary for his true happiness) and
- b) *The way of explaining* the doctrine. The one way was that of an original fall through which man was wounded and lost all the wonderful gifts he could have had. The other way would be to begin with man's imperfect nature, his need of God's help—and God's plan that he should, with God's help, gradually come to the perfection of his final stage.

But what of the biblical account of the Fall? Many scripture scholars say that there is no difficulty here at all, and that this new opinion would actually fit better into interpretations of the Bible. After all, the Genesis account of creation is not taken literally in all its details and can be harmonized with scientists' views of the world evolving through centuries. Why then, they ask, must we take literally the account of Adam? It would, they say, be perfectly possible that here, too, there is a similar literary device. The author sees man as he is meant to be, walking with God in friendly intimacy, in inner harmony, and at peace with all God's creation. This, rather than

a statement of past fact, is his vision of what man is called to be, yet what he can be only through the grace of God which comes to us in Christ bringing all things to the perfection for which they were created.

If this be true, then it solves many seeming conflicts with scientific explanations of paleontology, etc.

GOD'S GRACIOUS DESIGN

"Then the kindness of God our Savior dawned on us, his great love for man. He saved us; and it was not thanks to anything we had done for our own justification. In accordance with his own merciful design he saved us." (Tit. 3; 4-5).

a) *Save Us—from Ourselves*

Man's need of salvation is stressed by all Christian religions—sometimes without making it very clear why he needs to be saved, what he needs to be saved from, and in what salvation consists. The concept of salvation has been obscured, and even travestied by unenlightened religious zealots and by religious fanatics obsessed with the idea that 'salvation' consists in being seized by some inner conviction of being 'saved'.

From what we have seen so far, the need of salvation is obvious. This can be expressed in different ways.

- 1) Man needs to be saved from his own selfishness, his blindness, his capacity to deceive himself.
- 2) This is just another way of saying that we need to be saved from sin, or from the sinful and selfish force within us.
- 3) In different terms, the same reality can be expressed as being saved from 'original sin,' considered as the state of alienation from the friendship of God and our inability to regain the state of grace, or friendship with God.
- 4) From another point of view, it can be regarded as being saved from the consequences of the fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve.

We know that Christ was the Son of God who came

on earth, uniting a human nature to himself, living among us, dying for us on a cross, and rising again from the dead. He came to "give his life a redemption for many", to save us from sin and the consequences of sin. This fact is clearly and repeatedly taught in the Gospels, and in all the New Testament writings. Why was it that he suffered and died to save us? The common explanation given is that, since sin is an offense against God, satisfaction must be made before sin is pardoned.

"Sin is an offense against God." The malice of an offense is measured by the dignity of the person against whom it is committed. For instance, it is a far more serious offense if I insult the king or the president, than if I insult my equal, the man in the street. God, Creator and supreme Lord, is of infinite dignity, so that an offense against him is of infinite malice. Hence, since humanity had sinned against God, our "debt to divine justice" was infinite. But, in measuring the satisfaction made for an injury, the norm is the dignity of the person who makes the satisfaction. Man is finite and limited, and all our attempts to make sufficient satisfaction to God are unavailing. Limited as we are, no human satisfaction can compensate for the infinite malice of sin. Nor can any one man be truly the representative of the whole human race, to intercede on their behalf to win God's pardon. By sin we were irrevocably lost, if left to ourselves.

In Christ, then, God found a wonderful way to blend justice and mercy. Since Christ was a divine Person, every action he performed in his human nature had an infinite dignity and worth. By his suffering and death, in obedience to his Father's will and in love for his Father, he offered infinite satisfaction for all sins, and thus cancelled man's debt to God. Since he was man, the most perfect man, he was the new Adam, the new head of the human race, representative of all mankind, so that he could make

satisfaction on behalf of us all, and win pardon for all men. Thus we were redeemed in Christ. All we have to do is to accept the pardon Christ won for us, in humility, gratitude and love.

This is one way of explaining the mystery of the redemption. It has its basis in Scripture, its place in theology, and it highlights how much we owe to Christ. But it is only a partial explanation, and therefore leaves itself open to misunderstandings if it is not complemented by other views of salvation and redemption. Some draw from it the conclusion that, because of his infinite justice, God was either unable or unwilling to pardon men until the scales of justice had been balanced or weighed down in our favor by "satisfaction." Others imagine Christ as placating a Father offended by sin, and thus winning back a favor and love which God had withdrawn from those who had offended him. Christ's sacrifice of his own life, through his sufferings and death on a cross, was, in some way necessary, if we were to escape the punishment of hell and eternal spiritual 'death'.

Mixed up with much thinking about the redemption and Christ's suffering and death, there are often some slightly mistaken ideas about God's 'justice and punishment'. Redemption "is a work of justice. All that man has ravaged in himself, in the depths of his soul, in his psychology and his body and his universe, he must rebuild . . . justice that is rigorous, exacting, and perfect is required in order that perfection may return . . . This is not a justice that would give and restore something to God, but a justice by which God gives and restores men to themselves."¹ It is not from a penalty which a just God is bound to inflict that we need to be saved. We need to be saved from ourselves, and from the consequences of our own sinful tendencies.

God's problem—if we may so express it—is not how

a way can be found to appease his anger, or to satisfy his justice. There is no question of Christ having to win a pardon which God was loth to give. Christ does not have to win God's friendship and love for mankind—this was never withdrawn. The problem was how to win men back to accept God's friendship, to live in his love instead of according to their own independent self-will. It was God the Father who "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten son" (Jo. 3, 16). For man's salvation, God must convince man of his own love, draw him to it, get him to accept it and live according to its demands.

The Bible tells us that, after their sin, Adam and Eve hid from God; and thus have their children acted ever since, hiding from a God whom they feared, afraid that they would not be accepted in kindly forgiveness if they turned back to God. There is another fear, too, which has beset the heart of man through the centuries: the fear of what we might have to give up if we recognize God and the love which asks us to surrender to him. Some, who could admit God's love, were yet unable to renounce themselves: "For, though I knew his love who followed, yet was I sore adread, that having him, I might have naught beside." Others could not convince themselves that God really cared; for them: God was a distant God. To be saved from sin—his own, and the consequences of Adam's fall—man needed to be able to believe in God's love for him, to renounce himself to the point where he could surrender to that love. Yet, by himself, he was unable to do this. He needed God's help to be drawn above himself to the love he needed above all things for his own happiness. In whatever ways it may have been possible for God to bring this about, the way he has chosen was for his only Son to become man. In the life of Christ, and in his death, too, the "kindness of God Our Savior dawns on us." The atmosphere of the Gospels is not one of justice

and satisfaction; it is one of kindness and love. But that kindness takes into account all the needs of man; and one of our needs is to feel that the loving Father, against whom we have sinned, has had an abundant and loving recompense offered to him. The sufferings of Christ satisfy man's need to make amends if he is to be confident that he is fully accepted into loving forgiveness.

St. Thomas writes frequently of Christ making satisfaction for our sins. But he certainly never entertained the notion that God's justice demanded such a satisfaction before he could forgive. He explicitly rules out such an idea (*S.T.* III. q. 46, art. 2). He connects satisfaction, too, with the mercy of God. For God, in his kindness, takes account of our need to feel that adequate satisfaction has been made to the God whose love has been spurned by sin: "It is according to God's mercy that man should have been delivered through the passion of Christ, because, since man could not of himself make satisfaction for all the sins of mankind, God gave us one who could make satisfaction, his own Son. This is what is contained in Rom. 3, 24-25: 'Justification comes to us as a free gift from his grace, through our redemption in Jesus Christ. God has offered him to us as a means of reconciliation, in virtue of faith, ransoming us with his blood.' And this was *more abundant kindness* than if he had forgiven sin without any satisfaction being made." (*S.T.* III. q. 46, a.1 ad 3).

b) *God's Gracious Design*

Even the death of Christ is a sign of God's love: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." We read, too, "in God's gracious design he (Christ) was to taste death, and taste it on behalf of us all." (Heb. 2, 9). A gracious design, and God's favor given to man shine through the Cross of Christ. This is quite a different coloring from any thought of a stern God need-

ing suffering and punishment before he can forgive. As we have said, God's purpose is to get man, lost in his fears, doubts, and selfishness, to be convinced of the fact that God loves him, and wants his love in return; to be convinced that his own good consists in recognizing this love and living according to it. To do this, God chooses a way that is best fitted to move the hearts of men. In the life and death of Christ is played out the drama of God's love and the guarantee of God's acceptance.

Let us consider a human story which may help bring home to us the purpose of Christ's becoming man at the Incarnation, and the meaning of his life and death. A wealthy couple befriended an orphan family, took them into their home and cared for them. One day when the couple were absent, the orphans smashed up the furniture, broke the windows, and had a real wrecking spree. They knew, when the elation of their activity had died down, that their benefactors would not be pleased by their rank ingratitude. They decided to run away, and they found refuge in the slums. There they lived for some years, taking on the rough habits of the down and out companions they mixed with. Some of the older ones remembered with a certain nostalgia the happy days they had spent in the home which had been given them. But they felt there was no possibility of their being received back into the love and friendship of the kind couple whom they had insulted and deserted. They could not expect to be forgiven and restored to their old place. The younger ones, without any such memories, did not give much thought to the possibility of such an unselfish love existing. They could not imagine that anyone would care much about them. Attacks by other gangs helped deepen this attitude. Some of them thought they were happy enough, and well enough off in the circumstances which they had gotten used to.

The couple in our story had a son who, in the years after the orphans' departure, wondered what had become of them, and worried about their prospects for the future. He went out in search of them. When he found them, he lived with them as one of themselves, winning their esteem and regard. He stood up for them against the gangs who bullied them; he became the chief target of attacks and was often brutally beaten. With his own blood and bruises he cemented a friendship with them. He married the eldest girl; the rest of them were then his brothers and sisters, and he became the head of the family. Then he gradually revealed his identity to them, broke down their suspicions of his motives, and persuaded them to come with him to his father.

They realize that the poverty he took on, the hardship and the beatings were things that he was not obliged to go through. He had taken these things on himself only to win through to them. As this realization comes home to them, their love and their trust in him deepens as well. He goes back then to his father, asking him to forget and forgive the past ingratitude of the family to which he now belongs. He asks that they be taken back into the state of love and friendship which was theirs before.

Consider the father's position: if he rejects the family, he rejects his own son who has become one of the family. If he accepts his son, he must accept into family friendship the family which his son made his own. He cannot reject his son, whom he loves so much. That son has, through the force of his love for the father and for the orphans, made it "impossible" for the father not to pardon them and accept them into his friendship. Their confidence in the son who came to them helps them master their fears of being rejected and punished; their trust in his word assures them that, in spite of their apprehensions, they will find a greater dignity and happiness and a more rewarding life by follow-

ing him into his father's house, and by living there in the way that will be suggested to them.

Then, as the days go by, they discover the kindness of their adopted father; and they find out that there has been no opposition between father and son, no forcing of the father's hand. Instead they find that father and son had talked over the whole plan, and that the father's heart, as much as the son's, grieved over the lot of these children who had not known what was for their own good.

Now, anyone who has studied the Epistle to the Hebrews will know how closely our story parallels the summary given there of God's plan of redemption. There mankind is pictured (as a result of the fall) as "a multitude who lived all the while as slaves, made over to the fear of death" (Heb. 2, 16). Christ was the Son of God who came to share with men "their common inheritance of flesh and blood." He is the "Prince who was to lead them to salvation" (2, 11). He "takes hold of humanity," unites himself with the human race to lead them back to God. St. John Chrysostom points out that the expression used (taking hold of humanity) is "an image of a person who makes great efforts to seize one who flees from him." And, "it is because he has been tried by suffering, that he has power to help us in the trials we undergo" (2, 18). And, as he comes before the Father, he says: "Here stand I, and the children God has given me" (2, 14).

For all its simplicity, this is possibly the truest way of viewing the whole mystery of Redemption in Christ. Even its simplicity recommends it, for it was God's way of getting all men—even the simplest—to recognize and respond to his love. The Son of God becomes man. Because of his great personal dignity, he is now the real Head of the human race. The early Christian writers said that in Christ, the Son of God was "wedded" to human nature, becoming one of the human family. In all this,

he has but one purpose: "to seek and to save those who were lost." Through his life, as we read it in the Gospels, we see his concern for every human being: "This divine regardfulness for the rights and possibilities of every human being is essentially his character. Christ is God indeed; Christ has all knowledge and all power; he has all things given into his hands. But all these gifts he uses in order to give eternal life to the humblest and poorest, in order that he may be loved by the simplest, in order that he may strengthen the weak reed, in order that he may rekindle the poor smoking flax." ²

In order that he may be loved by the simplest . . . this explains so much of his life: that the kindness of God our Savior might dawn on all men alike, that by the charm of his character, they might be drawn to love him, that, when they then discovered his Person, they might find that to meet with God was not a fearful thing. When this confidence had been kindled in their hearts, they could then trust that to follow him meant far more than 'giving up things and dying to self'; it meant finding a wonderful new life. In confidence they would follow him and approach his Father, to find that he was their Father, too, who had "sent out his Son on a mission to us . . . to make us sons by adoption" (Gal. 4, 4-5).

There is further cause for love and wonderment when we realize that Christ, as Son of God, could have taken a human nature which was free from suffering. But "he dispossessed himself, and took the nature of a slave, fashioned in the likeness of men, and presenting himself to us in human form; and then he lowered his own dignity, accepted an obedience which brought him to death, death on a cross" (Phil. 2, 7-8).³ It is sometimes said that Christ could have redeemed us without his suffering and death. From the point of view of what God needed, that is true; but from the point of view of what we needed

to be convinced of God's love, would anything else have been sufficient? Through the blood and bruises of the battles he fought on our behalf, he cemented a lasting friendship with men, "sealed an alliance", a covenant of friendship between God and man. St. Augustine said of Christ that he came down to earth "calling us by what he said and did, calling to us by his death."

c) *By Way of Sacrifice*

We have a great capacity for stressing the dark side, for seeing the hard things in life and for thinking they are the chief things, especially in matters of religion. For instance, salvation means being saved from sin and hell much more than it means being saved by the life-giving love of God which is freely given to us, and to which we respond in love and gratitude. We take words and put the dark or negative side on top. Many people have done this with 'sacrifice'. People make sacrifices, i.e., they deprive themselves of something they would like, they give up something. Christ redeemed us by way of sacrifice—which to many people means only that he took on himself severe sufferings and died for us.

Sacrifice is a far richer concept than this, and an examination of its meaning gives us a great light on why Christ died, what his death means for us, and the whole mystery of Christ. It will enable us to see what might seem a surprising statement: "In *God's gracious design*, he was to taste death, and taste it on behalf of us all."

The basic problem in redeeming men is to get them to live for God, to surrender to his love, and out of love for him, to love one another. The only obstacle to the love of God, a great theologian has said, is self-love. You cannot give, unless you give up; you cannot surrender to another's love, unless you give up love of self; you cannot live for another without dying to yourself. Now we

find it hard to 'give up' things, to 'deny ourselves', to 'die to ourselves'. We do not want to die, and we tend to see all religion as giving up, dying to ourselves. We are afraid of what we might lose; we convince ourselves that we are better off as we are. And we *cannot* want to die, unless we believe strongly in the positive reality of a new life which will replace our death. In some ways, we cannot want to die even then—the suicide has had his personal balance destroyed before he can bring himself to destroy himself.

Our way to God is the way of self-renunciation and death to self—as is the way to the perfection of any personal love. "It befitted God's majesty that, in summoning all these sons of his to glory, he should crown with suffering the life of that Prince who was to lead them into salvation" (Hebr. 2, 10). Through his death, Christ goes the way that we must. His whole life was one of obedience, love and surrender to his Father's will. By freely accepting death, he surrendered himself completely. This was his complete death to 'self', to all that he wanted to be as man, in complete surrender into the hands of God. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," he said, as he died. "That is why God has exalted him" (Phil. 2, 9), raising him up in the glory of the resurrection.⁴ Christ's resurrection from the dead is the cornerstone of our faith, as St. Paul said—not chiefly because it is the main proof of Christ's divinity—but because it, above all things else, should help us believe in God's love to the point where we can surrender our whole lives to him. Into his hands, Christ, through death, surrendered himself completely. And the life-giving hands of God touched his dead body as it lay in the tomb and raised it to the glory of a life that could never know suffering or sorrow again. In the resurrection, in the Risen Christ, we have the shining example and the eternal guarantee of what God

will make us if we surrender into God's hands through the self-renunciation which his love asks of us. Christ is accepted into the full life of sonship. It is as man, our head and our brother, that he is accepted, and—as we saw—this is the guarantee of our acceptance, too, if only we will let the love of God possess us, by our faith now, and forever after death.

This, in substance, is what is meant by the 'sacrifice of Christ'. Since this is the central point of the Christian faith, and since sacrifice is a concept which sums up the whole of religion, it should be considered at greater length.⁵ This shall be done in a later chapter. Here we shall limit ourselves to a brief examination of the aim of sacrifice. Careful attention must be paid to this, for the most important thing in sacrifice is its aim, or purpose. This is well expressed by St. Augustine, who says, "*a true sacrifice is any thing that is done in order that we might be united to God in holy friendship, with a view to our final goal when we will find our true and full happiness.*" The word *sacrifice* comes from two Latin words "*sacrum facere*": to make sacred. An object was regarded as being made sacred by being given to God; it was his acceptance of the gift which made it sacred. It is important to remember, however, that the external giving of a gift was essentially a sin, a gesture, to signify an internal, spiritual reality. In the history of religion, there are many distorted sacrificial gestures, but they must not obscure the true notion from us. A man desires union with God and friendship with God; he naturally tends to express this internal desire through external activity. Such is the nature of man.

The true meaning of sacrifice is well illustrated by a well-known human example. Let us consider a child who has been disobedient and is 'in disgrace' with his parents whom he really loves. When, after his misdemea-

nor, he comes to his senses and recognizes that he has been at fault, he is sorry for having offended his parents. He goes along to his money-box and takes some of his small, but treasured, savings, and buys a present for his parents. He then comes to them and offers the small gifts which he has bought. He may know well that his parents do not need the gift; he has bought it with the money they gave him in the first place, so that he is only giving back what is really theirs. The importance of his action is not what he gives, but what he tries to signify and achieve by his gift. Analyzing his action, we see that it signifies several things: *sorrow* for having offended his parents; *obedience* for the future, and his intention of being a good boy; *love, respect*. But, most of all, it signifies his longing to be taken back into love and friendship with his parents. It shows that he wants to be taken into their arms, and into the warmth of the family love, which he knows he needs more than anything else. At other times, too, he will give them presents to show his love and gratitude. This also shows that he values their love and wants to grow in it. In later life, he will give presents to the girl of his choice. In these gifts that he makes will be the expression of his desire to win his way to her friendship, with a hope that one day he might, in making her his wife, enter into a more lasting relationship of love with her.

Through all these acts of giving a gift, there is the drive towards personal union with another in love and friendship. Now, in St. Augustine's description of sacrifice, this drive is underlined, "in order that we might be united to God in holy friendship"—and this even now on earth. And we add "with a view to our final goal (of union with God) in which we will find our full and true happiness." Sacrifice is the action into which man tries to infuse the whole of his yearning for union with God, his desire to

be free from sin which is an obstacle to that union; the whole of his drive towards God, the whole of his desire for union with God, in this life, and in the future fullness of heaven. Since it is expressive of man's deepest need, sacrifice is to be found in almost every religion. There are many different examples of it in the Old Testament. But whatever form it took, the meaning was essentially the same.

Like the boy in our story, a man would take something he possessed and valued to make a gift to God. He knew that God did not need his gift, but he knew his own need for God and for his protecting love and friendship. At the same time, conscious of his sin and his unworthiness, he wanted to express his sorrow for sin. His gift expressed the gift of himself, in loving obedience to God. "The visible sacrifice is a sacred sign of the invisible (i.e., the interior) sacrifice." (*De civ. Dei.* X, 5). This *offering*, or *oblation*, is man's way of signifying that he offers his heart and life to God in love and obedience.

In giving a gift, man has to give it up. In giving himself in the surrender of love, he has to *give up* his own will and preferences, to renounce himself. If he gives a gift which he values, in renouncing it, he gives up something of himself, namely, his attachment to this object. Hence, in his sacrifice, he destroys something of his own selfishness and his own sinfulness. This element in sacrifice is often called *immolation*, and could be well expressed in some sacrifices by the death of the victim. But it is essential to note that the real meaning was not that God could punish or inflict death or suffering because of our sin. It was rather that we had to "die to ourselves" in some way if we were to give ourselves to God in a total surrender of love, destroying something of the selfishness in us which is an obstacle to the love of God.

When a gift is *accepted*, this acceptance is a sign that we are taken into the favor and friendship of the person to whom the gift is made, into a *communion* of love and friendship.

The majority of religions have expressed man's drive towards God through sacrifice. Hence, the familiar pattern was one into which Christ could fit his work of redemption which we have already briefly considered. His suffering and death is spoken of as his sacrifice.

1. There was his offering of his own life in love and obedience: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."
2. There was his immolation, or death to 'self', to all that he wanted to be as man. Accepting suffering and death, he accepted the renunciation of all that he could make himself in his human nature. In submitting to a violent death, he had to struggle against his desire to live. And he said, "I lay down my life of myself," in complete surrender into God's hands.
3. The resurrection from the dead was his acceptance by the Father into the life-giving communion with the divinity.

All of this was something he did for us, offering our human nature, offering us with himself;⁶ and his acceptance is the guarantee of our being accepted into holy friendship with God if we surrender to him in love and obedience.

The Passion of Christ, says St. Thomas, is a sign of something to be done by us. Christ, since he was Son of God, did not have to die. But we do; and we have to struggle to die to ourselves if we are to live for God and his love. We find it hard to 'die to self', to 'renounce ourselves'; we find it hard to be convinced that we will be better off if we do give up our own selfish desires. We need to trust that losing our life will mean passing to fuller life; that our 'immolation' is the way to accep-

tance and union with God in which our real happiness consists. This, as we have pointed out, is the lesson taught us through the death and resurrection of Christ.

What do men have to give up in order to surrender to the love of God? Some have to sacrifice friendship; others, esteem and reputation. For some, keeping God's laws out of love will mean less success in life, not so much money to spend on themselves and their own pleasure; for others it may mean hardship and suffering in giving up pleasures, or the good things which they long for. It was with all these cases in mind that Christ underwent the variety of sufferings which constituted his passion: "He suffered in his friends who deserted him; in his reputation through the blasphemies uttered against him; in his honor and esteem through the mockery and lies directed against him; in his possessions, since even his clothing was taken from him; in his soul through sadness, repugnance and fear; in his body through wounds and scourging." (St. Thomas, *Summa theol.*, III, q. 46, a. 5).

Here is the answer to a question which is often asked: Why did Christ suffer so much if he did not need to, if any action of his was worth so much in God's sight? The problem, as we have stated it, was not what was needed to satisfy divine justice, but rather: What did Christ need to do in order to get all men to surrender to God, to convince them that whatever 'death to self' is entailed in their surrender, it is but a way to fuller life? Had he not suffered all these things, somewhere in the world someone who suffered would not have been lifted by the thought of his love. Someone would have found it too difficult to renounce honor, or position, or money, or pleasure. Someone would have found some 'sacrifice' too hard, failing to see that it was a way to life and love. But now, there is no one who cannot be lifted by the

inspiration and example which Christ provided in his own agony and death.

There is no one who cannot make his own those words of St. Paul: "I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up to death for me" (Gal. 2, 20).

St. Thomas, considering whether there could have been a more fitting way for men to be redeemed than through the passion of Christ, gives an answer, which, in its brevity and clarity, is a wonderful summary of all that God intended. We give his reply here, for it shows how his 'theological' view is not limited to any one way of expressing the purpose of Christ's life and death:

"Firstly, that through this (the passion), man might know how much God loves him, and that he might thus be brought to love God; for it is in the love of God that the perfection of human salvation consists. This is why the Apostle has said: 'As if God meant to prove how well he loves us, it was while we were still sinners that Christ, in his own appointed time, died for us' (Rom. 5, 8-9).

Secondly, because, in this way, he gave us a striking example of obedience, humility, constancy, justice and the other virtues shown forth in the passion of Christ; which virtues are necessary for human salvation. This is why St. Peter wrote: 'Christ suffered for our sakes, and left you his own example; you were to follow in his footsteps...' (I Pet. 2, 21)

Fourthly, because man is thus more convinced of the need to keep himself from sin, as is written in I Cor. 6, 20: 'A great price was paid to ransom you; glorify God by making your bodies the shrines of his presence.'

Fifthly, because this redounds to our greater dignity: that as man was conquered and deceived by the devil, thus also it should be a man who conquered the devil; and that as man then became liable to death, thus should a man by dying

conquer death. This is said in I Cor. 15, 57: 'Thanks be to God, then, who gives us victory through Our Lord Jesus Christ.' " (*Summa theol.*, III, q. 46, a.3)

By way of conclusion to this chapter, and by way of introduction to the next, let us consider some of the things which St. Thomas says when writing of the purpose of the Incarnation. This, he says, can be regarded from the point of view of winning a man to good, and from that of freeing him from evil. We shall take only what he says about the first aspect:

"First of all, with regard to *faith*, which is more certain if we believe God himself who speaks to us. Hence, Augustine says: That a man might more securely come to the truth, the Truth himself, the Son of God, having taken a human nature, established and founded our faith.

Secondly, in regard to *hope*, which is greatly helped through the Incarnation. As Augustine says: Nothing was so necessary to build up our hope than to show us how much God loved us. And what could show this more clearly than for the Son of God to become man?

Thirdly, with regard to *charity* which is greatly aroused in this way. Therefore, again St. Augustine says: ... what is the chief reason for the Lord's coming if not for God to show his love towards us? And he goes on to say: 'If we were slow to love, at least let us not be slow to return his love.'

Fourthly, with regard to right living, in which he was an example to us. And again, Augustine says ... 'Man, whom we could see, was not to be imitated; and God whom we were to imitate could not be seen. God became man so that man might be shown someone whom he could see, and whom he should imitate.' " (*Summa theol.*, III, q.1, a.2)

NOTES:

- 1) E. Mersch, S.J., *The Theology of the Mystical Body* (St. Louis: Herder, 1955), p. 275.

- 2) A. Vonier, O.S.B., *The Personality of Christ* (London: Longmans, 1922), pp. 218-219.
- 3) St. Paul's concept of the 'kenosis' of Christ is wonderfully rich and useful for an understanding of the redemption.
- 4) Cf. F. Durrwell, C.Ss.R., *The Resurrection* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1960).
- 5) On the purpose of sacrifice, cf. E. Masure, *The Christian Sacrifice* (London: Burns & Oates, 1943).
- 6) S. Tromp, S.J., gives a representative summary of the Fathers' teaching on these points in his article: "De nativitate ecclesiae ex corde Iesu in cruce," *Gregorianum* 13 (1932), 489-527.

CHAPTER 8

MAN'S MEETING WITH GOD

Religion is more than a set of practices, a number of beliefs, a code of life. A man does not make religion a part of his life merely by a decision to "do the right thing," go to church, or join a church. More basic than all these things (which would be meaningless without it) is his meeting with a personal God. In fact, it often happens that a man who has been brought up in some religion really discovers its meaning when, after some years, he discovers that the heart of it all is his personal meeting with God. There is a volume of collected stories of conversion which is entitled *The Road to Damascus*. The title is well chosen, for it was on the road to Damascus that the man who was to become St. Paul the Apostle had his personal encounter with Christ. Struck by the force of this divine personality, Saul of Tarsus (as he was then called) surrendered completely with this prayer from his heart: "Lord, what will you have me do?" (cf. Acts of the Apostles, ch. 9). Unless a man can ask this question of God in all sincerity; and unless he can try to live according to the answer he receives, he can not even pretend to have any religion.

a) *God's Revelation*

We have already seen something about revelation as God's making known certain truths about our destiny,

his will for us, and the way in which we are to make a success of our lives and reach our goal of eternal happiness. This is a very important aspect of revelation. There is, however, another element which is, perhaps, even more important to note clearly. God could, I suppose, have made known the truths we needed for successful living, had them written down in a book which we would be able to read, and done no more than that. This would have been rather an impersonal sort of action. Man's reaction to it could also be a rather impersonal examination of the truths proposed. But, you would still have no real religion if you had a man who was a passive spectator, listening unmoved to what God said; or even if he were an interested observer, and struck by the wisdom of what was said, he decided to make a selective choice of the teachings which suited him. The central truth of what God reveals is his plan of salvation in Christ, his will to have all men become his adopted sons and his children. We have seen that this constitutes a freely given personal invitation to each of us. In making known his intentions in our regard, God first of all reveals himself. The fact that God speaks to men, addressing a message to them, means that he takes the first step in making personal contact with us. If a man speaks to you—should he say no more than "Hey, you!"—he indicates his personal contact with you. The mere fact that God sends a message to man indicates his desire to make personal contact; it indicates that he makes a personal approach to each of us.

Then, when we consider the content of what he says, this personal character of revelation is even more apparent. God does not merely say: "That's the road to heaven," or "I created the world," or "You must not commit murder." What he says is more like what the couple mentioned above said to the child they wished to adopt; it is like the content of

a protestation of love and proposal of marriage which a young man makes to the girl of his choice. God, in his invitation to us to entrust our lives to his leading, reveals *himself* in his love and kindness, and asks for our personal response. In and through Christ, we have the supreme revelation of God's love and of his desire that we should respond to it. Christ comes and lives among men, to manifest in many ways how much God cares for the men he has made. "Come follow me" is Christ's invitation to the men of his time, and to the men of all time. Christ makes known to us something of the wonderful love of our Father in Heaven, his mercy and kindness. In the glorious resurrection of Christ, we have the revelation of what the love of God will make of us for all eternity if we accept it into our lives, and live according to its demands.

Religion begins with a personal response to God's approach to us. Hence, each of us must see God's Word as addressed to us individually and personally. We cannot regard it merely as something in the past. It is in the present that God comes to meet us, asking for our personal response.

God speaks to us through our needs, since our deepest personal need is for his love, protection and grace. God can speak to us through our fears and our failures, through frustration, loneliness and sorrow, through our poverty and our want. Often this is the way he *must* speak to us, if we are to stop to listen. It is too easy for us to imagine, in the days when things go well with us, that we can get along all right without God. This is particularly the case in a developed and materialistic civilization like ours, when few have time to stop and think, when all the corners of their lives are filled with bustle, business and entertainment. Even their leisure hours are filled with noise and music. Man has only to

press a button and his material wants are supplied. He can then think that he is perfectly well off, and that he has no need for God. Although our civilization can lend itself to such an illusion, the illusion is by no means one that is of recent origin: "I said, in my heart: I shall not be moved," wrote the Psalmist centuries before Christ.

There is, however, the other face to our civilization—the face of anxiety, frustration, and insecurity. In a sense this may be the salvation of many, for it is a reminder to the modern generation that, for their own happiness and peace of mind, they need something more than they have. We were made for happiness and complete content, and whenever we find something of these things, we want to sit down and enjoy them, thinking that here we shall live happily ever after. In the long run it is no misfortune if unhappiness and discontent come our way to make us realize that we have made camp too soon, and that what we found was no more than an oasis along the route. Many 'misfortunes' come to a man to help him know his need of God. Unless he does know his need, he will never respond to God's call. Religion will appear useless to him until he does know his need for God, in order that he might be true to himself, that he might satisfy his need to find meaning in life, security, love, and happiness.

If he realizes his need of God, a man will know that he will be better off by responding to God's invitation. Many a man takes a long time to be convinced of this. He is happy enough in his own life; he lives a good life according to his lights, does no one any harm, and in many ways may do more good than other people who 'go to Church'. He feels that he has a right to expect a 'fair deal' from God in the next life, and to be paid according to his works. While he is in this frame of

mind, he will also think of the extra effort he will have to make if he practises religion, of the things he may have to give up. He will thus not be convinced that he will be any better off, and he will not see God's call as directed to himself personally. Often, he will not let himself see it or give it serious consideration.

God's invitation to us in Christ is that we become his adopted children. We have seen the example of a child to whom a similar invitation comes from a couple who want to adopt her. In many ways her psychological reaction is the same as ours when the call of God comes to us. If she thought she was perfectly happy in the orphanage, she would be very slow to accept the invitation, since she would not be able to see how she would be better off in a home of her own. If she knew she would have to learn new ways, and put up with things she would find strange and hard, she could perhaps decide to remain where she was. To accept the invitation, she must know her own need of more love and friendship (which, of course, is not difficult in her case). She must also believe that she will be better off in her new home; for this she must trust her new parents.

We might here profitably consider another story—the story of Father Borelli and the street-urchins of Naples. Inspired by the example of Christ in his work of redemption, the young Father Borelli put on old clothes and went and lived on the streets with these gangs of hoodlums. He was accepted into a gang, and won some measure of esteem and affection from them. Finally, he revealed his identity to them—and by so doing faced the biggest crisis in his attempt to “redeem” them. They were outcasts of society; they had no love for law and order for they were convinced that neither priest nor police nor anyone in society had any love for them. They expected nothing except what they could steal or fight

for, or cheat out of someone else. It was hard for them to believe that Father Borelli could have any higher motives. What did he want to get out of them? What sort of a trap was he trying to 'con' them into? In what way would they be better off if they went with him and lived in his shelter and followed his advice to try to live decently? He found it very difficult to break down their suspicions. But he had lived among them, shared their lot, became one of them when he had no obligation to do so, fought with them and for them, and he suffered for them to show that there was someone who really cared. The memory of all this did not allay all their fears, but it made them trust him enough to go with him. They believed in him sufficiently to give it a try, taking his word for it that it would ultimately be for their greater good. They followed him, let themselves be guided by him, and many of them finished up respectable citizens. It was only in later years that they realized how much better off they were, what Father Borelli's 'redemption' had made of them.

There should be no need to stress the parallel between this story and God's revelation, in Christ's life and death, of the redeeming love of God. After all, Father Borelli was only trying to reproduce in Naples in the twentieth century what had been done by Christ for the world through all the centuries, and what every true Christian missionary has tried to do ever since.

b) *Man's Response*

The heart of a man's personal response to God's call is the living reality comprised of faith, hope and charity. Although "the greatest of these is charity," faith is the most basic; and a living faith cannot exist without hope and charity. Everyone knows how much stress is put on

faith, as the full response to God. In St. John and St. Paul, particularly, its importance is underlined.

i) *Faith*

Faith, in the words of St. John, is believing in the love of God. It is a belief like that of the orphan child who believes in the love of her new parents, and goes with them wherever they want to take her. In Scripture, Abraham is given as the great example of faith, as, at God's bidding, he leaves his country, his kinsfolk and his father's home behind him, "not knowing where his journey would take him," but knowing that God would not fail him. Faith is "an acceptance of Christ as Savior." This must not be understood as assenting to the truth that Christ has saved us—and then remaining where we were. It is like the urchins' acceptance of Father Borelli, as one whose love for them was such that he could be trusted and followed. Their salvation would consist in following him.

Faith is such a belief in the love of God that it inspires our response and our surrender to his call. We believe, and that belief transforms our life and leads us forth—with hesitant steps, perhaps, and many misgivings—to entrust our lives to God. This is a momentous step, but it is only the beginning, and all our lives we must grow in faith.

The orphan-girl in our example passes through various stages of knowledge of her parents and belief in their love. At times she will be asked to do hard things; she will be corrected, and she will be tempted to doubt their love for her. There will be difficult days in which she must try to believe in their love through her darkness. If she succeeds, she will enter upon the rewarding years of friendship with her new family. She will then know,

with a conviction which nothing can shake, that her new parents really love her and want her own good. She will get to know them with a knowledge which only friendship and intimacy can give—and this, the loving knowledge of a girl who has become their child, will be the most splendid thing in her life.

Had she stayed in the orphanage, she could have been taught some truths about family life. Her teachers could even have told her many things about the people who wanted to adopt her—what they did, where they lived, what sort of people they were. But while she got to know certain things about them, she would not have come to know *them*. Her knowledge would have been a distant, impersonal collection of truths. But now, at home with them and having learned to love them and to live in their love, she grows into that warm personal knowledge which is the human counterpart of the knowledge of faith and deepens over the years as we live in friendship with God.

Faith, as St. Thomas said, is “the beginning of eternal life in us.” By it we believe in God’s love and set out, with our hand in his, on our journey through life towards our home in heaven. It is only then that we shall share fully in the personal life of God, knowing and delighting in the perfect Persons of the divine Trinity. Along the way God may ask hard things of us at times, and we will be tempted to doubt his love. Much will be different from what we imagined it would be. In our dark days we must continue to believe in God’s love, knowing that his ways are wiser than ours and always for our ultimate good.

Faith is often spoken about as knowledge. However, it is not primarily a knowledge of things which are true, but rather of a Personal God who is the Truth. “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life,” says Christ. By faith

we do not merely know things about God; we get to know a personal God, and this is one reason why faith is said to be a special kind of knowledge—the loving knowledge of our Father and our Savior, which becomes the most splendid thing in our lives.

With slightly different imagery: “Biblical faith is the acceptance of the alliance which God offers to man. Faith which God asks of man is analogous to that which husband and wife give to one another and which unites them forever. This profound analogy is more than mere metaphór: for by this full faith, which is confidence and fidelity, man comes to a true knowledge of God, to that concrete knowledge which only perfect intimacy gives, that which unites husband and wife. This is what God himself said to his people by the mouth of Osee: ‘And I will espouse thee to me in faith; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord—(or know me, the Lord).’ ”¹

ii) *Hope*

All hope is looking forward; Christian hope is looking forward to being with Christ in the eternal happiness of heaven, looking forward and leaning on God. We can hope for many things, and rely on our own efforts to get them. But, as we look forward to eternal happiness, although we do our best to get there, we rely on God’s love to bring us to it. There can be no hope without faith.

As in faith, so there are two stages in hope—the first before we surrender to God’s call, and the second afterwards. When the call of faith comes to a man, he is asked to follow God’s call into the unknown wherever it might lead him. He can do this only if he can trust God, trust in his love, and in his kindness, trust him to such an extent that he is convinced that, in spite of his fears and his repugnance, what God asks of him is for his own good. Trust—that is the key-word in hope.

The little girl in our example was asked to trust the people who wanted to adopt her; to entrust her life to their care. With her memories of her own broken home, she would have searched their faces for signs of kindness and love, listened to their assurances and promises of loving care. Believing in their love and kindness, she then, in an act of trust, puts her hand into theirs and goes off with them into the unknown, hoping for happiness. Note that she is completely dependent on her new "parents"; she looks to them to give her the happiness and love which she longs for; she does not think that she will get it by herself. (We shall continue her story for it throws much light on our hope in God).

As she lives with her new family, the love and kindness that surround her give her a sense of belonging—she is 'at home in her father's house.' It is a wonderful thing, this sense of belonging, and it is very necessary for a healthy personal development. It helps a person realize one's worth, gives a sense of value and a sense of security. Children need affection, and when they know that they are loved, this gives them a sense of value and a deep feeling of security, for they know that they mean much to their parents who love them. They try to please their father and mother, but they know that if, at times, they fail, their parents will love them still.

Now all of these human realities are present in our hope in God; for our hope follows on our belief in the love of God who wants us to be his children, to share his personal life and love in heaven which, as the Epistle to the Hebrews says, is our true and lasting home. There was a famous English cardinal in the last century who, when he was dying, was asked how he felt. It seems a silly question to ask a dying man, but it received a wonderful answer. He said: "I feel like a schoolboy going home on holidays." Now, if you think this out, you see practically

all of the psychology of Christian hope. In hope we look forward to heaven as our true home and true happiness; we look for the love, happiness and friendship of the perfect Personal life of the Trinity. The schoolboy coming home on holidays knows that he will receive a welcome which is filled with warmth and love. It is not because of what he has done that he is confident of this; he knows that his welcome does not depend on how well he has done at studies or sport—as long as he tried to do what his parents wanted. Because he believes in his parents' love, he has a sense of security that he will be welcomed home.

As we face up to the thought of life after death, true Christian hope makes us trust in the love of God our Father in heaven. If we have learned to believe in his love, we will have learned to trust in him, to have that sense of security which the confidence of being loved inspires.

Our first step in hope was trusting God enough to commit our lives to his care, to believe in his love, and to surrender to his will, trying to keep his commandments and live as his children. Through the years of living with him and for him, we should grow in loving knowledge of Christ our Savior and of God our Father. And as we grow, we develop that sense of belonging in the family of God, and the sense of security which comes to us with the consciousness of being loved. Whenever we think of God or pray to him, we come before him like school-children coming home on holidays, convinced of his love and kindness. This will not mean that we expect that God will give us whatever we ask for—money, success and so on. We can ask him for these things, of course; but our confidence will be that he will always give us what best helps us to save our souls and come to our true home in heaven. We must not be like spoilt children

thinking that the only people who love us are those who give us everything we want.

After all, what we hope for, what we look to God for, is eternal life and the means to obtain it—in comparison, nothing else matters very much. It is not on our own efforts that we rely: the motive for our confidence is God. We do not go before him and say that we have done well at this or that, and *therefore* he should give us a reward. We try to live loyal to his love, and we trust in his love to take us home.

We are speaking of Christian hope, based on Christian faith. Both, as we have said, are bound up with our belief in God's love for us. Now as St. John says: "what has revealed the love of God, where we are concerned, is that he has sent his only-begotten Son into the world, so that we might have life through him. That love resides not in our showing any love for God, but in his showing love for us first, when he sent out his Son to be an atonement for our sins" (I John 4, 9 ff.). Can we doubt the love of a Father who sends his own son to live among us and die for us, that through his life we might see shining the love of God for us all, and that by his death we might know that "greater love than this no man has, that one lay down his life for his friends"? In Christ's death, we see the model of all hope: surrender in trust into the hands of God, secure in our confidence that in spite of all appearances, God in his love and power will sustain us. Christ accepted death out of love for his Father and for men, and death was the end of all that he could want to be as man. Yet beyond the Cross and the tomb, Christ saw one who loved him, one whom he knew he could trust: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Into the hands of God, the tender hands of a Father, the life-giving hands of God. And the hands of the Father which received his

spirit, touched his dead body as it lay in the tomb. That touch transformed it into living splendor in the glory of the resurrection. There is the ground of our hope and confidence: the love and power which will transform us who are united to Christ, giving us a share in the glory of the resurrection, to be taken, in Christ, into the fulness of eternal life. St. Paul writes to the Ephesians of the power of God's love as the motive of our confidence. "Measure it," he says, "by the mighty exercise of power which God showed when he raised Christ from the dead, and bade him sit at his right hand above the heavens" (Eph. 1, 20 ff.). The Epistle to the Hebrews puts Christ before us as the source of our confidence: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the origin and crown of all faith who, to win his prize of blessedness, endured the cross and made light of the shame, Jesus who now sits at the right hand of God's throne. Take your standard from him, from his endurance . . . and you will not grow faint" (Heb. 12, 2 ff.). Hope means confidence, and confidence gives strength to go about our task in the world resolutely making our effort to do God's will, trusting that God will bless our efforts, rejoicing—as our Lord told us to do—that our names are written in heaven, as children of our Father who created us, who sent his Son to save us, and waits for us to come home.

iii) *Charity*

It is not easy to separate faith, hope and charity, into neatly divided compartments, since they are all elements of a living, personal reality. It is evident that bound up with the faith and hope we have described is the great reality of love—of God's love given, and of the love which is struck in our heart as a responding chord. Charity is love. It is not an impersonal nor a distant relationship. The essence of charity is that it is an intimate bond of friendship. In trying to describe the love of friendship,

most authorities say that it is based on sharing a common life. Learned philosophical disquisitions can be given on this subject, but, I think we shall avoid them, and use again our simple human example of the little girl without a home of her own. Let us imagine her looking out of the window of the orphanage seeing a man and woman pass by. She likes what she sees and hears; she thinks the lady looks very kind, and the man seems someone you could rely on. They make visits to the orphanage; she sees them on several occasions, admires them, and likes them. They bring her little presents, and she grows to love them, particularly when they take her home for a short holiday. Now, none of this love is yet a good illustration of charity. But when the couple tell her they want to adopt her, so that she can live permanently with them, as one of the family, sharing their life and love, and when she gladly accepts, then you have a close human parallel to charity. And you would have it even if she had not learned much about them: on the one side, a love which wants to take a person into the personal life of the family; and on the other hand a love which accepts the offer and agrees to live in a personal love.

This is the image frequently used in Scripture to express the new relation of charity which comes to a Christian: God invites us to be his children. We are called to be no longer strangers or exiles, but members of God's household. St. Paul, time and time again, insists on this to the Christians to whom he writes: "not as of old a spirit of slavery, to govern you by fear; it is the spirit of adoption which makes us cry out, Abba, Father." If we agree to accept God's invitation, then this is our first act of charity, whereby we give our lives to God and promise to live in his love. We should grow in love all through our lives until we are fully possessed by God's love in the next life.

Many of us feel that our love for God is rather cold in

comparison with our love for our own families. We can console ourselves with the thought that our Lord said: "if you love me keep my commandments," i.e., trying to do God's will is a sign of real love, even though we may not feel that we have any great love for God. One of the reasons why many people are rather cold in their love for God is that they do not appreciate their own deep need of his love, and hence are not filled with gratitude for the love he has given them, when they had no right to it nor any claim on it. Like orphan children who have forgotten what it was to be lonely, we can forget that the only reason God made us was that we might have the delights of love and friendship. We can forget that human love and friendship are a gift ultimately from God who created us for love and friendship. These same people have a sort of grievance against God that they are not perfectly happy in this life—instead of seeing that they are created with a tremendous capacity for love which only God can fill, and which even he can fill only in the next life. He gave us a wonderful capacity for love, so that in fulfilling it in heaven, he might give us the most exquisite satisfaction: "Thou has made us for thyself O God, and our hearts are ever restless until they rest in thee." And so, our search for love is really a search for God. God, said St. Augustine, is loved knowingly or unknowingly by all things capable of loving. Our finest task in life is to seek God's love, and finding it is its own reward. We must ever seek it as God's gracious gift, and always when we find it, we will know that it is undeserved. Often we will find it in spite of ourselves—in wonder at the ways of God who is ever on the heels of those who flee from him and draws us to himself by ways most wonderful. Charity is the love of a person who knows he belongs to the family of God—since Christ became man that we might become children of God and

brothers of Christ. Growth in charity will be growth in personal friendship with Christ.

If we remember that charity is a family love for God, we shall understand what is meant when it is said that we must have a love of charity towards our fellow men, or love our neighbor for the love of God. This love for our fellow men, this fraternal charity, was Christ's own commandment. A human parallel helps us realize how such a love differs from an ordinary human friendship. Suppose you are to return home after a long absence; you meet a little boy in the street in front of the house, and you say hello to a strange girl working in the flower garden. You do not pay them much attention, for in your travels you have met a lot of little boys and strange girls. But when you get inside and are welcomed home by your parents, they tell you that they have adopted the little boy, and that the girl is your brother's wife. Your attitude towards them is now completely different from what it was as you saw them in passing, for you extend to them the family love into which they have been taken.

Very well—you believe that the love of God has gone out to you to take you into the family of God in Christ. If you are convinced of that, if you believe in the love of God for *you*, you will believe in it for every man you meet. Seeing all men as those whom Christ wants to belong to him, as those whom our Father in heaven wants to be his children, you will see them as brethren in Christ, and you must extend to them the family love that binds you to God and Christ. And, as St. John says: "If we love one another, then we have God dwelling in us, and the love of God has reached its full growth in our lives."

c) *Clinging to God: the First Truth*

It is evident that, in faith, what we believe is of the utmost importance: that God is our Father, that Christ

is our Savior, that "everyone helps to secure the good of those who love God" (Rom. 8, 28). It is also evident that by faith we believe certain truths. As Christ said, quoted Isaiah, "they shall all have the Lord for their teacher; everyone who listens to the Father and learns comes to me" (John 6, 45). The importance of accepting as true whatever God teaches should be obvious. Its importance was stressed in the early Christian writers: "The man who goes back, who is not true to Christ's teaching, loses hold of God; the man who is true to that teaching, keeps hold both of the Father and of the Son" (II John 9).

In faith, "which convinces us of things we cannot see" (Heb. 11, 1), we assent to the truth of what God says, knowing that he is infinite in truth, that he cannot make a mistake nor lead us into error. Acknowledging his authority, we accept as true whatever he says. Much of what he reveals to us must remain mysterious and beyond the grasp of our human, limited minds. But we must have the humility to recognize the limitations of our own knowledge, and pay homage to the infinite wisdom of God. In the words of St. Thomas, faith is clinging to God the First Truth, knowing that whatever he says must be true. This is well-illustrated in Chapter 6 of St. John's Gospel. There we see many of Christ's disciples leaving him because they could not understand nor accept his teaching on the Eucharist: "This is strange talk, and who can be expected to listen to it?" (v. 61). They could not understand his doctrine; they were the first of that numerous band through history who would say: "I can't see that this is true; therefore I cannot accept it." Setting the limited light of their own minds against him who was the Truth, "they went back to their old ways and walked no more in his company" (v. 67). Then Christ turned to the Apostles and said, "What about you, will you also

go away?" St. Peter answered on behalf of them all. He did not say: "We can understand what you mean." They could not understand either. But they could look beyond the doctrine with its seeming difficulties to him who taught it; and their answer was: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thy words are the words of eternal life; we have learned to believe and are assured that thou art the Christ the Son of God" (vv. 69 & 70).

All belief is a similar attitude—looking first to God, knowing that he is the living Truth, submitting our minds to him, knowing that our limited understanding will be blind to many things. But our lack of understanding does not make us reject what he has taught. We cling to him the First Truth, prepared to accept whatever he says, convinced that what he teaches must always be infallibly true. This is, of course, perfectly reasonable. We accept so many things on human authority. Divine authority is higher still. Reason tells us that God cannot make a mistake—and that our own minds are limited—so that it is perfectly reasonable to accept the word of the infinite Truth for some doctrine. Much has been written on this particular subject, to show that there can never be any real conflict between faith and reason. Although this work of defending the faith and showing its concord with reason, science, etc., is a most important task of the theologian and religious teacher, it is not a matter to which much space can be devoted here. Since it is the same God who gave us the light of reason and who brings us to faith in the mysteries he reveals to us, we know that God can not tell us something which is quite the opposite of what our minds can know with certainty. But we also know that if there is a God he will be greater than our human minds, and that much of what he tells us about himself will be beyond our complete understanding. The

rationalist, said Chesterton, "understands everything, and everything is not worth understanding."

We cling with faith unflinching to God who is the First Truth, knowing that whatever he reveals to us is true. It is important to note, however, that while we can never be mistaken in our act of faith, whereby we accept as true whatever God reveals, we can be mistaken about what God has actually made known. Because they do not make this distinction, some people have unnecessary worries about the faith. That is, they can assume, incorrectly, that some proposition is revealed by God, and they cling to it as true. Then they discover that it is wrong, or find that it is questioned by science, and they have "doubts about the faith." The real cause of the difficulty is that, in the first place, they wrongly judged something to be revealed by God, when it was only a conclusion incorrectly drawn. A good example of this is found in the opposition with which Galileo met. His opponents thought that it was clearly taught in the Bible that the sun moved around a flat earth. They were wrong, of course, in their interpretation of Scripture.

Some similar difficulties are met with by people who grow up with the faith. They go out into an adult world equipped with a child's understanding of religious truth, which they cease to study once they leave school. They have difficulties "about the faith" only because of the limitations of their own religious knowledge.

From this aspect, that of accepting the truth which God reveals, there is also a progress in faith, since God's revealed truth becomes the norm to which our other knowledge is referred. We gradually, under God's guidance, come to have more and more "the mind of Christ," seeing all things more truly because we see them in the light of eternal truth.

d) *The Norm of Faith*

Up to this point, there would be no difficulty for most Christians in agreeing with what has been written. However, we come to a matter which is the point of divergence for a few Christian bodies. This is the question: where do we find the truths which God has revealed? What is our norm to judge what God has taught? If we are prepared to believe whatever he has taught, have we any sure guide to know what are the truths he wants us to believe? If we want to surrender to him in faith and friendship, and if Christ has said: "You are my friends if you do things I command you" (John 14, 21), how are we to know exactly what are his commandments, and what is his will for us? All answer that in the Scriptures we have the word of God to man. Some Christian bodies say that in the private reading of Scripture each man discovers the will of God for him, and the truths that he has taught. We shall not delay on any teaching other than Catholic, since our purpose here is positive and not polemic.

The Catholic doctrine is that, in order that all men might know easily the truths that are necessary for their own salvation, Christ founded a Church which he commissioned to teach in his name. Hence, to the question: How am I to know what Christ taught? the answer: ask the Church which Christ instituted. For Christ said to the Apostles, the first officials in his Church: "He who hears you, hears me, and he who despises you, despises me" (Luke 10, 16). "Going therefore, make disciples of all nations, teaching them all things that I have commanded you. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, he who does not believe will be condemned" (Matt. 28, 19; Mark 16, 16).

He promises his Church the life-giving Spirit of truth

who "will bring to your minds all things that I have made known to you" (John 16, 13). And St. Paul writes of the Church as "the pillar and ground of truth." (II Tim. 3, 14-15). Christ came, teaching with authority, "to give testimony to the truth." "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you, going therefore teach . . ." His Church, with which he has promised to be until the end of the world, teaches in his name, and will teach with authority, declaring clearly to men the message of God.

Such a Church corresponds to man's needs, especially his need for *security*, regarding the vital matters of his own salvation, the meaning of life, the way to heaven. We read Scripture, and find that on many points there are different interpretations. To those of us who are not scholars, much is obscure, and we repeat the old question: "How can I understand unless some man show me?" The Church is there to show us, for she was commissioned to guard the message of Christ, to hand it on through the centuries, and to explain to all men the necessary and most important things. Only a Church which teaches with authority can provide us with security. "It is because the Catholic Church speaks with assurance that its message falls on so many willing ears; for down in the bottom of their hearts, men long for a religion which, above everything else, will be sure. In spite of all the nonsense that has been written about them, our young people—especially the worst of them—want somebody or other to tell them what they *must* do in order to find enduring success and happiness." (Lewis Gaston Leary, in *Problems of Protestantism*).

Nor does the Church, in supplying this security, take away our other need for *liberty in thought*. The present Ecumenical Council has shown how vast are the fields in which we are left to think things out. But there are certain matters about which it is dangerous—and possibly

fatal—to be left to think for oneself, e.g., whether this gun is loaded, whether this drink is poisonous, whether this aircraft is unsafe. In these matters, the declared truth sets us free from anxiety, doubt and the possibility of fatal error. Likewise religious truth, proposed by Christ securely and infallibly through his Church, sets us free from anxiety about our own salvation, from doubt, from the limitations of our own knowledge, and from the possibility of self-deception.

This matter of a Church infallibly teaching the truths necessary for salvation is another manifestation of the kindness of God. He has not left us to battle our way through the dark. If we believe in the power of God, we will have no great difficulty in accepting the fact that he is able to assist his Church, 'guiding her to all truth', for the benefit of all who, of themselves, could not see their way clear.

The Church supplies man's *need to surrender to God*. We have seen that the two aspects of faith are 1) acceptance of the truth which God reveals, and 2) full personal surrender to the love of God in which we have come to believe.

In regard to this latter element of surrender, a teaching, ruling authority in the Church saves us from the possibility of grave self-deception. It is an illusion to decide to serve God in our own way, to surrender to him on our own terms. If it is left to us to decide how we will surrender to God, we shall find that our selfishness leads us to a very comfortable and selfish service of God, which is a disguised form of self-seeking. If we surrender to God merely in private, in our own souls, it is very easy to mistake self-interest for religion. Faith is complete surrender to God, on his terms, in the way he comes to us, in the way that he asks us to follow him. We find a good example of this in St. John's Gospel where "the

Jews" refused to accept Christ. They believed in God and in Moses, and in the Law—as they interpreted it—and they told themselves that they had faith. But Christ condemned them as rejecting faith. They refused to accept Christ and his claims. They had their own ideas of God, and of the way the Messiah would come to them from God. They would not, then, accept this man from Galilee, in spite of his miracles and his teaching. God understands the human nature he has made, and he understands that real submission is made through the mediators whom he sends in his name: to Christ in human nature, and through the Church whom he has sent to carry on his mission. When Saul of Tarsus, after his vision of Christ, cried, "Lord what will you have me do?" he was sent to human teachers, to submit through them to the will and ways of God. Such is the continued divine plan: "He who hears you, hears me." Accepting the teaching of the Church, we do not submit to human authority, but we submit, through the Church, to the God who has said that this can be the only effective way of complete surrender. And, having renounced our own will and our own judgment, in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven as "little children," we find that we have surrendered not to slavery but to "the liberty of the children of God." Although we had to humble ourselves and bend down to pass through the gateway to life, we find that we enter into a far wider world in which we stand straight and free.

It is interesting to see that John Henry Newman maintained, in one of his sermons as an Anglican, that "the vast majority of people in this country (England) have not the faith." His reason for such an assertion was that, in his opinion, most of them did not really submit their minds and wills to God. They read the Scriptures, and took from them what they considered 'reasonable and acceptable'. This, he said, is not submission or surren-

der to God; it is setting up our own human norms by which we judge the word of God and make a selective choice of what we will believe and what we shall do. While not going so far as to agree with his conclusion, one must agree with the first part of his reasoning: there can be no faith without real surrender of mind and will to God; this is a difficult thing for human nature, and one in which we can easily deceive ourselves. From this possibility of self-deception, we are set free by Christ's institution of a living Church through whom we are asked to submit to God. Here, too, in losing our independent life, we find a fuller life in Christ to whom, through his Church, we make the gift of our minds and hearts.

NOTE:

- 1) Lacan, "Les Trois qui demeurent," *Recherches de Sciences Religieuses*, XLII (1958), 321 ff.

CHAPTER 9

THE SUPERNATURAL— THE PERSONAL *

In the last chapter I have belabored the image of the adopted child; yet I have done so with deliberate intent, because I am convinced that this scriptural example can serve to clarify and simplify the theology of grace and the virtues, so that its life-value will be brought home to the ordinary Christian. We must not undervalue speculative theology, especially in these days of phenomenology and facile philosophical thinking. The Popes have defended the scholastic part of theology often in recent years. Defense always indicates that attacks have been made, and attacks are usually made for a reason. One of the reasons for such attacks is the real danger that the man trained in speculative theology may not be able to translate his speculations back into language that fits into life; that the terminology and explanations of the teacher and the preacher will then mean little to the people to whom we teach and preach. We may even have obscured the real meaning from ourselves.

A good example of this is found in much of what is written about charity towards God and neighbor. We are told that we love God because of his "absolute goodness," and our neighbor for the same motive. This love for our neighbor is a supernatural love. Charity towards God is a love of friendship, which, as St. Thomas says, is a mutual love of benevolence founded on a certain

* This chapter may be omitted without loss by those not familiar with the traditional teaching on the supernatural.

sharing, or *communicatio*.¹ Since this is so, St. Thomas says, we cannot have a love of friendship for a horse. In explaining what St. Thomas means, quite a few theologians say that life is a principle of operation within a being; and since a horse has no principle of intellectual life, it does not share the same sort of life as man. Hence, if it were to be taken into friendship with man, it would have to be given a share in human life. Such life is above its natural powers, needs and demands; hence it would be supernatural. Similarly, if we are to enjoy friendship with God, we must be given a share in higher life—the divine life which is supernatural, i.e., quite beyond our natural capacity, needs or rights. God gives us this share in his own life, and our friendship is founded on this sharing.

St. Thomas would be rather surprised, I think, to read such an interpretation of his thought. What he actually says is far simpler than this. It is “psychological” rather than ontological. He says that God calls us to share his own personal life, and that from this sharing a love of friendship must arise in man. That is, his line of thought is the one we have illustrated by the example of a child invited to share in the life of some family. From such an invitation and its acceptance, a love of friendship must arise. The love of friendship flows from this sharing in the personal life of the family. It is impossible for a person to believe in an invitation to such a sharing, accept the invitation and not, through the acceptance, enter into a love of friendship.²

I have used this particular instance of charity because it well illustrates the different ways in which the word *life* is used. It shows also the easiest way to give people an idea of the ‘supernatural life’ which they are expected to live. Hence the burden of this chapter would be that it is theologically accurate and practically adequate,

to teach that the supernatural order is the order of personal relationship with God in filial friendship. This safeguards all that must be safeguarded in the theology of the supernatural, and it gives people a far better understanding of the supernatural life than trying to explain it as 'above nature'. (The theologian, of course, must go deeper into metaphysical analysis, but he needs not try to take the layman with him).

The word *life* is used in three different ways. The philosopher and speculative theologian, beginning with ontological realities, arrange them in this order:

- 1) Life is a principle of operation within a being. There are different kinds of life if there are different kinds of operation. In this sense, a man in a coma has intellectual and volitional life, even though he makes no acts of mind or will. (Sanctifying grace is this sort of life—our life of grace, a sharing in the divine life).
- 2) Life is a specific kind of activity. If the man in a coma recovers, he exercises his mind and will in a life of knowing and willing. This is true even if he is on a desert island, or in solitary confinement. But what a life! (Our supernatural activity is life in this sense).
- 3) We speak of social or interpersonal life—the life of a family, of friends, of people in love.

The order of intelligibility, and the order given in Scripture and the Fathers (and in St. Thomas who treats of grace as a quality in the soul only towards the end of the *Pars* III) is the other way around. We are called to share in the interpersonal, or 'family' life of God, fully in heaven, but truly here on earth through faith and charity. We are to know and love him on intimate terms as friends and as his children. These are the intelligible realities about which Scripture speaks as the new 'life' into which

we enter, the very personal life of God in which we are allowed to share. That this might be possible, some renovation of our interior being, through an accidental perfecting is needed and given. But this, like our *intellectus agens* and our other spiritual faculties, need not be adverted to, nor known about, for us to live this new personal life which comes to us. If they are overstressed, and placed to the fore when we try to explain to the nonspeculative minds (of whom there are many in the human family), they can be an obstacle, rather than a help, to understanding what is meant by grace and the supernatural.

To be sure, the professional theologian cannot neglect this created reality within us. It was necessary to stress it, and Trent defined its existence against the doctrine of the reformers who maintained that man was internally unchanged by justification. There is an internal, accidental modification of man's soul and faculties through habitual grace and the virtues. And thus man has a special sharing in the 'divine life', which is above and beyond his natural powers, and therefore 'supernatural'. It is necessary to defend this, for if it is denied, the reality of our friendship with God, and our sonship is destroyed. But the stress in explaining the supernatural life is not on the mysterious something within us, but on the reality of new personal relationships with God in Christ. We have new powers, certainly, but let us stress—as St. Thomas does—that they are powers "of delighting in the divine Persons" ⁸ in a new, intimate personal relationship.

Many people are mystified by talk about a supernatural knowledge of God, a supernatural love of God, a love of our neighbor for supernatural motives, supernatural virtues which are a share in God's own life and activity. But there is a lot of meaning in the scriptural approach: Faith is belief in God's love and in his personal approach to us inviting us to enter into an intimate personal rela-

tionship with him as his friends and his adopted children. Faith is an assent and a consent: agreeing to accept the invitation and surrender to God's love. The two elements in faith must be stressed. In the matter of faith, we have another example of how a reaction against error can make us stress one aspect so much that we incline to think it is the only one. At the Reformation, at the Council of Trent, and later in the nineteenth century, the Church had to make frequent statements about faith and reason against such errors as those of Luther, Froschammer, Hermes, Gunther and so on. The first Vatican Council stressed that faith was a supernatural virtue whereby, because of God's authority and truth, we accept the truths which God reveals. An act of faith, which is still taught to children, is: "O my God, I firmly believe all the truths that the Holy Catholic Church believes and teaches; I believe these truths, O Lord, because Thou, the Infallible Truth, hast revealed them to her. . . ." This includes only one aspect of the virtue of faith—and in a sense it omits the most important one. It would be true no matter what the content of revelation was. But the content is the tremendous and transforming reality of our personal relationship with God! *What* you believe makes all the difference to your reaction to the 'truth'. We react differently to different truths: v.g., to the truth that Manjimup is the name of a town in Australia; to the truth that a friend has died; to the news that we have inherited a fortune, or to an announcement that Russia has declared war on the U.S.A. Hence any description of the act of faith *must* stress the personal implications of what we assent to.

Perhaps a failure to keep this in mind explains why such a vast amount of theological writing and discussion has not yet solved the discussion about the "analysis of faith," or the "problem of the act of faith."⁴ Is the question correctly put in the first place? If not, then discus-

sion will go on indefinitely with no satisfactory solution. The question is usually framed in this way: The human reason can prove that God exists, and that he is infinite in truth, as in other things. The human reason can also prove the fact of revelation. If faith is an assent to truth on the authority of God who has revealed that truth, why cannot the human reason, without the help of grace, make that assent to truth? Many differing solutions are proposed to the problem. Some say that grace is needed for us to pass from the natural to the supernatural order—which, of course, is not very enlightening.

The question takes on a different character when one recalls the personal content of revelation to which one is asked to assent and consent. One cannot surrender to another person's invitation to love without being attracted towards that person. Such a personal attraction, as we shall see in the next chapter, is the very essence of actual grace. Man comes to faith only through "the instinct of the Holy Spirit, moving a man's *heart* to believe." ⁵

Furthermore, this view of faith makes it easy to see why theologians can speak about faith having a different formal object from mere natural knowledge, and of faith enabling us to know God in a new way. The knowledge any mother has of her own child is a different kind of knowledge from that which a casual acquaintance has of the same child. She 'sees him' differently, because she sees him through the eyes of love. Hers is a much more 'personal' knowledge. There is a similarity here with the knowledge of faith, and the knowledge of someone who has 'lost the faith' through apostasy, while keeping much of his knowledge about God and religion.

From this point of view, it is immediately evident why faith is necessary for salvation; and also why, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are told that we must believe that God exists and rewards those who seek him (Heb.

11, 6). In order that we might enter into a relationship of personal friendship with God (in which our justification and our salvation consist), we must obviously accept his existence as a personal being (at least implicitly). We must also believe that it is good for us to enter into such a relationship with him. Discussions about whether belief in Christ and belief in the Trinity are necessary should be treated from the aspect of their being a revelation of the 'personality of God'.

These matters have their application to the question of the salvation of non-Christians, and also to the problem of unbaptized infants. However, since on these points there is much discussion we shall leave them until the final chapter.

Hope is a supernatural virtue whereby we look to God for eternal life and the means to obtain it. To some people it has appeared as a slightly selfish sort of virtue, whereby we desire our own happiness. This attitude is by no means a thing of the past, something which occurred at times in history. But such an error is quite impossible if hope is put in its personal context—*fiducia quia ex fide*, as St. Thomas says—the trust in the Person of Christ and in our Father in heaven because we have learned to believe in his love. It thus appears as a magnificent virtue, bringing with it that security and sense of belonging which is part of the 'family atmosphere' into which God takes us.

Charity is the filial love, or love of friendship which spontaneously arises in the heart of a man who really believes in a love of God as splendid as is this love which Christ reveals to us. It is immediately evident that there is no supernatural, or 'personal' love in the heart of a man who does not know God's call to him. He can admire God, and love him because of the goodness manifest in creation, but as long as it remains a distant

love, it is not charity which is the intimate love of friendship. As St. Thomas says, we could not love God with a love of charity were we not called to personal intimacy with him in the next life.

It is clear, from this point of view, that a love of charity for our neighbor is more than merely human friendship. Our motive is supernatural, i.e., we see him, too, in the light of God's love that makes him an adopted child, taking us both into the same 'family circle'. In the days when this conviction was vitally alive in the minds of all, it was no wonder that "see how these Christians love one another" could become an exclamation of admiration.

Faith, hope and charity are supernatural, theological virtues, depending on God's personal approach to us, putting us into personal contact with God in a way that transforms and 'informs' our whole life.

Infused Moral Virtues

A man without faith can be honest, prudent, just and strong. But the virtues which he possesses are said to be 'natural virtues', if he does not have faith and charity. But what is the difference between these natural virtues, and the 'supernatural virtues' which come to him after justification? This is a question which theologians discuss at some length.

In our present approach, the matter can be fairly simply explained, and 'charity, the form of the virtues,' combines easily with the natural habit of doing good. Once a man enters into a personal relationship with God in a living faith and charity, all his natural virtues are lifted to the supernatural level because they take on a personal character.

In ordinary life, a man may be just, courteous, and temperate because he thinks it the gentlemanly thing.

This is good, but while he directs his life merely by the thought that *he* must do the right thing, his 'virtue' remains very natural. If he is courteous and temperate out of love for his wife and family, this is better, and more noble, because more altruistic. If, finally, he practises these virtues because the love of God demands it, then he is living a life of supernatural virtue, because it is directed towards God as the Person whose love rules his life.

St. Thomas has a very complete concept of "the perfect virtue." No virtue can be perfect without being informed by charity, and hence the virtues of pagans are "imperfect." But neither is the virtue of temperance, for example, a "perfect virtue" in a man who has very recently been converted from a life of self-indulgence. If he has charity then, since his will is directed towards God, and hence away from sin—including the sins of intemperance—he can be said to possess the virtue of temperance, but imperfectly as yet. To become a 'perfect virtue' it must subdue and control his passions. The perfect supernatural virtue is fully personal:

- a) because it is informed and inspired by his personal love for God;
- b) because it is fully 'personalizing', i.e., it develops the human personality by subjecting the lower impulses, the passions and appetites, to the rule of reason enlightened by faith and strengthened by charity.⁶

Gifts of the Holy Ghost:

In line with our study so far, we can say that the Gifts of the Holy Spirit are needed precisely because of the personal nature of the spiritual life, if we are to grow in the life of grace. If we take our human parallels again, we will see that a filial love, or a love of friendship, can exist and yet be far from perfect. It may even need to be further perfected if it is to endure:

- a) Think of a child whose desire is to act according to the will of its parents whom it loves. Left to itself and unenlightened by its parents, even though it has all the good will in the world, it will still judge in a way which is at variance with its parents wishes (even more so, if it is an 'adopted child' who brings with it, from its former life, its different ways of thinking). It will judge according to its own 'self-centered' norms, according to its own ideas and preferences. And so it will buy useless presents, and 'help' its parents in all sorts of hindering ways.
- b) Think again of a young married couple, who, in spite of their love, can have all sorts of misunderstandings, because they tend to "judge others by themselves." For the sake of harmony, they must develop understanding, instinctively sensing one another's moods, preferences, etc. Love, as it develops, takes this instinctive understanding with it—knowing without reasoning what the other thinks and prefers. By a deep personal love, two souls are tuned to perfect harmony and mutual understanding.

The Gifts of the Holy Ghost (receptive potencies to receive the graces God gives) give us that instinctive way of sensing the will of God, and of knowing God in an intimate knowledge which follows on a love that is deeply lived. They also make our wills ready and eager to follow the inspirations of grace. As a result, we act more instinctively according to the divine norms, which are often not our norms at all. Even with our infused powers of knowing and loving God, and acting according to his will, we often judge his ways from the central point of self, according to the limited lights of our own prudence and human wisdom. Adopted children of God, taken into the circle of his personal, family life, we bring with us our limited norms of judging. Confronted with the choice of the best mode of action, we will tend to

choose in a very human fashion unless we are enlightened by our Father, who gives us his Spirit to lead us.

It is obvious that these Gifts cannot be present in a soul in which there is no charity, or personal love of God. For it is this personal relationship of love which gives us the instinctive sense of the mind of God—the charity which unites us to God in love, making us “one spirit with him” (I Cor. 6, 17).⁷

So far, we have considered the advantage of thinking of the supernatural in personal terms if we are to make it have some positive meaning for most Christians. Positive meaning, I say, for ‘the supernatural’, in its technical theological definition or description, appears as almost entirely negative—‘that which is not due to nature in any way’. The purpose of this insistence was to safeguard the gratuity of ‘grace’ and salvation, and of the ‘new life’ which comes to us at justification. Special insistence was placed on this reaction to Pelagius first of all, and later to Protestant accusations of pelagianism. We must point out now, how all of this gratuity can be safeguarded in the view of the supernatural order as one of a special personal relationship with God. It can be safeguarded without some of the unfortunate consequences of too much insistence on the fact that grace is “above nature.”

It is obviously necessary to do this, for when one is asked to express a reality in terms different from those to which he has grown accustomed, and in which he has found his safeguard of orthodoxy, he can feel that he is losing something of what he has clung to. But the results of the insistence on the ‘above nature’ aspect did have disadvantages. Chenu says that we “acquiesced in the Lutheran distinction between nature and grace.”⁸

Certainly, many accepted “a standard concept of grace as a superstructure above conscious spiritual and moral life,” as K. Rahner expresses it.⁹ The supernatural was

something not felt, rarely experienced, but something we believed in. The spiritual life did not permeate our whole living and give value to all that a man did—or if it did so, it was only through the external device of a 'good motive.'

However, as a good many writers are insisting today, we must be able to show how the supernatural harmonizes with all a man's natural needs and aspirations. Speaking of the 'natural order' and the 'supernatural order' may have its advantages. Yet it almost always gives the impression that the two exist side by side, and that people pass from one to the other by grace or sin. But, of course, the purely natural order does not exist; it never did. What could have been, or would have been, is interesting matter for speculation, but it is not part of revealed truth. Man was created for the vision of God. Hence the human nature, which we know, is that of man-created-for-the-Beatific-Vision. According to some theologians, this means that we do not know human nature in its 'purely natural' state. Man, as we know him, since he is destined for the vision of God, must be already possessed of some modification to his nature by reason of his supernatural destiny. This modification is termed the 'supernatural existential'. Other writers—who claim to follow St. Thomas—say that man has a natural desire for the beatific vision or for the supernatural.

Common to both explanations is the affirmation that "man-as-he-is" has such an aspiration towards personal union with God through grace and vision that it fits in perfectly with all his natural desires and needs. This aspect of the supernatural, it is being stressed, is most important. It is one which is brought out very well—as should be evident from the preceding chapters—by showing that the supernatural life which is given us is a life of special personal relationship with a personal God.

Finally, this safeguards the traditional truths about grace and the supernatural, as well as it affords new light on old difficulties. In this way, grace and salvation appear as God's free gift to man, as something to which we have no right, for which we have no strict claim on God. We can do nothing to merit it; we cannot demand it nor can we receive it without actual grace; and further grace is needed to grow in it and persevere to the end. Seen as God's gift of personal love and friendship, divine adoption is obviously something which we accept in gratitude, even while we accept it as satisfying our deep-felt need—a need implanted in us by God (as a natural or supernatural existential) for the one reason that he willed to sate it by the gift of his personal love. Friendship and personal union in love are not things which we claim or have a right to. As a matter of fact to lay any claim to them would be to destroy them. What we 'need' is the free gift of love and friendship, the splendor of love is that it is freely bestowed. Only the free gift of friendship satisfies our need.¹⁰

The following chapter will further illustrate how the personal concept of grace makes it appear as "grace" indeed.

NOTES:

- 1) *Summa theol.* II-II, q. 23, a. 1; q. 26, a. 1.
- 2) Cf. T. Keller: "De virtute caritatis ut amicitia quadam divina," in *Xenia Thomistica* (1925), Vol. 2.
- 3) St. Thomas first treats of grace in the *Summa* when speaking of the temporal missions of the Divine Persons, and he repeatedly says that grace is a "*potestas fruendi divina persona.*" (Pars I, q. 38, a. 1; q. 43, a. 3, a. 4, ad 1; a. 5, ad 2).
- 4) Cf. for example, R. Aubert, *Le probleme de l'Acte de Foi* (Louvain: Warny, 1958).
- 5) St. Thomas, *In Joann. VI.*, Lect 5, n. 3.
- 6) Cf. J. Mouroux, *The Christian Experience* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1954), especially Ch. 9, where many references to St. Thomas are given.

G. P. Klubertanz, "Vertus morales 'naturelles' et 'surnaturelles,'" *Revue Thomiste* 59 (1959), 565-575.

- 7) Cf. *Summa theol.* I-II, q. 68, art. 2; II-II, q. 45.
- 8) M. Chenu, O.P., *The Theology of Work* (Dublin: Gill & Son, 1963), p. 15.
- 9) *Nature and Grace* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1963).
- 10) In recent years a good deal has been written on this question of the supernatural. Fr. de Lubac's work, *Surnaturel* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), gave rise to a series of articles scattered through most of the theological reviews of that date.

THE GRACE OF CHRIST

a) *The State of Grace*

"By the grace of God" is a well-known expression in English. By it we mean "with the help of God," "by the favor or kindness of God". In this we have been faithful to the scriptural meaning of the word "*charis*" which means God's favor granted to men. The word *grace* indicates a kindness freely bestowed on someone who has no right to what he receives. It takes with it a lot of fine overtones—of graciousness, of being graced with good things. When we speak of being in someone's good graces, we indicate that we enjoy his favor. The opposite is to be in disgrace, or out of favor with someone, usually through some wrong we have done or some mistake we have made. This is what we mean when we say that someone is "in the state of grace," or a state of friendship with God—as opposed to a state of sin when one has "lost the state of grace," through his own fault. "God's grace" is a term used to indicate also the special helps which God gives us.

For St. Paul (to refer to only one of the New Testament writers) "grace is not a thing, but God loving and giving himself, or, if you wish, his relation of charity and generosity towards men. Whence you can call grace the superabundant gift of salvation." ¹ The favor of God, or the grace of God means, then, first and foremost God's favor bestowed on us whereby he gives himself to us in love and

friendship, as our Father, as our Savior, as our friend and 'consoler'. It is all the graciousness and kindness of God which is manifested through his dealings with men, particularly through his gracious design to make us his children, to take us into friendship with himself. This, of course, is manifested most wonderfully in the work of Christ to win us into friendship with God.

God's favor and love are given to men not because they deserve his friendship or have any right to it. For it is given to them "even when they are sinners." Although God's love comes to us just as we are, it does not leave us just as we were. It is a love which uplifts us. Forgiving our sins, God works an inner transformation in our souls, our minds and our wills, perfecting our powers of knowing and loving so that we may really know and love him as his friends and his children. Scripture speaks of this as our being made "sharers in the divine nature" (II Pet. 1, 4), "born again of . . . the Holy Spirit" (John 3, 5), as being "renewed" (Tit. 3, 5), as being "raised to life with Christ." God in some mysterious way thus makes us like to Christ his own Son.

This gift of God, this perfection given to our souls, is often called 'grace'—since it is the effect in us of God's grace and favor. The important thing about it is not that it is "something in our souls," but that by it we are taken into union with God, and enabled to live in close personal contact with him. As St. Thomas says, grace in us is the "power to enjoy and delight in the Divine Persons." We are not conscious of this reality except through the activity which it enables us to exercise—just as we are conscious of our minds only through the exercise of thought.

A good example is sometimes given to help us understand why such an internal 'grace' is necessary, and what is its purpose. (The example covers what are called 'in-

fused virtues', too. For our purposes it does not seem necessary to make too many distinctions. It is sufficient to think of a new life, a perfecting of the natural life we already possess in our souls, our minds and wills). Most of us know of cases of a mentally defective child who is beyond the reach of any medical skill. With its malformed brain cells such a child can never be fully the child of its parents in a way that a normal child can. The parents love the child, but no answering, truly personal love is given. The child has no more than an animal-like attachment to his parents, whom he regards only as those who can satisfy his needs. He never develops any considerate and thoughtful love for them; he does not share their interests. He lives in his own self-centered world, apart from them. This is why such a child, if put in an institution, does not feel any deep or lasting sorrow. He is quite happy, provided his own selfish needs are catered for. He is incapable of being unselfish, of putting other people's wants before his own, of that self-surrender that is needed for real personal appreciation of other persons. As the parents of such a child look on him, their deepest desire is that he should be able to break through this barrier around his mind and enter into their own human life; to share their personal life of love and knowledge and understanding and common interests—the full, rich life of family happiness. An inner transformation, lifting his powers of knowing and loving to a higher level, would be necessary to bring him into their real family life, in which he does not share, because he cannot. He cannot live as their child and their true image. They themselves can do nothing about it, and it nearly breaks their hearts.

This image can help us understand three important religious truths.

First of all it is a faint image of the fatherly love and mercy of God as he looks on the men he has made. He has

made men to his own image and likeness, and in a sense, they are his children because he has created them. But to be fully his children on a personal level, they must enter, freely, into a relationship of friendship with him, in knowledge and love. God desires this even more strongly than the parents in our example desire the same thing for their child. At times even God is powerless to bring about man's entry into life—for man must freely accept the offer of grace and transformation. The parents' heart-break is something like that of Christ (in whom we see the mercy and love of God translated into human terms), who wept over the city of Jerusalem and its people: "How often would I have gathered thee to me as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, and thou wouldst not. Behold thy house shall be left to thee desolate."

The tremendous truth is that God longs for men (who often fail to recognize the lower level on which they live) to share the life of knowledge, love and delight which is the 'family' life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But unless a man is lifted out of his own closed sphere, he cannot share this personal life of God. To make this sharing possible, the God who created us to his image gives us new powers to know and love him on a 'divinely personal' level: sanctifying grace and the virtues, and inner transformation. This helps us to see why, at the Council of Trent, the Church fought so strongly against the error that grace did not bring about any real change within man. Without this inner transformation, we should be like the poor unfortunate child of our example—condemned forever to have no real personal knowledge or love of God our Father. But where the love of a human father is helpless, the love of God is charged with power, able to pour out new life into the soul that he has created, so that it can live fully as his child and his image. God's grace is life-giving and uplifting.

The second truth that the example illustrates is the nature and function of grace and the virtues, or the new life in us—"the power of delighting in the divine Persons"—in a way we could not do, unless God perfected our natural powers. This also shows how it is a mistake, when talking about grace, to give most thought and attention to some 'created reality' within our own souls. For this reality is given to us in order that we might live in personal contact with the divine Persons. "For anyone who reads the New Testament, the first characteristic presented by Christian spirituality is that it is a spirituality of the Trinity. . . . The New Testament insists far more on man's life as a personal relationship with God to which he is invited, into which he enters, even in this life, rather than to his divinization, his assimilation to God. It is this personal relationship with the living God which then divinizes the Christian." ²

Thirdly, it gives us a good idea of what is meant by original sin—i.e., the state in which all men find themselves before the grace of God comes to them to take them into a personal relationship with himself. The force of sin in us is this inclination to seek ourselves, to live in our own self-centered world, making all other things, and other persons serve our own needs. It is also a natural inability to break out of that selfish circle; to be able to do so we need the help of God's grace.

b) *Divine Indwelling*

The state of grace is thus a state of intimacy with the divine Persons. To express the closeness of this personal union, Christ has said: "If any man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our permanent abode with him." St. Paul speaks very frequently of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, poured forth into our hearts to help us live in the consciousness of the

love of God which is given to us, and to help us love God in return. Perhaps this mystery can be best expressed as a special, personal presence of God to us, and of us to God; a presence which did not exist while we were in a state of sin, a time when we were not united to God in this special, personal way. Friendship is a mutual meeting in love, a mutual giving and receiving.

To press our example a little further: the parents do not get through to the child in question as 'persons'. He recognizes them as the agents who help him, look after him, etc. But they do not make any real personal contact; they are not present to him in the richness of their own individual personalities. Nor is he present to them as a person recognizing the love they give him and returning it. If their love could break through the barrier that walls him off from them, then they would meet in this mutual personal "presence to one another" which did not exist before. When God's special personal love breaks through to us, when we recognize him as a personal God who loves us, and when we meet him in a grateful and glad response, then we have this special, personal presence of God which is called the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity.

Before passing on to another matter, let us consider one other thought from Scripture which helps us realize the intimacy of the personal contact with God which grace establishes. St. Paul writes: "The spirit you have now received is not, as of old, a spirit of slavery to govern you by fear; it is the spirit of adoption, which makes us cry out Abba, Father" (Rom. 8, 15). Father Spicq, O.P., comments on this passage: "We are taught to invoke God with the name which Christ used in speaking of his Father: Abba. It is also the word which Jesus used in regard to St. Joseph. In their prayers the Israelites said 'Abi, Father' while the term Abba is intimate and familiar, correspond-

ing with the French 'Papa'." ³ It is no use merely translating this into French; the English equivalent would be "Dad or Daddy". While our spirit of reverence would not allow most of us to use this familiar form of speech when praying to God, it should be given serious reflection, coming as it does from the pen of St. Paul, writing under divine inspiration. No more striking way could have been chosen to express the degree of intimacy with God which grace gives us. We should let this thought influence our approach to God when "We dare to say: Our Father, who art in heaven . . ."

Children of the Father in heaven, we are called to share in Christ's sonship. Grace is called the grace of Christ, not only because we owe it to him and his work of redemption, but also because it shapes us to his likeness. Grace, in the soul of Christ, was the power that enabled him to live, in his human nature, his personal life as Son of God, his personal relationships with his Father and the Holy Spirit.

c) *Actual Grace*

'By the grace of God' or 'with the help of God' are phrases which are sometimes used to mean the same thing. Actual grace is a term which is used to indicate the special helps which God gives us to come to justification (or to the state of grace), to remain in this state and to persevere to the end, faithful in our love for God and our loyalty to him. The term *actual* is used (because of its Latin derivation) to indicate a passing help as opposed to the permanent reality of the state of grace which is an habitual and continuous state. Through the centuries much has been written about the need we have of these helps of God if we are to be *healed* of the weakness of sin, and *elevated* to a higher life as children of God. Christ himself indicates

both the nature and necessity of God's action on us when he says: "No one can come to me unless he be drawn towards me by the Father" (John 6, 44).

In this one sentence, Our Lord indicates that actual grace is a 'personal attraction' towards God and Christ, or God attracting us towards personal union with himself. This particular way of viewing God's grace at work in us gives an answer to most of the problems about grace which theologians have discussed at great length. We shall not examine all the problems here, but shall take an approach which puts forward simply what we know of grace. It should perhaps be noted at the outset that there is no need to think of God giving these graces only from time to time. Our whole personal being is made for God, conditioned towards union with him, and the activity of God attracting us towards personal union with himself can be regarded as a permanent influence of God. We are not always conscious of this activity, nor always attentive to it. There are certain occasions when we are better disposed to profit by this continuous activity of God, to let him act upon us. And so, God, in his providence, makes use of many things to make us more attentive to his action, and more co-operative. He uses our needs, our failures, our frustration, our loneliness, and at such times he draws us more strongly towards himself.

Why do we need God's help to enter into friendship with God, to obtain the state of grace, or to be justified? Why do we need God's help to be 'healed' from sin and the effects of original sin? Why do we still need God's grace when, as his children and his friends, we have been given new powers to live in his love? All these questions can be fairly simply answered if we keep clearly in mind the personal character of the relationship with God into which he takes us. We must also remember the state *from* which he takes us. Both these states are well-illus-

trated by the example we used earlier in this chapter—that of a child living in his own self-centered world (the equivalent of the state of original sin, or a state without personal contact with God), and the state of personal relationships into which the parents want to take him. The state of sin is one in which *self* is the supreme norm by which we judge and decide, in independence and complete liberty. We have to be drawn out of this state into one of surrender to the personal love of God. Now we cannot do this, unless we are personally attracted towards God. We have to be healed of our inclination to make ourselves the center and supreme rule of life. This can be done only if we are drawn out of ourselves, attracted by the goodness of another, drawn towards surrender in self-forgetting love of other persons.

We have seen in an earlier chapter that all real love demands self-renunciation. Gift of self is death to self. Now it is impossible for a mentally healthy person to will any form of death to self unless he sees beyond the renunciation a greater good. We do not want to be cut open, to have teeth extracted, to suffer. But we can will these things for the greater good of better health. In the line of personal relationships, a man does not want to give up his liberty, a lot of his leisure time and money. A decision to give these things up for no positive reason is unbalanced. But, when he is drawn by the personal attraction of the girl of his dreams, a man gives them up gladly.

The point I am trying to make here is that one can surrender oneself in love to another person only if one perceives the attractiveness of that person. The mind and will are moved by the goodness perceived; one is drawn towards the other person. This is the positive aspect. At the same time, the person attracted is drawn out of his own self-centered world. He could never be drawn out of it by himself. The more he is concerned with himself and

self-love, the more he closes himself in with his own selfishness.

Hence, the grace of God heals us from selfishness only by drawing us out of the closed world in which sinfulness tends to imprison us. We could not be healed in any other way. Grace heals us *because* it elevates us, or it draws us out of our self-centeredness by drawing us into personal union with God.

Even after we have been drawn by God and we have surrendered to his grace and love, we still need his help. The force of egoism, the inclination towards selfishness, is not taken away. Pride and self-seeking are movements we shall have to fight against all our lives. We need God's grace to bind our wills closer to him in order to strengthen us against the things which attract us in other directions. In another sense, the need of actual grace after justification is the ordinary human need of continually renewed personal contact with the person we love. Without this contact, a friendship will hardly endure.

How can a man be free, if grace is necessary for him to believe in God's love, to surrender to him and to be justified and saved? This is the question of grace and liberty, one much discussed and fought about for centuries. I think many of the difficulties in the way of solving the problem stemmed from the fact that, in discussing the matter, it was isolated a little from its living context. How does the will move freely, if God must supply a motion before it can move at all? Lots of people who worry about the question imagine God as giving a push to the will. Remembering that the whole question is one of personal love and attraction, although we may still find the matter mysterious, it is the sort of mystery which we accept easily because it is part of our daily living. No man can fall in love by himself, nor does he strike up a friendship with a statue in the park or with the garden gate. Before

he can fall in love, it is necessary that he be acted on by another person, drawn by the personal attractiveness of that person. He must be moved by this attraction, or by the person who attracts him. Does this mean that he loses his liberty? Even though a man may say that "he could not help falling in love," the splendor of human love is that it is free: a freely-willed and total self-giving to another person. Some men will philosophize on the nature of this liberty which needs an attraction. But most men will go their way, and freely fall in love, and thank God that they do.

d) *Merit*

'Merit' is a term which has its basis in Scripture, and an idea which has played a large part in centuries of Catholic thinking. It again, was one of those notions which, after the Reformation, we insisted on defending against the attacks of Luther and his followers. Defending it, we did not take much trouble to examine it and see whether the expression of the truth it contains could not possibly be altered to be made clearer, to fit in better with a changing mentality. *Merit* is defined as a good work worthy of reward; to merit something means to earn a reward. The Christian truth which the terms expressed is the simple one which is found in Scripture: "Do not lose your confidence which has a great reward" (Heb. 10, 35). God is a just judge who will reward us according to our works (II Tim. 4, 7 ff.). The person who tries to live a good life will be rewarded by God. Hence the Christian is exhorted to live a good life, and helped to do so by the thought of his eternal reward. "So run that you may gain the prize," says St. Paul to Timothy.

These passages obviously contain the teaching that, in the next life, we will be rewarded according to our conduct in this. Now, when this teaching is explained, it can

be expressed in two different ways. We tell a child that he will be rewarded for doing well at school. He may win a prize for conduct and studies; his parents may further reward him with some special gift they promised him. But his real reward is that by his effort at his all-around formation he fits himself for life. In a very true sense his real reward comes only in later life when, because of what he has made himself, he is better able to enjoy himself and succeed in his own life, his family life, and in his relations with other people.

With children, or people of simple culture, the most effective way of teaching them that they will be rewarded for a good life is, I suppose, to express this teaching in terms of what they know. God will reward them, giving them happiness and all that they desire. But if they do not do anything worthwhile, there will be no prizes for them, no rewards, since they have not earned any. This does convince them of the necessity of doing good; the thought of a reward for their effort encourages them to make the necessary effort. This is not a wrong view of things, but it is the very simple view. It can lead to a very calculating sort of service of God, particularly if it insist too much on the "right to a reward" which is used to explain merit.

"Theologians are aware and openly confess that the juridical conditions of merit are imperfectly realized in these relations between man and God. . . . Legal right is indeed a very human thing. . . . On the other hand the supernatural economy is impregnated with charity and union . . . Consequently we should not be surprised that Christian thought does not find the Gospel message exactly mirrored in juridical concepts and that it seeks to express the same realities in a way that corresponds better to the nature of Christianity and its message."⁴

A better way has already been indicated. Our real

reward for living according to the love of God is that we better fit ourselves for eternal life. Or rather, our real reward will only come later when we find that, through surrendering to the love of God in this life, we have been so fashioned that we can be more fully possessed by his love in heaven. A man "by performing the good actions through which he perfects himself, advances towards the final end, and freely fits himself to attain it." ⁵ It is only through his union with Christ in grace and charity, of course, that he does perform good acts. Or to use another Gospel image, Christ is the Vine onto which we are grafted; we can bear any fruit of value only because of the vital activity of Christ acting in and through us.

e) *Man's Doing or God's Gift*

Christ's own image of the Vine and the branches provides the obvious reply to a question which has been debated since the time of Pelagius: "Are salvation and justification and growth in virtue man's doing or God's gift?" Phrased slightly differently: Is it by faith or by works that we get to heaven?" In the Gospel image, we the branches can do nothing to graft ourselves on to the Vine who is Christ. But once we are grafted on to Christ through the justifying influence of God, then Christ acts through us to produce fruit—or good works. "He is the Vine, we are the branches; and as the branches cannot bear fruit unless they remain on the vine, so we can do nothing unless we abide in Christ. And as no one would be so foolish as to say that this detracts from the glory of the vine that its branches bear much fruit, so no one, unless altogether stupid, can say that it detracts from the glory of Christ if his servants, by his grace, through his Spirit, and through the grace and charity inspired by him, should do works of such worth that the Just Judge owes for them a crown of glory. . . . The merits of men are

not required because of the insufficiency of Christ's merits, but because of their greater efficacy. . . . He merited for us the power of meriting." ⁶ Once you put in an 'or', you falsify the question. It is both man's doing *and* God's gift. Yet it is man's doing only because it is first God's gift. It is both faith *and* works, or a "faith which works through charity." On the whole question of bringing a man to the state of grace and to eternal life the statement of the question is quite clear: "Almighty God wills that all men without exception should be saved (I Tim. 2, 4), although not all are saved. The salvation of those who are saved is the gift of God who saves them. But if there are some who perish, it is entirely through their own fault." ⁷ Here we have the statement of a double truth which can be rather difficult to grasp: all the good is from God in our lives; all the evil from ourselves and the abuse of our liberty. Without attempting to go deeply into the philosophy of this, let us merely recall that grace is being drawn towards God who gives light to our minds and inspiration to our wills in a personal attraction toward Christ. When any love comes into a man's life, he does not take credit for it, for he knows that it is a gift to him. A man does not boast of the fact that he has fallen in love with the most wonderful girl in the world. If he has done so, and if his love is returned, he is humbly grateful for what has been given to him. Yet he has freely fallen in love; he had to consent to the attraction he experienced. There can be no such thing as love at first sight. There can be a very strong attraction at first sight, and an almost instantaneous assent to it. But there is no such thing as a "love that is too big for both of us" in a way which takes away the responsibility of the people who surrender to an attraction to love.

Similarly, when a man is drawn towards personal union with God, he sees himself as the recipient of a gift. Yet

he must freely assent to the attraction which grace is. He is responsible before God if he refuses to accept the love which is offered (it is entirely "his own fault"). Yet if he accepts, he knows that his friendship with God and his salvation is "the gift of God who saves him." We might think of a magnetic force exerted on some object to draw it upwards. The object is drawn upwards by a force outside itself. We are drawn by the force of God's attracting influence—all our upward movement is from God. Of ourselves all that we do is surrender to the action of God. If we wish, we can cling to some created thing which we should let go, and by clinging to selfishly loved objects or pleasures, resist the attracting force of God's grace. Salvation is all from God; yet we must attribute to ourselves the full responsibility of resistance to the influence of his grace.

From this point of view, it is not hard to see what is the difference between sufficient grace and efficacious grace—if I may dismiss so lightly a question which has caused theologians so much trouble. I shall not restate the problem but take for granted that those who do not know of it need not read this paragraph. If a grace is efficacious, is there something more in the way of grace than if the grace does not bring a man to a good act? Of course there is, since all the drawing upwards is from God. If he is drawn to a further good act, there is more of God's activity in his action than if he does not do the work. He gets closer to God only because he is drawn closer. Yet if he does not cooperate, does this mean that the grace was not really sufficient, that he could not have cooperated with the grace that was given him? Of course not, since he is held down only by his deliberate clinging to creatures and to sinful attachments or to selfishness. Here, too, we have some light on the doctrine of predestination. In thinking of it, we must resolutely school

ourselves to think only in terms of causality. And questions of 'pre' referring to time must make the problem insoluble for our minds which think so much in such terms. For St. Thomas the whole question was one of causality: any good that is in us is there only because it comes from God as First Cause. We are brought to eternal life only because of what God does for us and to us. But God does not select some to whom he will give grace while not giving it to others. If some accept more grace, they will receive more grace; but even God cannot give grace to those who freely refuse to receive and who choose to cling to self, and who, "if they perish, do so through their own fault." The mystery, here, is not in what God gives and does, but what St. Augustine called the "mystery of iniquity," the only mystery which makes no sense at all—the mystery of man's abuse of the free will which God gave him.

It is, I think, understandable, that some Protestants at times feel that the Catholic teaching tends to put too much accent on man's action, and good works, and not enough on God's gracious activity. For Catholic theology does stress the truths that man must prepare for justification, is truly changed by justification, receiving a new nature, and new principles of operation, which he must use to work out his own salvation. Sometimes the impression can be given (and I have actually read this example used to explain things) that man is then like a vivified Pinocchio, walking off under his own power after justification, with only occasional need of help from God. But, of course, as we have said, these truths were insisted on because they were denied, and the total Catholic teaching is:

God draws man into union with himself, into a personal relationship of filial friendship:

- 1) Giving himself to man that he might

- 2) take man, freely consenting, to himself
- 3) in a union of filial friendship now (justification) into which he is to be more fully drawn (sanctification), more fully surrendered to God's love, growing in faith (intimate knowledge), and in union with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit;
- 4) to be brought finally to fulness of life (Beatific Vision).

Prior to Justification:

- a) God draws man to himself (elevating grace), out of his own self-centered world (healing grace);
- b) by personal self-revelation to man (revelation and actual grace: illumination and inspiration) enabling man to perceive and will God as his own personal good and beatitude.
- c) Man, acted on, freely assents and, believing in God's love, under the influence of God's cooperating grace, submits to God's action, call, attraction, and thus comes to justifying faith. (This is what is meant by man's preparation for justification, allowing himself to be drawn away from his sinful and selfish tendencies).

Justification: means that God permanently unites man to himself (habitual grace is sometimes spoken of as an "entity of union"); man is permanently united to the three divine Persons in faith, hope and charity (infused theological virtues), drawn into the inter-personal life of the Trinity, in Christ sons of the Father—God and man dwelling together in 'family friendship'.

After Justification: Energized by the Spirit of God, he lives a 'Christian life', which is both the activity of God in man, and of man under God's influence. It is *both* God's gift and man's doing, for he is a branch grafted into Christ the Vine.

Man then lives and grows in friendship, acts as a child of God (or grows in justice, to use the technical phrase, or gains a greater degree of sanctifying grace). For this growth, he needs further actual graces, further freeing

him from selfishness, binding him closer to God, making him more like to God in his own personal life (for-another-ness), perfecting in him "the mind which Christ Jesus showed," in his sonship in Christ, that he may say ever more truly "I live, now no longer I, but Christ lives in me" (this through the graces given for perseverance, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit). He thus becomes more fitted to be fully transformed and possessed by God and comes closer to his full surrender to God in the happiness of the Beatific Vision (merit).

f) *What Must I Do?*

Christ our Lord was asked: "What must I do in order to gain eternal life?" He replied that one should keep the commandments (Luke 18, 20); and again he said that we are his friends if we do what he commands us (John 15, 10). On another occasion, he taught that the whole of the Law and the prophets is summed up in two commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole mind, thy whole heart and thy whole soul. . . . And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22, 39-40). Christ thus reduces all that we have to do to an admirable simplicity—to what might be called a personal morality, or what Origen long ago called a morality of familiarity with God. The Christian lives a good life. In doing so he does not aim merely at 'doing the right thing', practising the virtues such as honesty, temperance, truthfulness, etc. He does all these things, but they are all now the expression of his personal love for Christ, of his filial love for his Father in heaven.

He must first of all love the Lord his God whom he has met in faith, hope, and charity. This will mean that, first of all, he will be humbly grateful for what God has done for him—for all God's gifts of life and love. It will mean, secondly, a readiness to do his will in all things.

Hence, 'to love God' summarizes the first three commandments:

1. I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have strange gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
3. Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day.

The love of God must express itself in prayer and worship. Of course, God does not need our prayers. But we need to pray to God. We need to pray first of all so that we might face up to the reality of what God is—our Creator, Lord and the one whom we need for our own happiness. Prayer, in a sense, is "taking consciousness of our needs before God," and knowing that only God, who gave us our needs, can bring them to their complete fulfilment. Reverence for God must spring from a realization of his greatness and our own sinfulness. The more deeply we realize these truths, the greater will be our appreciation of what his love and friendship mean to us. Our personal relationship with God, in faith, hope, and charity will also find its spontaneous expression in prayer which, from this point of view, can be called 'a loving conversation with God our Father who, we know, loves us'. Our devotion, or filial piety, will naturally need to think about God, to protest our love, to ask his help and strength. In the Gospels, Christ frequently exhorts his disciples to pray—to ask God for what they need. He does this even though, as he says, God knows what we have need of. It is because God knows what we have need of that he asks us to pray: that we will keep in personal contact with God, which is our greatest need. Also, it is God's will that we should all have a part in the extension of the Kingdom of Christ. Although he is the First Cause of all things, he wills to use many secondary causes in bringing

about all the things he wants done. His will is that some things should be done through our cooperation with him, through our prayer for the success of his plans, through our petition that his Will might be done. And since our life is to be that of children of God, we have to familiarize ourselves with God, his sayings, his thoughts, his ways. All of this is prayer; it is living consciously the reality of our personal relationship with God, living in the realization of God's love for us. Then, because we love God, we shall try to do his will, to live as children of God and brethren of Christ, aiming at "all that rings true, all that commands reverence, and all that makes for right that is pure, all that is lovely, virtue and merit. . ." (Phil. 4, 8).

Discovering God in faith, we discover all men as our brethren in charity. And this second commandment sums up all things else which God commands us. "The man who loves his neighbor has done all that the law demands. (All the commandments, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet, and the rest, are resumed in this one saying: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself). Love of our neighbor refrains from doing harm of any kind; that is why it fulfils all the demands of the law" (Rom. 13, 9-10).

Love of our neighbor follows on the vision of faith which enables us to see that God's personal love goes out to all men, enabling us to see them all as belonging to (or called to belong to) the one family of God. This faith will make us see others in their personal dignity before God. Viewing them in this light we shall be unable to make of them mere instruments to serve us in any selfish drive—for power, possessions or pleasure. Our attitude must go further than this, developing into the positive charity which urges us to help others find their dignity and well-being as human persons who are called to be

children of God. It will urge us to combat ignorance, sickness, starvation—in short anything which holds a man back from attaining his full human dignity and welfare. Education, welfare work of any kind, social justice, and other kindred fields will be ones into which the Christian's interest should take him merely as a Christian. In particular, of course, will he be attentive to combating the forces of evil, and all that could undermine the faith and morals of society.

For the Christian "the faith that finds its expression in love is all that matters" (Gal. 5, 6). But the faith and the love run through the whole of his life. The Christian must seek the will of God and its application to all the aspects of his life for God in the world. Loving Christ, he will want to do "the things Christ commands him." How will he know these things in detail? By being guided by the Church to whom Christ said: "You must go out making disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to observe all the commandments I have given you" (Matt. 28, 19-20).

NOTES:

- 1) C. Spicq, O.P., *The Trinity and Our Moral Life According to Saint Paul* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1963), p. 27.
- 2) D. Barsotti, *Vie Mystique et Mystère Liturgique* (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 1954).
- 3) *Op. cit.*, pp. 53 ff.
- 4) E. Mersch, S.J., *The Theology of the Mystical Body* (St. Louis: Herder, 1955), p. 634.
- 5) *Ibid.*, p. 635.
- 6) St. Robert Bellarmine, quoted by H. Lennerz, S.J., in *De Gratia* (Rome: P.U.G., 1934), p. 297.
- 7) Council of Quiersy, in the year 853; cf. Denziger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Freiburg: Herder, 1953), n. 318.

PART II

CHRIST IN HIS CHURCH

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

No one can read the books of the New Testament without being struck by the fact that Christ worked hard to weld his followers into an organized body which is his Church; that through this Church men of all ages would be brought into contact with him, and through him with God the Father. Hence the claim which is sometimes made that "I am a Christian but I don't belong to any church" reveals a deplorable ignorance of Christianity.

a) *What Kind of a Church?*

Let us approach this question, too, from the point of view of our previous chapters. Let us ask, not what kind of a church we would like, but what kind of a church we need. For if Christ has established a Church, he has not done so merely to impose a set of rules and regulations which we must carry out. He has set up a Church to bring to all men the fruits of redemption—to provide for man's deepest personal and religious needs. We will therefore, expect to find that the Church of Christ exists as the God-given means of enabling us to live the spiritual realities of which we have treated in earlier chapters. All these realities will, then, appear again in this section but seen as threaded through the framework, the life, and activity of the Church.

It is natural then that some of this section will appear as repetitious. However such repetition is necessary if the Church is not to appear as some sort of institution which a man does not really need; or as one which demands of him

special duties which are above his human nature and which do not cater to his needs.

We all desire security in regard to our eternal destiny. We look for strength to succeed in life; we long for happiness and union with God. It is a consoling thought that Christ wants to give us all these things. Thus far many people can go—as many went with Christ in his own lifetime—until they realize that they can have these things only through total commitment to Christ. This is the parting of the ways. Those who want to go their own way will find all sorts of justifying reasons—which will mostly come back to the old, old reason which was given by those who, after their first enthusiasm, ceased to follow Christ: “This is strange talk, who can be expected to listen to it?” (John 6, 61). This, in our days, is what some people say about the Church, as they have said through the centuries. The way in which they would think it reasonable to go to God would be something different—which is one reason why God has chosen this way. There can be no surrender to God without complete self-surrender, and this includes giving up our own ideas of the way we would like to go to God. “Lord what will you have me do?” asked Paul of Christ. “Then the Lord said to him: ‘Rise up and go into the city, and there thou shalt be told what thy work is!’” (Acts 9, 6). The great Paul was sent to another to be instructed in the ways of God. Anyone too proud to go to God in this way, is too proud to go at all. As Christ said, we enter the Kingdom of God as little children, in simple surrender—if we enter at all.

We come to the Church to find God, to meet with Christ, to receive his grace, to know his will, to be guided and strengthened on our path through life towards our eternal union with God. We do not follow her teaching and adopt her practices in credulous superstition; we come to her in the conviction of the wisdom of God and the power

of Christ. God, in his love and wisdom sent Christ to bring all men to salvation. He willed that Christ might contact the men of all times and bring them into union with God. To do this he set up a Church which was to carry on his work, through which he would unite men to himself in faith, hope, charity and dedication to his Father's will. "For this was I born," he said, "for this I came into the world, to give testimony to the truth." And so we find it fitting, and even necessary, that he should have founded a teaching Church which might guide us securely along the path of true doctrine and right living. "He who hears you, hears me" (Luke 10,16), Christ said to those to whom he gave the teaching authority in the Church. We listen to her to hear the voice of Christ. She will not speak with his voice if she speaks hesitantly, uncertain of the ways of God. "We do not want a Church which is right when we are right," said Chesterton. "We need a Church which is right when we are wrong." We will not expect, either, that all her teaching should be quite plain and evident to our human minds. To her have been entrusted the 'mysteries of God,' and our faith is, partly, a "conviction of the things we do not see," an acceptance of the truth because God has said that it is true, even though it is beyond our human minds. And really if God and all his ways were perfectly within the grasp of our feeble intelligence, he would be a pretty poor sort of a God, and hardly the infinitely perfect being who could satisfy all our needs.

Nor do we have any illusions about the human weakness of her members. Christ came to "save sinners"; the Church carries on his work. Her task is to bring men to sanctity and salvation; and her task will be to nurse many through their weakness to find health; to be patient with those with whom Christ was patient, in the hope that his grace may someday bring them healing and strength. "There is a city, full, as are all cities of the halt, the lame, the blind and the

rest. But it is the city of God. Within it there is hearth and home for every heart. Outside it is the night." (Belloc). We have no illusion about her human weakness—even at times in those who are in high places. But we believe that the power of God can triumph even over such weakness as this, using feeble men to manifest his will and be instruments of his grace. The will of God to save all mankind will not be obstructed even by the weakness and limitations of those through whom he works. For he is almighty, his power unlimited.

We will not expect, either, that all men should respect the Church and reverence her. For we remember the words of Christ: "No servant can be greater than his master. They will persecute you, just as they have persecuted me; they will pay the same attention to your words as to mine. And they will treat you thus because you bear my name" (John 15,21). They hated Christ because of his call to self-renunciation and surrender to God. There will be hatred for those who bear his message to the world. And as Bishop Fulton Sheen has said: if you are looking for the Church of Christ, look for "the halo of hatred around the Church of God." She will be ridiculed and attacked, and this most bitterly at times. She will be attacked by those who were once her children. Actually, if I were not a Catholic, nothing would be more likely to convince me that I ought to be one than a comparative reading of what has been written by those who have joined the Catholic Church and by those who have left her ranks. The latter—the Chiniquys and the Monica Farrells—write with a bitterness which borders on the unbalanced, like a hatred which springs from feelings of guilt. Through the writings of the former (and many of them write the story of their conversion) breathes a peace-filled charity which is most impressive. Of the religion which they have left they have much to say by way of gratitude; their only criticism is that, eventually, they found

that it could not satisfy all their religious needs. This satisfaction came to them in the Catholic Church. A typical example is Maurice Baring, English writer and convert, who wrote to G. K. Chesterton on the occasion of the latter's conversion in 1922:

"I was received into the Church on the eve of Candlemas, 1909, and it is perhaps the only act of my life which I am quite certain I have never regretted. Every day I live, the Church seems to me more and more wonderful, the Sacraments more and more solemn and sustaining, the voice of the Church, her liturgy and her rules, her discipline, her ritual, her decisions in matters of faith and morals, more and more excellent and profoundly wise and true and right, and her children stamped with something that those outside her are without. There I have found truth and reality, and everything outside her is to me, compared with her, as dust and shadow."

"Her sacraments . . . solemn and sustaining."

All societies have their ceremonial, and in particular their form of initiation or admission. No one elects himself a member of an existing society. Entry into the Church or the People of God is through a definite sacred rite or sacrament known as Baptism. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved, he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark, 16, 16). "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (John 3, 5).

If we accept the Gospel accounts of Christ and his work, we are convinced of the power of God working through the human nature of Christ to bring salvation to the world. We see Christ performing miracles, at a touch of his hand restoring health to the sick and the diseased, raising the dead to life. On one occasion he smears mud on the eyes of a blind man who, when at Christ's command he washed his eyes in the pool of Siloe, finds his sight restored.

If we believe in Christ we believe that his power can work through the Church which he instituted. We believe that his sanctifying power *must* work through his Church, if men of all times are to receive the gifts of his grace, be freed from their sins, and brought to eternal salvation. We will not see—any more than the blind man mentioned above—why particular rites should have a special spiritual efficacy; but if Christ says they will, and commands his Church to use them, then, through them we too will want to come into contact with the healing and strengthening power of God. Now the Sacraments are rites and ceremonies which Christ instituted, so that through them we might come into contact with Christ in his life-giving power.

In an effort at brevity, let us sum up the various things we shall expect to find in the Church if she is to satisfy our needs.

a) Through the Church we shall come into personal contact with Christ, first of all in his life-giving power, transforming our souls through the gift of grace. Through the Church we will come into living contact with Christ in faith. Now faith has a two-fold aspect: (i) that of total personal surrender. This surrender is brought about efficaciously only if it is made through those whom God sends as representing himself. What man works out as a “reasonable surrender” is often no self-surrender at all, for it is surrender on his own terms. The Jews of St. John’s Gospel had faith of a sort; yet they refused to believe in Christ and to accept God in human nature. They refused to submit to what seemed less than what they expected of God and their own dignity. The Jew “goes away giving himself an answer, closing himself up in his own logic; in his own view of the world and history he reassures himself, forges a good conscience for himself . . . he has restricted his messianism to his own measure; he has made it too human.”¹ Faith, in the Gospels, is the acceptance of Christ as Revealer-

Savior. Some, who said they submitted to God, refused to submit to Christ. They could not renounce themselves, for they would not renounce their own judgments and their own ideas of the way in which they would submit to God. Hence they did not really submit at all.

We have to accept God's ways of dealing with men, not explain them. But the explanation would seem fairly evident: that for fallen man, subject to pride and the self-exalting effects of original sin, it is impossible to renounce self effectively, really submitting to God, unless we do so through the self-abasement of surrender through a created intermediary—which Christ has set up in the Church. If a man would go to God in "his own personal dignity," he goes in independence—which is evidently a self-contradictory attitude: (ii) Faith is also the submission of our intellect to God the First Truth—it is the acceptance of the truths which he reveals. Hence we need a teaching Church which proposes to us the essential truths of salvation: "He who hears you hears me"; "Going therefore teach all nations."

b) We need a Church in which we come into personal contact with our fellow-men on the level of real brotherhood (cf. Ch. 12, "The People of God").

c) The Church of Christ will give us security in regard to salvation. This is done, to some extent, through the sacraments which are Christ's guaranteed causes of grace and forgiveness of sin. It is done also through the authority with which the Church, to whom Christ has promised his unfailing assistance, exercises her mission of teaching the truths to be believed, and the way to live according to God's will. A Church without authority in teaching and ruling (declaring God's will) would not satisfy this need for security.

d) This will not mean, however, that the Church can answer all our questions, make us understand all the mysteries of God. After all, one of our religious needs is

the need to wonder at the greatness of God, "the unsearchable riches" of the mysteries of God and Christ. If there is no mystery, there is no religion, for a god whom we understand perfectly is no God at all. He has given us our human minds and intelligence to use in searching for a fuller understanding of his nature, his will and his ways. He has left us the challenging but rewarding task of seeking a fuller understanding of the truths he makes known.

e) For all the divine power at work within it, we need a human Church. There have often been outbreaks of 'perfectionism' in religion, i.e., of the error of wanting to restrict membership of the Church to the 'perfect.' Such a Church would cater to very few of us. Holiness and freedom from sin is the goal for which the Church strives; to this goal she must try to bring all her members. But the goal is the end of the way, not the beginning—and God gives men a lifetime to work towards the fulness of salvation. Hence there will always be imperfection in the members of the Church: strictness and laxness, emotionalism, sentimentality, superstition, credulity, scepticism and sin, selfishness and self-seeking. The Church will be like Christ in being able to tolerate and understand these weaknesses, while striving to deliver people from them. To want a Church whose members are perfect is to want one which is not made up of men on their way towards their final and perfect stage of existence.

f) We need a Church which will lift us above ourselves. Hence anyone who looks for a Church which will let him live the easy life is not looking for what he really needs. In the Church we find friendship with Christ. "Yet the friendship of a very great man elevates us. It is exacting. Whether it be that of a genius of thought or a hero of action, it always expects from us a difficult and exalting transcendence of ourselves. It has some astonishing surprises in

store for us. Still, in the very thing which upsets us and goes beyond us, we feel that the best of us is being fulfilled." ² A Church which would make no demands on our generosity would never redeem us; for redemption is deliverance from selfishness to bring us to surrender to Christ and the demands of his love.

g) We need a Church which gives value to our lives and to all that is human in them; a Church in which human realities take on spiritual meaning, and in which we are given a consciousness of having a mission in life, for God and for humanity.

This last consideration brings us to a brief consideration of the sacraments.

b) *The Sacraments of Christ and the Church.*

We have entitled the second section of this book "Christ in his Church." We have done this in order to avoid a "Christ or the Church" mentality, as if there could be any choice, or any opposition. The Church is the place in which Christ comes into contact with us; through the Church he acts on us, sanctifying and strengthening us. Through the Church we come into contact with Christ, as men of his own day came into contact with the divine through the human activity of Christ. This truth must be stressed for any understanding of the sacraments which are Christ's actions and the Church's actions. A sacrament is a sacred sign or ceremony or rite which is performed by the Church because Christ has commanded her to do so. In giving this command he has willed that these actions, when performed by the Church, should be the instruments which *he uses* to sanctify men and to free them from sin.

Christ was the Son of God living and acting in a human nature. He was "Emmanuel" which means "God with us"; God with us in a way that we could see and hear and under-

stand; God with us to portray his spiritual activity in external words and human gestures—to satisfy our need to feel and to be assured that God is really with us to help and heal us and take us into his friendship. He *said* to sinners, so that they could hear and be reassured: "Your sins are forgiven." He laid his hands on people and blessed them: *touched* them and healed their sickness. He *breathed* on the apostles and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven." He used these external signs to show that he was giving grace and spiritual powers.

Now in the Church which he founded to carry on his mission, and through which he willed to continue his work of salvation, there will be a similar way of acting. Being a human Church, she will, in many things, adopt human ways of helping people live their faith—in her ceremonies and songs etc. But Christ has not left all this to her own choosing. He has willed that certain of her more sacred ceremonies should be the means which he himself uses to sanctify men and to give grace as signs of his saving activity present to all ages. He has said that if the Church performs certain rites, he will always act through them as his instruments to produce some spiritual effect. This is not a question of magic formulae, as if words and gestures could have a special effect by their own power. But it is his will to act through them, whenever the Church performs them, and this makes them instruments of salvation. Hence they must be received in faith, with the Christian looking through them to Christ his Savior who wills to come into personal saving contact with him.

This way of acting—through human gestures and the actions of the society of the Church and her official ministers—corresponds to our human needs. Through these actions we receive assurance, after our human fashion, that we

have become children of God through baptism, had our sins forgiven, been charged with a special mission for Christ, been brought into personal contact with him in faith and love, or been strengthened and helped by his power. The sacraments are signs which signify a special effect—v.g., baptism signifying our birth to new life in the family of God, and our being brought to newness of life through our contact with the death and resurrection of Christ. By this power of signification, they help us to live our faith in Christ, to give a full personal response to his invitation that we live as children of God. But they are more than a help to our acts of faith, hope and charity and sorrow for sin. They cause grace in our souls—giving that life which enables us to live as Christians and children of God. In the soul of an infant, for instance, even without his cooperation, God, through the sacrament, sows the seeds of the Christ-life. For the adult, however, since grace is a life of personal surrender to God, he can grow in grace only in proportion to his dispositions and readiness to cooperate with God's activity.

The sacraments can be considered according to their place in our individual lives, or from the aspect of their relationship with the Church. Both of these aspects come out well in this text from Pope Pius XII: "The Savior of mankind, out of his infinite goodness, has provided in a marvellous way for his Mystical Body (The Church), endowing it with the sacraments; so that by so many consecutive, graduated graces, as it were, its members should be supported from the cradle to life's last breath, and that the social needs of the Church might also be generously provided for.

As all know, through the waters of baptism, those who are born into this world, being dead in sin, are not only born again and made members of the Church, but, being

stamped with a spiritual seal, they become capable and fit to receive the other sacraments.

By the chrism of confirmation, the faithful are given added strength to protect and defend the Church, their mother, and the faith she has given them.

In the sacrament of penance a saving medicine is offered to the Church's members who have fallen into sin, not only to provide for their own health, but to remove from other members of the Mystical Body all danger of contagion, or rather to afford them the tonic of virtuous example.

Nor is that enough; for in the Holy Eucharist, the faithful are nourished and grow strong at the same table, and in a divine, ineffable way are brought into union with each other and with the divine Head of the whole Body.

Finally, like a devoted mother, the Church is at the bedside of those who are sick unto death; and if it be not always God's will that by the sacred anointing of the sick she restores health to this mortal body, yet she does minister supernatural medicine for wounded souls, and sends new citizens on to heaven to enjoy forever the happiness of God—new advocates assigned to her.

For the social needs of the Church, Christ has provided in a particular way by two sacraments which he instituted.

Through matrimony, when the contracting parties are ministers of grace to each other, provision is made for the external and properly regulated increase of Christian society. And, what is of greater importance, for the correct religious education of the offspring, without which this Mystical Body would be in grave danger?

Through Holy Orders men are set aside and consecrated to God, to offer in sacrifice the Eucharistic victim, to feed the flock of the faithful with the bread of angels and the food of doctrine, to guide them in the way of God's commandments and counsels, to strengthen them with all the other supernatural helps." (*Mystici Corporis*)

c) *Sacraments, a Sharing in the Mystery of Christ.*

The mystery of Christ is infinite; the different sacraments help us appreciate and live the full richness of our sharing in that mystery. Each sacrament has its own special way of signifying the mystery of Christ: the Son of God, who became man, was anointed priest and redeemer; ruler, teacher and king; the Savior who "died for our sins" and rose again for our justification, and who now sits at the right hand of the Father and intercedes on our behalf, a Priest forever. He sent the Holy Spirit to the Apostles at the day of Pentecost to give life and strength to the Church, inspiring them to teach and sanctify in the power of the Spirit of God.

This is, of course, the most wonderful side of the theology of the sacraments. However it is one whose further study can be left to a later date, since it is beyond the simpler scope of this work.

With all the abundant works on the Liturgy, and many fine studies of the sacraments which have been written in recent years,³ it seems unnecessary to delay much on this section of the seven sacraments, especially since most of them are treated individually in later chapters. However there is one point which should be stressed for an understanding of the sacraments and their place in the life of every Christian. This point is that the sacraments should be seen as one of God's ways of helping us realize the religious value of the human, the supernatural value of the natural, and the spiritual value of the material.

Earlier we have seen how distinctions, necessary for the sake of study and exactitude of doctrine, can result in too great a divorce between the natural and the supernatural. But God's purpose in creating human beings was that through all their human lives they might grow towards God and live in personal union with him. All the natural things would help them know God and love him and live for him. The whole of 'nature' and of human life is, or

should be, directed towards God. Now by the sacraments, material things are taken to be made symbols of spiritual realities, giving grace to our souls. Human realities—such as human love, human effort to conquer weakness, human sickness and death—are taken and consecrated so that they may lift us above ourselves to the God for whom we were made.

NOTES:

- 1) Decourtray, "La Conception johannique de la foi," *Nouvelle Revue Theologique* 81 (1959), 563.
- 2) L. Lochet, *Son of the Church* (Chicago: Fides, 1956), Ch. 5.
- 3) Perhaps it would be as well to mention one or two works which are representative of much writing in this field:

- (a) E. Schillebeeckx, O.P., *Christ the Sacrament of Encounter* (New York and London: Sheed & Ward, 1963).

Fr. Schillebeeckx is certainly the outstanding name in present-day theological writing on the sacraments. With his theme that each sacrament is a "personal encounter" with Christ, and through Christ with the Father, he has developed the personal nature of sacramental acts in a way which fits in very well with the line of exposition which we put forward in these pages.

- (b) G. Diekmann, O.S.B., *Come Let Us Worship* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1962).

This is a book which will be easier for the average reader to follow. In his section "Two Approaches to the Sacraments," Fr. Diekmann contrasts

- (i) the approach which insists, almost exclusively, on the sacraments as causes of grace;
- (ii) the other, the more current liturgical stress on the sign-value of each sacrament with its appeal to our faith, our minds and our affective response to the invitation of Christ.

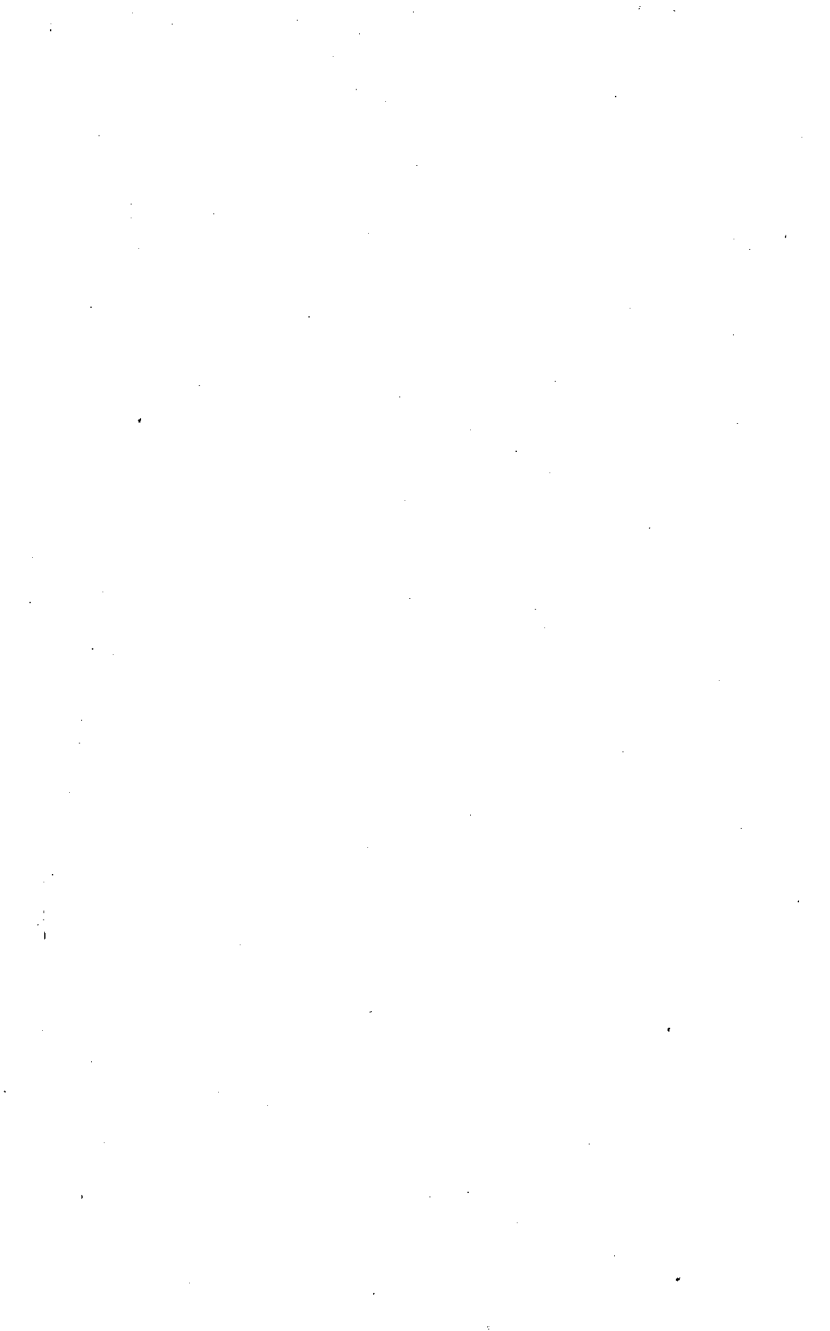
This latter aspect, of course, has been given prominence by the liturgical movement which has been such a vital force in the Church in recent years and which has contributed greatly towards bridging the gap that is always likely to develop between theological studies and everyday Christian life.

These modern stresses have helped avoid giving too absolute a meaning to the *ex opere operato* effect of the sacraments, as if, almost independently of the fervor of the recipient, the sacraments could cause in him an increase of

grace—grace regarded as a ‘thing’ whose measure is increased in the soul provided ‘no obstacle is placed.’ Some failed to see that there are more obstacles than sin or positive resistance: obstacles to the increase of grace are lack of fervor and generosity in response to the grace of Christ.

With the development of ideas on the personal character of grace and on ‘life and liturgy,’ more insistence is rightly being placed on the fact that the sacraments are “sacraments of faith” as St. Thomas called them in a phrase which occurs again in the constitution on the Church in Vatican II. This underlines the truth, that, as well as being efficient causes of grace, they appeal to our faith and incite us to a fuller personal commitment to Christ. This is most important for an adult’s reception of the sacraments. For a brief treatment of this, cf. G. Thils, *Christian Holiness* (Bombay: St. Paul’s Publications, 1963), pp. 148 ff.

Sacraments link us with the mystery of Christ—and here is one of the many fields in which, discovering God, we must set about re-discovering him. Discovering the liturgical life of the Church in the sacraments, through the liturgy with all its symbolism and biblical imagery, its doctrine expressed in the Church’s worship and sanctifying activity, we are led to a fuller understanding of the whole mystery of Christ.



CHAPTER 12

THE PEOPLE OF GOD

a) *A Community of Love*

When a man discovers God, he discovers his brethen as children of God. When a man meets with Christ, he discovers the Church of Christ. His need for security and truth to free him from doubt and ignorance, his need of personal fulfilment through personal relationships with God and others brings him to the Church through which Christ continues his work of redemption. That work was to "gather into one the people who were scattered," binding them together through the faith and charity which united them to God their common Father, led by the Spirit of Truth whom he gives to the Church. Looking back through the Old Testament at the history of God's work of preparing the world for Christ, we see that it is a work of forming a people of God with whom he made a Covenant, an Alliance of friendship. This preparatory work reaches its culmination with the coming of Christ who, in himself uniting God to man, forms a new Alliance with the new People of God, the Christian Church. For a man cannot be saved as an individual any more than he can be fully himself as an individual in isolation. As a person he needs contact with other persons. And reaching his full personal life through contact with God, he discovers that he is thereby brought into closer contact with others within the 'family of God'.

The Church is this: the people of God or the family of God gathered together in Christ, in a living faith, hope

and charity. It is a community of love, and a community of worship. Although this spiritual bond is the life of the Church, men cannot be united merely by internal realities which each lives individually and privately. The followers of Christ will be gathered together according to their human nature, and the Church will have a social character, bound together under external organization. But it is the internal and spiritual realities which bring men together in the Church of God. They gather together in a common consciousness of their dignity and their destiny, in a common realization of their debt of gratitude to Christ, and of their duties towards God and their fellow men.

The spirit animating the Church appears most clearly, perhaps, in the first gatherings of Christians after the death and resurrection of Christ, after he had appeared to his disciples in his risen and glorified humanity, and after, having ascended into heaven, he sent forth the Holy Spirit on them to strengthen and inspire them to go forth to be his witnesses. In those first gatherings were many who had known Christ intimately, others who had met him, listened to him, and heard some of his teaching, still others who had only heard of him. Some of them had hoped great things from him—until his crucifixion and death; and then their own hopes had died with him. But the astounding truth of his resurrection was established beyond doubt by the fact that so many of them had seen the risen Lord and listened to him for the forty days that he stayed on with them. Then only did they really understand the marvellous import of who he was and what he had done, for them and for all mankind.

His first followers would meet together, then, in wondering love at the ways of God, in grateful memory of the love of Christ who had gathered them together into one, and who, in order to do so, had let himself be crucified and put to death. They came together in the consciousness of

their unity in the family of God, conscious that they were now all tending together towards their true home in heaven, where Christ had gone "to prepare a home for them" (John 14:2), knowing that at the end of their lives, Christ would come again to take them to himself, that they might also be where he was in the glory and happiness of heaven. When they met they would also be very much aware that the truth that Christ was the Son of God and the revelation of the kindness of God inviting them to faith, was of tremendous import for them and for all the world. They thus understood why they should be his witnesses. The import of his life and work was momentous for all men for all times. Yet, it was only through them that the message of Christ, of redemption, could be carried to all men. The love of Christ would urge them to pass on his saving message to all mankind. They took various steps to do this. They wrote records of his life and teaching which the Church guarded and gathered into what we know as the New Testament. The Acts of the Apostles records the early missionary efforts and journeys, mainly of Paul, but also of the other Apostles. It also gives a picture of the early community which has never faded from the consciousness of the Church through the centuries:

All the faithful held together, and shared all they had, selling their possessions and their means of livelihood, so as to distribute to all as each had need. They persevered with one accord, day by day, in temple worship, and as they broke bread in this house or that, they took their share of food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and winning favor with all the people.

These occupied themselves continually with the apostles' teaching, their fellowship in the breaking of bread, and the fixed times of prayer. (Acts 2, 44-47; 42).

The Church thus appears as a community of love, and

a community of worship: a community of love in which they were all so much united in the one family of God that they pooled their material resources and helped their brethren in material needs. They knew that they shared in common the greater gifts of faith and grace, and that they were all united in looking forward to the perfect and lasting life of heaven. Their fellowship in charity naturally expressed itself in prayer and worship of God and thanksgiving to the Father who had sent his Son, Christ, to redeem them.

They met together, the record shows, for the *Agape*, the feast of fellowship, of friendship, of brotherhood. It was, however, not just an ordinary social event. In the splendid afterglow of the Resurrection, how could it be ordinary? Their meeting was one which was rich with memories and filled with gratitude to God and Christ. It thus found particularly suited to its mood the "eucharistic prayer" which had long existed in the religion of Israel. An understanding of this particular prayer-form shows how the community of Christian charity was also, quite spontaneously, a community of prayer and worship.

b) *A Community of Worship*

i) *Eucharistic Prayer*

Eucharist, as is commonly said, comes from a Greek word meaning to give thanks. It is not a perfunctory act of gratitude, but a combination of different steps. The first of these is that of recalling the wonderful works of God who has done marvellous things for his people. In wonder and even awe, the people recall the intervention of God on their behalf to bring them his blessings. This memory of what God has done naturally moves us to praise God for what he has done, and to express our deep gratitude to him. At the same time, the thought of his protection and help in the past will stir up our confidence in his future care

for us: "So long thy power hath blessed me, sure it still will lead me on." (Cardinal Newman)

We then venture to ask God that, as we remember his kindness and past favors, he might be mindful of us in our present and future needs, and be with us to assist us and bless us.

As the Christians gathered together in the early Church—and through all the later centuries—they called to mind the wonders God had wrought on their behalf—particularly in and through Jesus Christ his Son, whom he had sent out on a mission to us, that we might become the children of God. They recalled especially how he had given his life in sacrifice, and how God had raised him from the dead; how he had ascended into heaven, where he lives on, to make intercession on behalf of all mankind whom he had made his brethren; how he had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven on Pentecost to strengthen the Church, to guide her into all truth, to sanctify her members.

Special among their memories was the Lord's own eucharistic prayer, when "the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was being betrayed, took bread, and gave thanks and broke it, and said: 'Take, eat; this is my body, given up for you. Do this for a commemoration of me.' And so with the cup, when supper was ended: 'This cup,' he said, 'is the new testament, in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, for a commemoration of me.' " They carried out the Lord's command, knowing that "It is the Lord's death that you are heralding, whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, until he comes. And therefore, if anyone eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, he will be held to account for the Lord's body and blood" (I Cor. 11, 26 ff.).

ii) *Eucharistic Sacrifice.*

In giving to his Church this special mandate to re-

peat what he had done at the Last Supper, Christ institutes a liturgical ceremony which, as a sacrifice, caters to the needs of man in the expression of his religion. All that we have said on the nature of sacrifice (Chapter 6) must be applied here, and the meaning of the eucharistic sacrifice, or the Mass, comes out clearly. Since man is made up of body and soul, it is natural for him to express through external actions and symbolism the internal drive of his tending towards God.

In sacrifice, there are four main elements:

1. *Oblation* or offering of a gift—which signifies the offering of ourselves to God in loving obedience to his will.

2. *Immolation*: which is really a different aspect of oblation. If you give anything, you must give it up, renounce it, deprive yourself of it. In so doing, you renounce something of yourself, and by so doing, really repent of your sin. For sin is self-assertion and self-indulgence. If we take something we value and give it up, we renounce ourselves and break down some of that hardness of self-attachment which was present in sin. In the Old Testament sacrifices of animals, the victim was slain—so that its life could really pass over into God's possession. The death inflicted on the animal could then serve to signify his readiness to die to himself, to give himself to God in the complete surrender to God in love. This element of sacrifice often became distorted, and took on all sorts of lurid coloring—such as that of God wreaking vengeance on the substitute animal. And, of course, since giving-up is hard, we have made "sacrifice" mean, in popular language, only this negative side of things. We must remember that it is only one side of the coin, and not the one with most meaning.

3. *Acceptance*: "You do not hurl a gift into heaven", you do not force a gift onto anyone. It must be freely accepted. And when a gift is freely accepted, the person who receives it, acknowledges that he has accepted the

meaning, and the request behind it, and admitted you to his friendship, forgiving your fault, if that is necessary. In the Old Testament, this acceptance was signified in various ways: fire coming down from heaven to consume the victim on one occasion. This led to the practice of burning victims to represent their going up to God, as the odor of sweet incense to be accepted by Him. Also, the altar was regarded as representing God, and when it was placed on the altar, the victim was considered as having been accepted by God.

4. *Communion*: at the end of the sacrifice, those who had offered it, often ate a sacrificial meal. In this action there was the fuller significance of their having been accepted into the family circle of God. For they sat at his table, eating of food which he had accepted and made his own. What God had accepted, he had, in some way 'made divine'; and when man ate of this 'divine thing', he was closely united to the divinity. And since all those who sat at table with him were united to God in holy fellowship, the sacrificial meal was a sign and a cementing bond of union between the various members of the family of God. By eating of the victim, man also underlined the significance of sacrifice, that he offered himself to God.

"Sacrifice is the action into which man tries to infuse the whole of his yearning for union with God, in this life, and in the future fulness of heaven." And so, as the Lord has commanded, we take bread and wine, which, since they nourish our life, can aptly serve as a symbol of our offering of our whole life to God. We want God to accept our gift, as a sign that he accepts us into friendship and love, that we might be united to God in a Holy Communion. But the imperfect union with God now we will want to be the pledge of a fuller, perfect personal union with God in the next life.

But even as we bring our gifts, we will know that our

only way to God is in and through Christ who offered himself, and all humanity with him to God through his passion and death, to be accepted in the glory of the resurrection. The drive of the Christian offering sacrifice will be that he might get in touch with the one sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. And we find that, in instituting the Eucharist, Christ has provided a way for us to unite ourselves with the sacrifice of Christ which was "a sign of something to be done by us"—namely, that we might offer ourselves to God, renouncing ourselves, or dying to sin, in order to be accepted into union with God.

Over the bread and wine, Christ said: "This is my body which is broken for you; this is my blood which is poured out in sacrifice." Centuries of Christian tradition have understood these words to mean what they say—namely, that, in some mysterious way, the body and blood of Christ are really made present under the appearances of bread and wine. As the priest carries out the command of Christ, as the separation of his body and blood in the death of Calvary is signified by the liturgical action, the power of God brings it about that our gifts are changed into his Body and Blood which, once offered in sacrifice, have been eternally accepted by the Father.

Here we have the pledge of God's acceptance of our own self-offering, of our being taken into the sacrifice of Christ, accepted into the Father's love 'in holy fellowship', and drawn daily closer to God through progressive deliverance from and strength against our own inclinations to sin. The Eucharistic Sacrifice concludes, too, with a sacrificial meal, when we all come to the table of God and eat of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. This is indeed 'Holy Communion' for we are united to Christ, the divine victim, and through him to the Father. Since through this Communion we are united to the risen Christ, we receive from his life-giving humanity,

an inflow of grace and life. At the same time, our present union with Christ, is a 'pledge of future immortality'; it is the beginning of a union with God, and a personal union with Christ, which will be brought to perfection in the 'holy fellowship' of eternal bliss.

And as all the members of the community become 'table-fellows' of God, they are forcibly reminded of their union among themselves in the family of God. For the new sacrifice seals the alliance between God and his people; and as they act out their union with God, all must, if they truly realize what they are doing, live more deeply their union with one another as children of God. Thus the Eucharist is the central action of the Church as a community of fraternal love. It is also the most important and the essential expression of her character as a community of worship.

In writing of worship, most authors stress the fact that we acknowledge God's excellence, his supreme dominion, and his greatness. This is all true, of course, but the Christian has his acknowledgment colored by the knowledge that in Christ God has come near to us to unite us to himself. No Christian sacrifice can be dominated by the atmosphere which surrounds some ceremonies of other religions: an atmosphere of dread and of fear of a God who needs to be placated lest he inflict death on us for our sins. Nor is it the sort of tribute of respect which we would pay to a distant sovereign. Even our religion will be impregnated by our faith in the personal love and kindness of God. We must keep this in mind when we think of worship and sacrifice.

St. Thomas wrote: "The external sacrifice is representative of the true interior sacrifice, according to which the human soul offers itself to God. The human soul offers itself to God as to him who created it, as to Him who

governs its whole activity, as to Him who alone can give it perfect happiness" (*Contra Gent.*, III, 120). Now this means

- a) That we recognize in loving gratitude all that we have received from God in our own existence and life and the possibility of happiness (our creator);
- b) that we express our readiness to do his will in loving obedience, since his will is the rule of our life;
- c) that we express our conviction that he is the only one who can satisfy our need for happiness, and our desire that he might unite us to himself some day in eternal bliss.

All of this is expressed by the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass, and a man can concentrate on one or other aspect of the meaning of sacrifice as he takes part in the Mass. Whatever be the sentiments of his soul before God, he can find adequate expression for them in the Mass. He knows that the Mass is 'his sacrifice' as a member of the Church, and that he must endeavor to make the external offering more and more perfectly the sign of his own internal offering of himself to God. It will be the protestation of his love, his loyalty, his service of God. All of this he will want God to accept from him. Yet in his desire of being accepted, he will be conscious of his own unworthiness.

Then he will reflect that his offering is caught up into the offering of Christ who is the chief priest of every Mass that is offered. He will know that Christ, who lives on to make intercession on behalf of us all, has willed that the Mass should be the sign of his own offering of himself. Made once on Calvary, that offering is eternal, in that, accepted by God, he is eternally "given to God in complete surrender." "He offers to the Heavenly Father not only himself as Head of the Church, but in Himself, also, His

mystical members, for he encloses them all, even the weak and frail among them, most lovingly in His Heart." (Pius XII)

Through the Eucharistic Sacrifice, Christ has given us a wonderful way to satisfy many of our religious needs: a) The need to express our active drive towards God; the need to express our gratitude, our sorrow, our desire, our self-offering; b) the need for assurance that our offering is pleasing to God. In telling us to use as the sign of our own self-offering his divinely instituted ceremony which represents his sacrifice of death-and-resurrection, and in giving us his own Body and Blood to offer, he shows how he takes our offering into his own, and puts us into vital contact with his own life-giving sacrifice.

Need of Union with Christ. We need to live and grow in our vital union with Christ through faith, hope and charity. Our Lord has made it so much easier for us to do this through his permanent presence in the Eucharist. In the Eucharistic Sacrifice, we are united with him in his worship of the Father. In Holy Communion, when we take part in the Eucharistic Meal, we are closely united to Christ. These actions of the Mass and Communion, rich in spiritual value as they are, are passing actions. Yet our whole life is to be one of personal union with Christ. He remains present in the Blessed Eucharist, as a sign of his permanent presence with the people of God, as a help to us his people to live in the thought of his closeness to us, and to live close to him.

c) *To Proclaim His Exploits*

"It is yours to proclaim the exploits of the God who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (I Peter, 2:9).

The Christian Church must be a missionary Church—

not in the sense, merely, that she tries to convert the 'heathen'. But with her conviction of what the love of God means to mankind; of man's need of the redemption which Christ brought into the world; of God's will that "all men might be saved and come to the knowledge of truth" (I Tim. 2, 4) she must spread to all men the message of God's love for them. Christ did tell his disciples "you will be my witness," but the need of bearing witness is contained in one's real discovery of the love of God in Christ. "The charity of Christ presses us," wrote St. Paul. For if the divine love is a sort of hunger in the heart of God for the happiness of those he has created to be his children, and if "the love of God is poured forth in our hearts," then it must make us, too, hunger for the salvation of other men. This salvation consists in their knowing the love of God for them.

Through the Church the work of Christ's redemption must be carried on. Thus the Church must—by inner compulsion rather than by obedience to any external command—show to the world her true love of every human person. All men must know that she cares for them, their personal good, their happiness in this life and in the next; for, if they know that she cares, they will see this as a faint reflection of the love of Christ their Savior and of God their Father. Hence she has so many people devoted to the work of caring for the sick, the poor, the aged, and the orphan: that they might know that there is someone who cares.

She must also fight against everything which she knows is opposed to the personal good of men—as she has fought through the centuries, not only against sin and evil, but against ignorance, injustice, inhumanity—against everything which prevents a man from finding himself in his true dignity as a man, and against anything which is an obstacle to his being a child of God.

d) *A Royal Priesthood*

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation" (I Pet. 2:9).

Christ, the Head of His Church, is the eternal high Priest, i.e., one who offers worship and sacrifice to God on behalf of mankind, and one whose task it is to bring men from sin into a state of friendship with God. Since Christ continues his work through the Church, his Church, too, takes on something of his priestly character.

i) *The Priesthood of Christ*

When the Son of God became man, he became a priest, or one who was able really to represent men before God and unite men to God "in holy friendship." Thus it was at the moment of the Incarnation, when he became man, that Christ was constituted the High Priest of the human race. At that moment, as Christian tradition expresses it, he was anointed priest, his humanity being consecrated by the divinity to which it was united. Or, in a slightly different expression, his human nature was sanctified and anointed by the Holy Spirit. Then, too, since he possesses his human nature, he is in possession of the human life which he is to offer in sacrifice; and sacrifice was regarded as the chief liturgical action of a priest. Through offering his sacrifice, he honors God, and, uniting mankind to God, frees them from sin. All subsequent work, through the centuries, of freeing man from sin, is therefore part of Christ's priestly work.

There is, in the Gospel, another scene, in which, after he was baptized by John the Baptist, Christ is 'anointed with the Holy Spirit' Who descends upon him in visible form. This, too, has been seen by tradition as a priestly anointing of Christ, with particular regard to his work of preaching and spreading the Kingdom of God. In reference

to this, Christ applies to himself a text from Isaias: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has anointed me, and sent me out to preach the Gospel to the poor, to restore the broken-hearted" (Lk. 4:18). He went out, then, to his work of preaching the good news of God's love and his will for man's salvation.

His priesthood reaches its climax when he offers himself in sacrifice on the Cross, when his sacrifice is accepted in the glory of the resurrection, and when, ascending into heaven, "he lives on to make intercession on our behalf." Pentecost is the final stage in the priestly work of Christ when he sends forth the Holy Spirit, giving men the fruits of his sacrifice in grace and life and strength.

ii) *The Priesthood of the Faithful*

We have already quoted the text in which St. Peter tells all Christians that they are a royal priesthood. Belonging to Christ, they now possess as their own the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Church, and have their part in offering it to God. The baptismal character, which marks them out as belonging to Christ, is also a 'consecration' to the worship of God. Having their part in the offering of the Mass, the faithful, if they offer it truly, will make it a sign of their own offering of themselves to God. St. Paul appealed to the first Christians to "offer up their bodies as a living sacrifice, consecrated to God and worthy of his acceptance; this is the worship due from you as rational creatures" (Rom. 12:1). Pope Pius XII echoed these words in his exhortation to the people assisting at Mass: "As the people answer 'Amen' let them not forget to offer themselves and their anxieties, their sorrows, their troubles, their miseries and their needs in union with their divine Head crucified."

The Christian pledges himself to do the will of God, in his family, in his work, in whatever he does. Hence he is

truly the 'high-priest of creation,' offering to God all that he gives to others, all that he does in the world.

Baptism is often received in one's younger years. Later, as a child grows towards manhood, he becomes more conscious of his obligations towards others. Then he receives the sacrament of confirmation to help him face up to his Christian obligations in the world. This sacrament also imprints a character on his soul, whereby "he receives the power of publicly confessing Christ, in words, as it were in an official capacity" (St. Thomas). He is anointed on the forehead while the confirming bishop says: "I sign thee with the sign of the Cross, and I confirm (or strengthen) thee with the chrism of salvation." This sacrament recalls the first Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was sent to the Apostles to inspire them with strength and courage to preach the Gospel "The effect of this sacrament," the Church teaches, "is that, by it, the Holy Spirit is given for strength, as he was given to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, in order that the Christian might boldly profess the name of Christ." He is reminded that Christ the High Priest wants to act through him in bearing witness to the world.

The various forms of lay-apostolate draw inspiration from the doctrine of confirmation and the graces that go with it help the Christian to be one who bears effective witness to Christ in the world.

As the Second Vatican Council teaches:

The faithful, incorporated into the Church by baptism, are, by the character, dedicated to celebrate the worship of the Christian religion, and having been reborn to become children of God, they are bound to profess publicly the faith they have received from God channeled to them through the Church.

The sacrament of confirmation unites them more completely to the Church; the Holy Spirit enriches them with a special

strength and thus they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, by word and works, as true witnesses of Christ.

iii) *Hierarchical Priesthood*

The Church is a society, and hence there must be order in her ranks. Christ entrusted a certain power of ruling, teaching, and sanctifying to his Apostles, to be handed on to those who were appointed officials in the Church. These, by the sacrament of holy orders, are consecrated in a special way to the divine ministry, given a special share in the priesthood of Christ. Here let it be noted that whatever powers are given through ordination are given for the good of the Church. They take with them, then, a grave obligation to work for the building up of the body of Christ, or the people of God. The Priest is given

- a) the power to consecrate the Eucharist, to offer the sacrifice of the Mass on behalf of the people;
- b) the power to forgive sins in the sacrament of confession. These things he can do only because Christ consecrates him as his minister, the instrument he wills to use in causing these effects which no man could achieve by his merely human power.
- c) He is also commissioned to preach the word of God in due dependence on the bishop to whom the office of teaching is officially entrusted in the Church.

The bishop, when he is consecrated, receives the fulness of the sacramental sharing in Christ's priesthood. To him is given the Holy Spirit, as he was given to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, to assist him in his task of guarding and teaching the doctrine of Christ. Also, his is the office to hand on the priesthood, to confer those sacraments whereby the Holy Spirit is given to make man like to Christ in some exercise of the priesthood of Christ. He ordains men to the priestly ministry; he confirms, giving

the Holy Spirit to the faithful that they might bear witness boldly to their faith.

The power of Christ works through human ministers whom he has made his own instruments in the sanctification of men. It has been the constant teaching of the Church that this power does not depend on the sanctity of the minister. A sinful priest can forgive sins; an unworthy priest can celebrate Eucharistic Sacrifice. For the power is given to benefit the people of God, not for the merits of some individual. God so loves the world, and so wills the salvation of his own people that his will to save and his power to sanctify cannot be limited by any defects in the instruments which he wills to use. St. Gregory of Nazianzen compares the priest to a ring used to put a seal on wax. It does not matter what material the ring be made of—gold, silver or base metal—the imprint is the same. It is Christ who works through the ministers of his Church to forgive sin, to offer sacrifice to God. He safeguards his people even from the failings of his ministers.

This does not mean, however, that the priest is not called to holiness of life. He is to be the "sign of Christ present with his people"; of Christ present in the offering of worship to God, and of Christ present in his care and redeeming love. This is, in many ways, a dreadful responsibility; yet it is one for which every priest, in his own weak way, is bound to strive. "Christ was made in all things like to us, sin excepted; his priests are to be made in all things like to him. Sharing in his power, it will be made possible for them to share his strength, virtue and holiness. As the prolongation on earth of Christ's priesthood, it is fitting that they should also be the prolongation of his sanctity: 'It would be a disorder if the dispenser of the gifts of God did not himself possess those gifts and live by them. That he who sanctifies be not himself holy; that he who preaches should fail to practise what he preaches; that he who gives Christ

to others should himself go after the idols of the world and the flesh: that is something which heaven has cursed. . . .” (Sertillanges).

Within the unity of the People of God, a constant prayer of the people should be that their priests might be able to bear worthily the heavy charge they have taken on for the love of Christ and his Church.

It is because of his call to ‘represent Christ’ that the priest in the Catholic Church takes on the obligation of celibacy. By what he is, as much as by what he does, he preaches to the world his conviction of the love of God for us which we need above all others, and towards which all other loves should lift us. By giving his love exclusively to no human family, he is to be a sign to the world of the love of God for each and every individual. His care and concern for all should help people realize something of how much Christ cares for us all. Perhaps he could be just as dedicated to their welfare if he married, as do other dedicated men, and dedicated ministers of other denominations. But the Church has judged that he would be less effectively a sign of Christ present in love and care for his people.

NOTES:

1. *The Real Presence.*

The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist has been taken for granted in these pages, with no attempt at explanation. I have omitted any such attempt, first because I doubt if any of the philosophical attempts to explain something of this mystery would be very enlightening to the average reader; and secondly, because none of them have ever been very enlightening to me. The fact of the Real Presence is something I believe firmly because it is taught by Christ. I accept this teaching because it is so clearly contained in Sacred Scripture, and because it has been put forward without hesitation in the constant tradition of the Church. It is a truth I accept easily because it gives so much greater meaning to life, religion and worship.

For all of us, it must remain a “mystery of faith” which means

that we can never find a satisfying explanation of it. Certainly it must not be understood as crudely or materially as popular imagination might conceive of it. Our Lord is present "after the manner of a spirit" as St. Thomas says. "No matter how real it is, his presence remains sacramental, that is to say, in the manner of a sign" (G. Thils. *Christian Holiness*, p. 164).

2. *Sacrifice of the Mass.*

There are different ways of approaching the doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. At the Reformation the sacrificial character of the Lord's Supper was denied (although in recent Protestant theology there is a recognition of the fact that we are not true to scriptural teaching unless we affirm it.—cf. G. Aulen).

There was the consequent reaction to stress the fact that the Mass is a real sacrifice, the "same sacrifice as that of the Cross," with the resulting questions of how it is a sacrifice, whether Christ is immolated, what is its relation to Calvary etc. This gives the usual theological approach which is fairly well-known.

However, in this question, too, further light can be gained—especially for the non-theologian—by asking the questions: why do we offer sacrifice? What do we try to express by our offering? The theologian, too, can cast light on his problems by viewing them from the same angle. After all, these are questions that deal with the expression of human relationships with God. When translated into ordinary terms of the realities of life, some theoretical answers take on more meaning. For example, the four ends of sacrifice, or reasons why we offer sacrifice, are given as: adoration or praise (acknowledgment of God's excellence), thanksgiving, petition and propitiation. For many people this has a very impersonal and abstract ring about it. But let us take our example of the child who, after having done wrong, makes a gift to his parents, thus acting out the human equivalent of the religious sacrifice. In his action he expresses his desire to be united again (or more closely) in love and friendship to his parents. In expressing this desire he:

- (a) acknowledges their excellence, not in detached or distant sort of admiration, but in the recognition that his parents are so good and lovable that nothing can substitute for his union with them in love.
- (b) He expresses his *gratitude* for he recognizes that what they have done for him in the past has constituted his real happiness. The remembrance of these past favors inspires him with confidence in his
- (c) *petition*, whereby he asks not for things they might give him,

but to be united to them in love that he might be cherished and protected by them.

- (d) *Propitiation* or obtaining the forgiveness of an offence is brought about by restoration to full friendship and love.

And since no human example of love is sufficient, the example of a similar gift between two people in love can fill out the picture—for it illustrates the element of sacrifice which is a looking forward to and desire for a fuller personal union to come.

3. *Immolation.*

This much discussed question of the immolation in the Mass can, I think, profit by an approach from the living, human point of view. Is Christ immolated in the Mass, or mystically slain? Why should we want to immolate Christ? What does it mean for him to be "mystically slain," and what purpose would it serve?

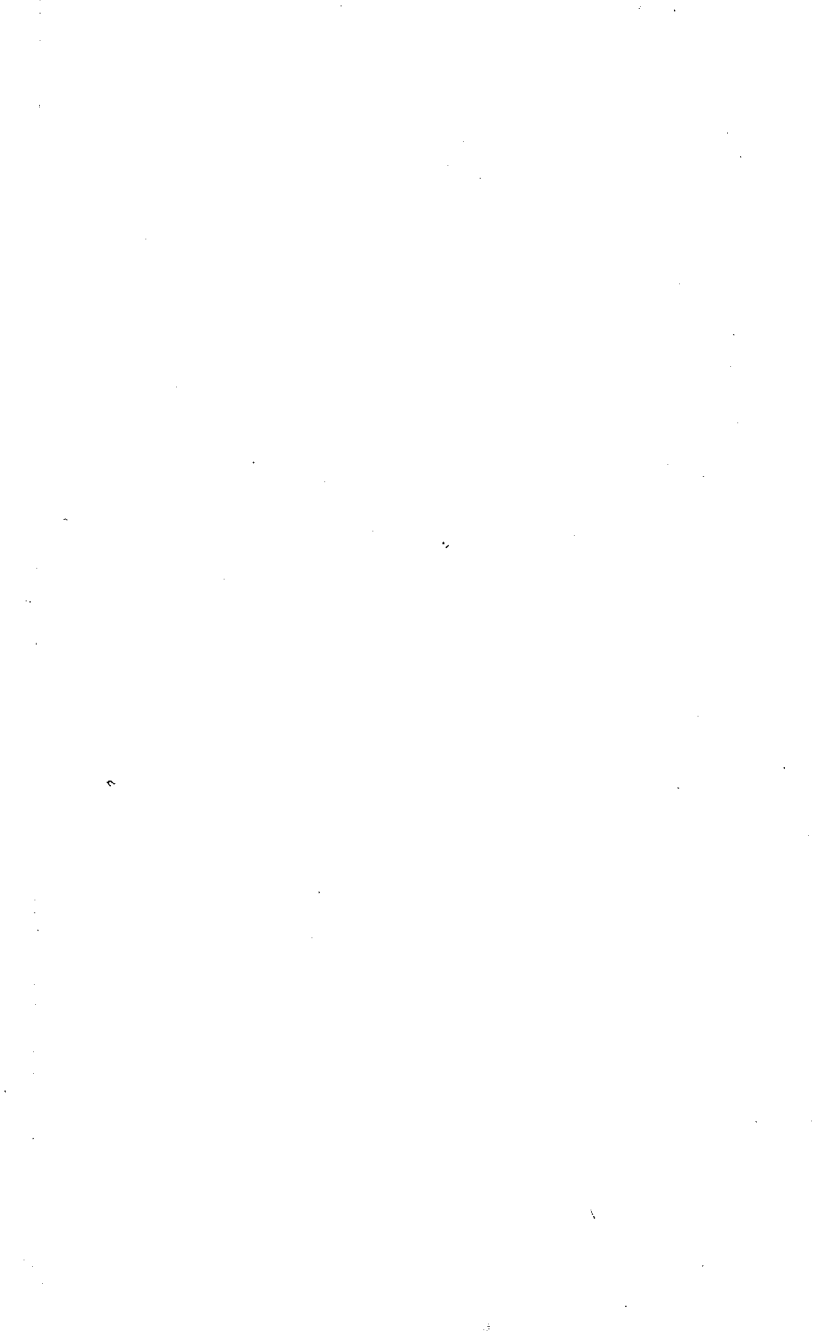
To these questions various answers have been given. Some of them were dictated by a notion of sacrifice which sprang from ideas of a God of vindictive justice—demanding some sort of death to be pacified for sin. De la Taille, in his *Mysterium Fidei* effectively ruled out all such theories. But, in spite of his great contribution to the theology of sacrifice, De la Taille himself seems to have equated 'immolation' with real death, thus falsifying some of his views of the Mass.

Why do we offer sacrifice? To express the offering of ourselves to God and our desire to be united to him. Hence the oblation of sacrifice is of value insofar as it expresses our own self-offering. But we give ourselves only by giving up self. Our self-immolation is our self-renunciation. The sacrificial action which is immolation is the external sign of our own inner self-renunciation. It is as essentially a sign as is the oblation in sacrifice. It must not be given an absolute realism for it is a sign.

In the passion and death of Christ, we had a "sacrifice unveiled"—the external offering of his life was the outward manifestation of his inward self-offering to God in love and obedience and complete self-surrender: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." But he could not give himself without *giving-up* his life, renouncing whatever 'self' and desire to live there was in his human nature. His external acceptance of death signified his internal acceptance of "death to self."

Now, in the glory of the Resurrection, because of his divine will in instituting the Eucharist, our Eucharistic offering is the external sign of his eternal offering, the eternal and enduring gift of himself to the Father which he never needs to repeat. Likewise, the sacramental separation of his Body and Blood is his divinely instituted sign of his eternal, never-withdrawn renunciation of whatever 'self' was in him.

Now we come to offer sacrifice, wanting to express the gift of ourselves to God, and with it the renunciation of our 'self.' Through the Mass, in which we are reminded of Christ's offering of himself and of all mankind with him, we are enabled to unite our sacrifice to his, and, thereby, to be assured that our offering is acceptable to God. What we are really aiming at is not to immolate Christ anew, nor even to offer Christ anew as if we would thereby have an extra claim on God. What we aim at is only that we now might be taken into the perfect offering of Christ made on Calvary, made for all of us and profiting us to the extent that we let ourselves be taken into his offering and immolation.



CHAPTER 13

THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

"You are no longer exiles or aliens; the saints are your fellow-citizens, you belong to God's household." (Eph. 2, 19)

a) *The Christian Family*

"Christian husbands and wives . . . have in their state of life and in their function a gift which is proper to them within the People of God. From their union, in fact, comes the family in which new citizens of human society are born. These, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, in view of perpetuating the People of God through the centuries, become children of God by baptism. In what might be called the 'domestic church', the parents should by word and example be the first to make the faith known to their children. . . ." (Second Vatican Council)

Our first experience of family life comes to us as children, in the family into which we were born. In Chapter 3, we have considered the "sacramental" nature of parenthood, in that, through their relationships with their parents, children should come to know and live their personal role as children of God. Obviously, then, Christian parents should be deeply conscious of their great dignity, and their grave responsibility: they are the mirrors through whom their children see reflected the image of God, either clear and true or darkened and distorted.

The sacrament of marriage consecrates the human reality of the parent-child relationship, making of it an in-

strument of grace and a means to help the child grow in faith and love. From this sacrament, Christian parents will receive God's strengthening and enlightening grace to help them in the difficult but noble task of the Christian formation of their children.

Within the Christian family, there are, as it were, two planes of human relationships, that of husband and wife, and that of parents and children. The parent-child relationship has been outlined already; its essential nature has been established. Particular details can be found in the many works on education, child-psychology, the training of youth, and studies of Christian marriage and family life. The serious-minded parent will, of course, go more deeply into these matters. But it is outside the scope of this work to treat them in detail.

Basic to marriage is the special personal relationship of husband and wife. The Catholic teaching on the sacrament of marriage begins with this: "By his passion, Christ won for us the grace which would perfect the natural love of man and woman, which would strengthen marriage in its lasting unity, which would sanctify husband and wife" (Council of Trent). Marriage can exist without children—for in its essence it is the "sacrament of personal union." Out of love for one another a man and a woman agree, in solemn contract, to unite their lives in love "until death do us part." Through this life of love, perfected by God's grace, they should 'be sanctified', i.e., brought nearer to God in faith, hope and charity, and brought to greater unselfishness.

Faith is belief *in* God's love, belief that God *is* love. The vision of faith shows us the Trinity in which the three divine persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are united in personal love, self-surrender and self-giving. Through faith we know that the purpose of creation was that God might share his own life and love with other persons; that men

and women might know the delight of a love which is self-giving and creative, might know it partially on earth and enjoy its perfection in heaven. We see, through the pages of the Bible, that God uses the image of "marriage insofar as it is love . . . the yearning in itself unlimited of a man and a woman for each other" to teach us the greatness of God's love for mankind, and the depth of our need for God's love. The People of God are spoken of as the "bride of God," with whom God wills to be united in love and unbroken fidelity. Then, in the New Testament, the Church which is the new People of God, is spoken of as the bride of Christ, and marriage is the symbol of Christ's union with his Church. (Eph.5). Finally, the eternal union of the glorified Church with Christ is depicted under the image of the joy and happiness of a bride's union with her husband.

Now when two people "marry in the Lord," in St. Paul's phrase, they marry sharing the same vision of life and love. They know that, in raising marriage to the dignity of a sacrament, God has willed that the mutual pledge of an undying love which husband and wife make to each other is a sign of Christ's love for each of them. They know, then too, that through their own unselfish love and fidelity they must help one another to grow in the realization of the wonder of Christ's love which cherishes them.

God has created them both; he has given them their human need of love; he has brought them together in a deep personal love. In a very true sense, he has given them to one another. Christ has made this human gift of love between husband and wife a sign of the love which he himself gives to his Church and, especially, to these two members of the Church. When a man receives the gift of human love of the woman who becomes his bride, he is assured by Christ and the Church that he receives also the divine love of Christ himself. He knows also that he must

be, in his own love, the sign of the love of Christ for his wife. Through the whole of their married life, they must, through their conjugal love, express the faithful love of Christ for his people, for themselves particularly. Through marriage, each partner is consecrated to Christ as the living sign of Christ's love for the other. Since the love of Christ cannot fail, Christian marriage cannot be dissolved, for it must mirror the fidelity of God's unfailing love.

To people who marry in this spirit of faith, God will give, through the Sacrament of Marriage, the helps which are necessary to remain faithful to the Christian ideal of love and marriage. Through their 'natural love', they will learn to believe more deeply in the unfailing love of God, and to appreciate their need of God's love for their eternal and lasting happiness. Secure in their mutual trust in one another, they will learn, too, to grow in their trust in God, in their hope, and in their sense of belonging to Christ who loves them. They will learn to love God "who has first loved them," and they will grow in charity, or intimate friendship with God.

Also, through marriage they will be brought to self-forgetfulness which, when inspired by Christian love, is that "death to self" which Christ said was necessary for those who are called to newness of life. For if marriage is to have even its normal measure of human happiness, it must be built upon an unselfish love. Often, in marriage, even a man who has at first thought little of sacrifice is brought, as the years go by, to genuine unselfishness and self-sacrifice through love.

There is only one way to God, and that is the way of self-renunciation. A philosopher wrote of conjugal love that it "seems almost like a ruse of nature to gain her ends. . . for, from the external point of view, love is a contrivance for inducing man to perform voluntarily what is repugnant to him, to know self-sacrifice" (Jean Guitton). And yet he

will find that, in renouncing himself through love for his family, he becomes a better and happier man; he becomes more truly himself. In point of fact, husband and wife will know that one of the reasons why they marry is that they might be more fully themselves, that through the gift of themselves to one another in love, they grow to fuller personal life. The mutual help and support which they give and receive is one of the important "ends" or purposes of marriage. "This mutual inward moulding of husband and wife, this determined effort to perfect each other, can in a very real sense. . . be said to be the chief reason and purpose of matrimony, provided marriage be looked at not in the restricted sense as instituted specifically for the conception and education of the child, but more widely as the blending of life as a whole and the mutual interchange and sharing of life." (Pius XI in the Encyclical *Casti Connubii*).

Through 'perfecting their natural love,' the sacrament of marriage and the state of matrimony bring husband and wife to a more mature and more perfect personal life. This will be done more effectively if both partners have a realistic and adult view of love and sex. Because of their special love they are drawn towards union with one another in a community of life and love—a special union which is characterized, and differentiated from other loves and friendships, by the fact that their love is expressed through sexual union. Since this sexual union is directed naturally to the generation of children, the specific end of marriage is said to be the generation and education of children. This does not, of course, mean that people marry only to beget children. They aim at a communion of life and love which normally, though not always, is crowned and perfected in the children who complete the family circle.

This realistic view of married love means that it is seen as the full surrender of two persons to each other.

It is a *personal* love which is characterized by unselfish regard for the other's personality; it is a love which is out to give love and happiness, rather than to seek its own pleasure. Hence, although emotional and affective elements enter into it, and although it finds its full expression through sexual union, these are not the primary aspects of it. They are certainly essential to conjugal love in its normal expression, but they are not rightly balanced unless they are seen as subordinate parts of a fully personal love. This is why there will be serious difficulties in marriage, and sometimes real failure, if a man marries mainly to gratify sexual desires, or if a girl in marrying is seeking for protection and endearing affections above all other things. Both of these attitudes have failed to integrate the emotional and physical aspects of married love into the fuller, more balanced relationship between two adult persons who join their lives together in real personal surrender of their individual preferences in the gift of one's life and love to the other.

One of the "ends" of marriage is said to be the *remedium concupiscentiae*, which is sometimes given the dreadful and inaccurate translation of "an outlet for concupiscence." It is far better translated as what psychologists call "integration of sex." People are brought through marriage to an adult, fully personal love which exercises control over sexual urges, making them fit into the wider relationship of personal conjugal love. This will, at times, for one reason or another, help husband and wife to forego marital relationships that their love might be more fully human and personal—e.g., during sickness, pregnancy, etc. This is something which must be kept in mind when discussing regulation of births. The whole question must be discussed in the full dimensions of the personal relationships between husband and wife, parents and children. What is for the real personal good of all concerned? But if husband and

wife are very immature personalities, their appeal to their 'personal needs' is not a sound objective norm. Their personal development comes about only through some measure of self-sacrifice and control. In discussing contraception, many people want birth-control without any self-control. And this is perhaps the basic issue in Catholic discussion of what is today admittedly a difficult problem—is it possible to have birth-control without some measure of disciplined self-control? The Church's view is that marriage is meant to develop the personalities of husband, wife and children through grace, an adult love, acceptance of God's law, and control of the sexual urge, integrating it into fully personal relationships. In other words, it is that a human person cannot become what he ought to be, or help others grow in their personal relationships with God and with one another, by using mechanical or medical devices to free him from the need of disciplining his sexual desires. It is that for husband and wife, as for all Christians, the way to heaven is the way of the cross and of self-sacrifice.

Married love is self-perfecting because it is self-transcending, i.e., it leads husband and wife to forget self through surrender in love to another. And, of course, when, in the normal course of events, their love bears fruit in the children who are born to them, their love has taken them further still from any self-centered life. Their life is devoted now to the care and work for their children, to their full education as human persons and children of God.

Here, in this human family, is a living cell of the family of God, the Church. The Christian teaching on marriage helps husband and wife to see their family life in its full 'sacramental' significance, to live it in its full human and religious values. Their faith shows them God as the source of all life and love. In the blessed Trinity, there is, between the three divine persons, the perfect life of inter-

personal love and self-giving. Such is the force of this love that it becomes creative; it brings created persons into being that they might share in the delights of God's own love. Created to the image of God, human persons find their greatest human happiness in interpersonal love and self-giving. God created them so that they might unite their lives and love in marriage, in which the love which they share would go beyond itself in creating other human lives—their children who are created to be children of God. When the Son of God became man to unite men to himself, we saw God's supreme act of self-giving: Christ gives himself to us as our Savior and our lover, that men might be united to God in faith on earth, and in the ecstasy of eternal happiness in heaven.

In the design of God, marriage was instituted to help us know and live our personal union with God. It is, as St. Paul says, a sign of Christ's union with the Church. This union has a three-fold stage, so that the sacrament of marriage

1. looks back to the love which Christ showed the Church when he gave himself up to death that we might be won to the love of God.
2. It looks forward to the final consummation of our lives when the Church will be united to Christ "as a bride with her husband" in the eternal happiness of heaven. And so marriage is meant to give those who live it some idea of the wonder of eternal happiness in personal union with God.
3. Being a sacrament, it is a sign of grace here and now. For Christ is at work in the world to fill out the ranks of the Church, and to unite the members of the Church more closely to himself. And so he makes the gift of Christian love between husband and wife the sign and cause of his own love given especially to these two people, making them instruments of grace to one another.

Because of their marriage he gives them the helps to grow in faith and hope and self-forgetful love, and to help their children grow to a trusting love in their heavenly Father. He helps them establish a Christian home as a living cell of the wider family of the Church.

In the strict sense, it is the act of making the matrimonial contract or consent which is the "sacrament of matrimony" and which gives to husband and wife an increase of grace, strengthening them to live for God in their married life. As a result of this sacrament, they enter into the permanent state of matrimony; and this way of life is consecrated, given religious value and meaning. Because of the sacrament they will be helped by Christ to grow in his love through the years, to live loyal to their duties towards him and their family. This will not always be easy. In some cases either husband or wife will have need of great strength and courage to be loyal and faithful over the years. But Christ's fidelity in love continues in spite of sin, failure and weakness, and sometimes husband or wife will be called upon to be the sign of this unfailing love towards an erring partner. In that case the Christian will be assisted by the grace of Christ to carry out a role even as heroic as this. It will only be faith in Christ and the grace of Christ which makes this possible.

b) *Christians in the World*

What we have said of the People of God applies to all its members. However, within the society of the Church there are different functions to be performed, and there is a necessary distinction between the hierarchy and the laity, between priests and people. Hence special consideration must be given to the particular role of the laity. It would be impossible to better what the Vatican Council says in this regard in the Constitution on the Church:

Given their special vocation, it is the duty of the laity to seek the Kingdom of God in using temporal things and ordering them according to the divine will. They live in the world, amid each and all of the affairs of the world, in the ordinary conditions of family and social life which are woven through their whole existence. It is there that they are called by God, while they perform their own duties guided by the spirit of the Gospels, to contribute, from within as it were like yeast, to the sanctification of the world, and thus to make Christ known to others, principally by the witness of their own lives, by the radiance of their faith, hope and charity. It is their task particularly to enlighten and order all the temporal things to which they are closely linked, so that these may be always done according to the will of Christ, that they advance and that they serve to praise our Creator and Redeemer. . . .

The laity, gathered together in the People of God. . . are all called, no matter who they be. . . to contribute with all the strength they have received from the goodness of the Creator and the grace of the Redeemer towards the growth of the Church and her continual advance in holiness. The apostolate of the laity is, then, a sharing in the saving mission of the Church. All are destined to this mission by the Savior himself through their Baptism and Confirmation. By the sacraments, and by the Eucharist especially, this love towards God and towards men is communicated to them—which is the very soul of the apostolate. However, above all, the laity are called to render the Church present and active in those places and in those circumstances in which it can become the salt of the earth only through their intervention. Thus each lay-person, by reason of the gifts which he has received, is the witness, and at the same time the living instrument of the very mission of the Church.

Over and above this apostolate which is the absolute duty of all the faithful, the laity can also be called, in various ways, to collaborate more immediately with the apostolate of the hierarchy. . . .

. . . All their work, prayers and apostolic undertakings,

their conjugal life, family life, daily work, spiritual and material assistance, if they are performed in the Spirit, and even the trials of life, if they are borne with patience, become "a spiritual sacrifice which God accepts through Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2,5). These sacrifices, in a spirit of piety, are offered to the Father in the celebration of the Eucharist together with the offering of the Body of the Lord. In this way, as adorers living in a holy way in every place, they consecrate the entire world to God.

. . . To the life of faith they will join a profession of faith. The evangelisation, or announcement of Christ, made by the witness of their life and their word, takes on a specific character and a special efficacy by the fact that it is carried out in the ordinary conditions of the world.

It will be their task to see that scientific progress and all temporal affairs are ruled "by the will of the Creator and the light of his Word." Also they will use their influence to see that their culture and activities have a really Christian moral value.

To play their role in the world the Christian laity will have ample scope to use their initiative and inventiveness.

c) *Religious Life*

Within the Church there are various religious orders—of nuns, brothers and priests. These people take vows to live a life of poverty, chastity and obedience in a more generous imitation of Christ than is strictly necessary. They do this only in response to a grace of vocation which is given them, and with the approval of the Church which has always held the religious state in high esteem. In so doing they answer the invitation of Christ, given in the Gospels, to a more perfect way of life. Religious life is seen truly if it is seen as being at the "very heart of the Church," as many writers are insisting.

The Church, as we have seen, is a community of love and a community of worship, in which Christians are united

together in the family of God, to worship him through Christ and to spread the message of God's love for all men. Within the religious communities this life of brotherly love in Christ is lived in a more perfect way. The three vows can be studied from different aspects: one of the reasons for them is that they do away with what is most likely to cause division and discord among men. These are:

- a) particular family ties which make it harder for us to see all men as equally our brethren;
- b) money and material possessions—the root of so much rivalry and discord even among members of the same family. The vow of poverty means that all money and possessions are held in common in religious life.
- c) one's own will. Through the vow of obedience, religious oblige themselves to obey superiors and seek the common good before their own preferences.

The Church asks religious to take public vows, for she regards this way of life as of great importance for the whole Church. All the members of the People of God have to aim at sanctity, and it is the Church's wish that all might be inspired and helped by the example of the thousands who consecrate themselves to a more perfect way of life. They do this not for any selfish motives of ensuring their own salvation and forgetting the rest of men, but out of love for Christ and his Church. In fact most of them undertake various forms of the apostolate, bearing witness in this way to the love of Christ for all men: educating the children of God, caring for the sick and the aged and the orphans, carrying on missionary work in many lands.

CHAPTER 14

PRODIGAL SONS

a) *The Sacrament of Penance*

The sacrament of penance has been especially instituted to forgive sin committed after baptism. This is a question to which particular attention must be given, for it is one which, because of ideas commonly held about it, does not fit easily into the synthetic view of Catholic doctrine which we are attempting to outline.

In setting up his Church, Christ said to his apostles: "Peace be with you; I come upon an errand from my Father, and now I am sending you out in my turn." With that he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit; when you forgive men's sins they are forgiven. . ." (John 20, 21-22). The errand on which Christ came was to deliver men from sin, and unite them to God in love. He gives his Church the power to forgive sin, and thereby to give peace of conscience and peace of soul through the pardon of sins. The Church, to whom the power is given, will know the way in which she is to exercise it. The particular methods which she has used to forgive sin have varied in practice and form over the centuries. But one essential thing has remained constant—men must have recourse to the Church, humbly admitting their guilt, if they are to be brought to forgiveness.

In the early Church, the scriptural passage most frequently quoted in connection with the sacrament of forgiveness was the story of the prodigal son. This young man,

after having left home and wasted his money in immoral living, finally comes to his senses. He says: "I will arise and return to my Father;" and his father, who has been longing for his return, goes out to meet his erring son who says: "I have sinned against heaven and before thee, I am not worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants." But his father welcomes him back into his old place in the family; the past is forgiven and forgotten. In spite of the fact that he is a Christian, many a man can be led astray by human weakness. But the Father he has forsaken remains his Father still, and wants him to return to his former place in his love. The sinner has only to admit that he was wrong, and to ask, humbly, to be restored to his Father's love. (Here it is essential to recall what we saw in Chapter 4 on sin and conversion).

According to the will of Christ, the sinner has to come to the Church to seek for pardon. He must confess his sins to a priest of the Church in sincere sorrow, with the intention of trying to avoid sin in the future. The priest, in the name of the Church, and in the power of Christ absolves him from sin, and imposes a penance (today this penance usually takes the form of some prayers to be said) which the contrite sinner must carry out to make amends for the sin he has committed. Hence we speak of the sacrament of penance, or the practice of confession, or the sacrament of reconciliation with God and with the Church.

Nobody can deny that the practice of confession is difficult, especially for people who are converted to Catholicism in adulthood. However, it is a condition laid down by Christ as necessary if we are to obtain pardon for our sins. It is not that he has said: "I will not forgive you unless you do this thing which is hard. Your sin has offended me, broken my laws; now if you want to regain my friendship you must do it the hard way." The truth of the matter is

that repentance, of its very nature, is hard. We have to undo what we have done to ourselves, break the hard streak of selfishness which we have indulged through sin. Confession has been instituted not because it is hard, but because it is a most effective way of ensuring that we really repent of sin. Other ways would have been easier, but they would have also made it easier for us to deceive ourselves.

b) Some Common Misconceptions

It is a well-known fact that sin is an offence against God, that it is breaking God's law, and that God, in his justice, cannot be indifferent to sin nor forgive unless a man repents. Hence, the minister of the Church who forgives sins is compared to a judge in our courts of law. The sentence which he passes is likened to the judgment given in the court, where a man is declared guilty, and punishment is imposed. The comparison is valid, of course, but it is easy to press it too far, forgetting that there are important differences between human and divine justice. In fact, all too frequently the thinking of Catholics in regard to confession contains some slightly incorrect notions. Some of these are connected with their ideas on sin and punishment, and should be rectified by careful thought on what we have already written in Chapter 4. In general, I think, many misconceptions arise from failing to realize that confession was instituted by Christ because, in his love and mercy, he wanted to help us to real repentance for serious sin, and to deliver us gradually through the grace of this sacrament from our sinful and selfish tendencies. Instead of having this view, there are people who develop something of a guilt complex, or fear that they are trying to obtain a forgiveness which will not be granted them if they make some mistake (even involuntary) in the rules for a good confession. Others regard it as the impersonal perfor-

mance of a condition laid down before their sin is cancelled. If they take care to tell all their sins, make an act of contrition, perform their penance, they have paid their "debt to divine justice," and so are free from sin. Some have worries because of the ill-defined "debt of temporal punishment" due to sin. Others wonder whether their sins were really forgiven. Their worries are deepened if, during the parish mission, the preacher uses that well-known text from Scripture: "Be not without fear for forgiven sin!" Some of them rush off to make a general confession, and they fear that if they say they have committed some sin six times, when it may have been seven times, then all seven sins remain.

Others have learned that they must have "a firm purpose of amendment," that they must promise that they "will not sin again." Yet, if they are honest with themselves, they will know from experience that they most likely will sin again, usually in the same old way. Since they cannot guarantee that they won't sin again, how sincere is their purpose of amendment, how truly are they sorry? Those who go to confession frequently "have not much to tell," and usually they have the same old things. They feel that they do not get much out of confession; they don't seem to get any better.

c) *Forgiveness through the Church*

It is through entry into the Church at baptism that a man enters into the full family life of God on earth. He becomes a member of the People of God, one of that vast number who, believing in God's love, are grateful for it, live loyal to it and to the fraternal charity which is the bond of Christian unity. Sin, which is deliberate disloyalty to God and to Christ, is also, necessarily, something which affects our relationship with the People of God. By serious sin we cut ourselves off, to some extent, from the

'one heart and one soul' of the People of God. Others may not know it, but we do; and we know, too, that even by less serious sin, selfishness, or lack of generosity, we hold back something of what should be our full gift to God, and to the common life of the Church.

The life of grace has come to us through the Church and in the Church; it is nourished by the Eucharist and our sharing in the Church's external life of prayer and worship. It is so tied up with the Church that it would seem fairly obvious that reconciliation with God after serious sin, and restoration to the full life of charity in the Church, can come to us only through God's further action through his Church: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." And whoever should refuse to seek forgiveness from the Church, usually betrays the fact that he cannot bring himself to ask pardon, even of God.

d) *In Accord with Man's Nature*

Through the history of Christianity, there are quite a few who have reacted against the practice of confession—"it offends our human dignity, our humanity" etc. But, really "it offends my pride, for it is difficult for man to beg for mercy, even from God. It is really that which makes confession seem so hard to me; to ask for mercy seems contrary to all the self-respect that makes man rise to the heights of his nature. . . . Yet it is the mercy of God which alone can bring me to my knees and make me ask for forgiveness; and this mercy I must regard as a high privilege, something which adds to and in no way lessens the value of human dignity . . . I go to seek his mercy, not simply because I love him, but far more because he loves me; not because to err is human, but because to forgive is divine" (Bede Jarrett).

In this passage there is a clear indication of why a man can find it hard to ask for forgiveness and mercy. Behind

these words is the picture of a man who is threatened with punishment by God from which he can escape only by begging: the very thought of this 'offends his humanity.' And really it does, as long as there is any thought of a more powerful being forcing someone else to get down on his knees to ask for mercy. But that thought is wrong—as Fr. Jarrett indicates at the end of his paragraph. Mercy means the loving kindness of God. We need his love for our own happiness; if we have rejected it through serious sin, how are we to regain it? Only through admitting we were wrong and saying we are sorry—this is the way with all love and friendship. But could we not merely say that we are sorry, in the secret of our own souls before God? Perhaps, but we could also easily deceive ourselves, since God will say nothing and ask nothing of us.

When speaking of 'conversion' we saw that effective conversion to God is ensured more universally and completely, when a man has to submit to God through some intermediary. Man is not mere spirit and he lives out his full personal turning to God when he approaches another living person whom he can see, to whom he can speak, from whom he can ask (as from God's representative) to be admitted—or readmitted—into friendship with God in the social structure of the People of God. If a man has sinned, he has indulged his selfishness, exalted himself. True repentance means that he breaks this hardness of selfishness, brings himself down from the heights of self-assertion. Christ, knowing human nature, saw that a man would be helped to do this, and safeguarded against illusion, by the practice of confession. And so a man must go to the Church, or an official of the Church, as to God's representative, and acknowledge his sins, admitting that he was wrong, that he has failed to be loyal to the love of God. He comes to the Church to ask to be readmitted to God's love and friendship; to receive through the Church

the saving grace of Christ which alone can forgive his sin and restore him to God's friendship. He comes in humble faith in God's love which will, through the Church's words of forgiveness, restore him to God's love and strengthen him in it. He will also, if his sorrow is sincere, be ready to make amends for any harm he has done to the other members of the Church, whom he has failed by his sin. He will want to undo any harm he has done to himself by surrendering to sin and selfishness.

e) *Satisfaction*

Because of a phrase often used, "the debt of temporal punishment due to sin," it is frequently thought, that even after God has forgiven sin, he must, in justice, still see that the repentant sinner pays some penalty for the wrong he has done. Hence he must make satisfaction, do some penance in this life, or suffer in Purgatory until he has paid this debt of punishment. Therefore, the Church, when forgiving sins, imposes some penance—is even obliged to, in order to safeguard justice. This is the 'penance' imposed in confession, or the 'satisfaction' which is a necessary part of the sacrament of penance. This whole view of things is far more than a popular way of viewing the matter; it is an explanation given by a large theological school of thought.

However, while it was once a satisfactory way of explaining the real necessity of doing penance, it is not the only possible explanation, nor the one which fits in best with what we know of the nature of God and the nature of man. It is one of the areas into which defective ideas of God's justice have permeated—the area of satisfaction for forgiven sin to be made either in this life, or in the next. Hence some rethinking needs to be done in regard to three connected points: satisfaction for sin, purgatory and indulgences.

Repentance really means that after sin we come to

recognize again that we need God's love, wanting it to rule our lives. When a man makes this discovery, recognizing that he has been selfish and untrue to the personal love of God, he cannot expect merely to say that he was sorry, and to let things go at that. He will want to make amends; to undo the harm he has done to the Church, the family of God, and to himself through self-indulgence. He is not the same after he has sinned; he has warped his will away from God. Something remains in him as a result of his sinful action: "dispositions caused by his sinful acts, which make it difficult for the penitent to perform works of virtue." In sincere sorrow, he will want to undo this harm, to get rid of these inclinations to selfishness which make him ungenerous in his loving service of God.

In the early Church, severe penances were imposed for grave sins, and it was necessary to perform them before being granted reconciliation with the Church. The purpose of this practice was so that the sinner, by penance and self-denial, might undo the results of his self-assertion in sin; that he might force back to God the will which he had warped away from God through sinful love of creatures. Through the centuries the penances have become less severe and are now mainly a matter of prayers to be recited. One of the reasons why this change came about was that it became more clearly recognized that a man makes his greatest satisfaction by a humble confession of his fault. For, when he goes along to one who, although a minister of the Church, is yet a man like to himself, and kneels to acknowledge his fault in humble sincerity, he most effectively humbles the self which he has served in sin and goes against his own inclinations which he has followed in going astray. He has done much penance already; and now he is readmitted to the living unity of the Church, and the priest says to him: "May whatever good you do, and whatever evil you suffer, gain for you a re-

mission of your sins, an increase of grace and the reward of eternal life". Entering into the life of the Church, he agrees to live a Christian life with all the self-denial which this implies, and to do so in a spirit of conversion to Christ. Through the grace of the sacrament, he will be helped to work at his fuller liberation from sin through the effort he makes to be good and avoid evil and bear what trials he must. When, after confession, he says the prayers which he has been told to say, he thereby reaffirms his decision to unite himself with Christ who suffered for his sins, and to offer his own suffering for the spread of the Kingdom of Christ.

"As soon as one understands that the Incarnation and its continuation in the Church are gifts of God, one will also understand that confession is good for us, and that it is the necessary means, . . . for us to be reconciled with God: to admit oneself a sinner not only before God, but also before the Church is already a reparation of the evil which has been committed, an act of humility that is opposed to the pride which is at the root of all grave sin, a recognition of our wretchedness which opens our souls to the generosity of God, and to the merciful help of the prayers and sacraments of the Church. Here, too, it is necessary to remember that, although the grace of God is never lacking, we are not always in the dispositions needed to receive it. No act can better open our souls to the reception of the grace of pardon than the humble avowal of our wretchedness, of our unworthiness: to confess that one is a sinner is also to confess the infinite kindness of God. . . detailed confession has of itself a 'satisfactory' character. The admission of sin with all that it implies of what is humbling and painful to our pride is already a reparation of the disorder caused by sin, a disorder which always implies an exaltation of the ego.

"It has been noted that the spread of detailed confession

in the West, toward the beginning of the ninth century, coincides with the diminution of the heavy penances imposed. This is an interesting sign, for it shows that the detailed avowal is considered as having a satisfactory character in itself. What is the more important is that confession be made in a spirit of humility, or regret, with a consciousness of the wrong done to the plan of God, to the whole Church, in a sincere desire of taking one's place in the Church as a member able to fulfil one's functions within the common work of salvation, in the will also of repairing the harm one has done" (J. Lécuyer, *Maison-Dieu*, n. 55, pp. 52 ff.).

f) *The Powerful Prayer of the Church*

In the early Church, in the days when long and severe penances were the order of the day, there was a special class of 'penitents', those people who, after confessing their sins, were carrying out the penance which the Church had imposed on them before readmitting them to the full life of the Church. They passed through various stages on their 'return to God'; some were not allowed inside the church building. They remained outside and asked those who entered to pray for them. Others were allowed in for part of the Mass, but not allowed to communicate. In some churches, at a certain stage of the liturgical ceremony, the bishop presiding would say: "Let us pray for our brethren, the penitents, that the Lord God might bring them to full conversion, forgiving their sins, and restore them to his friendship and to the common life of the Church." The first act of contrition was that long prayer of pleading, the Litany of the Saints, where the prayer of the Church was regarded as efficacious in bringing her erring children to forgiveness of sins.

Many of the external forms have changed in the administration of the sacrament of penance; later compar-

isons with juridical processes have at times given to some an over-legalistic view of it. But the essence has never varied. Still the repentant sinner comes to the priest as the representative of Christ and an official of the Church. He submits himself to the sanctifying, healing and forgiving power of the Church (or to Christ acting through the Church). He does this in order that through the prayer of the Church, and through her mediation of grace he might be brought to full reconciliation with God and liberation from sin. His external acts of confession, contrition and satisfaction manifest his desire for inner conversion. God, the Church and the sinner work together to destroy sin and its effects.

This consideration throws important light on "the purpose of amendment," and should help people to get rid of fears that they may be insincere if in spite of confession, they do still sin again. We do not come to confession to guarantee that we will avoid sin in future. Of ourselves we cannot guarantee anything—we are too liable to failure. We need God's grace to be freed from sin, and to be strengthened against future sin. We come to Christ and to the Church through whom he gives his grace, to ask to be helped by God's healing grace, to be delivered from sin and to be strengthened against the force of sin within us. It will take us a lifetime of God's grace to be delivered from these forces; in patience, perseverance and humility we continue our struggle, and come to the Sacrament of healing to be helped along the way.

g) *Frequent Confession*

Frequent confession is recommended by the Church, even to those who would rarely have anything very serious to confess. Another practice suggested for those who confess regularly is to mention some sin of their past life. On some occasions the making of a general confession, i.e., one

covering a period during which one has gone to confession, even frequently, is approved. Now, how do these practices fit in with doctrine? Confession is not obligatory to have venial sins forgiven and an act of sorrow, or of charity will probably see them forgiven before we go to confession. Is it therefore possible that a person could confess something which no longer needs forgiveness? Further, what is the use of mentioning past sins which have already been forgiven in past confessions? What is the purpose of general confessions?

The juridical school has an explanation of these practices, but it is an explanation which not everyone finds convincing. However, if they are seen in the light of what we have just said about the essence of the sacrament of penance, they fit in very well with the general doctrine of man's whole life being a gradual growth towards God and away from selfishness. The work of grace is to bring us eventually to full surrender to God, when grace and charity will have reached their full growth in our lives. But within us is the force of sin which is the tendency to self-seeking, pride and self-assertion. The sacrament of penance is the sacrament which curbs this tendency and strengthens us in our renunciation of self. It is the sacrament by which, through our acknowledgment of our sinfulness and selfishness, we 'renounce self'; we look to God and the Church to lead us more constantly and more generously along the way to death to self to live for God—to help us live more fully our entry into the death and resurrection of Christ. The grace of the sacrament is far more than a cancellation of past offenses; it is a healing grace which cures the weakening effects of our own sins. It is a strengthening grace curbing the force of sin in us, through the power of Christ given to us through the prayer of the Church and through our fuller insertion into the common life of charity within the Church.

Psychologically or spiritually, these truths should affect our whole approach to the sacrament. We do not come to confession to assure God that we will be strong against sin in future. We come, knowing our need of his strengthening grace, with the confident hope that, in spite of our weakness, his healing grace and the power of the Church will help us to break with serious sin. We do not repeat past sins to make sure of their forgiveness. For pardon we rely, not on the exactitude of our detailed accusation, but on the saving mercy of God in which we believe. We do not mention again sins that are almost certainly forgiven in order that we might have "a new title to forgiveness." When, in frequent or general confessions, we repeat sins of the past, we do so because we know our present and future need—the need of God's grace to strengthen us against some particular form of selfishness. And if in times of temptation to some particular sin, we mention past failings in that regard, we thereby submit our present weakness and receive God's healing and strengthening grace to surmount it. Then, through the priest the Church prays: "May whatever good you do and whatever ill you suffer gain for you a remission of sins, an increase of grace, and the reward of eternal life." Then all our efforts at self-conquest, self-discipline, and death to self in order that we might be submissive to the Spirit of God and possessed by the love of God: all these efforts receive a sacramental consecration and a greater efficacy from the sacrament which helps us live them in union with Christ who suffered and died to conquer sin and rise to newness of life. They are no longer our individual battle against our own personal weakness, but are taken into the common effort of the Church to conquer the force of sin in herself and in her members; they are supported by her mighty prayer to God on behalf of her members struggling against sin.

"The sinner making his confession" is one of the essen-

tial elements of this sacrament. (*Ipse autem peccator confitens in hoc sacramento est sicut materia*—S. Thomas, “*De Formâ absolutionis*,” in *Opusc. Theol.*, I). The other is the pardoning prayer of the Church restoring the sinner to the life of charity in the family of God, or strengthening him against sin which would lessen his share in that charity. When a man, conscious of his sinfulness and in humble recognition of his weakness, comes to Mother Church to be helped by her sanctifying and sin-conquering action to fuller sharing in the mystery of Christ’s Passion and Death, he receives a sacrament which leads to fuller life and fuller fervor of charity.

Although the grace of forgiveness comes from God, a man’s own activity—his sorrow and his satisfaction—are very important elements in this sacrament. They explain the efficacy of general confessions which are made at certain times; v. g., when a man is really making a new beginning, a ‘conversion’ or during a retreat confession covering the period since the last retreat. Sometimes, of course, a general confession may be necessary because of real doubt about the value and sincerity of past confessions. More often this is not the case. But when, for instance, a person enters religious life, or receives what is a real grace of conversion from a former rather careless way of living, this is a call to real conversion. Included in it is a real desire to break with the past, to “die to self,” to break down the selfishness which has ruled one’s life in the past. A general confession is one’s ascetic effort (an effort called forth by grace) to set forth and disown all the selfishness of the past, to destroy what we have been—to die to self in admitting our failures. And as we do so, we look to Christ for the grace to rise from the past to newness of life. Those who make a practice of making a general confession of the past year during a retreat should do so in that same spirit. They do not doubt about the efficacy of the sacra-

mental absolutions they have received during the year; nor do they still fear that they may not have freed themselves from the 'stain of sin'. But the sins and faults of the year are recalled as being the manifestations of the force of sin—that force which they still bear within them and which can break out in various ways. The particular ways in which they have failed during the year indicates the special direction their 'penance' should take, the fields in which they need most to die to self. The healing and strengthening grace of the sacrament is thus invoked for and directed against their special personal weaknesses.

h) *The Tribunal of Truth*

Every sacrament looks forward to the final goal of life. In penance when, as sinners, we come before the Church's tribunal, we are reminded of the fact that we must, some day, appear before God in judgment. We have seen, however, that after death we appear before the tribunal of truth; where the truth of what we are is made manifest. In confession also, we come to the tribunal of truth, to declare the truth of what we have been, of what we are without the grace of God. The judgment which is passed on us corresponds to the truth of our being, the sincerity of our desire for God's love and grace, and of our readiness to undo, with the help of God and the Church, any wrong that we have done. Making a complete accusation of our faults and readiness to do penance for our sins are not conditions which God exacts before he is ready to forgive us. They are the normal tests of the truth and sincerity of a repentant love. As one author writes, "there is no contrition if one does not discover that God is love." There is no contrition if a man merely submits to a regulation which he regards as almost unjust and over-exacting. The man who goes to confession in the right spirit, goes with the sentiments of the Prodigal Son. This man came to a realization

that in leaving his father and his home, he had lost the thing that meant most to him in life. All the pleasures that his riotous living had given him could not satisfy his deepest need. As he realized his need for his father's love and the family atmosphere of his father's house, he resolved to return. But he did not return in self-justification, confident that he could claim again his old place in the family. He said: "I will say to my father: I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am not worthy to be called thy son; but let me be, at least, one of the servants in thy house."

The man who, after sin, realizes his need of God's love, knows, too, that he must request humbly a love that he does not deserve. When he has discovered his need of God's love, and discovered that God's love is the love of a Father who will welcome him back in spite of his failure, then he feels bound to try to make amends. He discovers then, too, that the sacrament of penance is not something forced on him by God or the Church; but something to which he is constrained by the force of his own love as he confronts the reality of what he has been, and what he desires to be. It is something which satisfies his human needs:

- a) the need which a real personal love has, to express its repentance in a fully human fashion;
- b) the need of assurance that his sin is forgiven, and that he is taken back into the family-life and love of God: this assurance comes through the official decision of the Church in sacramental absolution: "I absolve you from your sins";
- c) it helps him from developing anything like neurotic guilt complex. For through the sacrament he knows that the Church is with him to help and strengthen him; that Christ, through the Church, speaks words of pardon and peace. The value of 'confession' is recognized by psychoanalysis which, as G.K. Chesterton said "is confession without the safeguards of the

confessional." In the sacrament of penance, added to the psychologically beneficial effect of "making a clean breast of things" is the healing power of grace and the consoling knowledge that the Church is authorized by Christ to declare and communicate his saving sentence of loving forgiveness. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."

i) *Theological Note*

The explanation of the sacrament of penance has so stressed the parallel with juridical power and courts of justice that some will surely wonder whether, in stressing it so little, this account of penance is true to the substance of traditional teaching. An initial argument is of course that any account of this sacrament is defective if it fails to harmonize with the general truths of God's love and mercy. However, a few quotations and references may help to allay some fears. Fr. J. Lécuyer writes: "It is perhaps on the subject of satisfaction that the legalist concept of sin, spread by nominalism, has had most influence on theology: the state of sin being considered above all as the obligation to undergo a punishment (instead of being an ontological disorder) the problem is put forward in these terms: with the pardon of sin, and thence of eternal punishment, is *all* punishment due to sin remitted? Since we know that purgatory exists, and that sometimes then, a temporal punishment remains, an explanation has been sought, not in the consequences of the sin itself, but as a demand of divine justice. It is interesting to note that Trent proposes this explanation only as probable: "the very character of divine justice *seems* to demand" that those who sin after baptism and are reconciled in the sacrament of penance receive a temporal punishment. This way of expressing the matter has its right meaning, but it must be admitted that it is not within a certain danger. . ." (*Maison Dieu* pp. 57 ff. This whole number of the review could be read

with profit by anyone who needs to see more fully this "new look" at the sacrament of penance.")

Fr. Lécuyer continues:

"Why the satisfaction demanded by the Church? This also follows from the nature of sin, and the disorder it produces in us and in the whole body of Christ. . .when one has regained grace, these effects are not cancelled by that very fact: bad habits, results caused by scandal, slowing down of the work of salvation of the world, etc. . . Therefore, if one has true contrition, and sincerely accepts to enter into the plan of God's love, it is clear that one will have also the will to remedy the "remains of sin" of which Trent speaks. This much is demanded by the life of charity into which divine pardon reintroduces us. To love is to will the good of him whom we love; how can we love God and our brethren without sincerely willing the success of the plan of salvation, and—if one has obstructed this success by one's own fault—without wishing to make amends and repair the damage done. This is to make satisfaction—something demanded by contrition informed by charity, by love. Since it is a matter of repairing the damage done by sin, it will be necessary to perform acts contrary to sin; and these acts will always have a painful character."

P. Anciaux, *The Sacrament of Penance* (New York, Sheed & Ward, 1962) is a good book for further reading.

St. Thomas says that, through penance, we seek "not only the restoration of the equality of justice, as in vindictive justice, but also and *still more* the reconciliation of friendship. . ." (*Summa Theol.*, III, q. 90, a. 3). Hence, in St. Thomas' thought, what should dominate the theology of penance, and its practice is the concept of friendship and its demands. In his own day he could give more place to the virtue of justice without incurring the modern danger of obscuring the love of God.

Furthermore, St. Thomas teaches that "intensity of

sorrow" is one of the reasons why the sacramental satisfaction may be very much reduced. This would be quite illogical if this satisfaction were demanded by vindictive justice. But it is perfect logic if the purpose of satisfaction is to "break the hardness of selfishness" which is brought about by sin. The especially intense contrition has already done that, and so the main purpose of satisfaction has already been achieved.

CHAPTER 15

GROWING TOWARDS GOD

Man is given his whole life in which to grow towards God. He does this not in some 'spiritual' sphere detached from his ordinary human affairs, but through his own personal growth and experience, and his life in this world. Man is born into a human family. He lives, he works, grows old and dies. In all this, he follows out the path God has traced for him. Along this way he goes towards God. His spiritual or religious life is not some tenuous thread above the every-day realities of life. He is meant to grow towards God through living in the world, working in the world, achieving something, amounting to something, and finally through growing old and leaving the world at death. He finds himself as he finds God; and he finds God in finding himself. Through the sacraments man is helped to find God as he grows, and to grow toward God as he makes his way through the world. Each phase of his life has a special sacrament to remind him of its special significance and its value before God. At baptism the child becomes a child of God, a member of God's household the Church, and begins to grow into a realization of his relationship with God his Father and with his brethren in Christ. As he grows, he becomes more aware of his duty towards others, and of having a mission for God in the world. Then he receives the sacrament of confirmation, and is officially deputed to be a witness to Christ in the world, in the power of the Holy Spirit who is given to him.

In his youth as he wonders what to do with his life, he can, under the influence of God's call, decide to give his life wholly to God and the Church in the priesthood or in religious life. But should he decide, as the majority of people do, not to "give up the world," but to marry and live a normal family life, he finds that this state of life, too, is fraught with religious values and consecrated by the sacrament of matrimony.

Through all these phases of his life he finds, in clearer realization as the years go on, that he grows towards God by growing out of his own selfishness and self-centeredness, that he finds his life by losing it. In Christian terms he finds that, baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ, he grows to newness of life by dying to self. Now this is a lifelong process—his whole life is a struggle against the force of sin and selfishness. The sacrament of the Eucharist, his "daily bread," "the bread of life," helps him sustain and strengthen his spiritual life, to persevere and grow in union with Christ in a loving faith. The sacrament of penance brings him God's healing grace to help him combat the force of sin within him. There is a final sacrament which is "perfective of penance" in that it helps him die completely to self in his final surrender into the hands of God. Before we treat of this sacrament, however, it is necessary to reflect that Christ has, by his redemptive suffering and death, made it possible for us to come, through age and sickness and death to a renewal of life, strength and youth.

a) *Age, Sickness and Death*

We begin life with confident youthful ambitions: to live, to achieve something, to amount to something, to find love, friendship and happiness. In some measure we achieve our aims during life, as the Lord has meant us to—for he has meant us to taste in life something of the satisfaction which can be ours by being ourselves and fulfilling our

psychological needs. The danger of course to which many people succumb, is that of setting up created idols, of thinking that human success or love or achievement is the summit of human endeavor. But man's normal span of life is so planned that naturally and automatically he is helped to a right attitude towards created satisfactions. He sees, as he grows older, that while they have had their place in forming him and helping him, this place is not permanent. His youthful energies abate as does the strength of his animal appetites. The thrill of success and achievement, of making his place in the world, changes to a quiet sense of satisfaction at what he has been able to do. And in retrospect he sees that even this is a very small contribution to the world and to history. Others take his place, new ideas are put into practice, and he finds that the crest of the wave has left him behind. In his own family, things change all too quickly for him. The children are suddenly grown up and gone, no longer dependent on their parents, but making their own way in the world. The house which was filled with life and laughter is drained of its warm atmosphere of love and companionship, and two people are suddenly and strangely alone. Then as they grow into old age they find that they who helped others, who were a source of strength on whom others relied, now need to be thought of, and to some extent, cared for. At the very least, nobody needs them any more.

If a man judges the success of his life by what he can get out of this world, he will see the chart of life as rising to its highest peak during middle-age (or earlier) and then falling away in a regressive curve. But the man who sees life as designed by God and directed towards God's will sees its graph as being like the path of a rocket launched into space. There is first of all the burning energy of youth that launches him on his search for life and success. When, in later years, there is a falling away of interests, pleasures,

etc., this is merely the fall-off of the booster-stage mechanism. He continues on, knowing that, while the human satisfactions of his personal needs were meant to help him be himself and go towards God, they are not meant to satisfy us completely, and thus, when we become fully aware of their insufficiency, we should be able to continue on our way towards the God for whom we were made. Because they are good, and to some extent satisfying, created things can be sought too greedily, and we can find that we are attracted towards them in a way which takes us away from God, or makes us forget him in the contentment of our earthly possessions. But, in the providence of God, age and sickness and misfortune can teach us—often as nothing else can—to be detached from created things and to look forward to the “kingdom which God has prepared for those who love him.”

b) *Death the Chance of a Life-time*

We were created to live forever. But through sin, death came into the world (Rom. 5), and all of us must die. Then Christ came and he “by dying destroyed our death, and rising again restored our life.” Death is still the way that we must go. From a natural point of view, it is the end of all that we have made ourselves; we leave behind our earthly achievements, our human love and friendship, our created pleasures and attachments. If we do not believe in God or an after-life, it is the end of everything.

But Christ has given a meaning to death which gives us hope and a vision of glory beyond the grave. We know that death can be for us a surrender into the hands of God in love and trust. Our whole life is given to us to grow towards God, to find our lives by losing them, to become ourselves by losing our selfishness, by coming to complete surrender to God, humbly admitting that he alone can make

us what we want to be. He alone can give us the eternal delight we long for. All sin, all rejection of God, is the proud but vain attempt to amount to something in independence of God; to be ourselves in the way we decide to be. Death shows us what we can make ourselves, what we amount to by our own efforts. For some people this has meant despair.

But the Christian looks to Christ who "by his death would deliver those multitudes who lived all the while as slaves, made over to the fear of death" (Heb. 2. 15). He sees how his own death can be transformed if he accepts it in faith and trust in Christ. It can become for him the last stage in his death to self. He freely accepts death as a surrender of his whole being and all his hopes into God's keeping. And he knows that the God to whose kindness and mercy he entrusts his soul will raise him up in Christ, whose resurrection is both pledge and cause of his own.

c) *Anointing of the Sick*

From what we have seen of the sacraments, it would seem strange if Our Lord had not given his Church a special power to help her members in times of serious illness. He himself was always solicitous for those who were suffering. And we read in the Gospel that his disciples "anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them" (Mark 6, 13). Serious illness can be viewed from two different angles:

- a) Even though it may not prove fatal, sickness, while it lasts, prevents a man from participating fully in the life of the Church. Through the weakness and lethargy it causes, it can affect him spiritually and psychologically making it hard for him to pray, to trust in God, to accept the will of God.
- b) At other times, it will be the beginning of man's passing over from this life to eternity. It is the onset of death from which no man can escape. It can

then be accompanied by fears of the unknown, despair, or a lethargic inability to turn to God in charity and repentance.

The sacrament of the anointing of the sick was instituted by Christ to "consecrate the state of sickness," to help a man profit by it as a means which should bring him to further death to self and surrender to God in union with Christ. ". . . Unction is perfective of penance, and of the whole Christian life which ought to be a continual penance. . . in the sense that the grace of Unction enables the sick person to bear more readily the affliction of sickness with which God has visited him, and in this way to make satisfaction for his sins."

In recent centuries the sacrament has been regarded mainly in the second way, i.e., as the sacrament which helps a man in his final illness. In earlier centuries, greater stress was put on the help it gave a man by helping him to regain his spiritual and bodily energy and to take his place in the life of the Church. Both of these aspects have a spiritual basis.

In a letter to the early Christians, St. James writes. "Is one of you sick? Let him send for the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Lord's name. The prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he is guilty of sins they will be pardoned" (5, 14f.). In this passage the Church has seen all the elements of the sacrament of anointing of the sick—an anointing with oil by the priests of the Church with a special prayer accompanying this action. The effect of this sacramental rite is to forgive sins if sin still remains; to 'save the sick man' and to uplift and strengthen him. In this letter of St. James the word 'to save' (*sosien*), wherever it is used, has the meaning of spiritual salvation. The effects of the sacrament are expressed thus, by the Council of Trent:

The effect of this sacrament is the grace of the Holy Spirit, by whose anointing any remaining sins, and the effects of sin, are taken away, and the soul of the sick man is uplifted and strengthened. It does this by arousing trust in the divine mercy, whereby he is supported so that he bears his sickness and its difficulties more easily, more readily resists the devil lying in wait for him, and sometimes, when it is for the good of his soul, regains his bodily health.

Obviously, the Council of Trent regards anointing especially for those whose sickness will prove fatal. But this is not the only effect of the sacrament: "Sometimes, when it is for the good of his soul, he regains his bodily health." Some writers have had difficulty in harmonizing what appear to them as two different directions in which this sacrament seems to tend. There is no insurmountable difficulty if anointing is seen (as all the sacraments must be seen) in the full context of the Christian life. All the sacraments look

- a) back to the passion, death and resurrection of Christ;
- b) to the present giving of grace;
- c) forward to the vision of God.

The Christian life is a constant movement towards God, as the redeemed sinner waits and works for the fulness of redemption. The life he is given on earth is "the beginning of eternal life in us." The positive reality of the state of grace is our personal union with God, our personal surrender to the demands of God's love, with its accompanying death to self. At baptism we are taken into the death and resurrection of Christ; hence our life is to be a continued growth to newness of life, and thus, too, a continued dying to sin, dying with Christ to all "selfishness."

In sinful man, suffering and sickness-unto-death is the result of sin. In Christ, his suffering and weakness-unto-death was the cancellation of sin, the full "emptying

of himself" (Phil. 2:7) which was his human surrender to God—the acceptance of death to self in a gift to God of his human life. In the Christian, suffering and sickness-unto-death can be considered as consecrated by Christ; embraced in faith, they can be our fuller entry into the passion and death of Christ, our fuller death to self, and therefore our more complete surrender to God.

In all men, sickness can be considered in its connection with sin and Satan, and as an obstacle to the fuller and more vigorous exercise of charity:

- a) in life, when the sickness gives way to restored health;
- b) at the end of life.

The sacrament of anointing consecrates the state of sickness, enabling us to bear it in patience and charity in union with Christ who suffered and died in love for us. We are helped to do this by the graces which Trent enumerates. Alternatively, by restoring the sick man to health, the sacrament gets rid of the obstacle to the fervor of charity. And when his time has come to die, the grace of the sacrament helps him to accept this culminating point of mortal illness. It helps him to accept his death as his final self-surrender into the hands of God, his fully accepted final entering into the immolation of Christ's own death. Pope Pius XII wrote:

When at last they are mortally ill, loving Mother Church is at their side with the sacrament of extreme unction, and although, God so willing, she may not always restore health to the body, she nevertheless applies a supernatural balm to the wounded soul, so providing new citizens for heaven and the new heavenly intercessors for herself.

More recently, the Vatican Council taught:

By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of the priests, the whole Church recommends the sick to the

Lord, suffering and glorified, in order that he might alleviate their sufferings and save them, and she even exhorts them to unite themselves spontaneously to the passion and death of Christ, to contribute thus to the good of the People of God.

Sometimes an improvement in health and a subsequent cure is a marked effect of the sacrament of anointing. This is not always the case, of course, because the time comes for all men to die. However it does happen frequently enough and, in earlier centuries, this restoration to health was more confidently expected. Still, although we must not regard the sacrament as being likely to effect *miraculous* cures, some authors say that we should not think that it has a bodily effect only in some exceptional cases. They say that it always has a bodily effect upon the sick person, even when he is not restored to complete health. The total effect of the sacrament, in this view, would be the strengthening of the whole person to meet his sickness and suffering. This strengthening, even in the spiritual sphere, can be brought about only through some bodily effect.

St. Thomas says that the special need of the sick person (for which the sacrament was instituted) is a certain weakness or lack of vigor in spiritual things or in the life of grace and charity. (*IV Sent.*, d. 23, q.1, sol. 1). Now obviously this spiritual weakness results from his physical state. Health, after all, is a quality of life and energy in both physical and psychological fields: sickness, by contrast, is a change in the whole person, the physical disturbance inducing psychological and spiritual lethargy. In the resultant state of inertia, a total drive of man towards God with full spiritual energy becomes morally impossible or at least very difficult.

Here, in sickness, a man suffers one of the results of original sin: the lack of integrity, or of the soul's full control of man's faculties. This lack of vitality is remedied by the grace of the sacrament which partially restores

spiritual vigor, partially remedying the loss of integrity. Grace now confers on the sensitive faculties a readiness to be ruled by the spirit. Hence the grace of anointing is a help granted to the whole person to live his supernatural life intensely, in and through the willed acceptance of his sickness, uniting himself to Christ in faith and love and trust. This help has spiritual factors which we have seen described in the text from the Council of Trent. It has a bodily aspect, too: strength conferred on the body that it might not hinder the flight of the spirit; or a help which partially restores all a man's faculties to a right order in their direction towards union with God.

In some cases this bodily effect will issue in restoration to health—due partly to the unity in man between psychic and spiritual forces, and partly to the mysterious connection between Christ's redemption of the whole person, and redemption of the soul. In other cases the bodily effect will be more perfect submission to the spirit which is called upon now to go forth from the body to share in the glory into which Christ entered through his own death.

d) *Purgatory*

Purgatory is for some, perhaps for many, the last stage in "their growing towards God." It is also one of the two remaining points in regard to which we must get rid of the idea of God inflicting punishment for sin out of a justice which is vindictive. (The other point is the doctrine of indulgences which we shall examine shortly). Purgatory is properly understood only if it is seen as what can sometimes be, the necessary last death to self which is our only way to full surrender to God in love. It is a very serious error to regard Purgatory as a short dose of hell; it is something entirely different. Hell is the suffering which results from obstinate rejection of God's love in hard and unbreakable selfishness. Purgatory is the last stage in death

to self in a man who, out of love, freely wills to renounce himself to surrender to God in love. Nobody knows how many people will still need further purgation or to what extent they need it. But it would seem obvious that there are some people who have let the love of God rule their lives and who have, with the grace of Christ, accepted death as a last loving surrender into his hands and who, therefore, would have little, if any, need of further self-renunciation.

On the other hand, most of us who try to love God are rather ready to admit that we are often far from generous, noble, self-sacrificing or constant effort in his service. While having no fear that the God who is our loving Father will want to punish our failings, it is not hard for us to realize that we may suffer from the knowledge of our own unworthiness before the infinite purity of God.

An example is sometimes given to help us realize this truth: the example of a man who, after living a pretty loose sort of life, meets and falls in love with a girl who impresses him deeply by her beauty, her purity and her radiant goodness. For the first time in his life he is possessed by a really unselfish love. As this comes about he sees himself, by contrast, as he really is—as soiled by all the sordidness of his wasted years. He has his searing moments of agony of soul, in which he would give anything to have the past blotted out; he sees how unworthy he is to make her his wife. The greatest cause of his suffering and remorse is the clear knowledge that he was foolishly at fault, deceiving himself in thinking that he was having a good time. Let us suppose further that, as a result of heavy drinking over that period, he has developed strong alcoholic tendencies and is also subject to frequent surly melancholic fits. Because of what he has made himself, he is unable to enter into a fully happy and constant relationship of personal intimacy with her as his wife. But if real love has come to him, and if some good and nobility still remains within

him, he will willingly work at undoing the harm he has done himself. He will take months of physical hard labor if this is prescribed to "sweat out" the physical and psychological poison he has gotten into his system. He will go through the agony of conquering his desire for alcohol in order that he might be able to possess and live the love that has come to mean so much to him.

After death, many a man in whom some good and nobility remain will come to a similar realization of his own unworthiness and inability to enter into the personal intimacy with the God of all purity whose love he needs for his own happiness. He will experience the searing and shameful realization of what he has been and what he has made himself. Yet this suffering will be transformed by the certainty that he will possess God for all eternity. In order that he might do this he will submit gladly to anything which is necessary for him to rid himself of all the distortion that remains within him as a result of his own sin and self-seeking. This will involve suffering, for it is the destruction of what he has made himself; but it is suffering transformed by love.

Since it is a question here of the purification of the spirit, it is rather meaningless to speak of the "length of time" a soul may spend in Purgatory. Intensity, rather than duration, would seem to be the measure of this stage of purification of the soul. Nor is it a question of how much time you will be sentenced to spend in Purgatory (often thought of as a place—which it is probably not—where one suffers in fire—which is sheer imagination). It is merely a matter of how much we still need to die to ourselves, to sin and selfishness, that we might be completely surrendered to the personal love of God in all its perfect purity.

e) *Indulgences*

It was Martin Luther's attack on indulgences which

sparked off the chain of events that culminated in the separation of many Christian denominations from the Catholic Church. As a consequence of much discussion, the Church's teaching on indulgences was given a prominence altogether out of proportion to its real importance. It is, after all, a very minor question; or rather it is only one aspect of the far deeper reality of the unity that exists in the Church of Christ, by reason of which each member can be helped by the whole Church. Furthermore, in all honesty, we must admit that in some cases, the practice of granting indulgences is no great help to fervent Christian living, nor to a right understanding of the deeper doctrine behind the practice. As Anciaux writes:

Without faith in Christ and the Church, without the fervor and devotion of charity, without sincere effort of conversion and mortification, the practice of indulgences is no more than sterile caricature and senseless calculation.

The caricature, which quite a few regard as the true picture, is connected with the ideas of vindictive justice and punishment due to sin which we have examined and rejected. In this faulty view of things, the idea is that because of sin, even after it is forgiven, God's justice demands that the sinner pay a certain "debt of temporal punishment," much as a man convicted in a court of law can be sentenced to a monetary fine or to a term in prison. The Church, from her "treasury of good works," or the merits stored up from the works of the saints, decided to pay part of the fine, or to offer a certain amount of her 'treasure' to God on behalf of the converted sinner, or the souls in Purgatory. God accepts this and lets the people off part of their debt, or part of their prison term in Purgatory, because of the merits of the Church. Certain conditions are laid down to gain this indulgence—saying some prayers, giving alms, visiting Churches, etc. Because

of this view of the matter, you can meet with "indulgence-hunters" who indulge in the "senseless" calculation referred to above.

Actually, because of the images used and the meaning many have associated with the word *indulgence*, it is very difficult to give some people the right idea. It might do no great harm to drop the word altogether, and to discontinue the practice of granting indulgences, exhorting instead to fervor of Christian life and worship, insisting on the fact that, by our own faith and love and good works we can, in and through the Church, help others to grow in faith and charity. For, in point of fact, this is what the doctrine and practice try to express.

There are two fields in which the teaching on indulgences has an application:

- 1) for the repentant sinner on earth who still needs to make satisfaction for the sins he has committed, and
- 2) for the souls in Purgatory.

For the first of these it is necessary to recall our chapter on the sacrament of penance. This sacrament has a rather complicated historical development—as has the practice of indulgences which was closely associated with it and cannot be understood apart from it. In earlier centuries the Church imposed rather severe penances; some of them were long and drawn-out. The purpose of these penances was that the sinner, through self-denial, might undo the effects of sin in himself and fight his way back to surrender to God in the Church, through charity. During the period of penance, much faith was placed in the power of the Church's prayer to help the sinner to full repentance. There was a deep faith in the union between the members of the Body of Christ, the "communion of saints." The holier a person is, the closer he is to God and the better able he is to help his brethren; his prayers and penances, his sufferings and

sacrifices are considered so much more efficacious. In the early Church, the penitents sought the intercession of these acknowledged holy people—the ‘confessors’ for example, the people who were in prison and suffering for their faith. Because of their intercession, the penitents were let off part of their penance which the Church had imposed on them (whence the terms indulgence of 100 days, or seven years, etc.). They were let off some of their “punishment” which had been imposed by the *Church*. But this could only be done because it was believed that the prayer and suffering of the confessor could bring about for the Church and for the penitent what his own works of penance would not have accomplished. Because of the union existing between members of the Church, it was believed that the man who had been a sinner could be acted on and drawn forward to fuller charity through the prayer and charity of the holier members of the Church. It is this same belief in the unity of the Church, and in the spiritual power of the Church to strengthen her members in love and faith, which is behind the later practice of indulgences. Certainly it was often misunderstood and abused—some concluded that they had been ‘let off’ real satisfaction for sin. But this cannot be—the truth of repentance demands that I destroy the effects of sin and selfishness within me. What must be done in my own personal life cannot be done by anyone else. But others, by their effort, their prayer, their generosity in love, and their union with me in charity, can help me be in myself what, through my own efforts, I would take longer to become.

For the souls in Purgatory, it is only this view of things that makes any sense. The reason for Purgatory is the need of a final growth in personal love and a corresponding final death to self and the effects of sin. This is such a personal matter—a question of what I must become rather than what I must suffer—that there can be no question of

substitution. God cannot pretend to overlook what I *am* because of what someone else does. But if there is, within the Body which Christ has knit together and through which he sends the vital flow of his own grace and love, a living union, then it is not hard to see that the prayer and penance, which the Church offers in loving faith for her members on their last stage to God, can support and help them to be completely possessed by charity.

(A good summary treatment of this matter can be found in the article of F. Courtney, S.J., "New Explanation of Indulgences," in *Clergy Review* 44 [1959], 464 ff.)

TOUCHED WITH HIS
SPLENDORa) *The Church Triumphant*

Our whole life is meant to be a process of growing towards God. Although this is a matter of personal commitment for each of us, it is by no means a merely private affair. When we really discover God, we discover the People of God who are more than members of society who share common interests in life. They are, as the Epistle to the Hebrews says so clearly, a people on the march towards the eternal city, a people who have to be brought to their perfection through union with the glorified Christ in Heaven. They are a people who share the vision of St. John: "And I, John, saw in my vision that holy city which is the new Jerusalem, being sent down from heaven, all clothed in readiness like a bride who has adorned herself to meet her husband. I heard, too, a voice which cried aloud from the throne, Here is God's tabernacle pitched among men; he will dwell with them and they will be his own people, and he will be among them, their own God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or mourning, or cries of distress, no more sorrow; these old things have passed away. And he who sat on the throne said, behold, I make all things new." (Apoc. 21, 2 ff.)

The Church in her final stage is described as a people who dwell with God in love and friendship; or as a bride

united in love to her husband—Christ. We who form the Church on earth live conscious of our destiny, clear-sighted as regards our goal. Otherwise, we would lose sight of the most important dimension of all in our lives. Conscious of our union with other members of the Church, we know that we are united, too, with our brethren in Christ who already have attained their goal and who are now in heaven. Ever since the Epistle to the Hebrews we have been encouraged to think of them, and of the fact that, grown perfect in charity, they will have an even greater interest in the welfare of their brethren than they had on earth; that it will be their desire and their prayer that we, too, might come to the full love of Christ which now transforms them in a happiness that can never fade. The thought of what they have achieved, of what God has done for them, of their concern for the other children of God and brethren of Christ, can serve as an inspiration and encouragement to us: "Why then, since we are watched from above by such a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of all that weighs us down, of the sinful habit that clings so closely, and run, with all endurance, the race for which we are entered" (Heb. 12, 1).

The Church has always encouraged the practice of honoring the saints and praying to them. Every practice expresses some doctrine and helps us make some truth a clearer part of our vision. What is the doctrine which lies behind this practice? It is not—as is sometimes mistakenly thought—that God will not grant us favors unless we go to him through the intercession of the saints. It is not that prayer to some saints is more efficacious than prayer to others. The practice is recommended to help us keep alive our conviction of the unity existing in the whole Body of Christ in heaven and on earth; to help us keep a clear vision of our real destiny; to strengthen our confidence in the help that God wills to give us. God is "wonderful in

his saints"; and in the Pauls and the Matthews, the Augustines, the Magdalenes, the Maria Gorettis, we see how the saving power of God, which is rich in mercy and kindness, can triumph over blindness and weakness and sin and human insignificance, to bring men and women to sanctity and love. In them we see the work of Christ's redemption successful and complete forever. Yet are we reminded—by the thought of union with them and their desire for our own salvation—that this work of Christ will not be complete until we, and the other members of the Church on earth, are taken to join them in their love and praise for God.

Then, as we reflect that they pray for us before the throne of God, and that they, who are our brethren, are eager to help us, we realize that this is only because they share in the greater charity and deeper concern of Christ our Savior and of God our Father. In this way, people can be led to surmount the fears that, because of their sins, God may not be ready to hear their prayer and help them back to his love.

The angels, too, have an interest in our welfare. Created by God to share in his life, they share in his love which desires our salvation. These angels, as Christ said, look upon the face of our Father in heaven, and see there his desire that we might come to join them in heaven, to praise God along with them. Therefore the Church has always taught (following in this the teaching of the Scriptures) that the good angels help us along the way, and that each of us has a personal Guardian Angel to assist us, and to help us realize the special personal love which God has for each of us.

b) *Christ, Mary, and the Church*

Mary was

- i) the mother of Christ, the God-man;

- ii) the person who was most closely associated with Christ in his work of redemption, an associate of the Redeemer;
- iii) one who therefore has a special place in the Church, and a special relationship with the rest of the Church.

It is easy to fall into pious imagination and exaggerated expression with regard to Mary unless she is seen clearly in the position in which God has put her: closely associated with Christ in his work of redemption and forming the Church. The greatest thing about her is not what she has done, but what she has been given. St. Alphonsus wrote a book which he called *The Glories of Mary*, but in fact, her one great glory is that God has united her most intimately with His Son, as his Mother. Since she was so closely united with Him who was the Savior of the world, it was natural and even necessary that, more than all others, she should be "touched with His Splendor" as he came to bring light and life to the world, saving and sanctifying it.

The development of doctrine in regard to Mary has been the Church's fuller realization of what was demanded—as prerequisite and consequence—of the "Incarnation as Savior" of the Son of God. This development of doctrine is solidly based on Scripture, and is also in perfect harmony with all the other doctrines of the Church. So much is this so, in fact, that it would be strangely out of character to have things different.

The following pages may be rather solid and concentrated. However they are included for a definite purpose. With regard to some parts of Catholic teaching the need seems to be to show how it fits in with human nature and with our modern mentality. With regard to doctrine about Mary, the need seems to be rather to show that it is based on

solid theological grounds and that it enhances, rather than detracts from, the dignity of Christ and the magnificence of his work of redemption.

The realization of this need seems to have been in the minds of the bishops of the Second Vatican Council when, in the constitution on the Church, they said: "There is one Mediator as the Apostle says . . . (I Timothy, 2, 5-6) Mary's maternal role towards men does not veil, nor in any way diminish, this unique mediation of Christ, but rather stresses its efficacy. In fact all the salutary influence of the blessed Virgin towards men does not arise from any necessity, but from God's good pleasure, and flows from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, is based on his mediation on which it depends and from which it draws all its efficacy. . . .

"In fact, no creature can ever be placed on the same level as the Incarnate Word and Redeemer. . . . It is this subordinate function of Mary which the Church does not hesitate to profess."

Concerning devotion to Mary, the Vatican Council says: "The Holy Council teaches this doctrine deliberately, and at the same time exhorts all the children of the Church to promote generously the devotion, especially liturgical, to the Blessed Virgin, to hold in great esteem the practices and exercises of devotion towards her. Furthermore it exhorts the theologians and preachers of the Word of God to abstain, with the greatest care from all false amplification, as from all minimization, when they come to consider the special dignity of the Mother of God. By the study of holy Scripture, of the Fathers of the Church, of the doctors and the Church's liturgy, a study carried out under the direction of the Church, they must explain correctly the role and the privileges of the Blessed Virgin. These are all centered on Christ, origin of all truth, sanctity and devotion. Both in

thought and deed, they must carefully avoid whatever could lead their separated brethren, or anyone else, into error about the true doctrine of the Church."

In this spirit let us proceed, beginning with the Gospel. The first two chapters of St. Luke's Gospel are wonderfully rich in theology, and they bring out Mary's place in God's work of salvation. They are a tissue of Old Testament references which show that the Annunciation is first and foremost a decisive event in the history of messianic salvation. St. Luke is not out to write a 'Gospel of Mary,' but he cannot write a Gospel of Christ the Savior without highlighting Mary's place in God's plan. There are many Old Testament parallels to the Annunciation—v.g. Joel, 2, 21, 23; Zach. 9:9-17, Jg. 6, 11-14; Soph. 3, 14-17. Let us consider these last two:

Jg. 6, 11-14 is an account of the deliverance of the people of Israel, with Gideon the chosen instrument of salvation. An angel comes to him and addresses him: "Yahweh is with you, 'valiant hero'" —he is addressed by a new proper name which indicates what he is to be and to do. He objects that he is "the least in his father's house," and asks: "How am I to save Israel?" And the reply is: "I will be with you, the Lord said." And Gideon said: "If I have found favour in your eyes, give me a sign."

Now compare Luke, 1:28:ff.

Hail 'Thou who art full of grace' (*kecharitomene*),
the Lord is with thee. . . .

Do not be afraid; thou hast found favour with God
. . . and behold Elizabeth . . . (sign given).

Compare *Sophonias 3, 14-17* and *Luke*

Rejoice daughter of Sion
Shout for gladness, O Israel,
The Lord is King of Israel in

Rejoice (*chaire*) O highly
favoured
one (*kecharitomene*),

your midst (lit. in your
womb). . . .

The Lord (Yahweh) is with
you. . . .

In that day the Lord
will say to Jerusalem:

Fear not, O Sion. . . .

Mary do not be afraid, . . .

Yahweh your God is in your
midst (womb)

Thou shalt conceive in thy
womb and bear a Son, and

A mighty Saviour (yoshia or
yeshua)

shall call him Jesus.

"The joy announced by the angel is the messianic joy of Sophonias. Mary, to whom the announcement is made, is the 'daughter of Sion,' she represents and sums up Israel in this decisive hour. The presence of the Lord in the womb of Israel will be for her conception and child-bearing; and the child will be Yahweh-Savior." (Laurentin).

Luke, 1, 35:

"The Holy Spirit will come upon thee, and the power of the Most High will overshadow thee. Thus this holy offspring of thine shall be known for the Son of God"; "*overshadow*" suggesting the cloud which manifests the presence of God in the Old Testament. Then there was the Ark of the Alliance with the "*shekinah*" or overshadowing cloud, while the 'glory of God,' i.e., God himself, filled it within.

Mary will also be the object of this double manifestation: presence above her, sign of the greatness of God—and presence within her of the Lord of Glory. This is suggested by a comparison of two texts:

Exodus, 40, 32:

"The cloud
covered the tabernacle
and it was filled with the
brightness

Luke, 1, 35:

"The power of the Most High
will overshadow thee,
Thus this holy offspring of
thine

of the Lord's presence," will be known for the Son of
(or "The Glory of God filled God."
it").

Cf. Luke, 2:32, where Christ is presented in the Temple, and is called by Simeon "The Glory of thy people, Israel."

The Glory of the Lord, which had deserted the Temple deprived of the Ark of the Alliance, returns when Mary presents Jesus there. Mary is the new Ark of the Alliance and the Ark of the New Alliance: cf.

II Kings (Sam.) 6:

Luke, 1:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 9. How is it that the Ark of the Lord comes to me? | 43. How is it that the mother of the Lord comes to me? |
| 11. And the Ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obededom . . . for three months. | (Elizabeth).
56. And Mary remained with her about three months. |

Mary's *divine maternity* is obviously contained in the fuller meaning of these texts from Sacred Scripture. Even here (although other texts are clearer for the proof of the divinity of Christ) the divine nature of her Son is fairly evident. The difficulty is sometimes raised that no one can be the mother of someone who exists before she does. It is obvious that this is merely another aspect of the mystery of the Incarnation: God existing from all eternity takes a human nature, and begins to exist as man. When he does take that human nature, Mary does for him what any mother does for her son, and so is truly his mother in his human nature. For those who admit the divinity of Christ, there has never been any difficulty here.

Mary's *sanctity* and freedom from all sin is also something we accept easily, as being fitting for Mary's great dignity as the Mother of God and as being in accord with the sanctity of Christ. In the first couple of centuries, not

much stress was placed explicitly on this. For, at that time, the wonder of the Incarnation was so strong in Christian consciousness that it almost completely filled the minds of the Christians: Christ had been a man, just like them—to the extent that he had a mother just as they did. But, as greater stress was placed on the divinity of Christ (against heresies which denied it), they insisted that, in the very important fact that he was the Son of God, he was not “just like them”—and on reflection they realized that his Mother was not quite like theirs: that the “highly favored one” of St. Luke’s gospel, was favored with great gifts of grace, that her ‘fulness of grace’ was such that there was never any stain of sin in her. This was summed up in the doctrine of her *Immaculate Conception*, defined by Pope Pius IX in 1854: “The blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her conception was, by a singular privilege of God, and in view of the merits of Christ, preserved free from the stain of original sin.”

From the earliest times, the Fathers of the Church had spoken of Mary in such terms as “innocent,” “undefiled,” “most pure,” etc. They had used that text of Genesis 3:15:

“I will place enmities between thee and the woman,
and between thy seed and her seed;
she (he) shall crush thy head.”

They had seen “the Woman” as associated with Christ the Redeemer in total opposition to Satan, and hence in total opposition to sin. She was the ‘Ark of the Covenant,’ and since Christ’s sinless humanity had been fashioned from her, she also had to be sinless: “The Lord was sinless because he was fashioned out of incorruptible wood, i.e., out of the Virgin and the Holy Spirit.” (Hippolytus).

It was only in later years that the question was phrased more explicitly as to whether Mary was always ‘from the first instant of conception’ free from original sin. And there

was a difference of opinion among theologians—St. Thomas and the Dominicans against the Franciscans and Scotus. All admitted that Mary was as “holy as she could be”, but St. Thomas could not see how the universality of the redemption could be reconciled with her complete freedom from sin. Scotus came up with the answer which is contained in the above definition: hers was a redemption which was fuller than ours. Whereas we are *delivered* from original sin through the merits of Christ, Mary was *preserved* from original sin—but only in view of the merits of her Savior. Mary was ‘most perfectly redeemed.’ She was also, then, free from all personal sin: “Thou art fair, O Mary, and there is no stain in thee.” Of course, this is much more than a negative thing—freedom from sin. Hers was a positive sanctity—fulness of grace and faith and charity.

St. Elizabeth said to her: “Blessed art thou because thou hast believed,” and the Fathers praise her for her faith. This must be understood in the full sense of faith: as belief in God’s redeeming love, and full surrender to it as it comes into one’s life. Her faith is, for them, closely connected with her divine maternity. St. Augustine said: “It was by faith that she conceived the flesh of Christ,” and “she conceived in her heart by faith before she conceived in her womb.”

Actually, it is only through reflection on the fulness of grace and faith in Mary’s soul that you really understand her divine motherhood. This latter was more than the passing fact of giving Christ a human nature. Every mother is intimately united to her child—in thought and affection; it is a most intimate personal union.

Now, grace, too, is an intimate personal union. By actual grace, a human person is drawn by the beauty and attractiveness of the Divine Persons, and invited to surrender to God in personal love. Mary, on the human level, was to be asked to be most intimately united with the Person

of the Son of God. She could be so united in the most fitting way, only if her whole personal life was linked with his—and this personal union with God is through faith and grace. Because she was, through God's grace, and her own answering faith, more intimately united to him than any other person ever was—then she could, more fittingly, be united to him as a mother. Or—to put it more truly, since all grace is God's gift—it was God's plan to give her the closest possible personal union with a Divine Person—through her divine motherhood. Yet this union would not be fully personal if she were not given the greatest possible graces in preparation for it, for these graces are needed to bring about a personal union in mind, heart and will. They are required that her motherhood should be on the necessary plane of dignity, and not merely a physical reality.

Virginal Maternity. Mary's virginity also comes out clearly in St. Luke's Gospel 1, 26-31. And St. Matthew writes 1, 22:

"All this was so ordained to fulfil the word which the Lord spoke by his prophet: Behold the Virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call him Emmanuel (which means God with us)."

This is the prophecy of Isaias, 7, 14.

Again, Mary's perpetual virginity has—based on the clear words of Scripture—been a part of Christian faith through all the centuries: "born of the Virgin Mary."

Now, her virginity, too, like everything about her, is seen in its full meaning and its real splendor, if seen as being intimately connected with her divine motherhood—a salvific motherhood, since the birth of Christ is the beginning of the mystery of salvation.

The full expression of Mary's perpetual virginity (ever virgin) is

- a) that Christ was virginally conceived;
- b) that Christ was born with no detriment to Mary's bodily integrity;
- c) that she remained a virgin after the birth of Christ.

The first two elements are seen in theology as "the sign of the Word of God being born," i.e., they are Christ-centered, and not just 'nice things for Mary'.

First of all, obviously, the virginal conception of Christ is a sign of his divine Paternity—that he is the Son of God. It is also, when seen in the history of the chosen race, a sign of his messianic character—of his saving mission. In the Old Testament, the men who have a great mission to perform for God and his people, owe their birth to divine intervention: Sarah's son Isaac, Anna's son Samuel, and St. John the Baptist were three of the greatest. God thus shows that it is he who intervenes to bring about the salvation of his people; an intervention rendered the more striking, in the cases quoted, by the sterility of their mothers. It is in this line that Isaiah 7, 14 finds its place—the Messiah will appear as owing his birth in a very special way to the intervention of God.

In Mary's own personal life, her virginity is closely linked with her faith and grace, her full surrender to God. In resolving to remain a virgin, she would have renounced the dearest wish of every Jewish maid, that of becoming the mother of the Messiah. In her humility she does not think she is worthy, and renounces even the possibility of such a dignity. And so she becomes one of those "poor" of the Old Testament, who looked to God for everything. And she also ranks herself with those women of the Old Testament—Sarah, Anna, Elizabeth—whose barrenness was blessed by God. Her poverty, and self-renunciation in her complete gift of herself to God are rewarded in the gift of himself which God makes to her in becoming her Son.

Her virginity in child-birth, with therefore a certain miraculous element about it, is part of early tradition, and finds a certain backing in the Gospel text which (without any mention of a midwife) says that Mary herself, after bringing forth her son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger. Here it is important to note that this is not one of those pieces of extravagant piety which later tried to make Mary all unreal and other-worldly. It, too, finds a place in the early Fathers as being Christ-centered: a sign of the Word being born into the world as Savior.

Fr. Laurentin, a competent Mariologist, gives the following points of 'theological and religious significance':
1. In relation to *Christ*: The Fathers of the Church distinguish three births of the Word of God:

- (a) eternally within the bosom of the Father—(cf. Trinitarian Doctrine) born of the Father before all ages;
- (b) born of the Virgin in time;
- (c) born, by faith, in the hearts of all believers.

The second birth—of the Virgin—is seen as a sign of the first birth in the bosom of the Father, and as signifying, too, the mystery of salvation for all men, when he is born in the hearts of each by faith. The first and third are purely spiritual births. The second will manifest the other two only if it, too, is a "spiritual" birth. We cannot stress too much the fact that for the early Fathers the Incarnation was redemptive and salvific. The temporal birth of Christ was thus seen as God breaking through and liberating from the servitudes and restrictions of the flesh, announcing the triumph of the Incarnation which was to be fully redemptive of human nature by bringing it to the glory of the resurrection when the flesh would be possessed and trans-

formed by the Spirit of God—in which resurrection all the redeemed are some day to share.

2. Mary is the exemplar of *all virginity*. Without bodily integrity, some said, the essence of virginity would still be there. But in the order of *sign* she would not be the perfect 'ikon of virginity', as she has always been venerated—nor of faith which is the soul of virginity and the virginity of the soul.

3. This truth is connected with other truths of Mariology: the Immaculate Conception, which the virginity manifests in all its fulness—since the pains of childbirth are, in Genesis, represented as being a result of original sin; the glorious assumption—of which this is a sign and pledge: St. Thomas says (*Summa theol.*, III, q. 8, art.2) that Christ came "to take away our corruption"—to free us from the corruption of sin and from bodily corruption (an effect of sin) through the full redemption of soul and body. Therefore, he says, it was not fitting that, coming as principle and cause of incorruption, he should be the cause of any bodily corruption of his mother through whom he came.

Christ, coming into the world as Savior, touches with the splendor of his saving power her through whom he came. St. Thomas has a principle that whoever is closest to the cause of anything is most fully affected by that cause. Christ was cause of redemption—spiritual and bodily. And so he gives his mother the fulness of grace, and the beginning of bodily incorruption which is later to be perfected through her glorious assumption.

MARY'S PART IN OUR REDEMPTION

Several connected themes come under this general heading. Although expressed differently they are all fairly closely connected. In text-books of theology, you will find that what is stated can be summed up in this way:

1. Mary is, in some true sense, the *mother of men*—a dogma of the faith. Her motherhood of men is connected with

- a) her consent to the Incarnation;
- b) her com-*passion* under the Cross.

Her part in our reception of the spiritual life is maternal: she, through her personal intervention, is (in some way) “a source communicating to men the supernatural life of grace.”

2. Mary is *Mediatrix of graces* (subordinate to Christ, sharing in his mediation). She is mediatrix, in some true sense, above the saints—a dogma of faith.

3. Mary is *Co-Redemptrix*. (associated and united with Christ in the work of the redemption). Certain in theology.

4. Mary is *dispensatrix of graces*

- i) in a special way, superior to the saints;
- ii) of all graces, in a general way (contained in the teachings of the Popes—as all the above).

In considering this whole question of Mary's part in our redemption (a) with Christ during his life and passion, and (b) now, in the application of the fruits of the redemption:

“The fundamental norm for the theologian is to safeguard . . . the dogmatic truth of the unique place of the Savior of mankind. There must be something which Christ alone did in the mystery of salvation. He alone was the Divine Person Incarnate, the Redeemer. Mary is redeemed by Him, receiving grace from Him just as we do.” (Alfaro).

Mary cooperates in the work of the Redemption by her consent to be the Mother of Christ, to give him his human nature in which he is to redeem the world. She is asked to be the mother of him who will save his people from their sins, and she consents to her motherhood of

the Savior—to the close union with him which this will involve. And so her consent, “be it done unto me according to Thy Word,” has a salvific significance for the whole of mankind. She is not asked to accept only a “sweet gift of motherhood”; she is asked to accept a vocation of the closest possible union with him who will sacrifice his human life for the salvation of the world. And she is asked to sacrifice all the natural aspect of her motherhood—for the same purpose. This shines out in almost every Gospel incident in which she is mentioned—the loss in the temple; Cana, etc., where Our Lord constantly puts above his natural relationship with her, her spiritual relationship of faith in him and in His Father in heaven.

When she stands beneath the Cross, she is asked only to live out the full implications of her initial consent to a salvific maternity. She had given him his human nature—he gives it back, through death, into the hands of the Father, in sacrifice for humanity. She has to accept now the will of God—the destruction of all she had been asked to do, in the death of that human nature she had been asked to give. As Pope Pius XII wrote: “A mother’s rights and a mother’s love were included in the holocaust.”

Now, let us forget Mary for a moment, and think of what Christ, by redeeming us, enabled us to do. When we are baptized, we are united with Christ, as members of his Mystical Body, drawn into his life, and into his worship offered to God. We become branches of the true vine, able to bring forth fruits of merit and satisfaction with worth in the sight of God. St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Galatians, taught that we can all, in Christ and under Christ, offer our sufferings so that others may profit by the Redemption.

If this be true of all of us in the state of grace, will it not be more true of her in whom was the fulness of grace? If we can all merit, who can gauge her merits? If you could measure her dignity as Mother of God, or her

fulness of grace or her fervor of charity, then could you explain the greatness of her merits. And, if we are all asked to offer our sufferings and good works for the rest of men, Mary was asked to do so in a very special way. In her unique position, she was, as it were, between Christ and the rest of humanity—the first of the redeemed, called to cooperate in the work of redeeming all others.

Now the “Mediatrice of Graces” and “Dispensatrix of Graces” is closely connected with her association with Christ in his redemptive work. Christ, our Redeemer, has finished his work of winning our redemption, but “he lives on to make intercession in our behalf” (Heb. 7, 25). Further, his humanity is the instrumental cause of all grace as it is given.

Mary, too, continues to be forever what she was on earth—she continues her intercession, uniting with Christ to ask for grace for men. Although (as the sounder theological opinion holds) she has no part in the instrumental causality of grace given to us now, as mother of Christ she fashioned and formed his human nature which is the instrument of grace for us now.

So, in her motherhood of men, and her mediation, the decisive factors are:

- a) Her consent to the Incarnation as salvific, as the event in which the Son of God unites humanity with himself.
- b) Her willing association with Christ, her sacrifice of all the ‘human elements’ of her motherhood, that all men might be children of God—culminating on Calvary in her consent to his death, that life might come to all men.
- c) Her continued intercession and ‘moral causality’ in heaven on behalf of all men.
- d) Her “maternal affection” for all men. Her spiritual maternity is not something more or less extrinsic. It

is intimately bound up with her divine maternity of the Savior of mankind. It impregnates her whole personality so that she lives fully, through her whole soul and whole affective life, her personal spiritual motherhood of all the children of God. And now in heaven, the general principle will have its special application to her: that one's knowledge extends to all things concerning those for whom one has been given a special personal or spiritual mission while on earth.

ASSUMPTION.

The doctrine of the Assumption seems to be linked with almost every other certain doctrine of Mariology—and this is the strongest proof for it (after the definition of the Church): that it is in such wonderful harmony with all the other things we know of Our Lady :

1. *Divine Maternity*: "By her divine maternity, the Fathers explain, Mary gave birth to him who is Life in his own Person; she contracted a relationship with her Son which is the most intimate physical and moral relationship which can be conceived; finally she acquired for herself a right to a unique love, which we cannot describe nor even imagine. The Greek Fathers delight in hailing Mary as the Mother of Life—in contradistinction to Eve.

"Since he who humbled himself in her was God from the beginning and Life before all ages, it was right that the 'Mother of Life' be associated with life; her death would only be a sleep, and her removal an awakening. . . 'Death will not boast of you because you have carried life in your womb' (Germanus of Constantinople)"—(from Fr. Duhr, S.J. *The Glorious Assumption of the Mother of God.*)

The same thought is found in Protestant theologians. Cordula Wohler writes: "I think it impossible that the body, which carried the Son of God could be dissolved by death. This holy body, this temple of God, could not and ought

not be decomposed in the ground. The honor of God demands it."

2. *Associate of Christ the Redeemer*: "The moral union—normal and necessary complement of the physical union, which in some sort made the lives of Jesus and Mary a single life spent in the same joys, the same aspirations and the same dreams—this also demands the likeness in resurrection that there was in death. 'It was necessary that she who, with eyes fixed on her son, hanging on the cross had her heart pierced by a sword, should gaze upon him at the right hand of the Father' (S. John Damascene). . . 'How could this blessed Virgin who had shown herself obedient to the word of God, how could this Virgin, united in all her being to God, become the prey of death and the prisoner of the tomb (*ib.*)' "—Duhr, *op. cit.*). Body and soul, Mary had given herself completely to Christ; her death would have been her final surrender into the hands of God. Fully given to God, she must necessarily be fully accepted by her Son, and by the Father who, at the Incarnation, had given His Son to her.

3. Her spotless *virginity*: St. Germanus wrote: "It was impossible that this virginal body, the vessel wherein God had confined himself, the temple vivified by the most holy divinity of her only Son, should remain in the sepulchre of the dead."

4. *Immaculate Conception*: (both positive and negative aspects) which Pope Pius XII develops as Mary's freedom from sin, and her share in Christ's complete victory over Satan. He refers to I Cor. 51, and 26 where St. Paul gives the general law: for those touched by original sin, the law of co-resurrection with Christ will not be applied until the end of the world, when sin will be fully conquered. The correlative proposition is that for those not touched

by original sin, the law of the co-resurrection will be applied at once, as it was for Christ in whom Satan had no part. N.B. St. Paul's difficulty is: why do not we all rise again, since we are baptized into the resurrection of Christ? He answers that the delay is due to original sin. But, if there is no sin, there will be no delay—therefore the Assumption.

5. *Mary and the Church.* For the Fathers, Mary is a "type of the Church"—which, as Fr. Congar says, is why there is "so little and so much" in the Fathers about Mary. There is no need to feel disappointed that they said no more about Mary, for when they had said that she was a "type of the Church," they had said everything. This 'type' was something like the divine idea in Platonic philosophy: something like a blue-print, or better a model, wherein, in a perfect miniature God reveals his plan for the Church, and already brings it about to some extent. The Church is to be the "bride without spot or wrinkle," united to Christ in love in heaven, transformed by the glory of the resurrection. Mary is already the one person and the part of the Church in which the work of Christ has been brought to perfection.

DEVOTION TO MARY.

From the way we have considered the main doctrines about Our Lady it should be evident how groundless is the fear that by honoring Mary you could detract from the honor due to Christ. Honor is "acknowledging one's excellence." Now all Mary's excellence is from Christ—as she herself acknowledged: "For He who is mighty, He whose name is Holy, has wrought for me his wonders." In her is most wonderfully manifested the redemptive plan of God, his love redeeming and uplifting, bringing mankind into personal intimacy with himself.

In her, we see the perfect response of the creature to grace, in humility, faith and self-forgetfulness, in charity

towards God and men, in whatever sacrifice might be asked of her.

We acknowledge and give thanks for what we owe to her, under God; for what she has done to give us life and hope. Our prayer is through her rather than to her:

Hail Mary: Rejoice O Highly favored one—the eternal joy-filled message of God's redemptive presence . . .

Holy Mary: that with her we might surrender more completely to God, that the love of Christ might possess us even as it possessed her. We pray to her, because there is an order in God's dealings with men, and in man's way to God. As members of the Body of Christ we know our place, and we know that she is far above us in sanctity. We go to her, not that she might grant us favors that Christ would refuse, but that we might be drawn into her greater response of faith and love.

Petitions to her must be seen in the right light. There are certain ways of speaking and writing which do justice neither to Christ nor to her—when it is supposed that Christ wants to inflict justice and she, with the tender heart of a mother, uses her motherly power of intercession to turn away his anger. Here another theological principle must apply: all created goodness is a sharing in the infinite goodness of God; all created charity is a sharing in and faint reflection of the infinite love of God.

Mary's love for us, in all its maternal tenderness and solicitude, is only a reflection and a sharing (however rich) of the divine love poured out on us in the Heart of Christ. It was of his own love that God said: "Even if a mother could forget the child of her womb, I will not forget thee." All God's plan of salvation is self-revealing—most revealing in those whom he has made most like to himself in sanctity and charity. If he came to us through a human mother whom he gave us as our mother too, it was that we should see her as one whose maternal affection for

us is a partial revelation of the infinite tenderness of God, and any 'power over him' as manifesting his gift of himself to us to aid and succour us.

In the Mass of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Hebrews, 4, 16: "Let us come with confidence before the throne of grace, to meet with mercy, and win that grace which will help us in our needs," is applied to Mary because it is first applied to Christ. With confidence that we shall obtain mercy, we go to her who is the Mother of Mercy only because of what she receives from her Son's fuller measure of mercy and compassion. He has, in her, chosen a way (adapted to all human hearts) of revealing what, otherwise, many would be slow to realize. We must go to Mary in childlike trust in her who is our mother. But such trust is not the keynote of a Christian's confidence. In the trust we have in her we learn something of what should be our boundless, childlike confidence in Christ. We are Mary's children only because we are more truly, in Christ, children of our Father in heaven.

CHAPTER 17

THAT ALL MEN MIGHT BE SAVED

We have seen that God has created the human race so that all men might come to possess eternal happiness through personal union with Him. The Catholic Church has never tolerated any suggestion that only a chosen few were destined for happiness. In her Councils, she has had to condemn this error more than once. Such an idea is quite contrary to the teaching of Scripture: "It is his will that all men might be saved, and be led to recognize the truth." (I Tim. 2,1). The Church solemnly teaches the universal salvific will of God. However, since men are free beings, they cannot be saved against their own will and completely in spite of themselves. Their cooperation is required. They must go to God in the way that he has ordained, and not in whatever way might suit their own good pleasure. Now there are certain things which, in Scripture, are said to be necessary for salvation. Taking them, on the one hand, it has not always been easy to see how they can be reconciled with God's will to save all men. Let us list the main points:

a) *Faith*

"Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11,6). "And how are they to believe in him unless they listen to him? And how can they listen without a preacher to listen to?" (Rom. 10,14) This consideration gave rise to the much discussed "problem of the salvation of the infidels," i.e., of those people who had never

heard the Christian message. Since Christ is "the Way the Truth and the Life," and since "there is no other name under heaven in whom we can be saved," faith in Christ is evidently the way in which God wills that men come to salvation. Obviously, if, knowing that this is God's plan, they yet deliberately reject Christ, there can be no salvation for them. But what of those who have never heard of Christ? What of those who, because of their own culture and religious formation, are, in all good faith, unable to accept the call to Christianity?

b) *The Church*

Every Christian must believe that Christ willed his Church to be one. Every Christian believes likewise that it is the will of God that all men might believe in Christ and become members of his Church. "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring and there will be one fold and one shepherd." Hence the Christian regards the Buddhist, the Shintoist, and every non-Christian as being outside the 'one fold'. He regards the Christian Church as 'necessary' for salvation'. The Catholic does not differ from other Christians in this. The difference is that he interprets the "one true Church" more strictly—as do the Orthodox Christians. He believes that the Catholic Church is the one true Church, and that it is God's will that through this Church men should come to salvation. What then of those who are outside the Catholic Church? Obviously again, she must hold that anyone who, in bad faith, rejects the Church, thereby rejects Christ, too, and cannot be saved. But what of all those who, in good faith, remain members of other Christian sects and do not accept the claims of the Catholic Church?

c) *Baptism*

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"; "unless a man be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost,

he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." Hence, baptism is necessary for salvation. What then of those who die without baptism?

There has been, and still is, much discussion of these questions. Necessity (the necessity of baptism, membership of the Church, faith in Christ) is interpreted in different ways. Many different opinions have been put forward. Unfortunately, a clear distinction is not always made between what is an opinion of some Catholics and what is definite Catholic teaching. Hence it is necessary to put forward the clear Catholic teaching on this matter.

First of all the Church condemns indifferentism. The Church teaches that a man cannot please himself about what way he will go to God. He must accept God's will and God's plan. She teaches that this plan is that man should be saved through faith in Christ, through entry into the one Church by baptism, and through living the Christian life within the Church. Since this is her conviction, she herself must make every effort that all men might know the will of God for them and freely embrace it.

However she realizes that many a man, in all good faith, will be unable to see things her way and will be unable to become a Catholic. She knows that many others, in all good faith, will not even become Christians. What does she teach in regard to these? This question is best answered in the words of Pope Pius IX:

It is well known to you and to us that those people who remain in invincible ignorance about our holy religion, and who are ready to obey God and to keep carefully the natural law and its precepts which God has written in their hearts, and who live a good life, can, with the help of divine light and grace, gain eternal life. For God who sees and knows well the minds and wills, thoughts and habits of all men, in his great goodness and mercy will not permit anyone to suffer eternally if he has not voluntarily committed sin. ¹

Further, the Church taught centuries before that "if anyone is lost, it is through his own fault."²

This is what the Church has always held. However, when a man is deeply convinced of something, and sees it clearly, it is not always easy for him to admit that someone else can, in all good faith, fail to share his vision. In practice, then, through the history of Christianity, there have been a good number of unenlightened attempts to force people to accept what was believed to be the only true religion. Looking back, we cannot approve these attempts; we can excuse many of them if we understand the mentality of the times (which so few of us do, and many do not try to do). But we must not let our thoughts about what we might regard as religious fanaticism confuse our view of what is, and has always been, the definite, official doctrine of the Church. In this matter, as in many others, the members of the Church have had to fight their way through difficulties and darkness to a fuller understanding of the truth.

As they have done so, they have realized that this is the way all of us must go to God—"groping after God" as the Bible puts it, following our limited lights and asking God to lead us. All men must be true to themselves, to the light of their own consciences, to their own vision of life. In this way, and in no other, can they be true to God. Hence they have seen that millions *must* win salvation as Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans, etc., and that *for them* there is no other way. This means that, while not yielding to indifferentism (doing that, they would be false to their own vision), they have learned a greater tolerance and respect for their fellow-travellers towards the eternal city. For they, too, go the way of faith in Christ and loyalty to Christ. We regret only that they are deprived of the greater helps to sanctity and salvation which we believe that Christ has given the Catholic Church. We regret, too,

the fact that it is probably because of our failure to make proper use of these helps, that our separated brethren fail to appreciate their value.

But what of non-Christian adults? How necessary is baptism, how necessary faith for them? With regard to baptism, the question is easily solved, for the answer is contained in the quotation from Pius IX given above. As theologians have expressed it, a man can be saved by "baptism of desire," which is contained in his love of God and readiness to do God's will, even though he does not actually receive sacramental baptism.

Hence, in regard to adults, the final and basic question is: "What faith is needed for salvation?" Further, "How does a man acquire this faith?" For if God sincerely wills that he be saved, he must make it possible for the man to have that faith without which it is impossible for him to be saved. Neither of these questions can be answered satisfactorily unless we first answer a third question: "Why is faith necessary for salvation?" It is not required merely as a condition laid down by God. It is demanded by the very nature of man and his eternal happiness. Salvation, heaven, eternal happiness consist in this: that a man enters freely into a personal relationship of love with God. As the Epistle to the Hebrews says: "Nobody enters God's presence until he has learned to believe that God exists, and that he rewards those who try to find him" (11, 6). This is the bare minimum required for salvation, namely, entering into the supernatural order, or into a personal relationship with God. For this, internal grace is necessary. Such grace is God's personal attraction, drawing the heart of a man to acknowledge and surrender to his will and friendship. By the light of his natural reason man can know the existence of God. When, then, the God, whose existence he knows, acts on a man's heart and will, inviting him to acknowledge him in love, obedience and submission, he will, if he

accepts, enter into a personal relationship with God whereby he is saved. For he is thus able, after death, to enjoy the full possession of God in loving friendship.

The manuscript of this book was practically finished when the Second Vatican Council approved and published its Constitution on the Church. In this magnificent document there is a passage which, I feel, must be quoted here:

"The Church knows that she is united, for many reasons, with those who are baptized and marked with the name of Christian, but who do not profess the faith integrally or who do not conserve the unity of communion with the successor of Peter. In fact, many of them hold the Scriptures in honor as the norm of faith and conduct. They manifest, too, an authentic religious zeal; they believe tenderly in God the Father Almighty and in Christ, Son of God and Savior. They are marked out by baptism whereby they are united to Christ, and furthermore recognize and accept other sacraments in their own churches or communities. Many among them have even the episcopate, celebrate the sacred Eucharist and cultivate devotion towards the Virgin Mother of God. Added to that is the communion of prayers and other spiritual benefits; and even a certain real union in the Holy Spirit, for he acts in them also with his sanctifying power by his gifts and his graces; and to some of them he has given a strength which goes even to the shedding of their blood. Thus, in all the disciples of Christ the Spirit arouses the desire and activity that they might all be peacefully united in the way that Christ has willed, in one flock under one Shepherd. And in order to bring this about, Mother Church prays unceasingly and hopes and acts and exhorts her children to purify and renew themselves, in order that the image of Christ might show forth more clearly in the features of the Church.

"Finally, those who have not heard the Gospel are re-

lated, in different ways to the People of God. First of all there is the people who received the alliances and the promises, and from whom Christ was born according to the flesh (Rom. 9:45); people of election, beloved because of their fathers, for God's gifts and his call are without repentance (Rom. 11:28-29). But the plan of God extends to those also who recognize the Creator, first among them the Moslems who, declaring that they keep the faith of Abraham, adore with us the one true God who is merciful and who will judge all men on the last day. As for those who seek the unknown God in shadows and images, God himself is not far from them either, since to all it is he who gives life, breath and all things. (Acts 17:25:28). In fact, those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of Christ and his Church, yet seek God with a sincere heart, and under the influence of grace try to act according to his will which they know through the promptings of their conscience, these also can obtain eternal salvation. And divine Providence does not refuse the helps which are necessary for salvation to those who, through no fault of their own, have not reached a clear knowledge of God but yet try, not without divine grace, to live an upright life. In fact, whatever there is among them of the good and the true is considered by the Church as a preparation to welcome the Gospel, and a gift of him who enlightens every man in order that, finally, he might obtain life.

"But often men, deceived by the Evil one, have abandoned themselves to the vanity of their own thoughts and have changed the divine truth for a lie, serving creatures instead of the Creator (Rom. 1:21 and 25); or, living and dying without God in this world, they are exposed to the danger of eternal damnation. Thus, with a view to promoting the glory of God and the salvation of all men, the Church, mindful of the Lord's command: 'Preach the Gospel to every creature' carefully tries to develop the mis-

sions. . . . 'It would go hard with me indeed, if I did not preach the Gospel' (I Cor. 9:16)."

d) *As Far As They Can Go*

When we know what is the way to justification and salvation according to God's plan, we are naturally concerned about those who, through what seems no real fault of their own, do not follow that way. However, the words of the Church, which we have just quoted, assure us that God's help will not be wanting to these people. And here it is probably true to say that many of us fail to see that the clear-cut divisions which are made for purposes of study need a lot of adaption to human realities. Sometimes, for example, it is said that the alternatives are clear: a man either accepts Christ or rejects him; he is either alive in grace or dead in sin. But is the question as simple as all that? It is, of course, at the end of a man's life. But before the end is reached, this is not the case, since man is not an angelic creature of clear intellect and constant will. He is a mixture of intellect, will, emotion and passion with his mixed motives and his human loyalties to which he feels he must be true. And many a man seems to be neither really for God nor against him. After all, when is a man really dead? Artificial respiration has often stirred up the remaining spark of life which, to all appearances, had departed.

In Japan (to take a practical example of what I have in mind) some people frequently assent readily to the Christian message. They want their children to be brought up Catholics. But they themselves cannot make the step; for conversion to Christianity would mean giving up their old customs, much of their culture, their friends and so on. It would mean forsaking all their old loyalties and customs which have, for years, been part of a life they were living in good conscience according to their lights. The same

thing happens frequently enough in our own country: people born of staunch non-Catholic parents, when contemplating becoming a Catholic, are faced with similar renunciations. The position is aggravated when, as sometimes happens, a man is a minister of religion, and far beyond the age where he can adapt easily to a new means of earning a livelihood for himself and his family.

It seems to be rather hard to regard these people as sinning against the light, and therefore as rejecting a call of Christ for which, if they die in this state, they will be lost forever. Is it not possible, and more in accord with weak human nature, to think that these people have gone as far as they can go towards God and Christ and his true Church? These and many others would seem to be held back from complete surrender by all the ties which bind them to their friends, family and culture. It is not that they have turned against Christ nor that they can't be bothered to see what he wants of them. Rather do they want to go to him, but cannot find the strength to do so. To expect them to surrender completely is to expect the heroic. Yet the heroic, even with grace, is by the very meaning of the word not what one can expect from the majority of people. I would suggest that we might regard many of them as having gone as far as they can go in their circumstances and in their weakness. When the moment of death draws near, or in the moment of death itself, when what has held them back can hold them no longer, it could well be that the grace of God will draw them to full surrender and to salvation.

Something similar could be the case of those within the Church who are living in a "state of sin" from which they would like to extricate themselves without being strong enough to do so. Many of these cases—particularly cases of mixed-up marriages, birth-prevention and so on—are often so complicated by reasons of health, finance or

infidelity of one partner that a rather heroic effort is demanded for the person concerned to overcome the difficulties in the way of full return to Christ. Perhaps these, too, have gone as far as they can go for the time being. As St. Thomas said, something of faith and hope remain, and, if they pray, the grace of God will be at hand to draw them to Christ when the time comes. Fr. Anciaux suggests something like this in his book on penance when he ventures the opinion that some confessions can be valid even though the penitent's contrition is not sincere enough to make him break definitely with sin. If he is in good faith, the prayer of the Church and the healing power of grace will combine to help him someday to go further towards God into full justification and forgiveness.

I record these thoughts with no intention of lulling anyone into a false sense of security. I do so rather, lest we lose hope or they lose hope for their eventual salvation. They are, in fact, in a dangerous position, in which it is easy to cross the line to the point of no return, when they no longer want to turn to God and accept his grace.

e) *Unbaptized Infants*

This is another question which has been much discussed over the centuries. Some, taking as their starting-point the necessity of baptism, have come to the conclusion that unbaptized infants are not saved. For, unlike adults, children who do not reach the age of reason, cannot make an act of faith or charity, and hence, when they die, they do so without sanctifying grace, and without the possibility of living in personal union with God. However, since they have committed no personal sin, they do not suffer in hell. Instead they enjoy a state of 'natural happiness' in a place called Limbo. (This word, incidentally, has an interesting derivation, linked with the older geographical ideas of the world. According to these ideas, the world was

flat, covered by the semi-sphere of the heavens. God lived above the heavens, and after death, the good went there to be with him. Those who died in a state of sin could not go up, so obviously they had to go down. Hence hell was called the lower or infernal regions. The presence of volcanic fire at the heart of the earth helped reinforce this picture. Our word "hell" comes from the old English *hole*, indicating how ideas of physical geography influenced the mode of thought). Now with regard to the children who died without baptism, since, in the thought of many, they could not go up to heaven, the only way they could go was downwards. Since they had no personal sin to account for, they were not punished with the "fires of hell"; rather they abode on the cooler outskirts of the lower regions—the fringes, for which the latin word is "*Limbus*," and which then became known as "*Limbo*."

However, the geographical notions are separate from the central thought which was that infants who die without baptism could not obtain the eternal reward of the Beatific Vision. There have always been some theologians who have not subscribed wholeheartedly to this opinion, and in recent years a good deal of discussion has taken place about it. Opponents of the "harsher" view say that, given its starting point (the necessity of baptism), the conclusion is quite logical. But, they say, if we take a different starting-point, viz., the universal salvific will of God, we come with equal logic to the opposite conclusion, namely, that it is possible, even for infants who die without baptism, to be saved.⁴

An opinion.

It is my opinion that the latter solution to the problem harmonizes best with the rest of theology, and I would suggest a view of things which appears to be a tenable doctrinal explanation. First of all, to hold that there is no

possibility of salvation for infants who die without baptism is to make a strange exception to the salvific will of God. It is hard to reconcile this with what we know of the love and mercy of God, and with his wisdom as well. Why should God create souls for the Beatific Vision and yet give them no possible chance of attaining it? To say that God has made their salvation depend upon baptism (which they cannot receive) is to limit the loving kindness of God in a way which seems to be at variance with the infinity of his love as it appears in all his other dealings with men. It is no argument to say that salvation is a free gift and that God does no one an injury by not granting him the possibility of attaining it. This is quite true—but it still does not fill the strange gap that such an opinion leaves in the love of God, which, in every other way, appears as richly generous and overflowing.

Because of these considerations, some theologians in recent years have suggested that it could be held as a possible opinion that, in some way which we do not know, God provides for the possibility of salvation of infants who die without baptism. Various possibilities have been proposed—an illumination by God, salvation through the faith of parents, etc. I must confess that, while these various suggestions could be possible, many of the ones proposed so far do not appear to be very closely knit with other theological truths.

A survey of recent literature is given by Fr. W. van Roo, S. J., in an article "Infants Dying without Baptism" (*Gregorianum* XXXV (1954), 406-478). With regard to this whole matter, he writes: "There is certainly room, there is a great need, for serious theological research. We need an adequate critical evaluation of the theological tradition of the common teaching, and of the '*sensus Ecclesiae*'. . . . As matters stand now, the question is not definitively closed. We are in the presence of a theological

tradition whose critical evaluation may well call for more delicately nuanced positions" (pp. 472-473).

"As the question stands today, we are in the presence of a common theological teaching and a conviction which runs through a number of documents of the Church contrary to the new positions (p. 472).

In this matter, as Pope Pius XII stated, the theologian must be careful not to put forward any opinion which would make people underestimate the need and importance of baptism, or make them lessen their zeal to see that, whenever humanly possible, no child dies without receiving the sacrament. But some theologians are questioning the value of the "conviction which runs through a number of documents," namely, that without baptism there is absolutely no possibility of infants getting to heaven.

In former times, this conclusion could be much more easily accepted. As we saw in an earlier chapter that, when people were accustomed to kings' and rulers' having supreme authority, and being able to inflict punishment as they wished, it was perfectly natural and easy to accept as 'just' any decision that God made. We, of course, must still do the same—if God has made this decision, then it must be perfectly just and in harmony with his love and mercy, even though we may not be able to understand why. But it is being asked whether the reasons for this conclusion are really probative.

First of all—how necessary is the actual reception of baptism? Not absolutely necessary, for adults are saved through baptism in desire—and everyone accords a place in heaven to the Holy Innocents.

Why then is baptism '*in re*' so absolutely necessary for other infants who die without baptism that we must conclude that there is no possibility of their being saved? The reason given is that adults are saved through an act of charity in which is included a desire (at least implicit) for

baptism. But infants, not having reached the age of reason, cannot make an act of charity; therefore they cannot be saved. It is this last sentence which, in the minds of those who oppose the older opinion, can be questioned.

Is the ordinary, popular view of death a very simple and one-sided view of reality? Is it merely that the soul ceases to inform the body, and that the body dies? E. Mersch defines death as "for the soul, the passage from a formative stage to a definitive stage."⁵ It is the final culminating step in a man's becoming what he was created to be, the final act in what he has made himself, either with God's grace, or in rejection of it. For the adult this last act will be the final and irrevocable ratification of his choice in life—for God or against him. There can be no conversion after death. This is not because God has decreed to give no further chance after death, but because of the nature of man and of spirit will. And, in the act of dying, a man will confirm his life's decision for God or against him.

The ordinary teaching about the death of an adult can hardly be applied without any qualification to the death of a child. For a man it is the end of the way, of the time of trial and becoming. During the short period of his life, the child has not begun his conscious way towards God or away from him. His act of dying cannot be the "passage from a formative stage to a definitive stage." His spiritually formative stage has not begun—there is nothing for him to ratify. Would not his death then, from the point of view of the soul, be rather an act of awakening to a consciousness of his spiritual being? In this act of awakening to this own independent spiritual existence, he becomes aware of his nature and his destiny, and of his own complete liberty. Like all spiritual beings, he cannot get to his goal (and this would hold good of 'natural happiness' in the Limbo school) without freely willing to accept it. He

is, in his awakening to a consciousness of himself as a free being, confronted with the choice of being himself in dependence on God, or independently. He must choose—this follows from the very nature of a spiritual being coming to consciousness of itself. There is therefore no need to suppose a 'special revelation' or special 'enlightenment' from God: that enlightenment is provided in the spiritual nature itself. But, of course, if the child is to receive the Beatific Vision, he must make an act of love and surrender under the influence of grace. If 'actual grace' is really the permanent influence of God 'drawing spiritual beings to himself', while the spiritual being is only occasionally conscious of that influence, and if all souls who are created for the vision of God are thereby intrinsically modified with a "supernatural existential", and if God wills that all men should be saved, then an important conclusion would follow: In awakening at death to a self-consciousness of oneself before God, the soul awakens, too, to the 'supernatural' influences at work within it. Consenting to them, it passes into the supernatural order and is saved. Refusing to consent, the soul rejects God and his grace and condemns itself to eternal separation from God. Thus the soul of a child dying without baptism is to be equiparated, to a large extent, to the angels created for the vision of God, rather than to the adult human being who has made his choice before death, and who, at death, only ratifies the decision already made. Hence, since we know from revelation that some of the angels rejected God, we know that it is possible for these souls who before death were unable to decide their fate, to decide at death for God or against him.

But the condition of the baptized infant is different—his salvation is assured through the seal of the Spirit, and the Christ-life within him. Hence in baptising infants we assure them of eternal salvation, and through the power of

God communicated through the saving sacrament, safeguard them from all possibility of eternal damnation. Therefore, even if one inclines to the opinion that not all infants dying without baptism are necessarily lost, he does not minimise the importance of baptism. Nothing else can effectively guarantee the salvation of the child who dies in infancy. Hence he must share the Church's solicitude to see that no one dies without the sacrament.

Perhaps it should be stressed that this argument from the love of God is *not* an appeal to emotion or sentiment, but an appeal to logic and to theology. The most central truth of revelation is that God is love. This love is beneficent, creative. God creates man that he might have the vision of God as his final goal—and Scripture mentions no other possible destiny such as the 'natural happiness' to which the Limbo school have concluded. Scripture speaks of the Beatific Vision as man's final goal, stresses the universal salvific will of God which means that he wants all men to be saved. It seems quite at variance with these truths to suppose that, for the very large number of infants who, through the course of history, die without baptism, there is simply no possibility of salvation. In no other circumstances has God laid down conditions which limit his desire to save. It is not a "condition for salvation" that an adult make an act of faith and charity. God acts with things according to their nature; and it is in accord with human nature that an adult can enter into eternal union with God only if he freely chooses to do so. It is his nature that, at death, he will ratify the choice he has made during life (although, of course, with grace the sinner can always repent in the last moments of life).

The question ultimately comes to this, then: Is it in accord with the nature of man that, even with grace, it is only *before* death that he can choose for God or against him? If it is, then infants cannot gain the Beatific Vision.

God will not save man in a way which contradicts the laws of human nature. This opinion could also, it must be admitted, be harmonized with the love and kindness of God. It is to be expected that, human nature being what it is, many infants will die before they can be baptized. God, deciding to create the human race, would have known this and foreseen that it would result from original sin. But, had he wished to avoid this natural infant mortality, he would have had to refrain from creating human beings. Now a great and merciful love could still choose to bestow the immense benefit of the Beatific Vision upon millions of human beings, while foreseeing that many infants would die before they could be baptized or make a choice for God. This is especially so if these children have a natural happiness. If it is according to the nature of man that he can make no choice for God unless he attains the age of reason before he die, then this way of seeing things would not detract from the kindness of God. And, if that be the case, it would seem to be a matter of wishful thinking to postulate special illuminations which are above and beyond the natural development of human nature and the ways of grace.

However, as indicated above, I think that we can seriously question the validity of this supposition. In other words, it would seem that according to the nature of spiritual beings there can be no final state of happiness (even natural!) without the soul's free choice and self-determination. This would mean that it is in accord with human nature that an infant who dies must, at the moment of death, freely determine its definitive state of being. The unbaptized infant, in accord with its spiritual nature as yet undetermined by any free choice, is still free to accept God's grace and invitation to a personal union in love. He is no worse off than any man.

However, the baptized infant is in a wonderful position. He chooses according to the nature of a spiritual being

which has been regenerated through grace, made a child of God, a member of the Church, and one sealed by the Spirit as belonging to Christ. His spontaneous free choice will always be to "come home" to God to whom he is irresistibly drawn by the whole force of his Christ-likeness.

In this way of viewing things, the Holy Innocents fit more harmoniously into the theological position. In their martyrdom by the anti-Christ factors in the world, they have been made like to Christ in his death as a victim of evil. Their being has been thus conditioned to make their final choice for the Christ to whom they have been likened. Through their blood shed in his cause, they have been baptized into his death.

NOTES:

- 1) D.B. 1673 Denziger-Bannwart, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, n. 1673.
- 2) In the year 853; cf. the decrees against Gottschalk in Denziger, *op. cit.*, n. 318.
- 3) Cf. J. Mouroux, *I Believe* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1959), p. 69 f.; E. Joly, *What is Faith*, in *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (New York: Hawthorn, 1958), pp. 108 ff.
- 4) Cf. opinions listed by van Roo in *Gregorianum* XXXV (1954), 406 ff.
- 5) *The Theology of the Mystical Body* (St. Louis: Herder, 1955), p. 264.

CONCLUSION

THEOLOGY AND LIFE

This book is one attempt at showing how theology is related to life. It may, perhaps, help some of the many who are struggling with this age-old problem. On the one hand we have the infinite richness of the Mystery revealed in Christ. On the other we have the limitations of human intelligence, of untrained minds of varying cultures—and for these the truths of salvation have been revealed. While we must, as theologians and teachers, aim at an ever deeper understanding of revealed truth and a scientific theology, we must also aim at presenting this truth in a way which brings it home to every man.

Some complain that theology is too speculative and too technical, tending to get lost in abstractions. To some extent it must be technical and abstract if it is to remain a science. But if it is to be the science of a way of life, it must be able to come into contact with the lives of men of our times. It is not a complete answer to study the "simple Gospel message" if we express this message in terms such as kerygmatic, eschatological, or even "the paschal mystery" when, for the uninitiated, these terms are as technical and unintelligible as any found in speculative theology.

I do not claim, for a moment, that this work succeeds in bridging the gap between the Mystery and ordinary human understanding of it. It may, however, indicate the lines along which, for some people at least, the bridge may be built.

For the ordinary Christian, these pages are not a sum-

mary of Catholic doctrine. They are more what some authors would call an "Introduction to Theology," for, if a man has followed their line of thought he will be introduced to Theology—the study of God in his own life and in his relations with man. When a man has discovered God through a realization of the fact that religion, and in particular the Christian religion, responds to his deepest personal needs, then his discovery has only just begun. Before him still lies the rewarding task of discovering God as he reveals himself through the word of Scripture, through all his saving activity in the Old Testament which reaches its culmination in Christ. In the tradition of the Church and in her authentic teaching to explain and defend the truth, in her meditation on the content of revelation, with the Spirit of God to guide her, he finds a fuller human insight into the mysteries of God's revelation. He finds them translated into life in the liturgical and spiritual life and the apostolate of the Church. And then, in this fuller knowledge of God in his trinitarian life, in the mystery of Christ, and in the Church, which is the fruit of man's incorporation into Christ and of the Holy Spirit at work in the world, a man finds that "in Thy light we shall see light": he now discovers himself and his fellow men more truly, seeing them not as a starting point, but as having their explanation and their *raison d'être* in the wonderful infinity of the God who made them.

For the layman then, this book may serve to indicate a "way in"—to the discovery of theology, of God and of reality.

For the theologian and teacher it suggests a "way out" from the fuller theological knowledge which they possess, to its more popular presentation which must be adapted to the mentality of those to whom we speak, and who, in different ways, will be experiencing the need for the God who created them. It is not a complete "Outline of Theo-

logy"; some lines have been very faintly sketched, others omitted or taken for granted, while still others have been heavily drawn. All this has been with a view to "Theology and Life," rather than in the aim of giving a complete theological picture. There are many truths which do not touch people where they live. For example, in the personal discovery of God in the "I-Thou" relationship of religion and faith, the existence, nature and function of angels is a fairly peripheral issue, and for most people can be taken or left without any great personal difficulty. The resurrection of the body is an item of faith which presents quite a bit of difficulty to imagination and intellect, at least as regards its precise explanation. But, once the fact of future happiness is established, the truth of the resurrection of the body is easily accepted and most people are content to leave the solution of its explanation until the Last Day.

With other matters it is quite different. For as well as presenting an intellectual difficulty to many moderns, they provide also an obstacle to the will in search of personal contact with God in love and in real sincerity. In presenting doctrine to the modern mind, there are, it would seem, two essential things which must shine through:

- 1) The reality of God's love, mercy and kindness;
 - 2) The sincerity of man's personal response in love.
- And these are, after all, the two key-points of St. John's first epistle, the summary of the whole of Christianity.

At variance with both of these points is any semblance of extrinsecism in religion; this can appear in many different parts of Christian teaching, and it can be the consequence drawn from good and necessary distinctions. For this reason, throughout this book, I have not put great stress on many of the distinctions which are made in textbooks, and which must be clearly made for an accurate theological study. However, a failure to stress them is far

different from a refusal to make them; but there is a time to distinguish and a time when the truth is better served by insisting on the unity and harmony that exist between various elements, which, although different, should not be separated. An obvious instance of this is in what has been written about nature and grace. While grace must be studied as added to nature, it must also be seen as harmonizing perfectly with it. And, to some extent, we falsify our study of creation (*De Deo Creante*) if we fail to take into account that all personal beings were created for the beatific vision as their destiny (*De Deo Elevante*). However, I do not wish to make a summary of the various parts of theology, but merely to indicate why certain aspects have been stressed more than others.

On the one hand I have tried to bring out a unifying thread which links together the various tracts of theology. This does not always appear in expositions of doctrine, and yet it seems to be essential in proposing a popular view of theology. It has also been my preoccupation to show (and this is even more essential if people are to be attracted towards the true faith) how all points of doctrine are a manifestation of the "Kindness of God." These two points do not really differ, for "God is love," and his work of creation and salvation can be seen truly and in harmony, only if seen as his love at work in the world.

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E. J.

CUSKELLY

M. S. C.

THE

KINDNESS

OF GOD

Rev. E. J. Cuskelly, a member of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, was ordained to the priesthood in Australia, his native land. Following this, he continued his studies in Rome at the Gregorian University, where he obtained his doctorate in 1952.

He was then appointed professor of Dogmatic and Ascetical Theology at Sacred Heart Seminary in Croydon, Victoria, where he has remained except for two years on the staff of the Apostolic Delegation in Sydney.

Fr. Cuskelly's first book *A Summa of the Spiritual Life* won great acclaim all over the world.

The author's preoccupation is to show how all points of doctrine manifest the kindness of God. He emphasises throughout that God is Love. Everything hinges on that reality and salvation can only be seen truly and in harmony as His love at work in the world.

Fr. Cuskelly succeeds remarkably in relating theology to life as he fulfils his two-fold purpose in writing: to give the average reader a 'way-in' to the discovery of God and His plan of salvation, and secondly, to provide theologians and teachers a 'way-out' from their fuller but more speculative and technical theological knowledge.

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