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THE WAY OF LIFE
(III A AND SUPPLEMENT)
A COMPANION TO THE SUMMA

A COMPANION TO THE SUMMA

VOLUME IV—THE WAY OF LIFE

(Corresponding to the
Summa Theologica IIIA and Supplement)

By

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SHEED AND WARD

LONDON AND NEW YORK

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September 23, 1942

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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FOREWORD

ST. THOMAS died too soon to finish his book, the *Summa Theologica*. Not all authors are so fortunate. This book marks the completion of a series, projected long ago perhaps with an eye to Thomas' good fortune. The first was a search for the ultimate answers that form the bedrock of human life, human action, and the living of human life; the second furnished the key to human life and human action; the third concentrated on the living of human life in all its exuberant fullness; this, the fourth, traces the royal road a man's feet must walk and the goals that await him at the end of the journey.

It was the Son of God Who declared "I am the way"; this book takes His words literally, as they were meant to be taken. Its subject matter, then, is the sublime mystery by which the Son of God became man to lead men to God, the mystery of the Incarnation. It does not stop at an examination of the mystery but goes on to trace all the consequences of God's dwelling among men: the life of Christ, detail by detail, His blessed mother; the continuation of His life in the sacraments; and the goal of heaven which is at the end of the royal road, the goal of hell which is the terminal of any other path. From beginning to end, this book deals with the supernatural, and that without apology, excuse, or defense; all this has been taken care of in previous volumes. Its contents are thus not so much an argued thesis as a divinely stated fact. If a modern reader is avid of facts, he will find a sublime diet of divine facts here; if, however, he is fastidious in the matter of facts, particularly supernatural facts, this diet may well prove too much for him.

It was not, however, for the fastidious, but for those who

were hungry for God that these books were written. If they do something to stave off starvation from those who have the courage to admit their hunger, Thomas may be pardoned for not having seen to it that they were not finished, and I may be forgiven for the effrontery that began them.

Again, I wish to express my gratitude to Thomas for the good things in these books, and to my critics that the bad things are not worse.

W. F.

Dominican House of Studies
Washington, D. C.

THE WAY OF LIFE
(III A AND SUPPLEMENT)
A COMPANION TO THE SUMMA

CHAPTER I

(OUTLINE)

MYSTERY AND MEN

1. The attraction of the mysterious
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 - (b) Concrete evidence
- 2 The appeal of science
- 3 Mystery and the mind of man.
 - (a) The three thirsts for knowledge
 - (1) For the solution of problems
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4. A world without mystery
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 - (a) The mystery of God The Beginning
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 - a Of angels
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Conclusion.

- 1 The *Summa* an invitation home.
- 2 The Mother of men.
3. The home of men.

CHAPTER I

MYSTERY AND MEN

MUCH of modern effort is dedicated, in one fashion or another, to the eradication of mystery. This book, with its three predecessors, advocates and champions mystery. It is all very well to laugh off mystery, to banish it sternly, or to strap it to an operating table for purposes of dissection. Mystery, nevertheless, remains a decidedly attractive thing precisely because it does not cease to be mysterious. And man will have his mystery even if he has to bootleg it.

Mystery is as natural to man as breathing; and nature is not easily changed. The child's world of fantastically beautiful mystery, marching alongside of grotesquely fearful mystery which turns out to be merely amusing because so obviously a toy to be used or discarded, is a thoroughly natural world. Later on in life we dispense with the Cinderellas, the fairy godmothers, and chivalrous knights, though the wicked princes are more difficult to banish; but we insist on retaining mystery. The child's absorbed delight in mystery is only one of many willing witnesses to the naturalness and attractiveness of mystery. Among others, mention might be made of the rich folklore of primitive peoples and the delightful, often delicately beautiful tales so faithfully preserved (and, indeed, still composed) by the Irish.

Oddly enough, many of the denials of the mysterious are in reality protestations of it. A travelling salesman once assured me, with benign tolerance, that in a few years science will have completely cleared up the mysteries of Scripture, particularly the mystery of alleged miracles. The very magnitude of the statement intrigued me; and, of course, encouraged the salesman. He rushed on to drive his point home with a crushing

example, the miraculous collapse of the walls of Jericho. The Scriptural account traced the sudden denuding of the city to the miraculous power of the trumpet blast of the besieging Israelites. That was, he explained, much too old fashioned; the real explanation lay in the cleverness of the Jewish trumpeters. Just as the right note on an organ will shatter a wine glass, so the right note on a trumpet will crash down walls; quite simply, the trumpeters had struck the right note. The whole thing was thrown back into the realm of the mysterious when the solver of miracles was asked: What note was it?

He resented the question; it seemed somehow unfair. By it, he was made to see that he had unconsciously given testimony to the inevitability of mystery and of the infallible tendency of the human mind to ferret it out and rest in it; even, indeed, to create mystery as a resting place where mystery does not exist.

There is nothing unreasonable about the attractiveness of mystery, however high above reason a particular mystery may be. Rather, behind that attraction is a profound reason, a reason with its roots buried deep in the nature of the heart and mind of man. Our human thirst for knowledge is not to be quenched by eight years of schooling, or by eighteen; by a year's investigation, or a lifetime's. That thirst is for infinite truth and infinite goodness. Clear knowledge of a thing, or an aspect of it, merely serves as a starting point of a new race for knowledge, the jumping off point for a deeper plunge into truth; it is a mark quickly put behind us as we rush on to new, and equally unsatisfying, goals. Only when we can see an object worthy of the unlimited capacities of our powers do we approach the happiness for which our whole being cries out. Such an object is mysterious.

This is not theorizing. It is a common experience in the hectic life of that very humble purveyor of truth, the lecturer. Let him mount the platform armed with a lecture that bristles with practical problems and immediate applications; the audience will yawn him down. If, on the contrary, his intellectual wanderings touch on such things as the essence of an angel, the

intellect of a man, or the foundations of the universe his audience will be straining at the leash like a hound eager to be off after the hare; they are impatient for him to end only insofar as they are eager to get into the argument themselves.

By way of confirmation of this, there is the fact that a priest need never be lonely; indeed, that he has little chance to be alone. The collar he wears is a public proclamation: "Here is a man who deals in mystery." There is no class who can resist the invitation. Consequently the priest is constantly engaged in intriguing conversations with bootblacks, taxi-drivers, porters, university professors, lawyers, and children. And he is learning all the time. He should not be too surprised when the ticket agent at Grand Central holds up an impatient line of travellers while he pushes a Bible under the grating and demands an explanation of an Old Testament prophecy. He must learn not to be impatient when the clerk behind the information desk at Chicago's Union Station greets him with questions instead of answers. He is, and always will be, a fascinating conversational target, no matter what nature may have done to his nose or time to his clothes; for he is a man of mystery.

This appetite for mystery is so keen that it leaves a man restless, bored in the face of the obvious; but eager, straining forward to get at the unknown. If men were, with complete unanimity, to embrace scientific knowledge as the one and only valid knowledge and scientists were to succeed in making all the details of this knowledge transparently clear, a tidal wave of despair would sweep the world. Scientists would be lined up before firing squads by the dozen every morning before breakfast, and newspapers would carry headlines announcing the executions of these public enemies.

For it is the infinite detail and the technical obscurity of science that has given it its tremendous prestige in the eyes of the layman. Its advance has been too rapid and too technical for him to grasp its findings. If it ever gets to the brevity and clarity of a philosophical or theological definition, it will be-

come as dull as the process of sweeping the floor or washing the dishes. Not a few modern authors have capitalized on an insight into this truth, producing best sellers that have neither mystery nor technical detail but only obscurity to recommend them. Apparently the ordinary man, finding himself beyond all doubt befuddled, is expected to conclude that he is facing mystery; obviously, a good many do just that. In contrast there is the perfect, though extremely brief, definition of sin given by Thomas: "*actus humanus malus*"—"a bad human action." Theologians and washwomen will be savoring that until the end of time, clear as it is, brief as it is; it embraces the double mystery of the humanity of man's actions and the evil of his sins.

The mind of man must have mystery because the mind of man must have intellectual food. Since it must have that food, it will not starve to death in quiet patience; it will revolt, will search out its mysteries where it can find them, even though the search take it to the secret chambers of hell.

Modern scholastics have changed the figure to underline the fact that the mind of man has a triple thirst. The least of these three is the thirst for the solution of problems, for the answer to the question how; this is the thirst of the mechanic. It is a conceptual affair, a matter of order between man's concepts and the workings of the world. Progress in this line is a horizontal pushing ahead accomplished by the correction of past mistakes; by it a man leaves the intellectual home of former days and forges ahead along bright but indefinitely winding roads. Inevitably there is in all this a tragic air of constant beginnings and no permanent ends, of the countless failures upon which its success is builded. It is a vagabond progress, whereas man was made to live in a home.

The second, a philosophical thirst, is for reality, for being, for a knowledge of the thing in itself. In this knowledge, progress is not horizontal but vertical, had by deepening knowledge already possessed, not by the correction of past

mistakes. For this a man does not rush down the high-road leaving his house behind, but rather, as Chesterton has it, he builds up the towers of his own castle, beautifies his gardens. This is the knowledge of mystery, of metaphysics, of philosophy. In absolutely everything in the world there will be the element of mystery because there will be the element of being; and never will the knowledge of the mystery be exhaustive. This is why we find every man a philosopher, even every scientist, though so few men are scientists. For here, in mystery, man is at home. His mind was made for being, for things in themselves; which is no more than saying that the mind of man was made for mystery. In contrast to the knowledge of problems, the knowledge of mystery is like the full bottle of warm milk compared to the infant's pacifier. Only on the nourishing food of mystery does the intellect of man increase in wisdom and strength.

If the mind of man is at home in metaphysics, it is much more at home in theology which deals with mysteries above all other mysteries. The mysteries of theology are, indeed, the fare upon which those giants we call the saints were nourished. Above all else, the mind of man is made for God, made for the infinite horizons of limitless truth; this is the object fully and adequately worthy of his powers. Man is at home with God, at home with the supernatural; there he is a native basking in the long sought warmth of his native sun.

Without mystery man is homeless, discontented, despairing, destructive, even animal. He is a vagrant; the longer the vagrancy endures, the more bitter he becomes. The modern tragedy consists precisely in turning all men out of doors to wander on the roads of the world, making vagrants of men by robbing them of mystery. Rather, the modern tragedy consists in the *attempt* to pull down the walls and roofs of the homes of men. Such an attempt could not succeed. Men, of their very nature, will fight for their homes. Actually the attempt to make the mind of man homeless is being defeated by the nature of the mind of man.

The attempt itself has given men some grounds for despair. If it could succeed, men would always have to look down, for there would be nothing to which they could look up. In spite of their intimate knowledge of personal pettiness, personal limitations, they would be forced to see in themselves the fullness of intellectual perfection: reason enough, God knows, for despair. Yet, strangely, we have tried today to turn all this into ground for pride and presumption. Remembering only that we are moving horizontally, that there is nothing above, we look down from our superior height like worms sneering at the dust through which they move.

The attempt has given men ground enough for boredom, for men have been presented with a threadbare world and asked to become excited about it. They themselves are the patchwork of the centuries, the queer result of a meaningless jumble of elements, not to be fooled by illusions of beauty, of truth, and of goodness. They themselves, these men, are old, cynical, tired, stretched out under a sky moth-eaten with dying stars like bedridden patients staring at a fly-specked ceiling.

The attempt has given men sufficient grounds for destructiveness, viciousness, animality. Gangsterism, national and international, is not a passing phenomenon in such a world, but a natural development. Why should men not hate such a bitterly disappointing world, why should they respect the persons, the ideals, the hopes of such a bitterly disappointing humanity? Why should they not hate their very selves for the tortured existence they are forced to live?

Men could not live in such a world as this. The attempt failed; the mind of man, starving, has called up mysteries of its own as a dying man in a desert calls up from his own diseased brain mirages that but add to his tortures. The modern man's escape from intellectual homelessness is perhaps more tragic than the vagrancy to which his leaders had condemned him; for he has gotten into a house surely other than the house of God. The monsters called up in a kind of stream-

lined devil worship now threaten to devour the modern man: the cloak of mystery has been thrown over a machine, a party, a class, an appetite; incense has been burned, hosannas sung, and the gods have turned on their worshippers to destroy them.

This is by no means a wholesale condemnation of men and things. Rather it is a statement of conditions under which human life is intolerable; yet it is a condition embraced by thousands of men and women today. Moreover, it is understandingly embraced. Men shy away from mystery, when it is precisely mystery which will save them, not because they scorn that salvation but because that mystery has been so badly misrepresented. There is something honorable in a man's refusal to be frightened by what he considers unworthy of fear; there is strength in a man's refusal to take a path he considers merely an escape from the labor of thought. Today the mysterious is looked upon too frequently as an insult to man's intelligence, to his courage, to his willingness to work. Actually, of course, it is none of these things.

It is true that mystery exceeds reason; but this does not mean that man cannot know the mysterious, naturally or supernaturally. It is an insistence that there is still more to be known, a challenge to his courage, his humility, his persevering labor. The smallest insight into the mysterious is more satisfying than all other knowledge, it is much more of a perfection of the mind of man. It gives some answer to that persistent "why" which it is man's unique privilege, in this material world, to ask. To expect satisfaction with anything less is to demand that a man be happy playing with the toys of children.

Really there is no need to argue this point. It is openly acknowledged in our distinction between a wise and a learned man, it is canonized in the saint. We admit that an ignorant woman may be very wise, while a learned professor may be very stupid indeed; we salute the wisdom of Finley Peter Dunne's "Mr. Dooley" in spite of the beloved character's

blissful ignorance of the language which he speaks. Man has, by such an insight into mystery, accomplished a little, by the ultimate insight into the ultimate mystery he has accomplished all, of that for which he exists. He has grasped something of reality, has produced the supremely human act at the peak of his intellect's potentialities reinforced by divinity—the highest act of his highest faculty. So he has something of the independent, all-embracing view of God. independent of time, place, matter, politics, wars and family squabbles. He has, in a word, the viewpoint of wisdom; and wisdom has never been the reward of the sluggard or the coward.

The three preceding volumes of this set made a close examination of a book of supreme mystery—the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas. The *Summa* has always been a book of mystery and will always so remain, for it is a book of theology, a book about God, the supreme reality and so the supreme mystery. The readers of those volumes can no doubt testify that this book of mystery has not been a lazy man's escape from the labor of thought; that it has not evoked fear but courage and love; that it has not been a childish attempt to escape reality but rather a divine insistence on it. These readers are excellent witnesses to the nourishing power of the intellectual food which is mystery, to the actual growth it promotes, to the substantial progress of the mind which, while satisfying the intellect, does not glut it but rather sharpens its powers.

It will have been noticed, too, from the preceding volumes, that the diet of mystery is not only satisfying to the intellect but also to the will, to the appetite. It is always true that the heart can go no farther than the head; an imprisoned mind means an imprisoned heart. Only when the gates of wisdom are swung wide can the heart of a man sally forth to the object of its desire.

This last book of this set, completing the study of the *Summa*, does not fall short of its predecessors in its subject matter. As a preparation for the long journey into mystery which it

proposes, it may be well to take a quick glance at what has already been done to familiarize us with mystery.

Surely one thing that has been apparent throughout these books is that the *Summa* of St. Thomas is satisfyingly about God, satisfyingly about the supreme mystery. The *Companions*, starting with St. Thomas, investigated God's existence and in so doing looked at the roots of the order, the origin, and the truth of the world. Then, hardly waiting for a deep breath, they set out on that audacious expedition into the very nature of God.

The readers of the first volume will remember something of the beauty of God's simplicity, the purity of His perfection, the desirability of His unutterable goodness, the sweep of His infinity, the comfort of His unchanging Being, the startling intimacy of His omnipresence, the long vista of His eternity, and the peace of His perfect unity. All of these mysteries were seen, not passingly, but with the fixed glance of deliberate, penetrating study; because He encouraged us, we could be rude enough to stare at God.

There was no hesitation in examining the knowledge of God, in scrutinizing the vision of Him Who alone can freely walk the corridors of our hearts and minds, knowing, indeed causing, the details of the most minute actions of the most insignificant nature. We dared to look at the ideas of God and at the Truth which is the root of all truth.

That "we" of the preceding sentence may be a little surprising. It has been dodged for pages, but can be dodged no longer. The fact must be admitted that the readers and the author of these books are not at all in the position of disciples and master; that atmosphere of a family discussion, so characteristic of Dominican Houses of Studies for seven hundred years, is inevitable when men settle down to the study of St. Thomas. Here it is completely obvious at once that there is one master; all others are students who never finish their learning.

With that comforting assurance of fellowship in learning,

then, we saw the will of God in its freedom, its efficacy, its beneficence. We were charmed by the love that does not discover goodness but rather creates it; we were a little astonished by the close alliance of mercy and justice, seeing mercy at the root of all justice and truth behind both. There was, too, the providence of a Father joined to the power of God, a providence reaching in a special way to us because of all creatures we can share in the life of God.

We even went so far as to peer into the happiness of God; farther still, into the inner life of the divinity, that subsistent knowledge and love that makes up the Trinity of persons and here we got a vague insight into the unceasing yet unchanging activity of God.

All of this was the mystery of God in Himself. Mystery did not disappear when we went on to consider the procession of creatures from God, for we were still considering God, God as the principle or origin of all else. The consideration of the beginning and duration of the universe left no space for boredom, while the angelic world was a gold mine of mystery. Their infused species were an unfavorable contrast to the drudgery of our school days; their love, a realization of the ideals buried in human hearts. With such knowledge and love, their sin and punishment presented mysteries worthy of the steel of our minds.

A quick, but detailed, examination of the seven days of creation allowed us to hurry on to that world that is a little less than that of the angels and infinitely above the world of matter, our own human world of men and women. Here everything was before our eyes in a glance at ourselves. Yet there was no dearth of mystery in the study of the human soul, its union with the body, its powers that make of man a cosmos including the wonders of the plant world, the animal world, something of the angelic world, and even something of the divine. We saw our ability to bring all of the universe into our minds by knowledge, and the corresponding ability to go out to all of the universe, even to God, by our love.

There was, of course, the inevitable human contradiction of appetites that can sink lower than the animals or soar higher than the angels. Above all, we spent considerable time in the study of that prerogative of intellectual nature, that instrument of mastery that distinguishes our every action from the world in which we live—our free will.

To complete the picture of humanity, two other considerations were essential. Consequently we considered the knowledge of the separated souls, such as the saints in heaven; and the first appearance of human beings on the face of the earth—the first man and the first woman. Understandably there was some nostalgia in the consideration of the life that might have been in the garden of Eden if the image of God had not forgotten what manner of man he was.

Returning to the wider view, we looked at the government and conservation of the universe, a breath-taking panorama worthy of the eyes of God. We saw the government of the physical and of the angelic world; in the latter, surely one outstanding marvel was a variety of beauty that leaves the human mind staggered. In the government of the universe creatures have a part to play, for God is no terror-stricken dictator who dares not share His power. We studied the part played by the angels, by men, and even by corporeal creatures.

All this was the work of the first volume: the study of the God of things as they are and of the world of things as they are. Throughout it was a study of substantial realities, which means, of course, a study of mysteries; yet, from first to last it was a study of God, the supreme reality, the supreme mystery, God in Himself and in the world of creatures proceeding from Him. It was, throughout, a matter of seeing things as they are not as suspended unintelligently in an unintelligible vacuum, springing from nothing for no purpose, but rather as ordered. Each thing was in its place and, seeing it there, understanding its relation to the whole, we were enabled fully to know the thing itself. There was none of the underestimating, none of the overestimating, none of the

grotesque mistakes that come from losing one's head in the clouds or burying it in the mud. We took the view of wisdom, the composite, all-embracing, serene view of eternal truth.

In the second volume we passed from the world of things to the world of action. After all, substance exists for function, things exist for a purpose and the achievement of purpose is action—nor will action suffer any other explanation. The world of action, then, is above all else a world of goals. It is a world hardly to be appreciated by our times for such a world is meaningful, a world where the final cause towers above all else and sheds the rays of its goodness on all that thereby becomes desirable. Or, to put it as Thomas did, the first volume was a study of God as the efficient cause; the second, a study of God as the final cause.

We were, of course, primarily interested in that complex, sometimes comic, but always significant world of human action. No doubt the real edge of that interest was faced towards our particular human actions here and now. At any rate, we had the undeniable fact of action as a starting point; and, since there is action, there is a goal. Human life is nothing more than a race to the goal, so our first task was to determine what that goal was. This was done by a painstaking examination of every possibility, concluding to the supreme mystery of the eternal vision of the essence of God.

The everyday actions of men are the steps to that goal. Here we were furnished with constant mysteries, in fact the rest of the second volume was spent in the analysis of these actions of ours. The extrinsic principles of them, with which the volume closed, were easy: law as the guiding factor directing men to their end, and grace by which the smallest acts were given an eternal significance. As for the intrinsic principles, well, we exposed the passions, refusing to pass them by piously as something base and at the same time refusing to bow down before them as awful divinities. We saw them for what they are: movements of the sense appetite in man, an appetite that was designed to be regulated by

reason and, so regulated, to play a great part in the working out of a man's life.

The rest of the story of that volume is the story of habits. The story of success was the story of good habits or virtues—a privilege and an absolute necessity of man. Here we saw such personal habits as fortitude and temperance keeping order within the passions; the social virtue of justice for our relations with others; the divine virtues of faith, hope and charity freeing our minds and hearts for the enjoyment of friendship with no less than divinity itself. At the apex of this successful building there was the divinely mysterious beauty of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

The story of the bad habits or sins was the story of human failure. After the investigation of their inner nature and tragedy, we tried to trace their causes in ignorance, passion and malice; we looked to see what part God, man, or the devil had in the mistakes of men. We stood appalled at the terrific effects of sin: the utter marring of the beauty of the soul by sin's stain, the irremediable, irrevocable, eternal punishment of it.

All this work of the second volume was really an exposition of the general principles upon which the living of human life is based. These were the basic principles behind the pursuit or abandonment of happiness. Certainly this is a most important affair for us. In fact, it is so important that all of the third volume was consumed in an exhaustively detailed examination of these habits of happiness which are virtues and the habits of unhappiness which are vices. This third volume was a study of freedom, of fullness of life: for the mind by faith, for the will by hope and by charity's participation of divine life and love. In justice we analyzed social life; in injustice, social anarchy. We saw religion as justice towards God laying the foundation for a divine social life. We looked into the mystery of courage; of greatness of soul; of the self-mastery of temperance; of the truth of humility. We studied modesty,

play, and miracles—and enjoyed ourselves with all three. The volume ended by the solemn comparison and evaluation of the two ways of life open to men: contemplation and action.

All this busy medley of human living, of human action, is because God stands at the beginning and the end of it, calling it into being by the desirability of His infinite goodness. Again we are back to God

This is what human life means, whence it comes, to what goal it goes, and the steps by which it reaches that goal. Yet this does not exhaust the mystery of a Christian life. There is mystery enough, God knows, in God. We can lose ourselves easily in the surpassing beauty and mystery of the Trinity. There is mystery enough in life; in the angels; in the world, above all in men. But there is not yet an end of mystery. There still remains the road along which we run to the goal and the light by which we avoid stumbling; both furnished by the Truth Who is the Word of God and the Son of Mary. This will be the subject matter of the present volume.

In this volume, then, we come to the climax of mystery and so to the climax of satisfaction of both mind and heart. For in the very next chapter of this book we must plunge into that mystery which is a stumbling block and a foolishness to the unbelieving: the mystery of the Incarnation, of God made man. Bethlehem will always be a rallying point, not only for the hearts but for the heads of men; the mystery of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity clinging to His mother's breast will not be exhausted through all of an eternity.

We shall not only consider the fact; we shall actually penetrate into the very heart of the mystery from what vantage points philosophy offers once the mystery is revealed. We shall go through all of the hidden life of Christ, into the full meaning of the union of humanity and divinity in one divine Person, into the life of Mary the Mother of God. For Christ is the Truth Who, in His own words, is "the light of life," the

"light of the world." We shall follow the truth, then, follow every mysterious, frightening, comforting step along the path He has marked out for us; every staggering step to Calvary's drama of the death of God, and on to the glorious resurrection which is the death of death.

Finally, as a climax to the mysteries of this volume, we shall see that continuation of the life of Christ which is the sacramental structure He instituted: a steady, burning light of sacramental care watching over every phase of a man's life; his birth, growth, food, drink, his mistakes, his love, his sickness, and death. We shall, in a word, follow the truth—even through the last things a man faces—to the goal which is an eternal beginning, or an eternal end without end. This final mystery we shall spend an eternity enjoying or an eternity regretting.

This volume closes the set of a layman's edition of the *Summa Theologica*. It is eminently fitting that this study should be carried on to its conclusion while the *Summa* itself remains unfinished; for the *Summa* is a very great book, too great for one man, or, indeed, for one age. Its very incompleteness is an emphasis of its character of a wayside shelter for men on their way home. It is not a permanent home for the minds or hearts of men; but rather an inviting insight into and a foretaste of the comfort of the enduring home to which it speeds the hearts and minds of men. It smacks of home precisely because it is steeped in the mystery without which the mind and heart of a man are vagrants bemoaning the empty futility of their existence.

Down through the ages the *Summa* has been the peculiarly favored instrument of the Mother of men on earth, the Catholic Church. For that Mother has been convinced, and history has borne her out, that the man who can be induced to read the *Summa*, rather than read about it, will find it hard indeed to wander the aimless roads of sterility and error. Just as the *Summa* is a wayside station for travellers, so the Mother of

men is a Mother of pilgrims. Men are not at home in the *Summa*, they are not at home in the Church; but they are on their way home. For the home of man can only be in the supreme reality, the supreme mystery, the only God.

CHAPTER II
(OUTLINE)
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(Q 1-3)

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Conclusion

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CHAPTER II

THE DREAM OF THE AGES

(Q. 1-3)

A DREAM can be an opiate or an inspiration. It can be the world of make-believe by which the coward escapes reality; or it can be a star lighting up the path of men, leading them on to a revelation of the profoundest meanings of the world even when it stops over a cave. It can be the restless, charging steed on which a man rides over the hordes of things earthly, crashing through the barriers that imprison the world.

It is to be noted that a dream, either as a reverie or a vision, is of no use to a man whose mind is blind. If his eyes are so dim that he cannot see the horror around him nor the splendor of the goal which makes battle a glory, he will not dream. Indeed, he cannot dream.

In one sense or another, men have always been dreamers because, normally, men are not blind. There has always been a percentage of cowards among us, of men and women who use their dreams to escape reality; but that percentage has always been small, since the human heart is a thing so stout as to dare again and again the dangerous business of love. A far greater percentage of men live on dreams in the sense of visions. There has always been a vision before the heart and mind of a man; how else would that heart and mind reach out, as they do, beyond what is already had, straining to the ultimate grasp of the infinite itself?

When men stood on the lowest rung of their human achievement, what was only an ordinary thing seemed high and hard; at such times their visions have been lowly, even despicable things. At other times, their visions have been as star-

ting as a joyous shout of courage thundering out of clouds of desperate battle. They have been daring, reckless, super-human things.

In other words, the stuff of man's dreams has always been furnished by the far horizons of humanity. Behind every human life there has been at least the ghost of that wild, reckless dream that goes as far as dreams can go, even to God Himself. Sometimes it was a tortured, twisted dream, a kind of nightmare which revolved around the mad notion that men could become God. Sometimes it was a disappointing, shrunken thing, as though the dream had squeezed itself through too narrow an aperture to reality, a distorted thing that revolved around the absurd conceit that men were gods because the human level was the peak of reality. Much more persistently, the dream has been that dream of dreams centering on God dwelling amongst us, being like to us but still God. It made God homely, familiar, tangible. It made Him man, but, because He still remained God, that dream was powerful enough to uproot the staid mediocrity of men left on their own level.

As long as there was left to them the far human horizons, men dreamed dreams and saw visions; robbed of these horizons, the magic stuff of dreams was gone. It is the shame of our time to have shortened the horizons of man, step by step, until now he is blind for want of something to see. By removing God and heaven from his heart and mind, our time has made it impossible to look up. Man might have been left to stare along the monotonous level of his own humanity, even though his eyes, whatever direction they took, would always end up short staring at the gray walls of nature. But that was allowing too much of the stuff of dreams. His very nature was denied; he was denied the right not only to look up but even to look along the distinctive horizon of his own humanity.

He was only allowed to look down, to search, nauseated, the depths from which he allegedly came to find there some reason to sustain his self-respect. Of course the visions of the

children's tales were forbidden childish eyes; after all, we had found psychological horrors in the guileless wanderings of Alice in Wonderland and reduced all dreams to sex.

This blind man's world would be too stolid, too brutal, too animal for men to bear; but it is hard to keep men blind since, do what we will, men remain men with all that divine dissatisfaction and reckless reaching of the human heart. We have tried to make the inspiring glimpse of a vision impossible, we have attacked the inclination to dream, have driven it out and in its place planted a horror of the visions that might have led men on; but we have forgotten that men will dream, must dream, or they will die. They will become sick of the revolting depths, uncertain of the limited lives ascribed to them, and they will either despair or, in spite of arguments to the contrary, they will dream.

There has been reason for the dreams of men in the very nature of man's mind and will. For that dream of dreams, the dream of our walking arm in arm with God, there is reason more solid than the nature of man. It rests upon the long promise of God, a promise whose fulfillment was awaited so patiently by a race that knew what it was waiting for and somewhat less patiently by a world that knew that much was lacking. That dream was realized, that seeking became a reality, when the maid of Galilee answered the angel: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word" At that instant God became incarnate. God was made man. The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.

In his *Summa* St. Thomas does not touch on the Incarnation until he has treated exhaustively of God and man; and with very good reason. It is only by knowing something of God and something of man that we can appreciate the splendor of the union of the two in the Incarnation. It is only by the contrast of the infinite, dazzling perfection of God with the limited, stumbling perfection of the best of men that we see something of the generosity and unreckoning love involved in the Incarnation, with the consequent debt of grati-

tude owed to God by men. When we understand man's relation to God, his desperate need for attaining that final goal, we can understand much more of the tender thoughtfulness of God in giving us a personally conducted return to Himself. Without one or the other, God or man, there is no sense to the Incarnation; without a knowledge of both, there can be no insight into the mystery; without the goal, thoroughly understood, the full, homely meaning of the incredible fact is lost.

The angel Raphael's protection and guidance of the younger Tobias on his long journey and safe return home is a dim shadow of the life of God on earth. Here God was not merely taking on the appearance of a man, as did the angel, he assumed man's own nature. He treated us like the children He hoped we would become, taking us by the hand, showing us by the example of His own life how we were to live our lives. Lest, as children, we be frightened by the majesty of divinity, He came to us in the familiar nature with which we must face all the struggles of our own short lives

So much love and sacrifice went into the Incarnation, and so much love and sacrifice has come out of it through the centuries, that it is easy to give emotion its head in talking of this mystery; but this was never the way of Thomas. Because of that very emotional appeal of the mystery, it is essential that we get its intellectual side firmly and clearly. By our Faith it is infallibly true that the Word of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, assumed true human nature from the Blessed Virgin Mary. In this mystery there is one person involved, the person of the Son of God; there are two complete and perfect natures, a human and a divine, really distinct from one another and joined only in the Person of the Son of God. Christ, the Person, is at the same time true God and true man; God from eternity, man in time.

Faced with a truth of this proportion, the human mind not infrequently rebels; and a revolt against truth adds up to error. It might be noted at once that in this business of error we admit no superiors, it is an old trick of our human

nature promptly to exhaust every possibility of error. In the comparatively simple matter of preparing a letter for the mails, for example, there is only a limited field for mistakes: the name, the street number and name, the city, the country, the return address, the postage, and the box in which the letter is deposited. Yet every day in America mistakes are made in every one of these respects. We can be depended on for mistakes, and that was no less true two thousand years ago than it is today.

In the mystery of the Incarnation three things are involved: the divinity of Christ, the humanity of Christ, and the union of the human and divine nature in the one divine Person. In the first four centuries of the existence of the Church every possible error was made against all three. Some men said that Christ was not God, denying His divinity. They were willing to look on Him as the most perfect of men, as more than a man, or even more than an angel, as long as He was to be less than God. Other men, defending His divinity, insisted that He was not human: perhaps His body was only a ghostly body, if it were real, it must have been a heavenly, not an earthly thing; or, since the evidence of His suffering and death was overwhelming, granted that He had a body, He could not have had a soul; again the evidence was too much, so perhaps He had no human will

The attack on the divinity and the humanity of Christ did not exhaust the possibilities of error; there was still the matter of the union of those two. Some heretics insisted that the union was entirely accidental, like that of a heap of stones thrown carelessly together. Others, indignant at such a mistake, refuted it by maintaining the union was an essential one: the divine nature and the human nature were somehow fused together to form a third mysterious thing that was neither God nor man, as matter and spirit are united to form what is neither a soul nor a body but a man.

Error in this matter is not surprising, for this is mystery. The reason for the error is always astounding. It rests upon

the notion that we can treat a mystery as we would a problem in mathematics. We are not content to feed on it, to penetrate it; rather we must destroy it by reducing it to the dimensions of our own human mind.

Of course there is mystery here since an infinite Person is involved. The truth is so wide that only the swinging doors of the divine mind can possibly accommodate it. Our minds, in contact with this truth, are like the arms of a very small child seeking to embrace its mother. The child can cling to its mother even though its arms cannot encircle that loved one; even though the arms of our mind cannot go around this truth, at least we can cling to it. We cannot discover the truth of the Incarnation by any human means. It must be told to us by God; once told, we cannot possibly understand it fully, for it is a properly divine truth. But we can and do wax strong on it, penetrate it a little, deepening the darkness of its splendor and lovingly examining it from all sides. What we can do by our own reason in this matter is to ward off the shower of small stones thrown by objectors and see the complete freedom of this mystery from any contradiction.

The Incarnation is a fact and a fact worth clinging to. Indeed, it is the central fact of the universe, the fact that gave youth back to an old, tired, disillusioned, despairing universe. It reopened the gates of heaven. It is much more than the beginning of an era. It is a release from slavery for creatures who have freedom in their very blood. It is the essential fact of Christianity.

We can, of course, speak of the historical Christ. The fashion today, however, is to speak of an historical Christ as if He were a mere character in history no different from any other man who walked across the human stage. This is sheer nonsense if, at the same time, one insists on retaining a claim to Christianity; yet when I have pointed out to individuals that the modern smartness was in reality a denial of Christianity, I've been made to feel as heartless as though I have told a child there was no Santa Claus. The conclusion simply

cannot be dodged: if Christ were not divine, then Christianity is a despicable hoax.

Christ was divine. We cannot prove this by reason; but it can be known and known more certainly than we know the very first principles of thought. For here, you see, there is no such intermediary between ourselves and supreme truth as the light of human reason. This truth comes to us on the direct and full authority of Truth itself; it cannot be proved, it must be believed. Nor is it such a difficult thing to believe; despite its immanent mystery, it is an eminently credible truth.

The existence of Christ and the words of Christ are as certain as any historical truth can well be. Yet this man, Christ, said He was God, not in a whisper, not obscurely hinting, but publicly: before His disciples, before crowds, before His judges. He was so understood; indeed, for saying this thing He died. His statements are well worthy of belief. His whole life is evidence that He was neither a fool nor a liar. He was not an actor talking Himself into a part. The splendor of His doctrine, the perfection of His life, His love of God and men are more than enough proof of this. To say the contrary, to say that Christ was deceived or was a deceiver of men, is to fly in the face of the historical evidence. Yet this man, who was neither a fool nor a liar, seriously made the claim again and again that He was God.

His statements had the solemn confirmation of God Himself. There were, for example, the express words of approval at the transfiguration and baptism; there were the miracles of the conservation and propagation of His Church of which the Incarnation was a fundamental doctrine. Miracles are not worked in confirmation of a lie for the very simple reason that God is Truth. Christ Himself worked miracles in express proof of the truth of His words. He made prophecies which were fulfilled. Through Him were fulfilled all the long prophecies of the Old Testament. Surely, if any statement made in the history of the world is worthy of belief, it is the statement that Christ was God, that God became man. Believing it, we

have laid hold on the truth around which all human history revolves.

If God were a clumsy lover of men, we might be forced to make excuses for something or other about the Incarnation. Certainly, in the course of human love, we must make allowances for love's good intentions. We know the lover did not mean to spill coffee on a gown in his eagerness to arrange a wrap, to wake up the baby with an over-cheery greeting, to arouse the enthusiasm of the populace by a resounding kiss in a railroad station. Human love is, often enough, clumsy and embarrassing in its expression, but not so divine love; precisely because it is divine, it is perfect in every way. It is not surprising, then, that the Incarnation is perfect from the side of God, from the side of men, and even from the angle of all the circumstances.

We shall see more of the beauty of the perfection of the Incarnation in eternity; but even now our stumbling minds, peering at the great work of God, see enough to make us lose our hearts completely. We know, for example, that the visible world was not meant as a set of blinders but rather as lenses giving new sight to our eyes, that we were not meant to stop at the obvious but to penetrate to the invisible things of God through the visible world spread out before our eyes. In the Incarnation, the perfections of God are manifest as no world can manifest them. In the infant Son of Mary there is evidence of a divine goodness that did not shrink from the womb of the virgin or the weakness of the flesh; of the thoughtful justice that brought about the conquest of man's enemy by man himself; of the wisdom that made a perfect payment of a most difficult, an infinite price; of the power that is indeed infinite, for nothing is greater than for God to become man.

Indeed, if we remember no more than the infinite goodness of God, the fittingness of the Incarnation strikes our minds in a burst of splendid brilliance. A quirk of human nature makes first page news of vice while virtue is made the material for an

epitaph, perhaps because we so readily see that a rotten apple can spoil a whole barrel. It is, however, no less evident that a good neighbor fills a neighborhood with good neighbors; that a wise man scatters his wisdom; that a saintly priest can change the whole character of his parish. For scattering power is even more true of good than of evil.

Some of that scattering of good is undoubtedly necessary; but not all of it for, after all, we do have beggars. We can give a dime away now and then and we hardly believe ourselves more generous than God. While it is undoubtedly true that God does not have to diffuse His goodness beyond the ineffable confines of the Trinity, what is more natural, more perfectly becoming, than that infinite Goodness should scatter itself? Creation is a statement of the efficient diffusion of that goodness; the life of sanctifying grace, a non-substantial participation of the divine life itself, is a declaration of the divine eagerness to share goodness, an eagerness impatient of the limits of nature; the highest diffusion of the highest Good is found in the personal and substantial union of God to human nature.

If our notion of generosity were not the finite thing it must always be, we might have said that we could have expected something like this from God—with the comforting privilege of saying "I told you so." In solid truth, only God could have had such an expectation. Always if we are seeing the truth we are overpowered by the goodness showered upon us.

The inherent beauty and goodness of the Incarnation, the divine vistas it opened up, the supreme dignity it conferred on our fallen nature add up to a total of such charm as even to sweep some theologians off their feet. They decided that the Incarnation would have taken place if Adam had never sinned. Thomas yielded to no man in his recognition of the charm of the Incarnation; but he was a hard man to sweep off his feet, intellectually as well as physically. He had the irritating habit of keeping his feet solidly on the ground even when he was peering into the high things of Good. In this

matter, he could see no room for conjecture. A truth such as the Incarnation can be known only by revelation; and revelation assigns one definite motive for the Incarnation, namely, the redemption of man and the destruction of sin. He agrees with Augustine in his joyous phrase: "O happy fault," the fault of Adam that merited such a redeemer.

His hard-headed denial that the Incarnation would have taken place in any case has seemed like a dash of cold water thrown on the romance of the Incarnation. In fact, it has been a dash of cold water, clearing our eyes and our heads; not at all a damaging thing when we are looking at the truth. Romance built on anything less than the truth is a pitiful thing, doomed from the start to shattering disillusionment; there is nothing pitiful nor disillusioning about the Incarnation. In reality, Thomas's opinion gives a more profound insight into the wonders of a divine wisdom that could make the sin of Adam work to such good. It does not decrease, it recognizes the sublimity of the romance of the Incarnation.

With the purpose of the Incarnation, the redemption of men, clearly in mind, the full perfection of the Incarnation as a fitting means is not hard to see. How better can man be redeemed than by moving him to good and restraining him from evil? And how can man be moved to good more effectively than by the divine virtues of faith, hope, and charity, by the solid steps of good works, by positively sharing in divinity?

Of course the worried father, looking into the very eyes of Christ, would find it not too difficult to say: "I believe, Lord, help thou my unbelief." It is not hard to understand the hope and courage of the woman suffering from an issue of blood as she crept up behind Christ to touch the hem of His garment, the garment of the Son of God at that very instant on His way to raise the daughter of Jairus to life. The love of Magdalen, great as it was as she followed her Master up and down Palestine, was nothing compared to the love awakened in her heart by the three hours on Calvary. It is hard to resist a love as impetuous as that of Mary's Son. There is no easier, more

effective way of engendering faith than by seeing, talking, living with the Son of God. There is no deeper root for hope than the evidence of His eagerness to help.

As for good works, how could they be made easier for us than to have Christ Himself mark out with His own tired feet the steps we are to follow. The road from Bethlehem to Calvary is not nearly so hard, as long as we can put our arm upon His; we may even find the courage to stop in the midst of our agony for a word of comfort and a gesture of help to others before we plod stubbornly on. This was the example Christ left; an example that was taken up joyously by all of the saints who crowd the corridors of heaven.

The final inducement to good was the share we were given in divinity. Now our nature shares substantially in that divinity by the Incarnation, until, in heaven, we personally and individually will share in that divinity by the vision made possible through the grace of Christ.

A man is not restrained from evil because he is thrown behind bars or tied hand and foot. Give him some self-respect by showing him he can fight evil, give him the truth that he might see what has to be fought, and set him free to fight—then, indeed, he has been restrained from evil. That is what Christ did for us in the Incarnation. He humiliated the satanic master before the very eyes of his slaves; He gave new dignity to a nature that had crashed from supreme heights. He protected us from the error of presumption, showing us that it was by His grace and His sufferings that we were saved; from the error of pride by opening our eyes to the humility of God. Finally, the supreme gift of freedom was bought by the ransom that set us free from the slavery of the devil.

In one sense, this Incarnation of the Son of God is more than beautifully fitting: it is absolutely necessary for a complete satisfaction in strict justice. God in His divinity could not suffer for sin; man as an individual could not redeem a whole race, let alone pay an infinite price. It was absolutely neces-

sary that some nature capable of suffering and merit should be assumed by a person whose life had infinite value. Only this, through the justice of God, could perfectly and completely satisfy for man's offenses.

God knows men; and nowhere is this more evident than in the timing of the Incarnation. A child at his home-work, if helped too soon, may resent the help, confident of his own abilities; he may take the help too lightly, or depend on it so much that he will put forth no efforts of his own. Man, who is always a child, also needs time to accept help: time to admit the humiliating knowledge of his own defects; time to see how much of truth he could lose; time to perceive how much of virtue would die out even with the help of the Old Testament; time, in other words, to be ready to accept the help that only God could offer. He needed time, too, to prepare to welcome a Savior of such dignity. Yet he could not have too much time, lest his faith become sluggish. Indeed, if the Incarnation were put off till the end of the world, man, with his capacity for getting used to anything, might well get used to the depths in which he would by that time be wallowing. Look what happened to knowledge, to reverence of God, to moral life, in the actual time elapsing between the fall of Adam and the actual coming of Christ.

God was not too late or too early in the help He brought to men. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was made man in the fullness of time, at just the right time, a time that gives the faith of men its full scope, embracing a faith of the future for the ages past, a faith of the present for the contemporaries of Christ, and a faith of the past for all of us who would come after Him.

Thus far we have seen the fact of the Incarnation, the credibility of that fact, its beautiful fittingness; but, as yet, we have done no more than glance at the mystery itself. The technique is something like that of a man faced with a task of which he is a little afraid. He will clear off the desk, arrange his correspondence, attend to odd jobs that have been

neglected for months, working all around the principal task while he tries to keep his eyes averted from it. Eventually he runs out of excuses and has to get down to work. It is time that we got down to work at the mystery of the Incarnation, scrutinizing the very heart of it—the hypostatic union itself.

We have the material of this mystery stated clearly in revelation: a divine nature, a human nature, and a divine Person. This divine Person, at one and the same time, exists in two natures, being His divine nature while having His human nature. Yet there is only one Person involved. This extremely bald statement of the mystery brings home the necessity of our fully grasping the notion of person and that of nature, along with their difference.

A philosopher would meet this difficulty by saying that a person is the responsible agent while a nature is that by which this agent acts; but this is little help to anyone but the contented philosopher. It becomes clearer when we notice that it is John Jones who talks, laughs, enjoys poetry and makes mistakes; and that he does all these things because he is human, because he has human nature. The proud young father peering through the glass walls of the hospital nursery runs smack into the whole truth when he admits his complete conviction that all the babies are human but he hasn't the slightest idea who is who.

There is no difficulty in seeing the difference between nature and person; after all, every man has the same human nature, but every man is a different person. The difficulty comes in trying to snare this difference with the frail lariat of words. Perhaps the closest we can come to it is in insisting on the non-exclusive character of nature and the decidedly non-communicable character of person. Nature, then, is not a perfect unity, it does not forbid communication; while the personal note establishes complete unity that makes this person distinct from everything else in the universe, a thoroughly completed substance, capable of rights and duties. Once that personal note is present, this nature can act; the acts are acts of this

person, they can be attributed to absolutely no one else in the universe.

In the case of the hypostatic union, we have a human nature and a divine nature. The divine personality constituting a divine person is there; but the human personality which would constitute a human person is not there. This human nature is personalized by a divine personality. In this union, then, there is no human person; only the Person of the Son of God. The union is not a union of nature to nature; human and divine nature are not tied to each other directly but in the personality of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. The same Person is the subject of the actions which proceed from both the divine and the human nature. It was Christ Who was hungry, Who was thirsty, Who was sorrowful; it was that same Christ Who forgave sins, Who raised the dead, Who founded the Church.

The notion that nature is united to nature in this mystery is not only heresy, it is an insult to intelligence. It would mean that the human and the divine nature were tossed together like a heap of stones, i.e., they were not really united but rather stood side by side. The result, of course, would not be one person but two, Christ would never have existed. Such a union might mean that the divine nature and the human were fused together like hydrogen and oxygen into a mysterious third thing that would be neither God nor man. If such a union is taken to mean that the divine and human natures, incomplete themselves, somehow complete each other as body and soul complete each other to form human nature, the result is just as absurd. For the outcome of this union would be neither God nor man, while the process itself would involve the absurd error of an imperfect God completed and perfected by a defective human nature.

No, this union was not of nature to nature; it was a personal union. Not a simple personal union in which the person is the *result* of the union of incomplete substances such as the body and soul in man. Here, in this mystery, the union is a

personal, substantial one in which the person is *not caused* by the union but rather *pre-exists* it. In this unique personal union, with its unique title of "hypostatic," the two substances brought together, human and divine nature, are both complete and the person pre-exists the union. The difference between union of this kind and the personal union out of which the human person emerges can be made quite clear by a momentary consideration of the dissolution of this latter union. When a man dies, the union of body and soul is dissolved. Since a person originally resulted from that union, with its dissolution, the person no longer exists: the soul of John Smith may be in heaven, but not John Smith; in fact, John Smith isn't anywhere until after the resurrection when body and soul are reunited. When Christ died on the Cross, there was the same separation of body and soul through the destruction of human nature; but the Person, the Divine Person Who had pre-existed the union with human nature, continued to exist.

In this unique way of hypostatic union the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became incarnate. That is a solemn truth of faith. The divine Person, then, is the sole responsible agent in the whole life of Christ. It was the Second Person of the Trinity who was born, grew, suffered, died; and it is precisely here that we find the secret of the infinite worth of the smallest acts of the Son of Mary.

It was not necessary to wait for our time to uncover the objection that the doctrine of the Incarnation adds something to God: before the Incarnation He was not man; afterwards, He was. This is exactly the same difficulty we faced in the first volume of this work in dealing with creation. Indeed, it is the fundamental difficulty found in all the relations between God and His creatures; and it is precisely in the nature of *relation* that we find the answer. Fundamentally, of course, the answer is that divine action perfects others but does not add perfection to an already infinitely perfect God.

Our mind being what it is, we prefer to take answers apart

and examine every smallest detail of them. Pondering this matter of relation, then, we see that it is no more than the order of one thing to another, always dependent on its two terms. When a pillar, for example, is seen by a tourist, there is a relation set up between the two; something quite impossible without both the pillar and the tourist. The same is true of the relation established when the earth is heated by the sun, or when human nature is assumed by the Word of God. Do we say that something was added to the pillar by the fact that it was seen by the tourist? Or to the sun because the earth was heated by it? Of course not. Nor do we say that something was added to the Word of God through the union to human nature.

Rather, there was something very definitely added to the tourist, to the earth, and to human nature. The difference between the two is that on one side there is a real relation—the side of the tourist, of the earth, of human nature, on the other—that of the pillar, of the sun, of the Word of God, there is only a relation of reason. The rule of thumb by which we can distinguish one from the other is this: where dependence is found, there is a *real relation*; where there is no dependence, there is a *relation of reason*.

Perhaps all this will not seem so overpowering if we leave the world of facts for the world of possibility. After all, a huge man does not look nearly so big standing next to a man who is still bigger; an enemy does not seem nearly so deadly if, just beyond him, is an even more deadly enemy. Perhaps the hypostatic union will not seem so intellectually frightening if we look at some of the hypostatic unions that might have been.

From the very fact that one of the divine Persons did assume a created nature, it is clear that any one of the divine Three can do the same. Even without this confirmation of fact, the truth is clear merely from a consideration of divine Personality. What this involves is the ability to place an act of assuming that nature and the power to complete that

nature. The question really boils down to a query as to whether or not a divine Person can do directly, through His divine nature and the infinite perfection of His divine personality, what is ordinarily the work of secondary causes. Certainly a divine Person can assume a created nature, any divine Person; for any divine Person is omnipotent and each divine Person is infinite personality.

Could divine *nature* assume a created nature? Certainly this is not the proper work of nature, for it will give the last note of incommunicability while the divine nature itself is in fact communicated to all Three Persons. This is rather the work of personality in the full philosophical sense of the term. Looking at it from another angle, nature is the root of action but never the immediate responsible agent. By reason of His divine nature, the Son of God worked miracles but it was the Son, not the nature, Who did so; by reason of His human nature, the same Person could suffer and die, but it was the Person, not the nature, that suffered. The divine nature, then, cannot properly be the first and immediate agent in the assuming of any created nature; it must always remain the radical, not the immediate, principle of action.

Can one divine Person assume a created nature, excluding the other two Persons? If we remember that the assumption of a created nature implies the act of assuming and the completing or perfecting of the nature assumed, the answer to this question is not difficult. The principle of the action of assuming is the divine nature which is common to all Three Persons; in this, no one Person can act alone since it is precisely because of the numerically common nature that all the works of God external to the Trinity are common works. But from the angle of the completion of a created nature, a work proper to personality, not nature, the infinite personality of any one divine Person is more than adequate. This is, in fact, the precise story of the procedure of God in the Incarnation.

Pushing this world of possibilities still farther, could a divine Person assume two, three, four, five, a dozen created

natures? Or, on the other hand, could one, or two, or three divine Persons be incarnated in the same created nature? All this may seem a little absurd, but it is not absurd. It is some little evidence of the tremendous power of that divine Personality and the mystery of the identically one common nature of the Three Persons.

The condition of the divine Persons does not exclude community of nature but only community of persons; They do in actual fact all possess the same divine nature. It is, then, quite possible for two or three of the divine Persons to be incarnated in the same created nature; in such a case, They would then possess a human nature in common as They now possess a divine nature in common.

As to the other question of a multiplicity of created natures assumed by one Person, there is no difficulty if we remember that the assumption of a created nature is possible because of the omnipotence of the divine nature and the infinite character of divine personality. To ask whether a half dozen or a dozen created natures could be assumed by one Person is simply to ask if there is a limit to the omnipotence of God and to the wide sweep of divine Personality. The answer is obvious. The Son of God could have assumed a dozen human natures.

It could have been otherwise. But it was most fitting that the Son, of all the three Persons, take created nature and that that created nature be a human nature. The Son of God, as the eternal concept of God, is, in a sense, the exemplar of all creatures. Just as by participation of this exemplar things are constituted in their proper species, so through a union, not participated but substantial, of this Word to human nature, men are restored in order to an eternal and unchanging perfection. We might say that the Word of God is like the architect's plan of a house: it is by that plan that the house is built in the first place; and it is by that plan, participating in it, that the house is to be restored once it has collapsed.

There is, too, the fact that the Word of God is the concept

of eternal wisdom through which all the wisdom of men is derived. Man is perfected in wisdom by the participation of the Word, as the disciples are perfected by participation of the word of their master. For the consummate perfection of this nature of ours, then, we must have a personal union with the Word of God. It is eminently fitting, to see the thing from another angle, that men who are to be the adopted sons of God should participate through the natural Son of God in the similitude of that sonship. Again, as the first man sinned, desiring inordinate knowledge of things which should not be known, so through the Word of true wisdom, through this gift of true knowledge, can man be led back to God.

There is reason enough for the Incarnation to leave the mind of man staggered. It does. It always has and it always will. Precisely because it is a mystery far surpassing the powers of the human mind, there has been open rebellion against this truth. In the beginning of the Church, these rebellions were gigantic; solid, thumping errors were made on an intellectual basis, errors that demanded the fine, sharp thinking of great minds to detect their fallacy, to show that there is no contradiction in the Son of God becoming man. In those first centuries, the possibilities of error were exhausted and the errors were met. Since that time, there has been a steady decline of intellectual opposition to the Incarnation. From then on, attacks on the Incarnation were really pot-shots taken with air-rifles against an impregnable fort.

In the Reformation there was a definite loss of the intellectual content of faith; indeed, faith itself was reduced to a kind of trust, confidence, a thing of the appetite. More and more, since then, Christianity outside the Church has been an easy victim of rationalistic attack. In fact, in our day that Christianity is succumbing to a scholarship that has been discredited for a generation. This Christianity has adopted a program of compromise with "progress" because it has no weapons of the intellect with which to fight. It is not surprising, then, that today, outside the Church, it is quite the ordinary thing to con-

sider Christ as merely a man. Undoubtedly there is in this a certain shamefacedness about the supernatural; here and there, there is an open denial of the supernatural; increasingly there is a denial, not only of the divinity of Christ, but of all divinity.

Today the Incarnation will gradually slip further out of the minds of men. Our world cannot accept the Incarnation because it lacks the ingredients of that Incarnation. It does not know what God is, or, indeed, if He is at all; and God plays a very important part in the Incarnation. Even less, perhaps, is known about man when we doubt his spiritual soul, intellectual powers, free will, his beginning and his goal. Under these circumstances, to accept the Incarnation is to accept the union of unknown things to no purpose whatsoever.

It might even be that we are barred from the future knowledge of the Incarnation by our modern rejection of the mysterious. That the barrier of rejection of the mysterious is beginning to break down is one hopeful sign of our times. Perhaps when its crumbling has progressed enough, we may yet know something of man, something of God, and, through the gracious kindness of God, something of the Incarnation. Certainly men are stirring to impatience at a dreamless world. Perhaps mysteries will give them back the stuff of dreams, restoring the far horizons of humanity. At the moment, our world is far indeed from the supreme and realized dream of God made man. So far that only the wisdom of God can envisage the time or manner of its return.

There is a chasm indeed between this world and the Christian world. In the Christian world, the Word, the Son of God, was made flesh. A girl of fifteen or sixteen welcomes Him into herself. Hers is the first human heart to thrill at the proof of love given in the exaltation of fallen nature and the humiliation of God. She was the first to stand aghast, yet believing, at the lengths to which God would go. She was the first to recognize the kinship of Christ, our Brother, and to feel something of the serenity, the courage, the inspiration, and recklessly responding love awakened by the presence of that divine

Companion Who was man. She was the first to carry the incredible tale the length of the land.

To the Christian world, the Word was not only made flesh; He dwelt amongst us. Twelve ignorant men entered into His life, ate, walked, slept with Him, sat under the stars and listened to His sublime doctrines, watched His agony, were witnesses of His Resurrection and Ascension, and, eventually, they understood that God, personally, had come to mark out the path men must travel, given authentic example of how men must love and work and sacrifice and forgive, suffer and die. Eventually, too, they took to the path, laboriously putting their feet down in the footprints He had left for them, and after them have come a host of men and women for two thousand years, treading the same path, under the same guidance, inspired by the same help, and to the same goal. At the core of their splendid lives was this fundamental truth that God became man, as it was at the core of their religion, as it is at the core of the world. For them a dream has been realized.

That dream is a star leading men to the secret meaning of the world, the charging steed upon which they crash through all the barriers of self, of society, of nature, to the realization of that other incredible dream, the dream of seeing God face to face.

CHAPTER III
(OUTLINE)
THE TRUTH OF THE WAY
(Q 4-8)

1. Contrasting contacts of high and low.
 - (a) Patronizing contact
 - (b) Ennobling contact
2. Intimate contact of divinity in the Incarnation
 - (a) Root of early errors—human nature seen from above
 - (1) Contrast of divine perfection and human limitation.
 - (2) The nature most fitting for assumption by God
 - (b) The human side of the union
 - (1) Not a person assumed
 - (2) Not a man
 - (3) But a singular nature from the stock of Adam.
3. The humility of Christ—the truth of Christ's human nature
 - (a) Four errors and their basis
 - (b) The truth of the human nature of Christ
 - (1) A real material body
 - (2) A human soul with all its faculties
 - (c) The order of assumption of human nature.
4. The ennoblement of humanity—the grace and virtue of Christ
 - (a) The divine ennoblement—the grace of union
 - (b) The created ennoblement—grace in the human soul of Christ.
 - (1) The individual grace of Christ:
 - a Its nature
 - b Its accompaniments
 - c Prophecy and the apostolic graces.
 - d Perfection of grace in Christ
 - (2) The capital grace of Christ—the grace of headship:
 - a Its nature
 - b Its extent Christ the head of the Church, of souls and bodies, of men, of angels
 - c. Degradation of human nature—headship of evil.
 - 1 The devil as head of the wicked
 - 2 Anti-Christ as head of the wicked.

Conclusion

1. The truth of human nature
 - (a) Perspectives and truth
 - (b) Perspectives of human nature:
 - (1) Seen from above
 - (2) Seen from below
 - (3) Seen from a horizontal plane.

- (c) Truth of the perspectives
 - (1) As partial views
 - (2) As complete views
- 2 Obstacles to belief in the Incarnation in ignorance of human nature.
- 3 The Incarnation and humanity
 - (a) Not a insult but an accolade
 - (b) Not patronizing but ennobling.

CHAPTER III

THE TRUTH OF THE WAY

(Q. 4-8)

TO THE nineteenth century, natural law was a mechanical distributor of men which did its work as inexorably, as perfectly, and as justly as a sorting machine separates coins. If a man lived on the edge of starvation, that was precisely where he belonged, and, presumably, he should have been happy to find his proper place. If he were rich, he could revel in that wealth, he deserved it, his place in life was his proper one. Some men were in high positions, others in low, but all were in their proper places. It need hardly be added that this doctrine was not formulated by men on the edge of starvation. Nor were they the only ones who suffered grave injustice in the name of that doctrine; it was much too comforting for those on top, utterly despairing for those on the bottom of the social ladder.

The two extremes of society met only in a patronizing contact of condescension. Men and women from the higher levels went slumming; whether such expeditions were merely forms of amusement or well meant expressions of real pity, they always threw the whole burden upon those receiving help. Both as gestures of mocking contempt and wholehearted pity, such contacts aroused a smouldering resentment.

When it gave rise to institutional charity, this philosophy of the natural law soon smothered resentment by completely breaking the spirit of man. The dignity of the individual man was forgotten in the exercise of duty to an obviously lower thing which left that lower thing firmly imbedded in its inferiority. Here and there, an occasional rebel would refuse to be

grateful, smarting under the obvious emphasis of his defects. But on the whole, institutional charity destroyed the vulnerability of its victims, broke their spirit, robbed them of self-respect, and moved them to submit to its ministrations as though, in truth, this were the best they could expect from life, being what they were.

Yet there is another way of conferring a favor, not a patronizing but an ennobling way; a way that puts all the burden on the giver. "Give a hand up," a Community Chest catch-word of a few years ago, is an accurate expression of this ennobling beneficence. There is a certain bending down involved as there must be in the conferring of any favor, for we must have what another lacks to minister to him; but it is not a patronizing pat on the head that serves principally to remind men of conditions that are already bitter enough. It is rather a rekindling of old fires, an awakening of great capacities, or, even, the bestowal of new capabilities.

It was in this way that the Son of God could stoop to a sick man and say. "Thy faith hath made thee whole," emphasizing the human part in the divine miracle. He could address a sinner. "Be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee," paying the divinely subtle compliment of recognizing how downcast a man's heart is by the consciousness of his sins. This is Christ's way, a divine way, of bestowing favors. That alone would be enough to recommend it. But it is not only a supernatural, it is a naturally wholesome way of bringing together the high and low.

Throughout all the contact of higher and lower in the world, where the divine touch is still unmarred, the contacts lift up, ennoble the lower thing; they do not press it down deeper into its inferiority. Thus when plant life and sensitive life meet in intimate contact in the animals, plant life operates on a much higher plane than when it exists alone. Animal powers in intimate contact with the rational in man, surpass the levels they reach when existing apart. In our own world of human contacts, sharp brushes with our intellectual superiors spur our

mind on to heights that surprise us; contact with sanctity shakes the greatest of sinners to the depths of their souls and lights, if only for a moment, the old spark of courage and hope for the things of God.

Men rightly resent patronizing. If they are somewhat wiser, they pity the patronizer for he is a victim of a peculiarly paralyzing blindness. When it is a question of man to man contact, the idea of stooping to men beneath us involves an element of contempt and its correlative of smug satisfaction. And contempt of men is an act of spiritual provincialism unworthy of the cosmopolitan heart of man. Christ was merciful, He was wrathful, but He was never contemptuous; for Christ was never blind.

If there be any justification for patronizing, surely it is justified in God's relations to men. For ourselves, we may reach up a little above our fellows by the accident of knowledge, of strength, of sanctity; but fundamentally we are on exactly the same level of humanity with all other men. In the Incarnation, God stooped the infinite distance between divinity and humanity. That distance would still have been infinite if it were perfect human nature, rather than a fallen nature stripped of its gifts by the sin of Adam, to which He was bending. Yet God's assumption of human nature was not a mocking expedition into the slums of creation. His kindness was not a slur on humanity; He did not break man's spirit or rob him of his dignity. He came to enkindle old and new fires that would light up ineffable paths for the feet of every man.

Perhaps one of the roots of error about the Incarnation is to be found in the one-sided insistence on the infinite distance between the divine and the human. It is safe to say that, on the whole, human nature was looked on consistently from above at the time of the Incarnation. Both Jews and pagans had their eyes fixed on heights of divinity infinitely far above men; human nature, seen from the heights of divinity, seemed to them a tiny, even an insignificant thing. Dazzled by the divine perfection, they were unable to see its image in man; the

fire of divinity was so big, they did not notice the spark of humanity. So limitless was the divine, it seemed to demand a kind of contempt for everything limited, humanity included. The idea of a union of the human and the divine seemed to men of that time like an insult to God.

There is a half-truth in that position that gives it a reasonable appearance. It would be insulting to suppose that intimate contact with humanity could add anything to God; but it is not an insult to divinity to see in that contact with humanity a gracious gesture ennobling that lower thing which is man. It is true that only to a divine mind could such generosity have occurred; but that is no reason for the human mind to refuse to have anything to do with such generosity. It is true that humanity is infinitely distant from the perfection of its Creator; but that does not mean that the innate dignity of human nature is to be forgotten or denied.

If God did determine to assume a created nature, surely no nature other than the human is so fitted for union with God. This is not to say that human nature has any title, any right, any natural capacity for substantial union with God. But on the grounds of fitness, everything beneath man falls short by comparison with human nature's unique imaging of God by intellect and will, along with the tremendous possibilities of its destiny of eternal face to face vision of the Godhead. On the grounds of necessity, all natures above the human are excluded; for the act of the angels in sinning is something that cannot be undone, the redemption of the angels, consequently, is an impossibility. Man is not driven to his action; nor is his choice eternally fixed by one act. He is an image of God, but a wavering one; his nature can be united substantially with God, and it needs that union desperately.

Before plunging into the details of this fitting and necessary union of God to man, it is of extreme importance that we make an exact determination of the human element of this union. It must be understood that here there was no question of God scrutinizing the Jewish population of that time in search of a

life companion, or of a person of exactly the right perfection of nature that God might then rob him of his nature and destroy him. There is no question here of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity assuming a human person; there is no human person involved in this union at all.

Something was certainly assumed by God. If a person were present in what was assumed, it would be necessary either to annihilate that person or assume him. In the first case, God would have created a person much as a child would light a match, merely for the mild amusement to be had from blowing it out. In the second case, there would have been no real union in the Incarnation, merely a conjunction of persons, human and divine, Christ, then, would be no more than a name to signify an ill assorted pair of twins. What God assumed in this union was not a human person but a human nature.

This assumed human nature was not that ghostly, unreal thing that had sprung from Plato's idealistic disgust with the material. However unhandy the material side of our nature may be in a subway, however expensive it may be in a restaurant, if we are to be human we must have a body; and God assumed a *human* nature in the Incarnation. This human nature was not the abstract, universal nature that exists in the mind of man; divinity was not united to a human idea with a resultant fiction that would be of small comfort and less utility. Nor is this human nature as it exists in the mind of God; for that would mean an eternal wedding of the Son of God to a divine idea, which idea is in reality identical with divinity itself. This is not human nature in the specific, universal sense in which it is common to all men; in that case, Christ would be the sole possessor of human nature with such consequent absurdities as Christ taunting Himself, questioning Himself, killing Himself.

Rather, the human nature taken by the Son of God was a singular human nature such as we have, a human nature taken from the line of Adam.

God could, of course, have concocted a human body from the materials of a test-tube and then have infused a newly created human soul. He might have brought forth this human nature from nothing, as He did in the beginning of things, whole and entire. Actually, He did none of these things. He took the material side of that nature from the pure womb of the Virgin, the flesh and blood of Mary; the soul, of course, must always come directly from divine hands. After all, it was not a test-tube or its ingredients that had sinned; there would be no humbling of the devil, no restoration of human self-respect and dignity in a victory won by a strange new nature coming directly from the hand of God. For the full manifestation of divine power and the ennobling victory of humanity over Satan, God had to take on fallen nature, nature weakened by sin and the penalty sin deserves, and lift it to the heights of the divine.

In *Father Malachy's Miracle*, a novel that shouldn't be allowed to grow old, the scientists of different cities were called together to explain the marvellous event that had all the world talking. According to the reports they had received, a dance hall had been whisked in an instant from the midst of a city to a rock out in the ocean, leaving a gaping hole where it had formerly nestled snugly crowded between two houses. After investigation, the scientists offered explanations which were various but exhausting. Some said that, contrary to gossip in the neighborhood, the dance hall had never existed; the story of its existence was a false rumor. Others insisted that, despite appearances, there was really no gaping hole between the two houses. While still others, disregarding the dance hall perched on a rock like a sea gull and the empty space of its former residence, pointed out that there really were no trustworthy witnesses of the whole occurrence.

The fictional verdicts are humorous, but not exaggerated, instances of a very human trick, the trick of molding the world to our way of thinking, rather than conforming our thought to

the hard realities of truth. In a sense, the trick is humanly understandable. There is much less of discomfort and annoyance in filling our house with purely imaginary guests, for imaginary guests will not spill real ash trays, break real dishes, or produce real disorder in the house. Solid flesh and blood guests, unfortunately, do all these things. The acceptance of truth makes us host to the world, the guests we then entertain, solid, real guests, can cause considerable havoc in the world of our dreams.

Men, faced with the living Christ, seeing Him eat, sleep, grow weary, hearing Him speak, pray, weep, were faced with the indisputable truth of His humanity. It was, in more than one sense, an uncomfortable truth for it brought God too close for comfort. The sun is all right in its place, but not too close; the Roman emperor of Christ's time was given loyalty, but no mere officer of the Roman army would look forward to a week-end with the emperor as his house guest. The high priests were held in high esteem by their people; but the people would be embarrassed, uncomfortable, uneasy with the priests in their very house. All these high and mighty things are much better at a distance. Obviously, then, the splendor of divinity was not something to have in the next room. Most likely this terror was not so much a sneaking fear of uncovering some imperfection in God, but was rather a fear of a keener realization of the responsibilities and imperfections of man.

At any rate, men went about escaping the truth by substituting every possible imaginary version of it that would not disturb the comfort of men. It was said, for instance, that Christ had no body; what men saw was a phantom body. In this way God was kept at a distance; but it also meant that from the ecstasy of Mary at Bethlehem to the tears of Magdalen on Calvary, indeed to the last despairing sinner rushing to the feet of Christ, the story of Christ is a long story of deception. The followers of the God-man, then, are victims of a lie that is more monstrous for being divine.

However, the evidence to the contrary was a little bit too much even for men in love with their comfort. After all Christ did stumble under the cross. Well then, they said, let us say that Christ had a real body; but at least it was not an imperfect, earthly body such as we carry through life. It must have been a celestial thing, a body made of the superior material from which the shining stars are formed; a material that really couldn't lose its form, a body that could not be separated from its soul.

Nevertheless, Christ did bow His head and die. Again the evidence was too much and men agreed to the reality and materiality of His body. Not all the emergency exits, however, had been tried. At least it could be claimed that He did not have a human soul; the work ordinarily done by a human soul could very well be done by the Word of God without serious inconvenience. Yet Christ's soul grew sorrowful, sorrowful even unto death; and, unless the whole thing was a lie, that soul informed the body, became an essential part of the composite human nature.

In a last desperate stand against truth, men, agreeing to the reality of Christ's body and soul, denied Him a human intellect and a human will. They would not concede to His soul those faculties which were responsible for man's original rebellion against God and his degradation of himself; for that inconstant, fickle thing called human love. This would be unworthy of divinity. One wonders if they had forgotten that it is those same faculties that are the source of the heroism of the saints, the utter abandonment of all else for God, of the unearthly yearning of the human heart.

That all of these escapes from truth are false is of divine faith. They are all false for exactly the same reason, namely, because of their denial of humanity to Christ. They are all monstrous because they make the supreme act of divine love a living lie. If Christ had no human, material body He was not a man. All the lovable human acts of which the Gospel tells us are no more than the fantastic reports of gullible dupes

of an immoral divinity. The divine Person involved here is the Word of God, the First Truth, the source of all truth; there is no room for a lie in the story of His life among men. If Christ had no soul, He was no man. That body of His was a false front, a dummy responding to mechanical tugs on its different strings to give an impression of life. And all the basis for sympathy and understanding, courage and inspiration, that has come to men from the struggles and difficulties faced by the soul of Christ is gone. If Christ had no mind or no will, the Evangelist lied when he said that Christ "wondered"; Christ was using meaningless terms when He said in the Garden "Not my will but Thine be done." Without a mind, without a will, the flesh borne by the Son of God would be bestial flesh; for by these are we evidently above the animal world, by these we are responsible, by these we merit. So the whole farce played in Palestine is as empty as a lie deserves to be.

The authors of these errors, faced with the Incarnation of the Son of God, reacted much as a family crowded into an East Side tenement would react to the sudden discovery of genius in their midst. To them, human nature could not be assumed by God. Why, they knew all about human nature; they had seen it under all circumstances, had lived with it all their lives. In other words, their fundamental failure was that they did not appreciate the dignity of human nature; they overlooked its imaging of divinity, its direct production on the spiritual side by God, its ultimate destiny of eternal vision of the essence of God. The men of that world denied the humanity of Christ, not out of respect for divinity so much as out of disrespect for humanity.

The Son of God took to Himself true human nature, body and soul, in the very instant of the miraculous presence of the human material of that union in the womb of Mary. At that moment in the history of the universe, heaven and earth waited in hushed suspense for the answer of a very young girl. Upon her answer depended the realization of the dreams of men.

Because she answered rightly, generously, unquestioningly, God was made man.

Understand, there was no question of intervening time. We must not picture human nature cooling its heels waiting for the tardy arrival of the Son of God. Neither is there any question of the Son of God taking our human nature part by part, as though the soul were taken from all eternity, or as though the flesh were taken while the world waited for God to turn out a particularly perfect soul. In neither case would the Son of God be taking on a human nature. Neither must we suppose the presence of any intermediary bond between human nature and the divine Person, such as joins Siamese twins, or as frail as the grace that binds us to God. This was a direct, immediate union of the Son of God with human nature.

We can, indeed we must, speak of an order of dignity. In this sense we can say that the soul was before the body, the spiritual before the material powers of man. We can speak of an order of causality, putting the soul first because it is the life-principle of the body. But it must be well understood that all this is a manner of speaking, necessary because our minds must have order even in the instantaneous. If we are spirited from the bottom of a flight of steps to the top in an instant, we must still look back to count the steps; we are uncomfortable in a modern elevator that whirls us up to the fiftieth floor unless we have numbers to check off as we soar up. In this mystery, we can soothe the grumblings of our minds by talking about the distinctions of first and second that we inject into the mystery; but we must not lose hold of the truth that there is nothing either in human nature or in the supernatural order that could serve as a medium for this union.

Because we ourselves are united to God by grace, there is a persistent inclination to make grace the bond of the hypostatic union. But there is no sense in which this is true. If we take grace in the sense of a gracious act of the will of God, then grace was the cause, not the bond of this union. If by grace we mean the grace of the human soul of Christ, then grace is

an effect of this hypostatic union. If grace is taken to mean the grace of the hypostatic union itself, we are stating the act of the assumption of human nature, not a bond between it and the divine Person.

If we pause for a moment in the consideration of this mystery to recover a little from our breathlessness, even that moment of rest is haunted by the thought that it is disturbing to have God so close to us. We can understand the twisting and squirming of the human mind trying to escape the grasp of that truth, for in the midst of our sins it is terrifying to realize that the nature we are degrading was joined to divinity through God's own Son. It is hard to justify our cowardice, our fear, our discouragement when we know the authentic character of the example of human living given us by Christ, an authenticity that is divine.

There is too the flattering comfort that accompanies the role of protector so evident in men's fear that God might humiliate Himself. It was as though they looked on God as an innocent abroad in an unsavory district; they feared He might somehow be soiled. So they moved to protect God even at the cost of truth. It is strange, seeing the clarity of the same truth in the human order, that such mistakes should have been made. Thomas, writing for beginners in composing his *Summa Theologica*, did not lower himself. The teacher of first graders descends to an inferior intellectual level but she does not demean herself, nor does she degrade the children she teaches. In the Incarnation, God was not dragged down; He came down. It was a gracious gesture of an infinitely generous love which rather raised God in our estimation even though it added nothing to God. The Incarnation is a graphic statement of the depths to which the love of God will plunge seeking us out; it is in no sense a lowering of God.

Half truths are only occasionally dangerous; they are always worthless. If we underestimate man we have also underestimated God; with the result that we have not knowledge of either God or man. Obviously, we cannot underesti-

mate a dinner and still properly appreciate the cook whose skill produced it. The heretics of the early Church, underestimating the nature of man, forgot the nature of God, Whose divine wisdom had produced man. It is not surprising, then, that they did not see that God's union with human nature would be supreme generosity from God and a supreme boon to man. They missed its ennobling character for human nature; and at the same time, they did not see that it would not be a divine slumming expedition but rather an awakening of humanity to its forgotten potentialities and a creation of new capacities in human nature.

Human nature needed that ennobling badly. It had been beaten down too long. It is quite possible that a great deal of Irish pride in Irish scholarship can be traced to a sense of vindication after years of unfair accusations of ignorance. Certainly the pride of American Negroes in their sports' champions has a long background of unjustified conviction of inferiority. A sense of failure can get into the blood and bones of a man. If he is beaten often enough, he may come to expect failure and cringe before its very threat. Human nature was in much this position before sin and the devil. It needed a taste of victory. It needed a tangible proof of its own greatness to be itself again. This taste of victory, this conviction of its own greatness ably portrayed in the life of Christ, has been at the roots of the indomitable courage of saints and sinners who have tried, with varying degrees of success, to follow the footsteps of the Master.

The obvious and substantial ennobling of human nature is found, of course, in the very hypostatic union itself. To enoble, if it means anything, means to exalt; here human nature was lifted up beyond the dreams of men to personal union with divinity itself. From that time on, all members of the human family have had solid reason for pride; and it is a very human trait to make the most of the slightest basis of pride. It is not only a mother or a father who speaks so proudly of "my boy" and what he has done, but brothers, sisters, and

cousins removed to the third or fourth degree miss no opportunity to drag in the name of an outstanding member of the family.

However, for a full appreciation of the exaltation of humanity in the Incarnation we must look within the very soul of the man Christ. There we will find a vivid statement of the sublime heights reached by man. There we have a landmark to which our efforts can be directed, by which they can be guided. For there, by the same medium by which our own souls are perfected, a man walked the heights of perfection.

In the soul of Christ there was exactly the same sanctifying grace which, in our own souls, makes us holy and pleasing to God. It *had* to be there if the soul of Christ were to move on a supernatural plane. It was as absolutely necessary for His soul as it is for our own. It was necessary for this most noble of men Who was to elicit the most noble of acts, to be given the supernatural principles of those actions, just as it is necessary for us; He Who was to be the cause, the source of grace to all other men, had to be given the grace He was in turn to give. This habitual or sanctifying grace was not only present in the soul of Christ, it was necessarily and inevitably present. One cannot get close to fire without feeling some warmth. One cannot stand under the spray of a fountain without getting wet. We cannot hold a cup under a stream without filling it. So the human nature of Christ, intimately, substantially united to God Himself, could not but participate in that divinity; and participation in divinity on the side of the human soul is sanctifying grace.

The consequences of grace in the soul of Christ were the same as they are in our own souls: that magnificent set of supernatural virtues, the material of the third volume of this present work, the tools by which his eternal niche is carved out by a man's own efforts. Christ could not carve the rock of eternity with the fingernails of human nature any more than we can; He too needed that supernatural help. But in Him these supernatural perfections were of a supreme degree. And

quite reasonably so. Just as the condition of a baby's lungs will give an estimate, perhaps unnecessary, of the power of the baby's voice, or the strength of a man gives a good idea of the shattering effect his blows will have, so the sublimity of the grace of Christ is itself a statement of the perfection of the virtues which flow from it.

There is one limitation to the virtues of Christ; but it is a limitation laid down against imperfection. Christ did not have the virtues that in themselves implied some imperfection. Thus, for instance, there was no faith in Christ. For faith implies the lack of the vision of God, a vision that was had by Christ from the first instant of His conception. There was no hope in Christ, at least in the sense of its principal object, the beatific vision; Christ did not hope for this, He had it. There might, though, very well be hope in Christ in the sense of that completion of happiness to be had after the resurrection of the body.

In Christ, the grace of prophecy and of miracles were almost constant things, giving irrefutable testimony to the presence in Him of those apostolic graces which are given, not so much for the salvation of the one receiving, but for the salvation of others. Of course, it should have been so; for Christ was Chief of the apostles, the first Teacher of faith and the whole purpose of these graces is to make truth manifest. It was for this that He came into the world.

A man is perfect in proportion to his approach to God; and the measure of his approach is sanctifying grace. Christ the man needed this supernatural perfection as every other man needs it; His human nature was no more capable of the supernatural of itself than ours is. He needed it and He had it, completely, fully, perfectly. If we remember that all this was the perfection of Christ the man, we can see much more of the exaltation of human nature in the Incarnation.

Rigidly, absolutely, Christ was full of grace. The phrase has been used of others and rightly so; but not in such an absolute sense as it is of Christ. Mary was full of grace; John the

Baptist was full of grace; Stephen and the apostles were full of grace. That is, each of these had all the grace necessary for the work they had to do, Mary excelling the others because of the eminence of the work for which she was destined, the inestimable work of being the Mother of God. In this same relative sense, it is quite true that all of us are full of grace; for the comforting truth of the matter is that all of us have the grace necessary to fulfil the work assigned to us by God, to live up to the obligations of our state in life.

In Christ, however, the fullness of grace was absolute; and in Him alone. No one had a greater work to do than the redemption of the whole human race, so that, in Christ, we might say the relative fullness of grace coincided with the absolute. What He had to do could be done only by God; Christ the man was God.

Lest we be swept away by the splendor of the grace of Christ, the note of the human in Christ rings out like a buoy sounding in the darkness of divinity to warn us again and again that all of this happened to Christ the man. The grace and virtues of Christ were perfections of a human soul; they were not, then, infinite, not uncreated but finite, created things. It is true that there was nothing of grace lacking to Christ; looking down the long ages to which this grace of Christ would reach as the source of grace to all others, we are not wrong in describing it loosely as infinite. Certainly any increase of it is impossible. If grace is the measure of our approach to God, how could Christ get closer to divinity? Once we have possessed the goal of our lives, increase in grace is no longer possible to us; Christ possessed the vision of God from the first instant of His conception. The degree of glory is given in proportion to the degree of grace, once and for all; Christ possessed glory from the first moment of His life.

This supernatural perfection of the soul of Christ is one of the sharpest rebukes the Incarnation brings to our age. No sane man of our time would reject the telephone as an effeminate substitute for a shouted message from New York to

Chicago. Yet thousands of men of our time, men who pride themselves on their sanity and reasonableness, reject divine help as an insult to their self-sufficiency in living human life successfully. In the Incarnation, the most perfect of men confessed His complete need of these supernatural helps; by these helps He was perfected, and by them alone.

There is a particularly solemn note in this rebuke because of the indisputable fact that no man walks the length of his life in isolation. In injuring himself, he injures others; in perfecting himself, he perfects others. Wherever he is and whatever he does, there will be repercussions from his life in the lives of those with whom he comes into contact. The apostles, and all the saints who followed them, were right in speaking of the spiritual children they had begotten; the awful tale of the still-born spiritual children still remains to be told.

For men, this influence on the lives of others, for good or ill, necessarily remains an extrinsic thing touching no more than the outer surface of another's life. Christ, by the very things by which He was perfected, perfected others, and perfected them intrinsically. The phrase "a second Adam," so dear to the Fathers, is both profound and exact. Christ was indeed a second Adam; like the first, He also was a principle of men, not indeed of their physical natures but of their spiritual perfection. As in Adam the physical nature which was to be the source of all others was perfect in the very beginning; so in Christ, from Whom was to proceed the endlessly long line of the blessed, the spiritual nature which was to be the source of all perfection was itself perfect from the very beginning.

The source of Christ's own perfection was the habitual grace in His soul. That same grace, as the source of the perfection of others, has been called the *capital grace* of Christ, the grace of His headship. It is well to understand this clearly, for it is the final, exquisite detail in the exaltation of human nature: the grace by which Christ is the head of all men is the habitual grace of the human soul of Christ in its superabundance, as working to the perfection of others.

The headship of Christ is well worth a thorough investigation, if for no other reason, because the figure of the Mystical Body which has won such wide appreciation today depends entirely upon it. Such an investigation does not represent any real difficulty; but it is somewhat complex, perhaps because it parallels so exactly the idea of headship in both the physical and moral order on a purely natural scale. If we do no more than look at our own head, which is always conveniently handy, and its relations to the rest of our body, or at the head of the State and his relations to the rest of the body politic, we have the outstanding characteristics of the headship of Christ at our finger-tips.

In a summary way we can list these characteristics as: distinction, conformity, union of order, and continuity of the head in relation to the members. When we bring the consideration down to the concrete, it is completely obvious. Take, for instance, the details of the first characteristic, that of distinction. No man needs detailed instruction to grasp the fact that he is much more grossly insulted when his face is trampled on rather than his feet; or, to put the same thing in another way, no one of us is surprised at the twenty-one gun salute given to the head of a State, though we would be astonished, as private citizens, if the guns boomed every time we appeared in public. We insist upon a real distinction on grounds of *dignity* between the head and members. We know there is much more cause for worry when we see an epileptic throwing a fit on the edge of a skyscraper than there is in the antics of a tight-rope walker in the same position: for we have complete confidence in the *government* or direction of things when the head is in charge; none at all when it isn't. We are quite sure that we cannot beat ideas into our brains with our fists, though we constantly expect our brains to communicate motion to our hands; we know, in other words, something of the eminent *power* of the head, and the lack of that command in the members.

The same detailed parallelism could be made in regard to

the characteristic of conformity between head and members. But this is really not necessary. It is completely plain to us that if the distorted masks worn by primitive peoples in their rites were more than masks, we would be looking upon things of utmost horror; it takes no deep thought to see that the union of totally unrelated heads and members would be as certain a guarantee of disorder and war as the confinement of a cat and a canary in the same cage. What, for instance, would happen if the Emperor of Japan were to be installed as ruler of America tomorrow morning?

There must be a union of order between head and members if complete chaos is to be averted; after all the head is served by the hands, the different members serve one another at the behest of the head. There must be continuity between head and members, for power must flow from the head into the members; a woman might wish, vaguely, that she could take her head off at night for the sake of her hair-do, but the temptation to try it is really not serious.

All these characteristics are to be found in the headship of Christ; He is really the head. That simple statement is a vivid picture of how truly Christ is ours, of the heights to which our nature was lifted in Christ the man, of the intimacy of our life with Christ and the catastrophe of our separation from Him. We are one with Him and it is by His grace that we ourselves live.

All of these inspiring truths are not lessened but magnified by even a brief glance at the sweeping extent of the headship of Christ. He is the head of all the Church, for He does for the Mystical Body what the head does for the physical body. He is the first of all the members, the most perfect, the most powerful, from Him life flows into all the members. He is the head of all souls and bodies; for His humanity was the instrument of the salvation of all souls and bodies, from Him grace flows into the souls of men to make the bodies of men here and now instruments of justice, to give them glorious immortality in eternity.

He is the head of absolutely all men in this life and of some men in eternity. He is simply and absolutely head of the faithful in heaven who are united to Him in glory, and of the faithful on earth in the state of grace who are thereby united to Him in charity. In a lesser sense, He is head of the faithful who have the misfortune to be in serious sin for they are still united to Him by faith. Potentially, He is head of those who have no faith and never will have; He is potentially head of those who have not the faith but who will have it at some time in the future. In other words, He is head of all those men who have at least the possibility of union with God.

He is head of the angels; they too belong to the Mystical Body of the Church. Nearer to God, He has more of perfection, participating more perfectly in the gifts of God, and from Him the angels receive accidental grace and glory. In relation to the angels, Christ enjoys all the characteristics of His headship of men.

There are other Christs, not only in the sacramental sense of the priesthood administering directly to the souls of men as Christ did, but also in the sense of the external government of men. It is true that Christ alone is head as far as the interior influx of grace to the members of His body is concerned; but as far as external government goes, Christ has allowed a participation in His headship, a participation limited in time, place, and power. The Pope is the Vicar of Christ, the visible head of the Church, participating in the headship of Christ.

There is one exception to the headship of Christ. He is not the head of the damned in hell. These are the headless ones, a horde rather than an ordered group. They have irrevocably cut off their head. They are slaves now, victims of their stupidity in attacking the head to their own destruction. The devil is their head only in the sense of external government; for while the devil may tempt, taunt, suggest, call names like a spiteful boy, play the part of a sneak or a coward, unless a man surrender, the devil can never crash the gates of a human soul. Obviously, his headship is not to be compared to the

headship of Christ with its intrinsic flow of life to the depths of a man's soul. Yet, in a very real sense, the devil does accomplish a difficult task in leading men to destruction and degradation against every inclination of their nature, every dictate of reason, every inspiring desire of their heart.

Unquestionably the devil has many subjects. He is head of the wicked, their invisible head. Later on, towards the end of the world, the wicked will have a visible head in Anti-Christ who will reach the depths of evil, with all the force of diabolic help and suggestion behind him to speed his descent and accomplish his goal of destroying men by leading them away from God.

A new step was taken by the motion picture industry when it introduced shots taken from odd angles. This was paralleled in the amateur world by the craze for candid-camera pictures. In both lines some striking results were achieved. distorted results that were comic, tragic, ridiculous, horrible, and often extremely humiliating. Behind all these results there is a really profound truth. The most familiar things can look completely strange if they are seen from a new angle; even a harmless cabbage leaf can look like a devouring monster if seen close-up through a magnifying lens. For our grasp of the truth of things depends to a great extent on the perspective from which we see them.

Thus, our human nature can be seen from below; then it looms as gigantic, imposing. Seen from above, it shrinks into humbling insignificance, dwarfed like a string of freight cars that, from a height of twelve thousand feet, look like tiny match-boxes cast down carelessly by a child. Human nature can be seen from its own level, then it appears as an inspiring and humiliating union of the lowest and highest in creation. Mary, seeing herself in this way, tasted a fearful joy at the Annunciation.

All these views are true enough if they are not taken as the whole truth. Man is gigantic, imposing compared to the level of life beneath him. Man is tiny, insignificant compared to

the infinite perfection of divinity. Man on his own level is the combination of the lowest and highest in the universe; he is capable of great love, of unstinting sacrifice, but he is also capable of great sin, of complete selfishness, of calamitous failure. To take any one of these as the whole story of humanity is to fall into absurdly tragic error. Thus the naturalist today looks at man only from below and sees him as the peak of perfection; the humanitarian sees man on his own horizontal level and is bewildered by the paradox of humiliation and inspiration with no key to the solution of the mystery. Much of Protestantism has looked upon man from above and seen him only as insignificant, corrupted, utterly powerless, a fit victim for despair.

To be properly appreciated, human nature must be seen from all these angles, not from any one. And it must be appreciated if we are to grasp the significance of the Incarnation. The Son of God assumed a human nature. If we see man only from below, we discard the idea of the necessity of the Incarnation, rejecting it as absurd. If we see man only from above, we consider the idea of the Incarnation an insult to divinity. If we see man only on the level of his own human nature, neither from above or below, we remain in ignorance of the world in which he lives, the man himself, God, and the very goal of the Incarnation.

In the early centuries of the Church, humanity was seen most consistently from above by pagans, Jews, and to some extent by Christians. To men of that time, then, there was something shocking, even insulting to divinity in the idea of the Incarnation. In our times, human nature is seen almost as consistently from below or, at best, from its own level. Now the Incarnation seems an insult to humanity. The truth lies between these two precisely because the truth is the whole view of human nature.

The Incarnation is a gracious gesture of love from divinity; and a gracious gesture of love is never unbecoming. This particular gesture is a badly needed ennobling of humanity,

never a degradation or a reflection upon that humanity. In other words, God has not patronized us in the Incarnation, He has not come down to us in a sneering, humiliating way that would leave us just so much more aware of the hopelessness of our defects. Rather He has come to us, bending down indeed, not to remind us of any bitterness in the contrast, but to rekindle old fires within us, to awaken us to a realization of our own great capacities, and to confer upon us new abilities that make our every act ring in eternity.

CHAPTER IV
(OUTLINE)
LIKE UNTO US
(Q 9-15)

1. Statements of human nature

- (a) A thing of evil and corruption
- (b) A thing of sweetness and light
- (c) A thing indifferent to evil and to good

2. Christ's summary of human nature

- (a) "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"
- (b) Significance of the summary
 - (1) For all men
 - (2) For Christ the man, like unto us

3. The perfection of Christ's human nature—the willing spirit:

- (a) Perfections of grace and virtue (Chapter III)
- (b) Perfection of knowledge
 - (1) In general—human and divine knowledge
 - (2) Human knowledge in particular
 - a Knowledge of the blessed
 - b Infused knowledge its object, act, and habit.
 - c Acquired knowledge
 - 1 Its object
 - 2 Its progress
 - 3 The teachers of Christ
- (c) Perfection of power in the soul of Christ
 - (1) Simply—not omnipotent.
 - (2) Relatively
 - a To others
 - b To Christ Himself
 - 1 To His body
 - 2 To the fulfillment of His will

4. The defects of Christ's human nature—the weakness of the flesh:

- (a) In general
- (b) In particular
 - (1) Defects of soul, i e , of intellect and will
 - (2) Defects of sense appetite
 - a The possibility
 - b The fact
 - 1 Pain, sorrow, fear
 - 2 Admiration and anger
- (c) The harmony of defects and perfections in Christ.

Conclusion.

1. The splendor of the paradox
 - (a) The strength and weakness of man.
 - (b) The strength and weakness of God
2. A truth that is too hard
 - (a) For men of power
 - (b) For men of thought
 - (1) Philosophies of optimism.
 - (2) Philosophies of despair
 - (3) Philosophies of animalism.
3. The Incarnation and cowards.

CHAPTER IV

LIKE UNTO US

(Q. 9-15)

NOT SO very long ago, a newspaper report of a medical meeting quoted one of the doctors to the effect that mothers, while very nice in themselves, were really luxuries. A child of today, outside the biological accident of birth, could take a mother or leave her alone; certainly it had no real need of the old-fashioned mother. Granted that the reporter might have had his passion for accuracy slightly dampened by the conjectures of a medical convention, still the trend seems to be in fact towards loosening the knot that ties a mother to her child that she might be freer to "live her own life." The unusual note in this report is that it states that trend from the child's point of view to give us the unflattering picture of a child cheerfully shrugging off its mother as so much excess baggage.

Maybe the modern child does feel that way about a mother. But then we would hardly expect a child to appreciate all of the homely functions of home when we ourselves take so much for granted. And we do take too much for granted. By way of making this point, let us suppose that some child of our day should be deprived of this luxury formerly known as a mother. If we concentrate on just one little consequence of that condition, we are given a somewhat startling insight into the obvious things we never see. Try to realize what a dreadful state that child would be in from the mere fact that no one really knows him. To the friends he will make, he will seem much better than he is; to his enemies, he will appear much worse than he is. To all the rest, the multitudes of men and women he will pass on the street every day, he will be just

another stranger; they will not be interested enough in him even to hazard an opinion on his goodness or badness.

The home has always offered a subtle relief for all men. A man knows his friends are wrong in their benevolent estimate of him; he has inside information on the limitations of his own goodness. He sincerely hopes, in fact he must hope, that his enemies are unjust, that he is not nearly as bad as they think he is. At one time or another, he will walk the streets of a strange city and be a little frightened at the multitude who do not care in the least whether he is good or bad. But when he comes home he is enveloped in an invigorating atmosphere of truth. Here everyone knows him, better, perhaps, than he knows himself. Those at home know he is not perfect; they know he is not completely corrupt; and they are decidedly interested in him for just what he is.

Personifying human nature with these facts in mind, we can readily understand how justly we speak of "Our Holy Mother the Church." We can see human nature coming home of an evening from a world in which it is a stranger, a world in which some men think it all bad while others can see nothing but good in it. Human nature comes home to the atmosphere of truth, to the Church; it snuggles into a warm robe, relaxes in slippers and finds grounds for hope, reason for effort, and support for love. Here human nature is known as neither all bad nor all good, and it has been staunchly defended against all comers for two thousands years for precisely what it was.

Men have vilified human nature, spat on it, despised it, insisting it was all corrupt. This was the ugly heresy that, retaining the name of Christianity, deservedly earned the contempt of so many modern minds. In the face of that contempt, it had to abandon its fundamentals or change its estimate of human nature; it was the fundamentals that went by the board. Other men have put human nature on a pedestal, insisting it was all sweetness and light. There human nature has remained, feeling silly, irritated by the combination of

incense and rare air, despising its courtiers. At least the cloying sweetness of the whole business gave it a sympathetic understanding of the mean temper of lap-dogs.

By others, human nature has been elbowed about, trodden on, blindly passed by like another atom in a subway universe. It has been jabbed at, tamped, analyzed, and prescribed for like one of a thousand patients being rushed through a clinic operating on a mass production scale. It has felt outraged, undignified, irritated, and bitter at the conviction that no one in the place really cared what its condition was.

It has been a steady comfort for human nature to come home, to come to the place where it was really known; to come to the feet of God and hear the God-man corroborating the experience of centuries by the words of the eternal wisdom that is God's. Christ's summary of human nature is perhaps the briefest, certainly one of the most beautiful and profound that has come down to us. Standing over His sleeping apostles there in Gethsemane, with the blood of agony still fresh on Him, He said: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." The very words, few as they are, give vivid expression to a divine, unselfishly generous understanding of human nature that removes the element of surprise from Christ's later thoughtfulness for the women of Jerusalem, His care for the thief on the Cross, and His solicitous farewell to His Mother.

The whole picture in the Garden is worth studying well. On one side there is the long-suffering, understanding, pitying God asking so little. The sleeping group is made up of high-minded men who cherish goals impossibly out of reach, their hearts and minds stretching out to unthinkable things; and the flesh so often having the last word in their lives. So might the lives of the best of men be summed up—always we fall short; always we are unprofitable servants. This might be a summary of any year of our lives; indeed, of any day of our lives from childhood's first examination of conscience, with its solemn, wide-eyed, firm purpose of amendment for faults that would not put dust on an angel's wing, to the last moment

when we link arms with the divine Companion of the road and set out for home. It is no doubt significant that in the fairly short tract which we are considering in this chapter, Thomas, who made so few mistakes, is twice forced to retract opinions he had held and written down in his earlier days, thereby giving as strong testimony to the weakness of the flesh as the brilliance of his doctrines gives testimony to the willingness of the spirit.

Once when very young, I was sent to a little church in the mountains of Switzerland on Christmas eve to hear confessions. On arriving, I asked the curé if there were not some peculiarly local expressions, expressions meant not to hide the truth but to make the hard work of baring one's soul a little less difficult. His answer, which is the sole reason for this bit of autobiography, was classic. Shrugging his shoulders, he said: "*C'est toujours la même chose*"—it is always the same thing; and he was right. For while the spirit is always willing, it is likewise true that the flesh is always weak.

It was kind of Christ to give us this statement of the truth of human nature; in doing so, He gave us a declaration of the whole-hearted character of divine love. The Son of God did not pick and choose from human nature, like a spoiled child picking the nuts out of the salad or the raisins out of the cake. He did not choose the willingness and dodge the weakness as a half-hearted Christian might embrace the truths of heaven and the love of God while shying away in terror from hell. Christ took the whole, essential nature. In reality, it is a blasphemy born of snobbery that denies to Christ this or that part of our human nature; that is pleased to see Him in rapt contemplation but nauseated by the thought of sweat on His brow. This makes God a half-hearted lover, squeamish, cowardly, selfish, like a woman who smiles on orchids and diamonds but goes pouting to a judge at the mention of babies or housework.

Christ was true man. Assuming human nature meant that He was not only embracing a willing spirit but also bearing,

and bearing with the fierce pride of a fighting clan, the burden of the weak flesh. In Gethsemane He said in actions what men might not stop to read if it were said in words, offering us a kind of divine tabloid account of His humanity; for never has flesh protested so vehemently as when its protests were round and red and dropping to the ground, never has spirit proved more willing than when it said in the midst of agony, "Not my will but Thine be done." Never has understanding been more generous, more profound; never has the spirit of man faced higher goals or faced them more courageously. The Son of God took on the perfection and the defects of human nature, for Christ was man. It happened to Him, as it happens to every man, that the vision's splendor called Him on but the road was long and rough and hard.

In the last chapter we saw half of the perfection of Christ's human nature in the perfection of His grace and virtue. We stopped there as a child might stop, pushing away the delightful drink that it might swallow and breathe after that long satisfying draught. In this chapter we shall look at the rest of that picture of supremely willing spirit; thus fortified, we shall go on to look at the defects, the weaknesses of the flesh. First, let us finish up the beauty of the picture by considering the knowledge of Christ.

Christ was God. As God, He had that eternal, infinite, perfect knowledge which belongs to God. But that was as God. Had he no more than that, His human intellect would have remained the barren thing it is at the beginning of every human life. Intellectually, He would have remained an infant all through life. His intellect would have been a host to the universe forlornly surveying its empty castle to which not a single guest had come. This human faculty would have been merely an idle decoration of divinity, as grotesque as a moustache scratched on a masterpiece. For the mind of a man exists to know.

The Son of God took on human nature in all its perfection. In Him that human nature reached a climax of perfection. No

one of the distinctively human potentialities remained unfulfilled. His was not a ragged, limping, decrepit human nature, but one that reached to the utmost of its perfection. He had, then, not only a divine knowledge, but also a human knowledge.

To some this human knowledge of Christ seemed superfluous. It was a tiny creek that would be swallowed up by the ocean of divine knowledge, a candle completely dimmed by the flood of sunlight. This might be true if human knowledge were a rival of divine knowledge, but it is not. Our wisdom is derived from divine knowledge; it is nothing more than a participation of that eternal and supreme Truth. Rather than being dimmed by proximity to its source, the brightness of our knowledge is increased as we get closer to the source from which we receive the light.

We might sum up the knowledge of Christ by saying He had all of the knowledge that can come to the human mind, after all, that is no more than saying that none of the potentialities of the human mind were unfulfilled in Christ. What can we know? We might begin by asking what we do know; but that is much too discouraging for a beginning. Pushing aside the personal consideration for an objective tabulation of the fields of human knowledge, we might check off theology, philosophy, history, the confusion of languages, the welter of sciences, politics, and so on. We would think that we had assigned an enormous field to one human mind; though, actually, we would only be walking a race horse. All of this is merely one kind of human knowledge, the acquired knowledge that is inextricably bound up with frets and worries, midnight silence and university degrees. This is what we spend our life gathering bit by bit as we abstract the universal from the singular with the help of our active intellect, separating the gold of the intelligible from the dross of matter.

Our possibilities, however, go far beyond this grubbing. We touch on the angelic world by infused knowledge such as Adam had, such as comes to the souls in Purgatory and to

the blessed in heaven. Unfortunately, infused knowledge is the miraculous exception in this present life, otherwise books like this would be entirely unnecessary. Indeed, we even invade the sphere proper to God; the human mind does see God as He seems Himself, directly, face to face, in the beatific vision. Even this is within our power; not within the power of the principles of our nature, of course, but within the field opened up to our nature by the addition of supernatural help.

The investigation of the knowledge of Christ, then, is more than an unveiling of the beauty and perfection of Christ the man. It is a concrete statement of the heights to which human nature was exalted in Christ, a blueprint of the perfection to which every possessor of human nature is in fact ordered; for Christ the man was one of us. His knowledge included the knowledge of the blessed—the vision of God—the infused knowledge which is proper to the angels, and the acquired knowledge common to all of us in this life. In all these ways some men do know. In all these ways the God-man knew most perfectly.

It might be mentioned in passing that further investigation of the knowledge of Christ may well be a humiliating experience for those who have read the previous volumes of this series. Nearly all of the investigation will be a review, an application of the material covered in dealing with the nature of man; as such, it will no doubt offer some surprising evidence of how much we can forget.

The human mind of Christ saw the essence of God directly but only as a man can see it. That is, in His vision there was nothing like the clarity of God's own vision and its comprehensive grasp of divinity. This vision was possible to the mind of Christ only because of the supernatural help of the created light of glory, a light that pales into insignificance before the uncreated light of the mind of God. The human nature of Christ was a created thing, capable of only finite acts, as are all creatures; certainly it was quite incapable of the infinite act necessary to enfold the divine essence.

In the beatific vision, every man sees what pertains to himself, all those things to which he is tied by some bond. It was no different with Christ, except that all men pertain to Christ their Savior and their Judge. By reason of His deeply special interest in every detail of every human life, Christ sees in the divine essence all that pertains to all men; a comforting, if astounding, truth. Even with His human mind, He would see the successively infinite hopes, thoughts, desires of men, over the whole long span from the first man to the very last.

He sees all this more clearly than any saint or angel will ever see anything in the essence of God; and the reason of this is a truth that hits at the heart of human living. It is true that in this life knowledge is a serious liability, forever carrying with it the burden of leadership and the weight of responsibility for the little ones who have not an equal share of knowledge. But it is also an asset, particularly when it is mellowed by grace, for it widens a man's world; or, rather, it widens a man's mind so that he can admit more of the world into himself. In the vision of God, the knowledge we have so laboriously acquired plays no part. We see more or less deeply into that divine essence, not by reason of the development of our minds, but by reason of the light of glory; this vision is, after all, a supernatural thing not to be measured by natural yardsticks. This light of glory, which is the measure of our penetration of the divine essence, is given to us in exact proportion to the degree of our grace and merit. In a word, it is sanctity, not learning, that ultimately counts.

Coming down a step from the knowledge proper to God to the knowledge proper to the angels, the infused knowledge which flows directly from God, we are in the presence of a manner of knowing that leaves us frankly envious. The learned theologians who came to examine the doctrines of Catherine of Siena must have been, unless they were very holy, just a little resentful of her superior theological knowledge; there must have been, among them, some rueful comparison between their own long, hard, tedious path to knowledge and

her swiftly joyous short-cut. They gave testimony to the miraculous character of her knowledge; and miracle it was. But this is not true of the knowledge of the angels or of those who see the face of God.

For them this is not miraculous; it is the ordinary, the usual, the natural thing for the citizens of heaven. There the spirit is uppermost, it is not dependent on the body. Perhaps we can see the natural character of this type of knowledge better if we consider a blessed soul before the resurrection of the body. In what is then its present state, it has no body, that is, it enjoys a mode of existence that is purely spiritual. Along with the new mode of existence, there must be a new mode of acting, for action necessarily follows the mode in which a nature exists. Without a body, the only way for a mind to know is to receive that knowledge from God, since, obviously, the mechanism for abstracting ideas from matter—the apparatus of senses and imagination serving the active intellect—is missing.

True enough, it is hard for us to conceive of a man getting his knowledge directly, immediately from God as a normal, natural thing; as difficult, in fact, as it would be for us to conceive of wings on a cow. But that is because we forget our affinity to the angels, we forget that we, too, are spirits. We are so accustomed to looking at streets, buildings, taxicabs and buses that we never think to look up and notice there is a sky. Christ Himself, Who was not given to idle talk, insisted that in the resurrection men would be like angels.

From the point of view of its content, the infused knowledge of Christ was far superior to that of the angels. By it, He knew all a man is capable of knowing by natural reason and all those things which will be revealed by God; the angels, while their natural knowledge was complete from the first instant, enjoy only a fragmentary and gradual sharing in revealed knowledge, a kind of piece-meal munching on tid-bits from the table of God. The infused knowledge of Christ was also greater than that of the angels on the grounds of its penetra-

tion of the hearts of men and of its certitude, since Christ was so much closer to the Source of all certitude from Whom nothing is secret. Yet, in another way Christ's infused knowledge was definitely inferior to the angels; this manner of knowing is natural to an angel, it is a little too big to be manipulated expertly by the mind of a man.

There is a certain freedom in the use of this infused knowledge which Christ, of course, enjoyed too. He could use it, as the angels do, without any reference to the phantasms which are the normal source of our ideas. On the other hand, He could, if He liked, refer it to the phantasms and go on from there to reason discursively, not because He had to, but as a boy who has learned a trick well does it over and over again, just for the fun of the thing.

It is always hard to keep the human mind from rushing ahead on wings of fancy in matters that come close to the heart. In this matter, perhaps because of memories of childish tears of despair, of examinations that were flunked, or of the absurd, stubborn mistakes of youth, some men have been loath to concede a real acquired knowledge to Christ. A knowledge that is extracted from material things by the use of the sharp scalpel of our active intellect, seemed too bloody a thing to be worthy of Christ. Yet if we put emotion to one side and look at the problem hard-headedly, it is quite clear that this acquired knowledge cannot be denied to Christ. If His nature were perfect, and it was, then all its potentialities must have been realized, for an unrealized potentiality is a distinct imperfection. Just as Christ's possible intellect, the faculty whose act is to know, was brought to full perfection by infused knowledge, His active intellect realized its potentialities in the work of acquired knowledge. If we deny the active intellect of Christ its proper work of abstracting the intelligible from the material, it becomes a mere decoration, a toy that is not even played with. Christ did not take any part of our human nature as lightly as all that.

If we remember that a man's knowledge is not limited to

singular things, the things directly offered to the senses, we shall save ourselves needless difficulty in our consideration of the acquired knowledge of Christ. There is no question but what the senses of Christ never came into contact with a swing band or a radio thriller; yet Christ's acquired knowledge did extend to all the direct objects of man's intellectual knowledge, to all the essences and laws of things. Obviously this took time. for the human mind is kept busy enough learning one thing at a time and Christ's was a human mind.

There was then real progress, positive growth in that knowledge of Christ, not merely a manifestation of knowledge or an experimental verification of what had been known in this way all along. To deny this is really to maintain that the robe of Christ's humanity was shabby in spots, for it would imply unrealized potentialities in the active intellect of Christ. We do not defer to the dignity of Christ as God by picking the pockets of Christ as man.

Christ learned; but Christ was never taught either by men or by angels. Just passingly it might be noted that in this solitary fact there is reason for perpetual gratitude on the part of the human teachers of all the ages; for by it they were given protection against the absurd but very human mistake of taking seriously the superiority whose constant expression is demanded by their work. The learning of Christ is fruitful material for investigation. The human mind can find out a thing for itself or it can be taught by others; of the two, personal discovery is by far superior. After all, a pupil does not get ideas from the teacher's mind as a load of coal is transferred from a truck into a coal-bin. He receives his ideas through the medium of words which are nothing more than the signs or symbols created by men to signify a man's own knowledge. The creatures of the universe are also signs, but signs made by God; they are signs of the wisdom of God, not of the wisdom of man, and it is a more noble thing to be taught by God than to be taught by men. It was eminently fitting that Christ should have been independent of the

teachers of men : from the very first instant of His life He was a teacher of men, not their pupil.

Christ was man, walking the roads of Palestine, feeling the heat of the sun and the cool of the night, often sleeping under a blanket of stars like the poorest of His contemporaries. But He was an extraordinary man, perfect in grace, in virtue, in knowledge. What could He do with this perfection; or, more properly, what in fact did He do with it?

To answer that question, we may look at Christ's life from two angles. The one shows us failure, defeat, death on the cross, the other shows us Christ healing the sick, raising the dead, forgiving sinners, doing all things well. Unquestionably it was the inherent defects of human nature that made possible His tragic end. How great a part did the power of Christ's human soul play in the wonders of His earthly life?

There can be no doubt of Christ's omnipotent power as God; and there can be no less doubt about His complete lack of omnipotence as man. Christ as man, for instance, could in no way create, nor could God Himself use Christ's human nature as an instrument in creation. What could He use it for? As an instrument it must have some proper action if it is not to be a silly mockery; and what action can an instrument have on the nothingness from which the soul is created?

Short of omnipotence, however, Christ's soul was all-powerful. Considered in itself and its natural powers, it could do all those things proper to a soul; those things and no more. As an instrument of divinity, united to a divine Person more intimately than our hands are united to our bodies, it could work all the miracles conducive to the end of the Incarnation. It was only a physical, instrumental cause, yes; a cause whose power was really the power of the principal cause who was God. But it was none the less a true cause and these miraculous effects were truly the effects of Christ the man.

In the concrete, then, the humanity of Christ as the instrument of divinity could, and did, drive out devils, forgive sins, heal lepers, raise the dead. By its own power it could not

add one cubit to the stature of Christ; it could not regulate His digestion, His nutrition; in fact, it was faced with the same helplessness we face when we come to the boundaries of those kingdoms which are not subject to the will of man. Yet when Christ walked on the water, when at His word the apostles let down their nets and caught a great draught of fish, when the fig tree withered at His curse, all this was the result of the humanity of Christ acting as an instrument of divinity; none of these things is subject to the power of the will of man.

It is true that by its own power the soul of Christ could do all that He willed, but this was simply because Christ was too wise to will what could not be done. Another man, in an idle moment, might sit dreaming by the shore of a lake and, playing a childish game with himself, wish that he could transport himself across the lake without bothering about a boat. Christ's will could entertain no such fantasies; but the human will of Christ did, in fact, set out across the lake without bothering about a boat, not dependent on its own power, but as an instrument of the Word of God, for in this it was capable of acts proper to omnipotence itself.

These considerations lend special significance to the prayers of Christ. When He went up into a mountain to pray before choosing His apostles, he prayed for effects which were to be produced by His human will of its own powers. But He also prayed for those things that His will was to produce as the instrument of divine power—for the resurrection of Lazarus, for the confirmation of the strength and the faith of the apostles at the last supper. This has particular importance for it brings out the fact that prayer is more than an act of humility, more than a statement of truth, more than a sharp cry for help; it is the spade by which we turn over the earth in preparation for the divine seed. Prayer is itself a cause, playing a necessary part in the government of the world.

Glancing back at what we have seen of the human nature of Christ, it begins to be clear that He took all of our human nature in a sense larger than was at first obvious. He took

more than the essentials of human nature; He selected something from every state in which human nature has existed. From the state of innocence in which Adam was created He took freedom from sin; from the state of glory which is the last home of man He took the vision of the essence of God; and from the state of guilt in which we now labor He took the subjection to the penalties of sin, that is, the weakness of our flesh. It is worth noticing that while Adam, in the state of innocence, had immunity from bodily harm, this gift was passed over by Christ; He not only came to redeem us, but also to show us how to suffer and to die, knowing that it was in learning these lessons that most of our lives are spent.

That Christ took on our bodily defects—hunger, thirst, and all the rest—is of faith; it must be believed on the infallible authority of God. That He need not have done so is obvious from the infinite value of all the acts of this divine Person; any one smallest act was more than sufficient to redeem the whole human race. Why did He embrace the things from which we shrink?

Well, for one thing, it was the most fitting way to redeem men. The soul of redemption is charity, which He took on in the perfection of His soul; and the material of redemption, the material for suffering for others, is to be found only in the weakness of the flesh. Christ literally underwent all penalties while He was one with us through charity. But over and above this, the defects of the body in Christ strike a note of support and nourishment for the divine virtues of faith, hope, and charity that is hard for the dullest of men to miss. Christ underlined these again and again as opening up the direct path to God; at the same time, He made them so vivid, so pleasing, so humanly appealing to our eyes as to make us forget the rough spots in the long road home.

How much easier it is for us to believe that He was truly man when we see the extreme fatigue that brought sleep so quickly to Him even in a wildly tossing boat; or the helplessness of His infancy in the cave at Bethlehem. This very weak-

ness of Christ was an emphatic stressing of the nature of the goal of our faith. Our ideal is not a physical but a spiritual strength by which we conquer the devil and human weakness. Our bout with the devil, after all, is not a wrestling match but a battle for sanctity. How much easier it is for us to hope with the example of His strength in suffering before our eyes, knowing how thoroughly He must understand, having gone through it all Himself. How much easier it is for us to love, seeing His love reach the peak of sacrifice which fulfilled His own heroic definition of love's extent: "Greater love than this no man hath, that he give up his life for his friend."

The importance of Christ's suffering for our own uneasy lives can be gathered from the fact that His very capacity to suffer was a constant miracle in Christ; God, you know, does not waste miracles. Normally, because body and soul are such intimate neighbors, the glory of the soul redounds to the body, glorifying, spiritualizing it, as it will the bodies of the saints after the resurrection. Although Christ had this glory from the beatific vision of God, the full glory of the soul from the first instant of His life, that redundancy to the body was deliberately and miraculously impeded. The enemies of Christ put Him to death? Oh no. He spoke a profound truth when He said: "I have power to lay down My life and to take it up again." The sacrifice of Christ was voluntary in the fullest sense of the word; it was not merely submitted to but sought after, something that could have come about only because He wanted it so.

Let there be no mistaken conclusions drawn from Christ's eagerness to show us how to suffer and how to die. Granted that miraculous damming of joy in the inner recesses of the soul of Christ, granted the determination of the divine and human wills of Christ to suffer these things and gladly, it is none the less true that the lash on His back seared as deeply as on the back of any criminal, the nails were driven through His hands and feet perforating them as they would ours. In other words, the sufferings of Christ were not a sham, a

shadow of reality; they were real with a reality made possible by the eagerness of God's love for us and the willingness of His Son. Christ was willing to undergo the actual infliction of all this pain; the physical acts themselves followed the inexorable laws of physical nature.

The more firmly we grasp the truth of the freedom of Christ's sacrifice, the more deeply we penetrate the depths of God's love for us. In this line, it will be a help to realize that Christ had no obligation whatsoever to submit to the defects of our nature. For the rest of us, there is no escaping these things; they are a punishment for the sin of nature which all men contract at birth. Even Our Lady, miraculously preserved by the Immaculate Conception, should have and would have contracted this debt of punishment if divine payment had not been anticipated; she was in fact without sin by reason of the anticipated merits of Christ. Christ's own innocence was something quite different; it was not had by purchase but by right. He was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of God, as a consequence He could not have had the original sin which is the source of the penalties we all must pay. He was born of the line of Adam, but not of the seed of Adam; and original sin was a sin committed by the head of the house of humanity and handed down by the head of the house ever since.

It is well to understand that there was simply no point in Christ having a sinus headache or bad teeth. The defects He took on were to satisfy for the whole of human nature, defects which did not imply a contradiction to knowledge, virtue, or grace; for all three of these were necessary for the New Adam in His redemption of the human race. Such defects were death, hunger, thirst, and so on. The implications here are, of course, not flattering. Thomas makes the implications explicit statements and thereby ruins a perpetual topic of conversation; but he is not just being cruel, his point is necessary if we are to grasp some of the limitations of the defects of Christ. According to Thomas, sickness and diseases, other

than those bound up with nature itself as penalties of original sin, are fruits either of our own sins, the sins of our parents, or, at the very least, are the results of weakness in the generative power of our parents. This is no compliment to a race that worships at the corner drug store; yet we confirm the truth ourselves in the now famous program of "building up resistance." Thomas himself was sturdy, but even Thomas suffered for years from a badly ulcerated leg; he was not, you see, pointing the finger of scorn at weaker brethren, but humbly facing his own human nature.

After having seen the perfection of Christ's knowledge which barred ignorance from His mind, and the perfection of His grace and virtue, effectively barring sin from His soul, there would seem to be little room for consideration of defects in the soul of Christ. Still, because sin plays such a major role in every human life, indeed, in the whole economy of the Incarnation, Christ's challenge, "who shall convince me of sin," will always remain startling to human ears. That constant surprise of men is reason enough for a keener consideration of sin relative to Christ.

It is of faith that there was no sin in Christ. Plainly, human nature cannot stand next to a divine fire and shiver, it cannot be, at the same time, full of food and hungry. Christ from the beginning had full possession of the Beatific Vision, which means that there was an intimate personal union of His human mind with the divine essence. There was, further, the personal union of His human nature with a divine personality, the union which is the very essence of the Incarnation. In Him there was an absolute fullness of grace. In this condition, human nature is not to be decoyed into sin; there is simply no rival good to furnish the material for temptation.

Quite aside from these fundamental reasons, there is the complete unbecomingness of sin in Christ. He took human nature for our redemption and instruction. Sin's destruction of charity wipes out the very principle of one man's satisfaction for another by wiping out the bond of union between

them; in Christ's case it would defeat the very end of the Incarnation. Moreover, a sinning Christ, which is to say an unlovely and unloving Christ, would not be one to awaken love in us. On the side of instruction, sin does nothing toward conservation of the truth of human nature, let alone the teaching of it, for it is contrary to nature. It is not help to virtue, or instruction in virtue, surely one of the great ends of the Incarnation, for it is the denial in practice of all that virtue stands for.

Not even the unpremeditated nudgings of sense appetite that make up so much of our uneasiness and worry were present in Christ; and of course there were none of those raging outbursts of passion that leave a man shaken and shamed in the knowledge of the loss of control over his own life. These inclinations to sin, were they present in Christ, would imply that He found something of desirability in the tinsel and make-up of sin even in the broad daylight of the vision of God; that there was an attractiveness in companionship with the devil to a nature personally united with the Son of God. Certainly there would be an implication of imperfection in the virtue of Christ, for as virtue grows more perfect, our control of these movements of sense appetite is proportionately perfected. These things have their roots in sin, at least in original sin; and in Christ there was no such sub-soil of evil. They were useless for the ends of the Incarnation. All the proper defects of the soul, then—ignorance, sin, and the inclination to sin—were not to be found in the soul of Christ.

However, Christ had a full share of those other defects which affect the soul through the body. All these can be summed up in one word by saying that the soul of Christ could and did suffer; for the soul of Christ was, after all, the form of His body, intimately, substantially united to it. Thus, for instance, Christ suffered exquisite pain when the crown of thorns was pressed down on His head, pain that affected His soul as it would the soul of any man. Why shouldn't He have suffered pain? He had full and perfect faculties; He enjoyed

none of the impassibility of Adam's first days; and all a man needs for pain is a bodily injury and the consciousness of that injury.

Sorrow went deep into the soul of Christ with the knowledge of evil such as He had in Gethsemane, or from the outpost of the Cross: evil to Himself, to His mother, to His apostles, even to the enemies who were doing so much more damage to themselves than they would ever succeed in doing to Him. Christ felt fear during the long days of Nazareth, during the short, busy days of His public life, during the quiet nights with His apostles, for ahead of Him loomed loneliness, betrayal, rejection by His people, death. He wondered, too, at the faith of the centurion, and pondered hundreds of other things every day. In fact, from the point of view of the acquired knowledge of Christ, wonder and admiration must have been as constant in the life of Christ as in the joyous expedition of childhood. God was His teacher, using the creatures of the universe as the symbols of His teaching; every day was a day of wonder for the marvellously wise Christ. Nor should this seem so strange. It is only our dullness and blindness that takes the world for granted, the perpetually young who remain alert of mind keep the precious gift of wondering at the mystery of ordinary things. That Christ was angry we have on the authority of Scripture itself. His was a burning, scathing anger, yet not an anger such as blinds and binds a man's reason, rather it was accompanied by an inner serenity whose faint shadow can be found in the saints when their contemplation does not impede work nor work prevent contemplation.

There is really no need to go into all the passions of the soul of Christ. Christ was human and the passions are an integral part of human nature. But in Christ, the passions shared fully in that divine balance that is proper to human nature in its fullest perfection; they were not, as we find them, rushing ahead of even reason's quick step, turning to overwhelm the mind of a man, or deliberately, maliciously passing

all bonds of law. Yet the passions of Christ were flesh and blood passions, for Christ was a man.

When we examine the humanity of Christ detail by detail, the conclusion in each case is so clear as to be irrefutable. Yet, assembling those details to form the whole picture, our minds are far from content. In this chapter we have seen Christ as possessing the goal of life, yet facing Calvary; as holding to First Truth directly, yet growing in knowledge; as in possession of perfect happiness, yet with all the defects of body and soul compatible with His mission.

The only possible answer is a frank admission of the paradox. The scholastics put it beautifully in describing Christ as both *viator et comprehensor*, i.e., both on the way and already arrived at the goal. We can get some little intellectual grip, though with no more than finger-tips, on this paradox by means of Thomas' analysis of the beatific vision. Essentially it is an act of the intellect seeing the essence of God directly with the first and immediate effect of joy in the will. Its secondary effects, proceeding successively down from the will to the inferior faculties, reach to the glorification of the body. The essential act, then, is the vision of the essence of God. Integrally it will include all of its effects: joy in the will, in the inferior faculties, glory in the body. Christ was a possessor of the goal of life as far as the essential act and its first effect is concerned, i.e., He saw the essence of God and from that vision joy flooded His will. By a miraculous intervention, the secondary effects of that divine vision were impeded; during His life, then, He was still "on the way" as regards the lower faculties and His body.

For us, there are several advantages in this composite picture of Christ. Christ is not only God and man, showing us both ourselves and our goal, He is a man Who was at the same time in heaven and on earth. In a sense, He is at the same time what we are and what we must strive towards; in another sense, He is what we must be even now, for while our feet touch the roads of the world our minds and hearts must always be in heaven.

The splendor of this paradox of the weakness and strength of Christ finds its reflection in the willing spirit and weak flesh of every man. There is indeed something splendid in a man's undaunted approach to a bruising, uncertain battle, in the dogged courage which holds to high goals, in the sacrifices worthy of that goal made in spite of constant failure, day after day, week after week, year after year, generation after generation. Chesterton put this splendor in the mouth of the Virgin Mother of God when he had her say to the beaten Alfred—and this by way of encouragement—"you have wars you hardly win and souls you hardly save." It is the splendor of courage which shines alike in the penance of the worst of sinners and the generosity of the most sublime of saints.

That Christ, knowing human nature so well, should still have taken on that paradox was more than a re-consecration of the marriage of spirit to matter. In us, that paradox lights up life only by the intermittent sparks generated by the clash of steel. In Christ, it was of a steadier, kindlier, more substantial light. His is the warm, welcoming, beckoning beacon light of faith, hope, and charity; His faith, His hope, His love for men which are the solid grounds of our faith, our hope, our love for God.

This truth, too, was recognized as a hard saying and men have been refusing to tolerate it for ages, either because they do not know God or they do not know men. In our time, that ignorance has concentrated its error chiefly on the nature of man.

Some men have thought that human nature could be made the victim of the stratagems of a bully or a cynic, that it could be beaten or bought into submission. As if, having seen the prize which is no less than God Himself, anything else could be substituted for it in our hearts; or as if there were an answer to the divine question: "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" As though a beating could stop the march towards the supreme goal by experts in being beaten, by men who have never learned to quit, despite the weakness of the flesh, because they know that as long as the spirit remains willing, the

fight can continue. Yet this side of human nature has been forgotten every time a persecution has been launched; the persecutors have forgotten that Christ's summary of human nature was accurate, that the spirit does remain willing.

Men of thought, philosophers of optimism, have told us what great ones we are, assuring us that the flesh is no longer weak. To them, human nature is all goodness, for they are afraid we cannot bear up under the fact of sin. They would have us pretend that failure is not there. We must call everything by different names so that, in a huge child's game of pretense, we can all be happy, cheerful, and helpful. Of course, we could not be any of these things if we were forced to face the truth.

Still others, the philosophers of despair, have insisted that the spirit is no longer willing, that the flesh has prevailed, that the courage is dead, that men are beaten never to rise again. High goals have been abandoned and we must resign ourselves to being thoroughly comfortable, though miserably unhappy, rather than attempt to be supremely happy though always slightly uncomfortable. They have lost the knowledge of the joy of trying, yet, in spite of themselves, they worship at a throne of power with a cult of success.

The Incarnation is a hard truth. The paradox of willing spirit and weak flesh is a hard, humiliating truth. Certainly, the truth of the Incarnation is not a truth for cowards, for it is a truth based solidly on the truth of divine and human nature; no coward can face these truths. To face the truth of divine nature, we must face not only mercy but also justice; we must look at a goal that cannot only be won but can also be lost. To look at the truth of human nature, we must see not only its strength but also its weakness; we must consider its possibilities not only of victories but also of losses; we must face the paradox of high goals and feeble efforts. In a word, we are challenged by a call to warfare, with all the responsibilities such a crucial fight involves; and a battlefield has never been the proper place for a coward.

CHAPTER V
(OUTLINE)
THE MAN AND HIS GOD
(Q 16-21)

- 1 The truth at the core of human life
 - (a) Effects of its recognition
 - (b) Effects of its obliteration
 - (c) Wonder of humanity
 - (1) Reason for its revelation
 - (2) Details of its truth
 - (3) Its explanation—the image of God
- 2 The wonder made more evident—the Incarnation
- 3 Knowledge of this truth in Christ (Chapter IV)
- 4 Expression of this truth
 - (a) Importance of accurate speech
 - (b) Rules for accurate speech of Christ
 - (c) Some applications
- 5 The wonder of humanity in Christ
 - (a) The unity of Christ
 - (b) The desires of Christ
 - (1) In general
 - (2) From the side of the faculty.
 - (3) From the side of the act
 - a The free will of Christ
 - b Its conformity to the divine will.
 - c Contrariety of desires in Christ
 - (c) The works of Christ
 - (1) Theandric operations
 - (2) His works from the side of human nature:
 - a The works in themselves
 - b In their effects—merit
 - 1 For Christ Himself
 - 2 For us
 - c The subjection of Christ
 - d The prayer of Christ
 - 1 Its possibility
 - 2 Its fittingness and necessity
 - 3 The objects of the prayers of Christ.
 - 4 The answers to the prayers of Christ.

Conclusion

- 1 Condition for grasping the wonder of man
- 2 The modern world and the wonder of man:
 - (a) Inevitable blindness
 - (b) Compensations offered
- 3 The remedy for blindness

CHAPTER V

THE MAN AND HIS GOD

(Q. 16-21)

THE hurried reader of the morning paper skips quickly through the report of another amnesia victim with no more than a vague moment of compassion to mark the path his running eyes have trod. To the policeman who discovered the victim, to the doctors and nurses who cared for him, this sick man may be a source of a strange pity tinged with a little fear. Here is a stranger to the world: he does not know who he is, whence he is, where he belongs, or the goal to which he is going. He is as odd a sight as would be a solitary wave separated from the ocean but still showing all its natural characteristics. A thoughtful man would appreciate the atmosphere of mystery here and perhaps see a warning of profound truth.

The sense of mystery and fear is justified, for the victim of amnesia presents a picture in miniature of a truth universal in its application and its importance. His condition declares, in a negative way, a truth that is at the heart of everything, a truth that must be seen if we are to see the meaning, the beauty, the full perfection that is in this world of ours; the truth, namely, that nothing exists alone, that everything has its place.

Perhaps we can see this more clearly in terms of our own human life. That central truth of human life finds accurate expression in the phrase "man and his God." For that is the truth of a man's place in the universe. If that truth is seen, then we have seen the place of God, the place of man, and the place of the world. It is a truth that, apparently separating

God and man, actually ties the two together and sets both off from all else by uniting them to all else.

The attempt to deny this truth, to submerge it, escape from it, or despair in the face of it makes up the history of much of the unidentified misery in the depths of the human soul. On the other hand, its recognition produces the humility, the peace, and the order characteristic of the soul of a saint, or the rebellion, the war, the chaos that ravages the soul of the deliberate sinner. It is a truth that every man must know, indeed, that every man, at one time or another, does know at least in a vague, confused manner; for at one time or another the wonder of man has dawned on the mind of every man. Seeing this truth of the proper place of man, we are presented with the singular spectacle of a dependently independent being; there precisely lies the beauty and marvel of man.

To be seen rightly, man must be seen as possessed of a mysterious unity which cuts him off from all else as a distinct person in the universe, yet as essentially dependent on an absolutely necessary support by God. His desires are his own, whether in harmony with or in open conflict against the desires of his God upon whom he is so totally dependent. His works are his own; whether they be the wonders of human knowledge, of human love, or, outstripping the limits of nature, works of supernatural merit that reach into the very hearts and souls of others, works that endure eternally.

He may deny this truth and flaunt his rebellion in the face of God, or admit it, and protest his subjection to God in a concrete summary of all the wonders of mankind as he kneels down to pray. For, since only a master is capable of praying, prayer itself is an act of a master; and, since only a subject needs prayer, it is a protest of subjection. Prayer is man's statement of his superiority over the material universe for prayer is his exclusive privilege; at the same time, it is his insistence on his part in the government of the universe for by it he fulfills the decrees of God.

There will be more than enough of beauty, more than enough of wonder in any human life to occupy the mind of a man for a lifetime if he sees man in his proper place, subject to his God, above all the rest of the material universe. If we wished to put the reason for this beauty and wonder in just one word, we could insist that man alone, of all the creatures in the material universe, is the image of God. In comparison with divinity, he is like the colored print of the Sistine Madonna; even this rough copy will bring out much of the fearful wonder of divinity to a thinking man. This image of God is a marvel and a promise; it is a glimpse of divinity seen in the shallow pool of humanity, with a solemn promise of fuller beauty in a later vision.

All of this is true of mere man seen in his proper place. But, after all, we are children. To see man in this way means that we must strain our eyes at long horizons, sweep vistas that stretch from God to the smallest things in the world. Because we are children, we easily tire of such long distances; we are easily distracted by the first bright thing that hits our eyes, each new thing makes us easily forgetful of the last thing we have seen. To bring the ends of the world together, from the speck of dust to the infinite perfection of God, to fold all the intervening detail into a tight compactness that would give us an outline of the universe, not in one volume, but in one glance, God became man. In the Incarnation, the man and his God are the material for one glance of faith. In that mystery, God and man are united so closely as to be one subject of action. There we see the divine and human natures in a constant interplay of action, desire, subjection, and prayer in the one Individual.

The knowledge of the truth of the divine and human nature of Christ is the Catholic child's right, a man's comfort, and a theologian's delight. In the last few chapters, we have tasted of the delicately strong, finely seasoned food of the courtiers of the queen of the sciences. Some will have found it odd, too substantial, or too dainty for a steady human diet.

Surely it is a food for which a taste must be cultivated. It is food for the gods. Indeed, it is God's own food.

Mere knowledge of the truth, however, is not enough. Being what we are, we are going to speak of the truths we know, and it is extremely important that our speech be accurate. As many a man struggling with a foreign language knows from experience, we may know the truth and speak so badly as to spread error; or we may not know the truth yet, speaking so badly, actually tell the truth, as some fortunate students have learned to their surprise in the course of an examination. A person who does not know the truth, if he but speak insistently as well as accurately, can do a very efficient job of spreading error. The fact is that we are going to speak. For men are angels surrounded by fences; men must speak, for they must have company and their only means of vaulting the separating fences are words or their equivalents.

Words, then, are precious things to a man, things to be appreciated even more than water in a desert or hope in a fight. To misuse words, to betray them, to waste them seems criminal and has certainly produced calamitous results. When the subject matter of our conversation is the Incarnation, we have placed huge, precariously balanced burdens on the shoulders of our words. The slightest misstep brings that burden crashing to earth as the shattered remains of a superb truth which we call heresy.

The chief difficulty in talking about the Incarnation is that both a human and a divine nature, with their distinctive properties, belong to one and the same Person. The difficulty is not serious if we are careful with words, hardly more serious, in fact, than it is to talk of a man who is both a barber and a tenor. All that is true of a barber is true of this man, and all that is true of a tenor, is also true of him; though, obviously, what is true of barbers is not necessarily true of tenors. In the case of Christ, all that is true of God and all that is true of man is true of this one Person; but, obviously, what is true of God is not true of all men. We must be very careful, in other

words, not to attribute to the divine what is contradictory to it, or to attribute to the human what human nature cannot have.

Yet it is undoubtedly true that the characteristics, the properties, of both God and man are true of this person. Theologians have called this the "communication of idioms or characteristics." It does not mean that, since the Incarnation, we can say that divinity is a biped. What belongs to humanity was not given to divinity; nor was what belongs to divinity given to humanity. But in the concrete, both humanity's and divinity's characteristics are true of Christ.

The key to the solution of the difficulty is in the word "concrete." It is not John Smith's humanity that laughs like a horse; it is John himself. *He* is the concrete subject of all action, of all properties; not his nature. We cannot say that a man is humanity, for man is a person; what he has of humanity, then, will be had in the concrete. In other words, the concrete term directly signifies the person; it is only obliquely that it signifies the nature by which this person has this property.

The one thoroughly universal rule of speech, then, in regard to the Incarnation is that the concrete can be said of the Person (Who is, of course, always concrete). Thus, we can say that God, i.e., this Second Person of the Trinity, is man; that this man, i.e., this concrete Person, is God. A moment's thought will warn us that we cannot predicate the abstract of the abstract, by saying, for example, that divinity is humanity; nor can we predicate the abstract of the concrete in such expressions as "divinity is this man, God is humanity." It is just as false to predicate the concrete of the abstract. The reason for all this is simply that in such statements, we have not preserved the identity of the person, who alone is the subject of action, of characteristics, of attributes.

Thomas had a horror of falsehood which was, no doubt, the inevitable corollary of his burning love of truth. He would not tolerate ambiguous statements relative to Christ. Express-

sions that, while correctly understandable in themselves, still smacked of heresy or were in heretical use, were to be firmly set aside. He would not even have names in common with heretics. He was a lover impatient of any slightest reflection on the object of his love. It was because of this that he put special emphasis on the point that there are many things which must not be attributed to Christ without definite limitations; attributes, for example, which belong to a nature exclusively or that are repugnant to the subject. To say, for example, that Christ is mere man, is the adopted son of God, while true of any other man by reason of human nature, are definitely repugnant to this Person, Christ, of whom we are speaking.

Perhaps this will be clearer if we bring it down a little further. In Christ there were three classes of properties or attributes: those He had by reason of His divine nature, such as His infinity, eternity, omnipotence; those he had by reason of His human nature, such as His capacity for suffering, dying, and so on; and, finally, others that were had by reason of the union of the two natures in this one Person, such as His role as Redeemer, Mediator, and so on. Where a doubtful expression might be misunderstood, all danger is removed by attaching to the expression the limitation which points a finger clearly at the origin of this particular attribute. It is quite accurate to say that Christ is a creature, if we add "according to His human nature." It is true that this Person is eternal, according to His divine nature. To put it all briefly, what is true of the one nature cannot be said of the other except in so far as these two are one; and they are one only in this Person. Thus, we can say that God was made man, but we must not say that man was made God.

Of course there are difficulties to be urged against this mystery, old, old difficulties sitting like beggars by the side of the road as the centuries pass, clamoring for reason's beneficence, but not with much hope. One such difficulty argued that because Christ had two natures, He was not one but two, i.e., He was not possessed of that sovereign unity which is charac-

teristic of every man. The answer is so obvious as to awaken wonder that the difficulty has held to its feeble, flickering life so long. A man who has two eyes is not double, indeed, he does not even see double; for the subject, the person, who possesses these two eyes is one. Possession of two natures no more doubles Christ than the possession of two eyes doubles John Smith. In each case there is one person: Christ has two radical principles of operation as John Smith has two principles of sight.

An equally ancient objection has run head on into a striking modern illustration of its sophistry. In our time it has become possible to transfer the cornea of a human eye from one man to another, giving the second man sight. If this transferred cornea is put into my head, that does not mean that there are now two existences in me. The cornea begins to be by the same existence by which I am. So in Christ the human nature, coming to the already existing divine Person, has not an existence different from that divine Person; there are not two existences in Christ, but by one and the same existence the divine and human nature exist. Radically the answer is always the same: it is not nature but person which is the immediate subject of all predication, of all attributes. It is I who exist, not my nature; though it is by reason of my human nature that I exist in this way. This truth is not nearly so obscure as we insist upon making it. A voice coming over the radio can be made to sound high and shrill, or full, rich, and low by a mere turning of a dial. The radio does not make the sound nor hear it; it modulates the sound. Just so, nature does not make existence but rather modulates it. By reason of human nature, Christ could exist in this way, although He existed by a divine existence

Christ is one Person having two natures. Logically, then, He had two wills, i.e., two organs of intellectual desire. This truth is as inescapable as the fact that a man without eyes is blind. Mere bars of logic are no guarantee that the human mind will not try to escape; indeed, such is our capacity for

trickery, that we even try to escape in the very name of logic. To protect us from the trickery of our own minds, this truth is bolstered by the infallible authority of God. Nevertheless, men made the escape; and by their error, were condemned to make still more errors. For error is as fertile a thing as a lie though, as Chesterton said, a lie can only be young once; which, perhaps, explains the prodigious initial activity of errors and lies. Instead of attempting to pursue the numerous offspring of an original error, let us concentrate our thought on the aging ancestor.

Some men have shied away from the activity of a human will in Christ. They may have been sentimental lovers of peace who saw war in mere juxtaposition; they may have been introverts who had so long shunned the society of men in their thoughts as to become barred within themselves by fear of a clash with men. At any rate, the very idea of the human and divine wills at such close quarters sounded the din of battle and deafened them long before the battle could have started, as a person surrenders to sea-sickness while the boat is still tied up to the pier. In a desperate attempt to avert this purely imaginary but titanic struggle, they took the guns away from humanity, denied it all activity except as a purely passive instrument of divinity. The human will of Christ was to be a mere pawn moved about by the divine will.

Christ had a human will because He had a human nature. It was not a dog-eared or moth-eaten human will; it was a perfect one because Christ's human nature was perfect. Christ, therefore, not only had the faculty of will, he had its acts for without its acts the faculty is imperfect. His will, like ours, had that natural and necessary act that deals with the end of life; He naturally and necessarily willed happiness. He had the no less natural, but entirely free, act of the will which deals with the steps to the goal, the means to the end. Yet there was no war of human and divine wills in Christ.

That what was human in Christ did not snarl at the divine will does not argue to a defect in the human side of Christ.

Human experience should long since have made it clear that submission to the divine is not an obliteration of the human; though our naiveté still takes a battle with divinity as an argument for virile humanity. Saints like Dominic and Pius V went through all of life without a single mortal sin; yet it would be hard to find human lives that were more fully, more humanly lived. They were moved by God, of course; but their acts were no less humanly done. We go to Mass on Sunday, undoubtedly moved by God; but it is not God Who has hold of our arm as we are pulled out of bed.

The whole second and third volumes of this series were detailed examinations of this happiness and fullness of human life under God. Throughout all three preceding volumes we have seen the sovereignty of the human will again and again. We have seen that the divine movement is not destructive of human freedom but the cause of it, as it is the cause of the necessity of all lesser causes. There is no need to go into that again. Let one more illustration cover it: it is by reason of divine movement that a hen lays an egg, but no one maintains that God has laid the egg personally. Of course Christ had a human will; of course that human will was active. For Christ had a human nature; and a will is an integral part of a human nature, as a divine will is an integral part of a divine nature; the two need not clash, should not clash. When they do, it is the human will which has attacked its own humanity.

Walking along the same path of logic from the same premise of the human nature of Christ, we must come to His sense appetite, or His organ of sense desire. A man of today, with a smattering of one-sided psychology, might be shocked at such a notion. To him it would mean picturing Christ immersed in the confusing battle to escape neuroses, fixations, complexes, counting ten in an attempt to hold his temper, or giving his golf sticks to a caddy.

All this is an injustice to sense appetite. It is like accusing a tramp of being born on the rods of a freight train, because that is where you now find him. This was not the way sense

appetite started off in man; it was not made for this, but worked its way down thus far as a tramp works his way down to the last level of homelessness. Yet a tramp is still made to live in a home; and sense appetite, whatever its perversions, is still made to obey reason. It is only in such obedience that it reaches its happy perfection, not in the wild roistering of uncontrol or the sulky silence of inactivity.

It was this healthy sense appetite that Christ had, having perfect human nature. He did look for figs, He asked for bread, and He wept at the grave of Lazarus. Christ, in other words, was what *we should be* in relation to our sense appetites, in Him, sense appetite was precisely what it should be in us. In actual fact, we approach that perfection of sense appetite in Christ when we are at our happiest, most human. Certainly this does not mean an obliteration of sense appetite, nor does it argue an unfair bullying of a weaker thing by a particularly strong, tough will talking out of the side of its mouth, though it is true that, in us, the will's relation to sense appetite is not unlike a mother's care of a child, including such unpleasant things as washing behind the ears and an occasional spanking.

On the same grounds of His perfect human nature, we cannot deny Christ free will, all of it, its acts in relation to the goal, the steps to the goal, and the acts incidental to the goal. After all, there is many a good story told in heaven, even though the goal has long since been reached. Christ cannot be denied the completely free acts of His human will, the acts other than those dealing with the end, without admitting in Him imperfections unworthy of the New Adam.

Yet superficial thinkers do not find it easy to concede the free will of Christ. The argument is that since Christ could not sin, He obviously was not free. The argument is, of course, absurd, as absurd as to deny the ability to drink wine to one who, for one reason or another is not capable of becoming a drunkard. Sin is an abuse of liberty; and liberty's abuse no

more enters into its definition than monstrosities enter into the definition of a man. The choice demanded by liberty is not that between acting well or acting badly, but of the various ways of acting well or, at the very least, the choice of acting or not acting. That Christ could be gloriously free though He could not sin should not be a truth particularly difficult for us, in the full richness of our human experience, to admit, for certainly we can be sure beyond all doubt that no one has ever found freedom in sin.

Superficial thought, however, is apt to be much more stubborn than superficial disease: perhaps because even an honest loss of an argument demands the bitter effort of intellectual labor. At any rate, these opponents of freedom in Christ insist that even the choice of good was denied Him. He had been commanded by His Father to undergo death, and in precisely this way; that ended the matter as far as He was concerned. Of course. But since when has a command destroyed freedom? We do not attempt to command a bench or a chair, we do not rightly command even an animal, for to command means to move by a moral, not a physical, force, by intellect and will, not by a tow-rope. It supposes freedom and depends upon it. Surely no one is more free than the saints in heaven with all their full, joyous obedience to God. It is just because they are so free, and Christ was so free, that both they and Christ could lay such strong claims to obedience. In His very obedience there is proof enough that Christ laid down His life freely.

In our lives, the effort to choose frequently digs deep furrows of responsibility to mark plainly the dividing line between the face of youth and of maturity, it turns night into day as far as sleep is concerned, and, even then, often leaves us with no results to reward all our efforts. But this hesitation and doubt is a limp put into liberty's quick step by our ignorance and weakness, it does not follow that gawkiness is inseparable from liberty's full stride. There is so much we do not know,

that we know we do not know, that we may well be uneasy in our decisions. Christ, you will remember, was neither ignorant nor weak.

Neither was there the civil war in the soul of Christ that so often rages in our own when our will is torn two ways by the sheer inability to pick the better thing, or when sense appetite seriously threatens, even successfully rebels against reason. The appetites and desires of Christ were in complete harmony, at quiet peace, even in such bitter moments as the agony in the Garden. The will of Christ was in complete command of His lower faculties and was, at the same time, in complete harmony with the will of God. Not that the scourging at the pillar or the agony in the Garden were a pleasure to His sense appetite. His orders were to undergo these things, not to find them a source of pleasure, and submission to reason is far from a paralysis of the senses. Just as the human will has its most proper operation, though it be subject to the divine will, so the sense appetite has its full and proper operation in its very subjection to reason, of course it properly flees sorrow and pain, but with the limitation of that flight to the demands of reason.

So a man sits down in a dentist's chair freely, not in an expectation of ecstasy, but for the glory of God, the sake of his health, or the beauty of his face. Sense appetite, it is clear, does not reach to the glory of anyone; it is totally uninterested in health, or beauty. Its concern is with pleasure and pain. It does its work in the dentist's chair, protesting against the pain, urging escape from it; but, on the whole, a dentist rarely has to pursue his patients or retain them by force.

Men wondered at Christ, as well they might. They saw Him sink into exhausted sleep with the same relief any tired man would enjoy; yet they saw Him rise and stop the storm at sea with a word of command. Wondering, they were at the edge of the mystery of the two radical principles of action, the divine and the human nature, in Christ, each with its own proper operation. The human actions were plain enough.

Men could not see the ineffable action of divinity itself ; but they could and did see (and were afraid seeing it) the divine-human action whose first cause was divine nature and whose instrumental cause was human nature—the leper cleansed at His touch, and Lazarus answering His call from the depths of four days in the grave.

If men had scrutinized the Son of Mary more keenly they would have found grounds enough for wonder in the human acts of Christ, acts that proceeded from His human nature. The ordinary man's kingdom is a limited thing with the maintenance of order within those limits difficult enough ; beyond those limits, he has no control at all. His intellect and will are his complete servants, his sense appetite is a somewhat surly help ; there his rule stops. He may shout himself hoarse but his vegetative powers continue on their way as serene as a stubborn puppy ; he may concentrate his will to its utmost, but a charging tank will still knock him down and crush him.

In Christ, there was that same human kingdom but with complete, whole-hearted obedience from the territory subject to a man's control ; indeed, even the outer provinces were under His sway in the sense that all that affected His body was known and consented to from the beginning. Inasmuch as His human nature was the instrument of divinity, the whole universe of action was as much His slave as was the whole universe of things, as eager to obey as the wind and waves on the sea of Galilee.

If we are to grasp the worth of the life of Christ, we must remember well that the field of strictly human action was much wider in Christ than it is in us. Before this divine Person the whole field touched by the action of man was wide open. This is important, for it is by these actions, actions under his control, that a man merits. It may be argued that there should be no question of Christ actually meriting, since He was God's own Son ; but that is to forget that Christ was also man. It would not be nearly so worthy of His dignity as man to be born with a silver spoon in His mouth as to achieve the

hard-won fruits of His own labors. In the first case, a man is pampered, dependent; in the second, he makes himself. While it is true that man was made, under God, to be master, the kind of master he was made to be demands the very best that is in him.

What could the Son of God merit? Well, obviously, as God He could merit nothing, being already in possession of all things. Even as man, it was not at all fitting that He should merit grace, knowledge, beatitude, for that would argue that at one time or another He lacked these things; as we so readily understand in our own lives, while it is a stirring thing to see a man win back to virtue by penance, it is a much more inspiring thing for him never to have been without his innocence. But Christ could, and did, merit such things as the glory of His body, things pertaining to His exterior excellence, such as His ascension, His veneration, and so on; indeed, we could sum up the merit of Christ by insisting that He merited all things that were of lesser worth than the dignity of meriting itself.

More important, from the angle of appreciation of the fruitfulness of Christ's labors, are the benefits that came, not to Him, but to us, for it was for us that He came. We have a quick, though somewhat vague, view of the scope of Christ's merit by remembering the perfection, the superabundance of His grace and realizing that the principle of all merit, in Him as in us, is sanctifying grace. Nor are we likely to dismiss the merits of Christ lightly if we keep in mind our own helplessness in meriting for others. In strict justice, we merit only for ourselves. What we merit for others is only in the name of God's mercy, the divine friendship, and our own dispositions; all these make an affirmative answer to our prayers from God a fitting thing. Christ, in strict justice, merited such things for others as the first grace by which a man begins to live a divine life, faith, the remission of sin, virtue, perseverance, eternal life and all that pertains to it. In concrete terms, the sinner is like a hungry child staring at a bakery window; no

one can take him in but Christ. Indeed, his very hunger is from Christ; without Him, the sinner would starve, not knowing his own hunger. The saint is a child hoisted on his father's shoulders in order to see, to desire, to reach out, and possess divine gifts; no one knows better than the saint how helpless he is without Christ.

Christ Himself was not born with a silver spoon in His mouth; we can be very sure, then, that there are no spiritual playboys degenerating through idleness and ultimately slipping into heaven by reason of the labors of their ancestors. Christ merited richly, infinitely for us. These merited graces flow down from Christ, as the Head of the Mystical Body, to men who are its members. All these things are due in strict justice to the Mystical Body; but they are gratuitous to each member individually, their completion is in the individual's own hands. Every man must make his own way to heaven; yet the journey is possible only because of the Son of Mary and His merit.

In His grace, knowledge, virtue, desires, works, merits, Christ was perfect man. Which is only another way of saying that He was subject to God, for the perfection of man, like the perfection of all else in the universe, lies in subjection to his superior, in maintaining his own place. Lest we miss so obvious a truth in the perfection of Christ, slurring it over to protect our own pride, He put it into plain words again and again in insisting on His obedience to the Father. Like all other men, Christ's subjection to God was not on one slim ground. His goodness as man was a trickle of water flowing from the ocean of divine goodness; His power was that of a creature, held in trust from the Creator; His will was the will of a servant in the presence of his lord. This last was really the landmark of His life. Here His example to men was overwhelmingly convincing, though men are not yet convinced. He was jealously obedient to God; He gave a positively eager subjection to all who shared in the lordship of God: to Mary and Joseph, to the Chief Priests, even to the Romans who were putting Him to death.

The Greek Fathers spoke of Christ being subject to Himself because He was both God and man. While true enough if rightly understood, the statement is dangerous because of its implication of a dual personality in Christ. We use the same type of expression in recognizing a man as master of his fear but the slave of his anger, at the same time the master and the slave of himself. Of course we are not arguing that he is two persons; rather, that there are two *reasons* of subjection and dominion. We are speaking loosely and we know it, for strictly speaking, a master and a servant are two different persons. It is much safer to be accurate; and accuracy, relative to Christ, demands that we say that according to His human nature He was subject to Himself as God.

All this is merely for the sake of accuracy. The fundamental truth is the subjection of Christ, the man, to God. Nowhere is that truth given more consistent expression than in the constancy of the prayers of Christ. Christ prayed; a truth as astonishing as the tears of Christ. In fact, the more we examine the prayer of Christ, the more wonderful it seems. It should be so. It should catch our attention and hold it. For He gave us an example of how and why to pray; we need the study of it badly.

For prayer, while a thoroughly natural act, is still extremely difficult to a stiff-necked race. The very kneeling position of prayer, a position of subjection, is a symbolic statement of its difficulties. We sometimes forget that that position is also a proud statement of our ability to pray, of hope, of faith, indeed, of a rightful claim to a share in the government of the universe. The poverty and ignorance of our times is never more apparent than in our contempt for prayer. Perhaps that is why Christ left such sharply delineated pictures of His prayer: alone on a mountain in the evening; in the desert; at the grave of Lazarus; at the last supper; in the Garden; on the Cross. It is no doubt in the study of His subjection that our proud age will find itself.

That Christ could pray is evident from His possession of a

human will, since prayer is no more than the elevation of that human will to God that it might be fulfilled. Prayer has seemed a child's instrument, like the magic lamp of Aladdin or a fairy godmother; there is some truth in the conception, for we are ever children reaching beyond our own powers. But prayer is also a man's instrument in the proudest sense of the term man; it is a tool for a man who dares to take his part in the workings of the world. For prayer is more than a child's coaxing smile tossed charmingly at God. It is a physical cause as necessary for effects as the preparation of a field before the sowing is necessary for the harvest. In the preceding volume we saw that God gives men a part of His power in the government of the world. Our prayers are fulfilments of conditions of His divine decrees without which these effects would not be produced; by prayer, we take our responsible role in the world.

It was fitting that Christ should pray. He was man; more than that, He was our teacher on the living of human life, and an integral part of that life of ours is the prayer of it. By His prayer, He showed us from Whom we came, to Whom we go, and the part of prayer in our journey. However, it was more than fitting that Christ should pray; it was necessary. Not as though He were not God, not as though He were impotent; but because He was man, with a man's part to play in the government of the universe, with a man's offering to make for the fulfilling of divine decrees.

There is solid comfort for men in the prayer of Christ. Take that one agonized prayer in Gethsemane. In it there is the final stamp marking His humanity as genuine; there is a nod of approval for our hurried, desperate prayers against fear, for pleasure, against sorrow, and for all the other objects of sense appetite. By His example, these are human things, humanly desired, and rightly asked for as long as in the request there is humble subjection to the eternal, far-seeing wisdom of the Father Who is guiding us home; as long, that is, as we have the trust to say "Thy will be done."

Praying there, prostrate on the hard, bare rock of the Gar-

den, Christ prayed for Himself that we might learn to pray for ourselves; that we might know that the most perfect man needs help and needs it desperately; that we might learn from Whom to seek all the good that we need; that we might learn to say thanks for what we have received and for the things we still need. As far as an observer could see, the prayers of Christ, like our own, were not all answered. If the observer were wise, he would know that he could not see into the soul of a man; he would recognize that he could not hope to catch sight of the calm hope that leaves no room for bitterness in what we call an unanswered prayer. That is, he cannot see the constant chord in the melody of prayer—"Thy will be done." With us, not knowing the divine will, our prayer is a constant act of loving, trusting faith; with Christ, knowing it full well, prayer was a complete act of obedience.

There is a profound beauty and attractiveness in a person seen at prayer, whether it be a child kneeling at night, a sinner hiding his face, or the Mother of God receiving an angel. This beauty is a matter of profound truth, not of mere sentiment. For a man at prayer reveals the wonders of his humanity as clearly as though he had drawn aside a curtain to show us man in his place. Man is above all else, for he alone is capable of prayer; he is subject to God, master of himself, a sovereign agent of divinity, the image of God looking back out of the mirror of the world at divinity.

For the wonder of humanity is unseen until it is viewed in its proper place—in relation to God and to the rest of the world. Nor is this peculiar to humanity; it is true of absolutely everything in the world. A human ear may be a thing of beauty until it is pinned to the dissecting table; a human head is a beautiful thing unless it be served on a platter at the command of a king. Yet in our time, it is as though we had torn the heart out of a rose and stood there wondering a little angrily what had happened to its beauty; for we have torn man out of the universe, yet wonder that he puzzles, frightens, or disgusts us.

Each discovery about man, each "liberation" proclaimed in the name of man's humanity, is only another sickening blow struck at a bound man. The modern scholar demands that we see beauty in a disfigured creature, inspiration in a creature devoid of hope, wisdom in a contradiction, or order in chaos, like a humorless man roaring at his own pointless joke. We simply cannot do it. Men have been forced to leave the world of beauty, of wonder, of inspiration, of incredible truths; but because they still cry out for all those things, they are allowed to proceed on an "as if" basis. The franker ones, of course, must force their eyes to continue to sicken until they are relieved to escape the light they have learned to loathe, to welcome darkness; or train their palate to savor the husks and draw back in revulsion from the bread of angels.

It is a perverted blindness that is rather proud of itself, though it shuts men off forever from the beauty and wonder of man. Perhaps "forever" is too strong; certainly the blindness must endure as long as man will not be seen in his proper place, as long as the relation of man to God, and man to the rest of the universe, will not be faced. Perhaps it will endure as long as men refuse to look at the God-man; at Christ's human and divine natures united in the one divine Person. For this is a miniature of the central truth of the universe; the divine tabloid compressing in one picture all the beauty that the long, wide vision of the universe can give to us.

CHAPTER VI
(OUTLINE)
THE DIVINE MEDIATOR
(Q 22-26)

1. Time and truth.
 - (a) The difficulty of truth and error.
 - (b) The field of buried truths.
2. Modern burial of fundamental truths
 - (a) Leadership and its goal
 - (b) Priesthood and sacrifice
 - (c) Hidden treasure in the Christmas cave
3. Christ's part in sacrifice:
 - (a) General characteristic of priesthood
 - (b) Work of the victim
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 - (1) In general
 - (2) For others
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5. The royal family of the priest
 - (a) Sons by nature and by adoption
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 - (1) On the part of God
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6. The adoration of men.
 - (a) Identity of worship given to humanity and divinity of Christ.
 - (b) Other objects of supreme adoration in Christ (*latría*).
 - (c) Veneration of His mother (*hyperdulía*)
 - (d) Veneration of the saints (*duhá*)
7. The priest at His work the mediation of Christ.

Conclusion

1. The tragedy of buried truths.
 - (a) The tragedy of modern leadership
 - (b) The tragedy of modern irreligion.
2. The treasure cave of Bethlehem.
3. The kings and the infant

CHAPTER VI

THE DIVINE MEDIATOR

(Q. 22-26)

THE contention that the obvious is most easily missed by the human eye or the human mind, while it may be well argued, seems to place a very low estimate indeed on the content of human knowledge. For it is quite certain that it is a strong human trait to stop at the obvious for the very good reason that a little extra labor is demanded to go beyond the obvious to the hidden. The spectator, for example, idly watching archaeologists excavating a buried civilization, say in Egypt or Greece, is usually quite content to spend his wonder on the time, labor, and expense necessary to unearth the traces of that lost culture. Yet a moment's reflection would impress him with the fact that much more time, much more labor, and incredible expense went into the actual burial of that city, particularly if he were a spectator who had somehow managed to live through the nineteen forties.

In our own lives, there can be no doubt of the effort, the discouraging labor, and the amount of time necessary to unearth truth; the long hours of study, the dogged years of relentless pursuit that is never nearly as successful as we would wish it. Yet all this is even more true of the burial of a truth, particularly of a fundamental truth. In our own short, personal experience with the lives of men, we cannot have missed the difficulty, the time, even the expense that go into the deadening of a man's conscience, into his burial of the truth of sin. Perhaps the uneasiness, the worry, the torturing remorse of the process cannot be measured accurately in terms of time

or money; but if labor is to be measured by what it takes out of a man, no one has worked harder than the man who is finally able to take sin for granted.

Such personal experience is well buttressed by the evidence offered, for example, by a contrast of primitive and later civilizations. In the former, for instance, marriage was almost universally monogamous, only later developing into the varied forms in which it is found in history; the mythical state of promiscuity so blithely talked of today is not a landmark in the history of man but a threat upon humanity's horizon. Among the primitives, worship of God, as far as the evidence allows of a conclusion, was originally monotheistic; it is only much later that those perversions developed that are to be found among the present peoples of the world. In fact, all this can be safely generalized; the field most likely to contain more fundamental truths more deeply buried is precisely the field enclosed by the fences of "higher civilizations." If, for example, we are in search of the perversions of the truth of sacrifice, it is to the higher civilizations we must go to come upon the ultimate perversion of human sacrifice; if sex perversions are the goal of our research, then we waste time laboring among the records of the primitives.

The burial of truth with the same determined eagerness with which a dog buries a bone is not to be considered as an historical peculiarity that has long since died out. The practice was never more common than in our own time. Take, for instance, the essential, the fundamental truth of leadership, a truth which proceeds from the fundamental fact that a man has some place to go. In our own very high civilization, men are enthusiastically, fanatically, following leaders who champion the denial of a goal for men, or who deny all motion to the individual man as such; leaders, in other words, who explicitly surrender all valid claim to leadership and so all solid faith in leadership. Some modern leaders have called forth goals that can have no meaning to the individual, goals of a race, a party, a class which exclude the individual as such;

still others insist upon following the people as a mother follows a spoiled child's aimless wanderings.

From time immemorial, a leader has been a man who stood out in front, between the people and their goal, so that they could be sure of the direction of their goal by a glance at the leader. Today, a leader is not expected to stand between his people and something else; rather, he represents the blank wall where all hope must end. In the spiritual world, the leader should take up the awful position between God and His people; today, spiritual leaders, though seriously laying claim to leadership, insist that there is no God and, consequently, no purpose in leadership. What has happened to so fundamental a truth as that of leadership if it hasn't been buried?

Then, too, there are the fundamental truths of sacrifice and of the priesthood. Surely there is no truth more thoroughly buried today than these two; yet there is little more fundamental, if for no other reason, because there is little more fundamental than the recognition of primary truths. And these are primary truths. From the beginning, men have seen that a child cannot effectively deny that he has had parents; on the same basis, they saw that a man cannot deny his Creator, for his very dependence is an acknowledgment of that Creator. The recognition of man's dependence is, at the same time, a recognition of God's dominion. These are truths that must be recognized if man himself is not to be denied.

The recognition of the dominion of the Creator is made by each creature according to its nature. Man, the intelligent creature naturally in harmony with the rest of creation, sought to acknowledge this truth in a human way; universally, men have hit upon sacrifice, and so upon priesthood, as the means of human acknowledgment of their own position and of the dominion of God. Since sacrifice was, for the most part, an act of a group, of a community, it was to be offered by one who could speak in the name of all the people, by a community official who was called a priest.

The recognition of man's position and of God's dominion,

over and above the need for sacrifice, also made clear the necessity of winning to that final position which is the destiny of the human race, to that God Who is the goal of life. It meant going to a goal and making reparation for the endless wanderings and recessions from that goal. In other words, by the recognition of the truth of his position, man recognized that he had a place to go and that he needed spiritual leadership to get him to that spiritual goal. The work of the priest, then, has always been to furnish that spiritual leadership, to stand out before the people in that no man's land between God and men with the souls of men depending for eternity on the exercise of his office.

Christ came to remove the debris from buried fundamental truths as well as to give us new truths. Of the buried truths, none received greater emphasis in His life than those of priesthood and sacrifice.

The birth of the babe in Bethlehem has always been a shock and a comfort to the world. It is a simple, homely expression of an unthinkable truth. The ages have rightly stressed the homeliness of that scene: the family group of mother, father, and the Child Who had no father but God. That first Christmas throws us off our guard by putting God at our mercy; its surprise blow strips us of all the protective armor with which we cover our heart from the incursions of the outside world. The helplessness of God has pierced the armor of man. Yet we see the scene no less truly when we see it as the cave where God began to unearth buried truth.

Mary kneeling at the manger, offering her Son to God as every good Jewish mother would, made the first offering of the Perfect Victim; this was, too, the first act of the Perfect Priest, for the infused knowledge of Christ dated from the first moment of His life. Priest and Victim was her Son, and God; she knelt in adoration before Him; He, the High Priest, interceded for her. In that picture alone we have all the material of this chapter

If the priesthood were subject only to human explanations,

then it could be said securely that only one who was very young, very foolish, rashly presumptuous, and absurdly gallant would dare to undertake it. Fortunately the explanations are not limited to the human order. These men are not those who have chosen but rather who have been chosen, and that by God. However, the human side is not neglected or wasted by God; there is still the element of eternal youth, of divine foolishness, of the reckless gallantry of love in the priesthood. When these things die out of it, the priesthood will be only a name. So to our time, as to all times, the celebration of a first Mass or the ordination of a priest is a gala event; even the most casual acquaintances and complete strangers crowd into the church to drink in some of that intoxicating atmosphere that envelops the departure of reckless love down the hard road.

Such presumption as may be present cannot linger long. The saints among the ordinary people to whom the priest ministers, the helplessness of his wisest words, and the divine efficacy of his fumbling efforts keep the priest well aware of his own failings. Indeed, the very consideration of his principal work of spiritual leadership makes his own helplessness and the efficacy of divine help the central truths which furnish the support by which alone it is possible for him to face his work.

For the work of the priest can be summed up in one sentence. he is to stand between God and the people. On the one side there will be the desperate, trusting dependence of these men, women, and children spurring him on; on the other, the unutterable perfection of God shining upon him with a brilliance that throws his every weakness into bold relief. If this were a merely human office, it would be a lonely, terrifying, comfortless thing to strike terror into the heart of any man. Because it is a divine office, it has depths of serene joy that only God can sound.

As the intermediary between God and His people, the life of a priest is an endless series of journeys of heart and mind

from God to men and back again ; in time, he becomes like an old pack horse who looks naked without a burden. Coming from God, he carries the precious burden of divine gifts—truth, love, the divine life of grace ; coming from man, he carries to God the stuttering prayers of the human heart and the petty satisfactions we are able to offer for the sins we have committed

The chief act by which the priest accomplishes his office of mediator has always been the act of sacrifice, it is that act, indeed, which has called the priest into being. In Christianity, the sacrifice of the New Law is the Mass, the central act of the Christian religion and the principal reason for the existence of the priesthood. It is in sacrifice, then, that the priest is most truly a priest, it is then that he stands most squarely between God and the people. The sacrifice is a vain gesture, the priesthood a useless office, if the victim's destruction does not attain to the ends of sacrifice.

The Old Testament distinction of offerings for sin, for peace, and as a holocaust is a succinct statement of the ends or goals of sacrifice. Sacrifice, after all, must do just two things: it must pay man's debt to God, acknowledging His position ; and acknowledging man's position, it must fulfill his double need of dealing with sin and winning that divine life which is his peace. These are noble ends indeed for a human act: a holocaust to God, remission and satisfaction for sin, the conservation and increase of that share of divine life within us which is grace. It is small wonder that men looked with awe on the simplest act of solemn sacrifice.

Yet, before Christ, only the benign tolerance of God could look with favor on the victims offered by men, could accept a holocaust, a supreme act of worship, from such feeble hands, inevitably weary and soiled from wielding weapons in the war for the priest's own soul. With Christ came the perfect priest and the perfect victim. Swaddling clothes may seem strange clothes for a high-priest ; we hardly expect to see a high-priest lying in a manger under the watchful eye of a mother or nailed

naked to a cross under the glaring eyes of an angry mob. These are garments more fitted to a victim than to a priest; but, then, human nature was a strange cloak for God to take up in His short walk through the world. No doubt it was because He knew it would always be more difficult for us to see Him as a victim than as a priest that He left that indelible record of His victimhood, of the beginning and the end of His human life.

But priest He was; and the only priest on Calvary. It was He Who offered the sacrifice there, not His executioners. Indeed, He was the perfect priest from the very beginning. His Christmas gifts were the kind of burden we should expect to tire the back of a worthy priest: for He brought truth, love, grace, even God Himself to us; His gift to God was full satisfaction for all sins and the prayers of all the centuries of fighting Christians who would accept His challenge to set out on the hard road of the cross.

He was priest and He was victim. He accomplished, as the victim should, the remission of the sins of men, peace with God, and a union such as only God Himself could have conceived, a union in His own Person and in the lives of each man by grace now, by glory in eternity. The offering for sin, the offering for peace, the holocaust, found their perfection in the life and death of Christ. The sheep and goats, victims in the Old Law, were accepted by God in lieu of better things; the Son of God made man was an adequate victim, perfectly accomplishing the ends of sacrifice and loosing a flood of grace on the souls of men of all ages.

Christ the priest stood between God and man. On Calvary He was raised a little above the earth; for three hours He hung there, far below heaven, a little apart from men, very close to God. The hopeful men of all ages can look over His shoulder, sure of the goal and the direction of the goal; on the other side, there was the white glare of the divine light which could find no fault in Him. All other priests, in the very act of sacrifice, are a part of the multitude for whom they pray, for they are sinful men themselves dependent on divine mercy;

Christ, alone of all priests, sinlessly approached divinity and made His plea in His own divine name.

In a wider sense the whole life of Christ, from beginning to end, was the act of a priest; for the wider sense of sacrifice includes all that is offered to God that the spirit of men might be lifted up to God. Surely, every act of Christ's life was directly aimed at that end; it is not lightly that we call Him Redeemer and Savior. Indeed, the priesthood of Christ still endures, it is unending. The act of a priest, after all, is not the offering of sacrifice to the exclusion of the consummation of that sacrifice; and that consummation is accomplished only when the people for whom the sacrifice is offered attain the final union with God which is the end of the sacrifice and the eternal holocaust of all who are saved.

The priest of the twentieth century, continuing the work of the perfect Priest, is also a spiritual leader standing between God and men. Nor is his office a lonely, burdensome, terrifying one for he stands there, not in his own person, but in the person of Christ. He need make no excuses for the priest who is offering the sacrifice, no apologies are necessary for the victim, for the priest and the victim are still Christ Himself. This poor human instrument standing on the altar is no more than an instrument in the hands of the High Priest. As Mary was on the first Christmas and on Calvary, the humble Catholic of today is present at the perfect sacrifice accomplished by the perfect Victim and the perfect Priest; now, as then, the people need only look over the shoulder of their leader for sure direction to the goal. What there is of imperfection, of unworthiness, is not material for worry for the people, but for the priest. Though he was chosen and did not choose this life for Himself, the standards to which he must measure up, to which he will be held, were set by that High Priest during His life in Palestine; it was Christ Who died on the Cross, not His loved ones, and it is the priest who must run the risks, face the dangers, and assume full responsibility, not the people.

In that same wide sense of sacrifice, of which we have spoken

above, it is true that the whole priestly life of a twentieth-century priest is a sacrifice from beginning to end. He is set apart in order that all of his life, all his actions, might focus on the one effect of bringing men to God ; it is for this that he exists, that he studies, that he works, that he lives. In a sense, his priesthood, too, is eternal. No priest counts his work done when the Mass is over or the confessional slide shut ; it is finished when the gates of eternity swing shut on those who were committed to his care, when the eternal consummation of his sacrifice is begun.

Through all the long chant of the priesthood the same melody has rung out clearly : gifts to men, worship and satisfaction to God. And it is through Christ alone that all things have come to all men, that all sins have been satisfied for, that the perfect holocaust was offered to God. The priesthood of the Old Law was a figure and a promise of that which was to come ; what efficacy it had was by anticipation of the merits of the perfect Priest for whom the chosen people waited so anxiously. That this might be clear, the priesthood of Christ had early been foreshadowed in the strange figure of a priest, Melchisedech, who comes from nowhere into the pages of Scripture and disappears into the void from which he had come. It was strange, among a people so careful of lineage, that no mention was made of the ancestors of this priest—almost as though he were pictured as unbegotten ; it was strange that his sacrifice should have been of bread and wine, as a kind of promise, even a description of the Mass ; it was even more strange that all the priests of the Old Law, still in the loins of Abraham, should have made their gesture of subjection to this stranger in the tithes Abraham paid to him.

The priesthood of the New Law is a continuation of the priesthood of Christ, not merely a memory of it. It is as dependent upon Christ the priest as an echo on the voice that gave it birth ; in fact, it is as dependent on the priesthood of Christ as the existence of man is on the existence of God or the miracle of a saint on the efficacy of divine power. For in

all the priesthood of the New Law, it is still Christ Who is actually the priest and the victim.

Even aside from the divine guarantee of its endurance, it would probably be extremely difficult to wipe out the memory of Christ's priesthood from the minds of men. For generosity is one thing to which we pay spontaneous tribute; particularly generosity that goes all the way, with no conditions spoiling its flavor. Of course we distinguish between generosity that reaches its heights by mistake, that, for instance, which leaves a child ruefully regarding the candy bag emptied by a generosity that thought there was more than one piece left; and that which makes no advance reckonings, such as that which enables a mother to send a son off to war with a smile veiling the tears in her heart, or which enables a wife to saunter out of the world she has known arm in arm with a husband who has brought disgrace or poverty upon the family. In our human estimation, this sort of thing makes up for many a defect; even the infamous and unlawful wife of Herod, Herodias, regains something of our respect when she passes out of history with one final, splendid gesture of generous choice, refusing to abandon her exiled and despoiled husband. If the sacrifice of Christ the Priest was no more than an incautious whimsey of God, it would have been a thing of wonder for what it gave away—the very life of the Son of God.

But this was no divine whimsey. We come closer to an appreciation of the recklessness of divine generosity if we remember that in the mind of God, the intelligent Creator, there is a kind of architect's blueprint containing the smallest detail and the greatest item of the universe He has made. The small corner of these divine plans which deals with men we call predestination. Among the men whose every breath is detailed there is the man Christ Who was leader, king, legislator, above all, priest. Every detail, then, of the priesthood of Christ, every item of His sacrifice was clearly, serenely, wisely, eternally embraced in the plan of God. This truth has been the comfort of every priest since Christ and the perpetual humiliation of a

human generosity which tries to match the divine. Indeed this was no divine whimsy.

From our side, the purpose of Christ's priesthood was to bring us home. Because so much is so freely given to us, we may easily take too many things for granted, forgetting that the home to which He is bringing us is His home by right; it is ours only through still more generosity on the part of God. He is the natural Son of the family; we are members of the household only by an adoption that stooped the infinite distance between divinity and humanity to take us into the family of God. Nevertheless we are members of the family, brothers of Jesus Christ, and heirs of heaven.

Still we must not let the splendor of the home dull our appreciation of the adoption which is the means of our getting there. Not long ago, the newspapers reported that a couple had just discovered that their adopted baby of one year was feeble-minded. Since this condition could not be the result of environment, at least in so short a time, they demanded the right to return the child as so much damaged goods. The story was hardly any longer than that; yet it silhouetted perfectly the limitations of human adoption. In general, a man adopting a child is being generous, sharing his riches and his home with an unknown child. Of course, the child will not receive the wealth of the father immediately, since that kind of wealth cannot be shared and kept at the same time; it is clear, too, that considerations of his own comfort, his own companionship, and that exquisite joy that comes from caring for one who is as helpless—and as grateful—as a child have entered into the adoption. Even so, the adoption was a generous act. The present condition of the child, however, is not due to any generosity on the part of the adopter. He hasn't made the perfection of the child; he must institute a search for the perfect baby. In this particular case, the shop-lights were rather dim and the foster-parents considered themselves cheated.

Divine adoption is something else again. We need have no worry about being sent back because we are feeble-minded;

God has not been cheated. His creative love does not search out a good child to adopt; rather, He makes the goodness which He adopts. He shares His riches with His adopted children immediately, as well as giving them a share in the divine heritage; for from the beginning we participate in that by which God is rich—His infinite goodness—a treasure which can be shared and not be diminished, which can be given away with nothing of it being lost. Nor has God filled an empty house with the joyous laughter of children because He was lonely. The house was not empty; nor was He lonely; but He is good. It is His divine goodness which alone explains our right to the house of God.

Once we see something of the goodness of God, His adoption of men is understandable. We are the image and likeness of God. We have an intellect and will, as He has; we are capable of knowing and loving the infinite, though in our own humble way; with divine help, we are capable of knowing and loving God in His own divine way. In fact, there is nothing so much like God's own natural Son as a man in the state of sanctifying grace. Understand, this similarity is not that of a house to the architect's idea or of the student's knowledge to his teacher's idea. This is a family likeness; through grace and charity, we are one with God as the Son is one with Him by nature.

We are very much at home with the High Priest and Victim. Perhaps we are a little awkward and self-conscious at first; but only for a very short time. We are at home. There may be some of that strangeness and tension on our part that comes to a family whose new priest has just come home for the first time; but after all this is our brother and we are soon ourselves. When at last we reach heaven, we are one of the family who has long been looked for and at last has arrived. On arrival, we receive the rousing welcome given to one who might have strayed a little to reach home somewhat later, a little more the worse for wear, a little more ready for rest.

Yet, for all that homely, lovable familiarity, we do not forget

that Christ is God. His priesthood and sacrifice, never separated in our eyes from His life, are reminders and commands of that complete worship we owe to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We serve Him, love Him, live intimately with Him, yet every minute, as Mary did, we adore Him because He is God.

It is to the divine Person, of course, that we pay this tribute, as in the human world it is the person we praise or blame, not his hand, his foot, or his nature. If human nature could be separated from the Person of the Word, and thus from divinity, we would pay it the lesser tribute which we give to Mary, the tribute of supreme excellence among the saints. But it cannot be so separated; we must, then, give the humanity of Christ adoration, though not an absolute but a relative adoration. Thus, in adoring the Sacred Heart, or the Precious Blood we are really adoring the Word Incarnate.

This may become more clear from an examination of the tribute we pay the images of Christ. The Catholic, kissing the crucifix, does not imagine that that crucifix is alive, that it is God, that it is a mysterious power; certainly he does not consider it a representation of something that does not exist, never did exist, and never will exist. These might be the pagan's views of his idol. The ordinary Catholic would be astonished, and a little amused, at such notions; as amused as a man accused of falling in love with a piece of paper because he was caught kissing the picture of his young wife. Of course he gives honor and respect to the picture, not because it is a picture, but because it is a picture of his wife. This is a relative respect; by it he means to honor his own wife. So a Catholic, kneeling in prayer before a crucifix, gives the crucifix a relative adoration, an adoration that is referred to the Master who is represented on that crucifix.

The point should not really be so difficult; at least it is a general rule in all our human dealings that we give the same respect to a person absolutely that we give to his image or memory relatively. Our respect for the corpse at a funeral

certainly does not flow from our esteem for dead bodies; it is an expression of our esteem for the person to whom this body once belonged. The relative anger of a mob burning a tyrant in effigy is not inspired by a hatred of effigies, nor is the mob under the delusion that it is destroying the tyrant in the destruction of his effigy. When a human mind has wandered so far as to make this kind of mistake, it is lost in the jungle of voodooism.

This respect or tribute to excellence varies according to the excellence it honors. The respect we give God, for example, is called adoration. To lesser degrees of excellence we give veneration, a tribute whose real basis is sanctity: for this is the preeminently human excellence; this is the respect we give to Our Lady, to the saints, to the very wise, the old. In Latin, the terms are much more precise. *Adoratio* is the generic term including all these tributes to excellence; that which is due to God alone (our "adoration" in English) is called *latría*; that which we give to Mary as the mother of God is called *hyperdulía*; finally, the tribute paid to the saints is *dulía*.

All this may seem too technical a laboring of a perfectly clear truth; but history brings eloquent testimony to the importance of accuracy and clarity in this matter. Undoubtedly the identification of the Latin generic term *adoratio* with the English "adoration" contributed a great deal to the storm against images that swept Europe with the Reformation. At times this noting was due to ignorance, at others, to a malicious preying upon ignorance by those who knew better. At any rate, the charge was that these images were being adored with the very same adoration with which we adore God. Notice the contrast: the modern pagans in Russia, Germany, and Spain destroy images in a petty gesture of hatred against God; the Reformers destroyed images in an ignorant gesture to protect the rights of God which, in fact, were not being violated.

The Reformers' charge was false. But the quarrel was an old, old one. The same error had been condemned in the Councils of the eighth century; and in all its long history, the

error had given birth to vandalism, hatred, bloodshed, murder, general destruction. Why was all this argument made about so simple a thing as images? Why was the Church so stubborn about the whole thing; would it not have been much simpler for the Church to renew the Old Law prohibition against images and stop all this violence?

Well, there was first of all the matter of truth. The Church may surrender, in fact has surrendered, territory, wealth, power, but not truth; for the last bit of truth is more important than all the safety, security, peace, and beauty to be found in the world. Then, too, there is the very purpose of images as a more than sufficient reason for the stubbornness of the Church. These are the books of the little ones, the script that can be read by the most unlettered of men; and the souls of these little ones are worth any price that may have to be paid for them.

Images are a memory lesson that continues to be repeated as long as a church stands; they are the seal by which the mystery and example of the lives of Christ, Mary, and the saints are impressed on our minds. The world did not have to wait for modern psychology to discover that vision is an effective means for vivid, serious instruction, for the inflaming of affection, and for indelible memory. Men knew long ago that the horrors of war visible in the streets down which they walked were far more impressive than the most detailed story of a returning soldier. In the ordinary course of human events, some things are going to strike our eyes, impress themselves on our memories, and claim our affections; if among these are not the saints, the Mother of God, and her Son, then we leave the field open to the undesirable things of the world to pay court to our hearts without any rivals.

Within the easy familiarity of a family circle there is God, Christ His natural Son, and the adopted sons and brothers of the Priest and Victim. On our side, we adore Him, familiar as He may be with us, for He is God; on His side, the High Priest, our Brother, goes about His priestly work in our favor,

standing between God and ourselves, bringing us divine gifts, offering our paltry gifts to God. Of course we have other mediators · saints on earth, saints in heaven, Our Lady herself, not infrequently the shamefaced sinner pleading the cause of one who has shown mercy. But no one of these can perfectly effect the work of mediation, no one can unite us perfectly to God but Christ, for only He established the bond of friendship on Calvary and released a flood of grace into our souls. Others can only work to this end. The union itself is God's work, a work proper to Him Who is one with us in human nature and one with God in divine nature

There is inevitable sorrow in the unearthing of a buried civilization for it is the revelation of a human tragedy. Looking down on the crumbling stone, we are gazing on the final defeat of all the thoughts, the works, the hopes and struggles of a people who are gone. There is this mercy about it, however, that the citizens of that culture died with it; they did not have to live on after their world was dead. The burial of a fundamental truth, on the other hand, has all the bitterness of a buried civilization to which is added an ultimate agony; for the human beings to whom it was a pillar of home are forced to live on without it.

The burial of the fundamental truth of leadership was a bitter blow to humanity. It struck directly at the truth of a man, his dignity, his freedom. And men had to live on after the truth had been buried, they had to smile at its funeral, submit to the despoilers of humanity, and even, later, join with the champions of this rule of absolute tyranny.

What has been true of leadership in general is above all true of the perfection of leadership, the spiritual leadership whose proper act is sacrifice. The burial of the fundamental truth of the priesthood has left the soul of man bewildered, lost. It had already been a little lonely in an entirely material world which gave it no spiritual companionship; but now, that soul has been snatched from home and country to a barren exile, alone. The wandering, exiled victims of our present war, miserable as

their plight is, are a very mild likeness of the hidden misery of all men brought on by a more subtle attack that has pulled man out of the harmony of nature and forced him to live a lie.

The cave of Bethlehem sheltered more than the mother, her Child, and the foster-father; it contained, too, all the fundamental truths which the world had tried to bury throughout the centuries. These truths are never buried beyond recovery because God Himself was born in a cave; there we find such truths as the immortality of the soul of man, the validity of his intellect, the freedom of his will, his faith and hope, his virtue and merit, courage and high endeavor, the goal to which he goes. Fingering this treasure of truth, we must not overlook the truth of man's position and God's position in the universe; nor the absolutely fundamental truth of the priesthood and sacrifice.

There was a delicate divine irony in the providence which brought the kings of the East to the humble throne of the Infant with their treasures. Gold, frankincense, and myrrh were royal gifts offered by royal hands and a fitting tribute to a poverty-stricken Child Who yet was God. The kings brought the treasures of the world; they took with them the buried treasure of fundamental truths. In reality, it was the Infant who had brought treasures to the kings, not the kings to the Infant.

CHAPTER VII
(OUTLINE)
VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD
(Q 27-34)

1. Woman and the world
 - (a) The criterion of an age
 - (b) Bases of a philosophy of life animal, rational, divine.
 - (c) Fundamental tests of woman's life
 - (1) Sanctity
 - (2) Virginity
 - (3) Marriage and childbirth
 - (4) Evaluation of the infant
- 2 The exemplar of womanhood—the mother of God
- 3 Preparation for divine maternity
 - (a) Preparation of soul—perfect sanctity
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 - (3) Fullness of grace
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 - (1) In relation to God—absolute virginity
 - a Its universality
 - b Its stability and merit
 - (2) In relation to men, marriage to Joseph
 - (3) In relation to the angels, the Annunciation
- 4 The Infant conceived
 - (a) Material of the flesh of Christ
 - (1) Remote material the ancestors of Christ.
 - (2) Proximate material furnished by Mary
 - (b) The active principle of conception
 - (c) Characteristics of this conception
 - (d) Perfection of the infant in the womb

Conclusion.

- 1 Mary and the woman of the modern world
 - (a) In the light of the fundamental tests
 - (b) From their preparation for life
- 2 Fruits of the lives of Mary and the moderns
- 3 The only choice Madonna, Virgin, Magdalen.

CHAPTER VII

VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD

(Q. 27-34)

THE housewife bustling about her kitchen, the tired shop-girl smilingly meeting the discourtesy of customers, the product of a finishing school stepping into a world that is always glamorous to youth, these may all seem far removed from the abstract philosophies of life which mold the thought and action of an age. Actually, the status of woman, any woman in any age, is a concrete expression of the philosophy of life on which the citizens of that age proceed in the living of life. This statement does not demand mental gymnastics for its comprehension, nor does it ask philosophy to work the modern miracle of standing erect in a careening street-car serenely powdering its nose. It merely demands a consideration of the solid fact that the life of woman is one of the most vivid and accurate of all the norms of judgment of an age and its philosophy.

A moment's examination of our age, or any age, will bring out unmistakably the only three bases for human life: the animal, the human, and the divine. The life of every age is physical, human or divine; built up on the basis, that is, of strength, justice, or charity. It is true, of course, that some men of every age have acted like animals, it is also true that in the most debased ages there were some men who were uprightly human, even some who were saints. The question here is not of the exception but of the rule, of the ideal to which an age looks and the things that it condemns or mocks. Considered in that general light, there is nothing in an age that so sharply mirrors its philosophy as the lives of its women.

Perhaps this fact can be brought out most briefly by a short comparison. A sea-plane can stagger through pounding seas for a while, for it has something in common with the sea, some bond of unity; but in a very short time it is pounded to pieces. When it soars above the sea into the air, its flight is swift, accurate, though, often enough, quite rough; the air is its proper medium; that is where it belongs. If it is equipped with superchargers, variable-pitch propellers, and a sealed cabin, it can get above the level of ordinary air to travel in the stratosphere; there its flight is of such speed and grace as to stagger the imagination.

Woman has something in common with the animal level of life, some bond of union with it; but if she is forced to live on that level very long, she must break up. Physically she is no match for a man; in an age whose philosophy is based on strength, she becomes a toy, an instrument of pleasure, an inferior creature, for the principle of such an age is that might makes right. She was made to live on a human level; on that plane she is the equal of the mightiest and the wisest. Yet, because on the purely human plane strength so often usurps the place of justice, the course of her life may often be very rough. On the supernatural, the divine, plane, where she can expect not merely justice but also charity, she reaches her highest perfection; there her life is one of smooth grace for there, above all other planes, is where she belongs.

Every age has had a practical opinion of woman because every age has had a philosophy of life whose expression has thundered ceaselessly on the shores of woman's life. Strangely enough, in the ages most unkind to women it is women themselves who are often the most aggressive champions of the debased philosophy by which that age lives. It may be that such women have actually become convinced of the philosophy of that age; it may be that they have been tricked by the specious promises such an age always holds out to its victims; or it may be that woman's championship of such a philosophy is merely another expression of that subtle, feminine practicality

which knows so well how to listen and to say the things that men most willingly hear.

The repercussions of a philosophy of life upon women has been so clearly seen that the attempt to dodge them has produced queer results in the history of humanity. In some ages, the nineteenth century for example, the result was an hypocrisy that approached the comic. Apparently the nineteenth century was a romantic age; actually, its romantic glorification of women was fatalism that tried to hold to the Christian respect for women. It found itself helpless to do so except by glorifying the only weapons its philosophy had left for women in a world of brute strength and mechanical inevitability, namely, youth and beauty. Women, trying to live up to the demands of their age, lived in a nightmare of absurdity that found a feeble reflection in the very clothes they wore. Still other ages attempted to hold to an animal abuse of women in an age of a human philosophy of life by maintaining that woman was something less than a human being.

More frequently, however, there has been a frank application of a definite philosophy of life to the women of that particular age. In an age based on animal philosophy, woman is a toy, a domestic instrument, or a necessary nuisance; in any case, she is to be used and discarded. In a rational age, she will be an equal who could yet be taken advantage of when the need arose. In a divine or supernatural age, she is the daughter of the mother of God, a member of the mystical body of Christ, coming directly from God and going to Him, redeemed by His blood, and cooperating in one of His greatest works, the generation of human beings.

To discover the status of woman, it is not necessary to carry on extensive researches into the philosophy by which an age lives. No more is necessary than the application to woman's life of the basic tests of human and divine life for a woman. We need only ask a few questions. What value does she, and her contemporaries, place on sanctity; i.e., has the divine any place in her life? What is her estimate of virginity? What is

the attitude of her contemporaries and herself to marriage? What part has the consecration of love and the stability of justice in the living of her life? What is a child, what is the evaluation of infant life? In a word, has reason any place in her life?

More concretely, it can be said positively that an age which mocks sanctity, considers virginity a matter of taste or lack of opportunity, declares marriage a legal convenience for the satisfaction of passion, and strips the child of rights, giving it consideration only in accord with parental convenience—such an age is based on an animal philosophy of life. Its norm of living is purely physical; its yardstick is brute strength.

Ultimately, of course, the difference between an animal and a rational age boils down to the difference between the denial and the admission of the spiritual nature of the soul of man. If the vote of an age goes against the spiritual character of man's soul, then the only basis of judgment is the material, the weaker must, of course, suffer. And the weaker are always the women and children. It may seem fairly safe to deny a child's rights, since the child is, after all, quite helpless, so the thing is promptly done by abortion and its cousins. But once the lie has started, it is hard to stop. If the child presents an opportunity for the expression, in a particularly cowardly way, of materialism's social principle that might is right, why should the principle stop there? It does not stop there. We talk half-laughingly today of the battle of the sexes; but it is not a very good joke. There was never such a thing except in a materialistic age; even then, the war has never lasted very long. In such a war, on such a basis, woman always loses.

All this is on the negative side. The positive side can be seen, clear-cut and decisive, by even a hurried glance at womanhood's model, Mary, the mother of God. There we can see not only what woman can be but what she is. This is woman's place and her titles to it.

The perfection of Mary's womanhood stands out most sharply in the supreme moments of her life: in her divine

maternity and her preparation for it. To put the same thing in the words we have been using up to this point, Mary's perfection is brought out from the confused detail of her age by the application of these basic tests of any woman's life: sanctity, virginity, marriage, the evaluation of the infant. Mary, seen from the vantage point of these basic tests, leaves no room for doubt of the basis upon which woman's life is lived to its fullest. It must, of course, be remembered that Mary is a model in the order of nature as well as in the order of grace. Grace does not destroy but rather perfects nature. Mary, then, is the exemplar for women, not only in so far as she is the holiest of women, but also as the most womanly of women, the most free, winning the highest possible place in the hearts and minds of men.

Mary's preparation for her divine maternity began in the first instant of her life in the womb of her mother by that singular privilege which is called the Immaculate Conception. It is necessary to stop here for a moment and remark on a world-wide instance of that obtuseness which is the despair of teachers. An explanation is given, made very clear, repeated again and again, and every student agrees that he understands perfectly; then a recitation is called for and the students not only have the matter backwards, they give it that way. It has been explained again and again that the Immaculate Conception has nothing to do with Mary's conception of Christ, that it refers to Mary's conception by St. Ann and it has nothing to do with a virgin birth. Yet year after year, it is taken as a statement of the virgin birth of Christ. The Immaculate Conception is not a statement of a miraculous conception, but of a miraculous preservation from sin in the entirely natural conception of Mary by her mother.

In a previous volume, it was explained at great length that all the seed of Adam contract the sin of nature (Original Sin) in receiving nature from nature's head. Christ was not an exception to this general rule; for He was not from the seed of Adam, as will become more clear later on in this chapter. The

one solitary exception to the general rule was Mary, and the exception in her case was made in anticipation of the merits of Christ. Though from her natural origin she should have contracted it, she was preserved from Original Sin; and that preserving grace of the merits of Christ freed her from all rebellion of the lower appetites, from every least motion of sense against the regime of reason.

St. Thomas, in his treatment of the original sanctity of Our Lady, insisted on three things: her purity from sin; her redemption by Christ; and the fact that the grace of her sanctification was also a grace of preservation. On these same principles, Pope Pius IX declared the dogma of the Immaculate Conception to be of faith. But there is a serious dispute among theologians as to whether Thomas taught or denied the Immaculate Conception itself. The argument hinges fundamentally on a distinction of priority of time and of nature; in other words, the question at issue is whether Thomas was arguing that we must *think* of Mary as conceived before being sanctified, or whether he maintained that Mary *was*, in time, conceived and later sanctified. The defined doctrine of the Immaculate Conception makes it clear that Mary was preserved from original sin in the very instant of her conception; so that never, even for the shortest period of time, was there a stain of sin on her soul.

The argument as to the stand of Thomas is sharp, sometimes even bitter. Really it does not merit sharpness or bitterness. In the light of the humanity of Thomas, it seems small to begrudge him a single mistake or to gloat over his having made one. In the light of the incredible accuracy of his far-reaching mind, he might well have foreseen and taught this truth of faith as he did so many others. Certainly it would be a contradiction of evident facts for any man to challenge Thomas's love for and appreciation of the sanctity of the mother of God.

He insists, for instance, that never in all the course of her life did Mary commit any actual sin, either venial or mortal.

She was the mother of God. As the honor of parents reflects on their children, much more does the shame of a mother reflect on her child; Mary would not have been worthy to be God's mother had she been guilty of sin. Then, too, she above all others was so close to Christ, the Holy One; He took flesh from her and dwelt so intimately in her, not only in her womb but in her heart.

Mary's proximity to her child and its effects is brought out beautifully in Corregio's "Holy Night" which, I believe, hung in Dresden before night fell in Germany. In it, Mary is bending over the Child Who, however, does not appear in the picture; over Mary's shoulder, Joseph can be seen standing in the shadow. The Virgin's whole face and body is alight with a brilliant, soft splendor as though she had just put her arms around the sun. The moving beauty of the picture has solid foundations in the profound truth of the effects on Mary of her divine Son. The farther we take her away from Christ, the less we know about Mary herself; the closer we bring Mary to Christ, the better we understand her. It is this proximity to the source of all grace that makes it so easy for us to understand something of the fullness of the grace of Mary; He was the fountainhead, she was the closest of all men and women to this source of living water.

Perhaps we can get a still further insight into the perfection of Mary's grace through a homely example. An oaken log, lying in the damp underbrush, is only a potential source of the comfort of fire. When it is first exposed to the flames, it undergoes a period of disposition, of drying out. When that is over, the form of the fire invades the log and we see miniature flames, dancing like elves, catching tentatively at its huge sides with finger-tips that slip again and again; as they grow bolder and stronger, the flames seem to rush at the log in solid ranks, are repulsed, to try again and again. Finally, the whole log, entirely aflame, is a holocaust worthy of the dignity of an oak. In the perfection of Mary's grace, we can distinguish three somewhat similar stages. The first, the stage of

disposition, make her worthy to be the mother of God and is called the Immaculate Conception. The form of perfection really took full hold on her soul in the conception of Christ and her constant life with Him. Finally, in the glory of heaven, she is a blazing holocaust of grace, one with God in the beatific vision.

Mary's preparation of soul was perfect. She was sinless in her conception, spotless through all the days of her life. Others had been sanctified in their mother's womb, Jeremias and John the Baptist for instance, but only she was immaculately conceived. Others all through their lives had avoided mortal sin; she alone passed through the course of human life without the slightest stain of even venial sin.

Normally, we speak of virginity in its spiritual sense, meaning the abstention from all voluntary venereal pleasure, whether lawful or unlawful. When we speak of Mary's virginity, over and above this we include that physical integrity which, in other women, may be lost in various ways and which is virtuously surrendered in the consecrated act of marriage. Even in this physical sense, Mary was a perfect virgin though she conceived and bore a son.

This virginity was flatly miraculous. Its challenge today is a part of the universal challenge to the supernatural. The challenge is not made in the name of the progress of science, though it is under that heading that many reject it today; rather it is made in the name of the decadence of faith. There is no scientific question involved here at all, for the point at issue is not what a secondary cause in the physical order can do, but rather what the first cause can do. Philosophically the possibility of this miraculous virginity represents no difficulty whatever. If the secondary cause of natural conception, the natural father, operates by virtue of the first cause, as everything must, then surely the first cause can produce the same effect without the secondary cause which is so entirely dependent. To put it more plainly, God can do anything which He has put within the power of any of His creatures

We do not expect a worm to jump up and run down to the beach for a swim. We are quite sure the best a worm can do by way of locomotion is to crawl along flat on the ground; that is the only mode of operation open to it, since it is a worm. A man can, of course, crawl along on his stomach if he wants to; but we see no difficulty in admitting that he has several other means of locomotion. After all, he is not a worm, his nature is not limited to one avenue of action as is the material creation which does not enjoy his intellectual knowledge. The critics of the supernatural, in denying to God the power of His creatures, demand that the action of God be as limited as the action of nature, even of irrational or unknowing nature. Since the operation of any being follows the nature of that being, of course the operation of God follows the omnipotently perfect nature of His being. The possibility of the virgin conception and birth of Christ is plain philosophically; the fact of it is something to be accepted by faith.

For us the fact is certain. In the conception of her Son, the power of God entered the womb of Mary as serenely enriching and undamaging as a thought entering the mind. In the birth of Mary's Son, the Son of God left her womb, leaving the seals unbroken, with the same divine ease with which He came to the Apostles after His resurrection, the doors being locked. Ever after, Mary's loyalty to her divine Lover and the humbly unselfish love of Joseph preserved that virginity intact.

The fact is sure. The beauty of the fact is worthy of a work of God. Mary's Son was the eternal Son of God. It was beneath the dignity of the eternal Father to share His parenthood with a man. Christ was the Word of God; He should have proceeded from His mother as He does from the mind of God, without corruption, with no destruction of integrity. He came that He might take away the sins of the world, yet a natural conception would make Him guilty of the sin He came to destroy. He came that men might be born again spiritually of the Holy Ghost; so He himself was conceived through the power of the Holy Ghost. He came to

restore integrity to human nature; should He take integrity from His mother? He it was Who commanded that parents be honored; would He overlook the opportunity to give His own mother the sublime honor of virginity?

Perhaps because those who bow before the altars of the animal are always blind to beauty, this enduring virginity of Mary is taken today as an unnatural condemnation of sex. That mistaken estimate has missed the whole beauty of virginity and the whole meaning for all her daughters of Mary's spotless purity. This is a divine emphasis of the sacred significance of sex, not its condemnation. Here it was plainly said that sex is not a toy, not a master, not an instrument of pleasure, but a messenger of love, the physical expression of spiritual sublimity. Separated from love, sex is not human but animal. In Mary, that love was a divine love, a love that needed no physical expression; indeed, from the side of the divine Lover a physical expression was an impossibility. To that love, Mary brought purity as every woman should. Her virginity was absolute, to emphasize the high place of purity and the sacredness of divine consecration; in all other wives, Mary's virginity is paralleled by faithful chastity, that is, by adherence to the human significance of sex.

In order that the preparation of her body be absolutely perfect, Mary gave her virginity the stability and perfection that cling to a vow like perfume to a flower. She consecrated not merely her act, but her very power to act; the whole substance of her body, not merely its use. This vow of virginity was probably made absolute only after her espousal to Joseph and in conjunction with him; for the Old Law seemed to make generation an obligation, a part of the race's preparation for the Messiah. It was only after the glorious news of Gabriel that Mary knew she could take an absolute vow of virginity.

In her preparation for life, Mary could not, of course, slight the virtue of justice which regulates the relations of men to men and men to God. In justice to her Son, to herself, and to society it was necessary that she be married. In that prosaic

statement lies a wealth of significant truth: the truth, for example, that the strength of Rome needed the stability of the carpenter's home in Nazareth; that God needed the protection, name, and care of a father; even the strange truth that the devil himself could not penetrate the mystery of this family. There, too, is the truth that the mother so protected by God needed a husband to escape the blundering penalties of men, to preserve her good name, and for the love he would give her, a love that would make care, thoughtfulness, protection completely sure.

Joseph's position as head of that family was necessary for our stumbling hearts centuries later; that, by an added witness to the mystery of the Incarnation, we, who are so slow to believe, might have a confirmation of the word of the mother of God. From Joseph's part in that family life, we are given a divine approbation of virginity for both sexes; and in the vivid language of his action, we see the blessing of God on marriage. Joseph was truly the husband of Mary; this is not to be forgotten. We must remember that Joseph was deeply in love with Mary, and she with him. In their union, there was that complete consecration of soul that is the essence of human love; the mutual surrender of rights which is the essence of marriage, though the exercise of rights was suspended in the name of a greater love which the constant presence of the divine Child would not permit them to forget; here there was even a God-given child to be moulded by a human mother and father.

In the contemplation of Mary's perfection, it would not do to overlook Joseph. A dogged, humble, unquestioning devotion marks all of his recorded life. The uneasiness about his wife's condition as they approached Bethlehem, the shock of the news that every place was taken, the panicky search for quarters, all this was Joseph's worry. The warning of Herod's murderous intent was given directly to Joseph; the hurried flight into Egypt was a matter for him to manage. The long return from Egypt to Nazareth was something for Joseph to

plan and carry out. He faced a routine of daily drudgery that hardly brought in a living when he would have liked to lay kingdoms at the feet of his beautiful young wife.

In fact, Mary's entry into the life of Joseph was a signal for unceasing trouble. Before his espousal and marriage to the mother of God, Joseph's life was one of serene, uneventful peace; he was a humble artisan in a tiny village completely off the trade route which was the artery feeding men's desires for power and wealth. Quite probably nothing out of the ordinary had ever happened to Joseph; his was the serene routine of quiet, daily labor. But that was before Mary came. There was the immediate worry about her miraculous pregnancy, a terrible agony for one who knew Mary as Joseph did and one that well deserved the prompt assurance of the angel to put an end to Joseph's search for an easy way out for Mary. He was rushed to the other end of the land with a wife whose time had almost come, and forced to find lodging where there were no lodgings to be found. Kings visited him and his family who had never thought to come within miles of a king. Kings pursued him and tried to put his Child to death. He was driven into exile and forced to earn substance for his family among strangers. Mary brought trouble to Joseph, plenty of it; and he loved every instant of it. He rejoiced that he had been chosen to protect her, to give her unselfish devotion. In other words, Joseph was in love.

It is impossible to think of Joseph without loving him; he was indeed a father and we have seen his likeness on earth. For love is always a call to things above ourselves, to unquestioning sacrifice and complete consecration; it is an invitation to heroism which, somehow, we do not hesitate to answer. It is the natural parallel, in the lives of men and women of every age, of the Annunciation of the angel to Mary.

This was Mary's preparation in the sight of the angels: an unquestioning response to the proposal of God. The Annunciation was an instance in which the human heart most closely imitated the enduring embrace of angelic love. It was right

that Mary be told of the mystery beforehand. It was right that she receive the Son of God in her mind and her heart before receiving Him in her body; certainly that faith in Him would bring her more joy and more merit than the mere physical bringing of Him into the world. It was right that she who was to be the principal witness of the mystery should, above all others, be certain; and how could she be certain except by divine instruction?

Mary, it must be understood, was not an ignorant peasant girl pushed into divine things unwittingly. This was the Queen of heaven in her youth. Her offer of herself to God was a willing surrender of youth and beauty made with eyes wide open and heart unwavering; her gesture was regal, majestic, marking one of the heights achieved by human nature, for her acceptance was an "I will" of human nature to a spiritual matrimony with God. The Annunciation was a hushed moment in the history of the universe when the fate of the world hung on the response of the Virgin Mary.

The longer we study the scene of the Annunciation, the deeper it digs into our heart with that quietly mysterious penetration we notice in loving regard of the strange familiarity of a loved face. How thoughtful of God to send an angel! It was in complete accord with His general order of providence which makes angels the leaders of men to divine things as it makes all higher things the leaders of the lower; but it was more than that. It was a gesture of apology from angelic nature for the original betrayal by an angel of that nature through a woman. What a pair they make, the virgin and the angel! How close they approach one another; if St. Jerome was right in maintaining that to live in the flesh but not according to the flesh is not an earthly but a heavenly life, never did human nature approach closer to the angelic.

It was a divinely clever touch to have Gabriel appear in bodily form to announce the visible coming of the invisible God. Mary was to receive the Son of God not only in her mind but also in her womb, it was, then, not only her mind

but also her bodily senses that were refreshed by the angelic visitor. This was a story to which the world must hold with certainty, even though for that certitude it be necessary to make tangible an angelic spirit and to record in sound the flashing message of angelic intelligence.

No angel ever did a better job than Gabriel. If he had been told of his mission at the beginning of his long angelic life and had sat down in a corner of heaven in a grim concentration of his angelic mind through the centuries, he could hardly have improved on the composition of that brief message. He was a messenger with a story to tell to a virgin, a story which must win her consent. Really, then, he had three things to do: he must catch her attention, announce the mystery, and win her consent. Notice that he took no gamble on his angelic beauty and majesty alone riveting the attention of Mary. Maybe he was a particularly humble and modest angel; maybe, knowing Mary's absorption in God, he thought she might snuff at a mere archangel. At any rate, he took no chances; he promptly astonished her beyond measure by his very first words.

To a really humble mind, as Mary's was, nothing is more astonishing than to hear oneself praised. Here was unlimited praise, and from an angelic source: "Hail full of grace"; as if that were not enough, there was a hint of the miraculous conception, "The Lord is with thee"; finally, an indication of the blessings that were to follow on that vaguely hinted privilege, "Blessed art thou among women." This was indeed a cautious angel who took no chances.

With Mary's astonished eyes fixed on him in rapt attention, the first part of his work was done; he went rapidly on, instructing her in the mystery of the Incarnation: "Behold thou shalt conceive and bring forth a Son." Then telling her of the dignity of the Child, the Son of the Most High, he explained to her how it would take place: "The spirit of the Most High shall come upon you." Sweeping on to the con-

vincing conclusion, he cites the example of Elizabeth and states the root of all these wonders, the omnipotence of God, "for no word shall be impossible with God." It is a breathless scene, moving with the rush of love. Who can say how love enters a human heart; how could Mary say what the angel's words had done to her heart? There is no hint of doubt in the Virgin. She did not ask, "how shall I know this," as Joachim did, stating his disbelief; rather, she declared her firm belief, asking, not how she could know, but how it could be done. Whether this question was asked in a moment of anxiety for her cherished virginity or in a thoroughly justified curiosity, it was a question wonderfully becoming her age and her sex.

Her answer put the mystery of love into human words that would resound within the walls of the world until there were no more human hearts to love: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word." Complete surrender, complete dedication; unconditional, joyous, eager; words whose garments are faith, hope, humility, absolute trust.

Then the Son of God was made man. He took flesh from a child of Adam, but he was not from the seed of Adam. He was prophet, priest, and king as a worthy descendant of His ancestors; more than that, He was God and the Author of His ancestors. There is much discussion about the genealogy of Christ as given in the Evangelists who give it through Joseph. Some have claimed that Mary and Joseph were so closely related that the genealogy of one would be that of the other; the Evangelists' accounts, then, give us the actual ancestors of Christ while preserving the Jewish custom of tracing ancestry through the male line. If this is so, it is not hard to detect the divine humor smiling at our ponderous theories of selective perfection of the race, for most of the women, besides Mary, mentioned in the Gospel account of Christ's ancestry were disreputable. Others maintained that this account is strictly the line of Joseph, explaining that among the Jews an adopted or legal sonship was considered as strong and true a

bond as natural sonship. If this be the case, then we know nothing of the ancestors of Mary; and, again, there is reason for a divine smile at our pride of family and race.

The proximate parent of Christ was beyond all question the Virgin Mary. She gave to Him what every mother gives to her son; He was flesh of her flesh, blood of her blood. It was to this that all her preparation was directed, for this it was necessary; her Son was the Son of God.

Christ was conceived of the Holy Ghost; that is, the active principle of generation was God Himself. Since this conception was a work extrinsic to God Himself, it was, of course, the work of the whole Trinity; but it is attributed to the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Love, for it was a work of love and by the Holy Ghost we ourselves are also made sons of God. The first cause, God, did what is ordinarily left to the causality of the second cause, a human father. Not that the Holy Ghost is spoken of as the father of Christ, the Son of God already had an eternal Father in heaven. This generation was not according to that substantial likeness that is essential for the establishment of the relationship of father and son. It was miraculous, for it was a generation by the direct action of God; yet, since it was from the material offered by the Virgin, on this count it can be called natural.

However, through all the Incarnation, it is the miraculous that holds our attention, as it is through the life of Christ. Here, in the very first instant of Christ's life, the miracles piled one on another might shock our minds into incredulity if we did not remember the infinite power of the active principle in this generation. Because God Himself was the generator, the body of Christ was a perfectly formed human body at once; it was informed by a rational soul in the very first instant and, in that same instant, was assumed by the Son of God. All this we have seen, at least in principle, in a previous chapter in studying the essence of the Incarnation.

The perfection of this divine Infant was spiritual as well as physical. From the first instant, His soul possessed sanctifying

grace, the use of free will, infused and beatific knowledge. For God was the generator, and the Son of God was the Person involved in this assumption of a human nature. The perfection of the Infant obviously has a deeper significance than fittingness to the Son of God and the mother of God. Here is underlined a truth that marks the sharp difference between the pagan and the Christian world. For here is written, in capital letters of perfection, the truth that the infant, helpless though it be, is the equal on human grounds of any adult; and this from the first instant of its life. Where justice and charity are the bases of human life, this truth is evident; where physical strength is the foundation of human living, what chance has the infant?

The material of this chapter might well be summed up in a comparison of Mary with the woman of the modern world, if it be soundly understood that the modern part of that comparison does not signify this or that woman, or group of women, but the modern ideal. What is said of modern woman, then, is by no means a wholesale condemnation of the women of the twentieth century; rather, it is an exposition of the position of woman today in the light of the things approved or disapproved, applauded or mocked by the philosophy by which our age directs its life. With this caution well in mind, we may ask: what is the result of the application of the fundamental tests of woman's life to Mary's and the Christian woman's life as against the woman of the pagan world?

We have seen something of Mary's sublime sanctity, her absolute virginity, something of her regard for marriage, and her justice to herself, her Child, to Joseph, and to society. We have seen her response to the high call of love. What of the modern woman?

What chance has she to strive for sanctity when the very existence of the soul is denied, the freedom of her will rejected, and the moral code scoffed at as a mere convention? Virginity? A personal matter of fastidiousness or of social fitness, when it is not something to be tossed away quickly in the name

of development of personality. Is marriage thought of in terms of justice to the child, to the husband, to society; or rather in terms of physical beauty and social convenience? The question is, of course, rhetorical. Is there a high, unselfish, even reckless response to love's demand for sacrifice; or a careful reckoning of personal advantages, a clinging to an avenue of escape in love's most sacred acts, with a door left open for a quick retreat at the moment when love's price becomes too high?

We have looked at Mary's life as a preparation for divine maternity: a preparation of soul through sanctity, of body through virginity; as enveloping the lives of men in relation to marriage, and as reaching to the heights of the angels in the Annunciation. What would be the preparation of the woman of our time if she were to follow the ideals of her age? Surely not sanctity. Hardly virginity. For marriage, there would be some physical, financial, emotional, and social reasons considered; but that would pretty well sum it all up. A shorter summary could be made by simply listing the considerations of self.

The fruits of such lives are fruits worthy of the sowing. Mary was blessed among women. In her lifetime she won unselfish love, the joy of caring for her Son, the triumph of Calvary, the sorrows of earth and the glories of heaven. Just such fruits have come to the Christian mother ever since. The pagan earns the scorn of men for her cowardice, her shallowness, her selfishness, her lust or her weakness, though it was at the behest of men that these things were cultivated. She wins indifference from her child who returns what he has received. There is none of the triumph or exquisite joy of sacrifice, for there is no sacrifice. The shallow pleasures of earth will not drown earth's sorrows. In eternity, at least there will be many questions to answer.

After all, a woman was not made to live in a world whose philosophy of life is on an animal basis, where strength alone counts, where might is right. In such a world it is the weak

who suffer, the women and children ; in such a world, woman has but two strong points, her youth and her beauty. Who shall blame her for clutching so desperately at them ; who shall blame her for not exposing others to such a burden, for refusing to weaken her own precarious position by the burden and dependence of children ? Certainly not one who embraces the philosophy by which she is asked to live ; yet, in the end, it is precisely such as these that give her the bitterest scorn.

Her life was meant to be lived at least on a human basis of justice. In the divine life of charity, she attains her fullest development, her fullest happiness, for here justice and love rule, not strength. On such a basis, she has open to her a life of fullest perfection, the kind of life portrayed by the model of women, Mary, the Virgin and Mother. In these two alone a woman can find happiness ; she must be either the mother or the virgin, with virginity maintained or, by the bitter path Magdalene walked, regained.

CHAPTER VIII
(OUTLINE)
THE HELPLESSNESS OF GOD
(Q 35-39)

1. The feast of the child.
 - (a) The two sides of Christmas Mary's and the Infant's.
 - (b) Two types of helplessness
- 2 The gifts of Christ
- 3 The Infant and the Christmas story.
 - (a) The birth of Christ
 - (1) Birth in general
 - (2) Birth of Christ in particular.
 - a The fact itself.
 - b. Consequences of the fact.
 - 1 For Christ
 - 2 For Mary
 - c Time and place of the birth of Christ.
 - (b) The manifestation of Christ
 - (1) Persons to whom it was made
 - (2) Its order
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 - (4) The Magi
- 4 The law and the Infant
 - (a) Circumcision of Christ and the Holy Name.
 - (b) The offering in the temple
 - (c) The purification of Mary
- 5 The close of the hidden life.
 - (a) Baptism of John the Baptist
 - (1) Its fittingness and origin.
 - (2) Its effects
 - (3) Its subjects and duration.
 - (b) John's baptism of Christ
 - (1) The baptism itself
 - (2) Its circumstances
 - (3) Divine testimony at the baptism

Conclusion

- 1 The helplessness of God and of man
 - (a) The example of Christ. Christian helplessness.
 - (b) Mockery of Christ
 - (1) Helplessness of sensuality
 - (2) Helplessness of brutality
2. Foundation of the mockery—the decline of personality:
 - (a) Evidenced by the attitude toward infants
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- 3 The hard lesson of Christmas. become like little children.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HELPLESSNESS OF GOD

(Q. 35-39)

AT TIMES the Providence of God seems unnecessarily unkind. At such times, when that thought is lurking in our minds ready to spring into bitter expression, we are actually in possession of strong evidence of our own blindness; the prayer to be said is not one for relief, but one for belief, for humility, for sight for our blindness. For instance, you have just come upon a tragic climax to a life-long story of devotion. A woman, left with two very small children, succeeds in rearing them by a life of teaching. With the children grown, happily married, with families of their own, she is pensioned and is ready for rest, some pleasant reading, perhaps a little travel. Then she suffers a stroke that leaves her helpless, dependent upon the kindness of her daughter; to add a touch of bitterness, let it be Christmas Eve. We could be in entire sympathy with the thoughts of that woman if they ran something like this: "A merry Christmas! After all these years, when I could have had a few months of rest and enjoyment of the reward of life's labor; what a fine Christmas I've been given."

We could sympathize with her because we, too, have our share of blindness. There is no difficulty in seeing the tragedy. Her bitterness is a human, understandable thing. It is hard for us, as it is for her, to see how she could have a merry Christmas. And the reason of the difficulty is that we are blind to half the Christmas story.

After all, there are two sides to Christmas. Mary's side, the one we can easily understand and emphasize in our own lives,

is one of thoughtfulness, love, care of the Infant; of the joy of giving what little there is to give. Surely, there is another side; the side of God. It is odd that we should so persistently overlook it, for there would be very little to Christmas without the Child. The Child's part of the story is summed up in the word "helplessness." The idea must have been of tremendous importance for the Almighty Himself to give it such emphasis. Translated into terms of action, it perfectly complements Mary's side of Christmas; indeed, it makes possible her side. The Child's part in Christmas was not a bestowal of gifts but a reception of them; not the outpouring of love, care, thoughtfulness, but the grateful acceptance of all these things. Yet, if we reflect a moment on what Mary brought to the Child and what the Child brought to Mary, it begins to dawn on us that it was the Child Who brought the superior gifts.

To understand this, we must see that there are different kinds of gifts. There are, of course, the obvious ones: candy, stockings, grand pianos, love, or life. But there are also more profound gifts that play a much greater part in the living of life: the offering, for example, of opportunities to others for the expression of their love, a chance for them to sacrifice, the privilege of the consecration of themselves to man and to God. Something of the profundity of these gifts appears from the Christmas story's delineation of the helplessness of God; it is strange indeed that we so frequently miss the perfectly obvious truth that without that helplessness none of the other joys of Christmas would be possible.

There is a human contempt for some types of helplessness that is a healthy contempt: our contempt, for example, for the wife who insists on being entertained, cared for, coddled; for the man who will not work because the community owes him a living; for the timid, indecisive souls who meet a crisis by wringing their hands; or for the parents whose families must be raised by others to save these weaklings from utter failure. But there is real danger in the extension of this contempt to all helplessness. This was the error of the nineteenth century, an

error based on the single norm of material success which made the poor objects of contempt. We can hardly say that such success is no longer an object of worship; yet the Christmas story itself is an insistence that not all helplessness is an object of contempt.

To escape this danger of generalizing contempt, we must learn well to distinguish the humble helplessness which is based on a knowledge of personal defects and limitations from the proud helplessness which has its basis in an exaggerated idea of personal perfection. The humble kind is rather young and happy looking, whatever its age; for it is constantly surprised by the kindness and fairness of others. The proud variety, worried and old before its time, is surly and bitter at the imperfect recognition given its own excellence. The first looks on what perfections it has as commands to give and to serve; in its eyes, imperfections, even its own, are titles to receive and to be helped. The second admits of no imperfections; but does insist that its perfections are titles to receive, while the limitations in others are commands for them to give, to serve their superiors.

Modern examples of the proud helplessness are found in those who insist on being loved to the exclusion of their loving, on being served and obeyed though they refuse to serve or obey anyone or anything. An age-old example of humble helplessness is given by the Infant in the crib at Bethlehem and emphasized throughout all of His life. The contrast between the two is sharp, as severe as that between the humility of Christ and the pride of Rome. Throughout His infancy, His adolescence, His hidden life in Nazareth, the Son of Mary received gifts; He gave others only the opportunities for love's expression. This was His time of human helplessness, a time invaluable to the fullness of other human hearts. In His public life, His passion, His death, His activity was primarily one of giving, not of receiving; He made the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dead rise, sins disappear from the souls of men. He did all things well; giving, giving, to the utmost limits of

divine generosity, even to the limits of that Last Supper and of Calvary.

The perpetual undertone to the roar of His life and its climax was the constant reception of gifts. He was served by the faithful women and even by Judas, the procurator of the apostolic band; by Magdalen and her sister, Martha; by Veronica on the road to Calvary. Even as He died He was given vinegar and gall; in death, His body was cared for by Joseph of Aramithea. Indeed, even in that mockery of a trial, Pilate tried in his weak way to give Him some protection

This particular truth of the life of Christ is worth remembering. As the model of human living, as the Truth and the Way of life, He manifested the two types of joy that are always open to every human heart, the two types of gifts which every man is capable of giving. For every human being has his limitations, his imperfections, i e., he can receive from others, indeed, he must receive from others. In other words, the poorest of us has in his power the gifts of the Infant, the gift of helplessness. At the same time, every human being has some measure of perfection, something to give, some point of superiority; i e., every human being has the power to give the gifts of Mary and the adult Christ. Indeed, that very superiority is a demand that we bestow these gifts. If our appreciation of the gifts of Christ stops at His power and activity, then we have overlooked half the treasure He brought us. Clearly, the priceless tears of the women of Jerusalem would never have been called forth by a world conqueror; the confession of Longinus was torn from him by a dead Christ helplessly fixed to a cross.

St. Thomas was never one to establish his affections on the airy foundation of feeling or imagination; he was not a romancer, but a lover who never saw deeply enough to satisfy his love. He insisted that the head go first and the heart follow after; but follow all the long, hard way of truth. In treating of the birth of Our Savior, quite naturally he begins by a profound examination worthy of his great mind. He asks

what is the goal of birth in general. Who or what is born? What difference does it make?

Truth always makes a difference which ignorance or blindness seldom sees. It is important to know that the intention of nature in a birth is the specific nature, for the real purpose of a birth is a specific purpose. Perhaps the importance of this will be more clear if we consider birth, rightly, as a motion; obviously the goal to which any motion is going is important, so important, in fact, that it distinguishes one motion from another, a pat on the back from a spanking. The goal to which the motion which is birth goes is a nature.

Yet it is the person, not the nature, that is born; just as it is I, not my humanity, that falls downstairs, that learns, that is loved. It is the person, not the nature, which is the subject of all action, of all attribution. In the cave at Bethlehem, the Son of God, the eternal Word of the Father, was born; the *Person*, a divine Person. Thus the Son of God had two births, for He had two natures: one in time, from Mary; the other in eternity, from the Father. In each case it was the same Person Who was born

Just as truly as Christ was the Son of God by His eternal birth, He was the Son of Mary by His temporal birth. Her divine maternity was a real perfection in Mary, an addition to her long list of perfections of which all the world would forever after be proud. But, clearly, His temporal birth added nothing of perfection to the infinite perfection of the Son of God. Our difficulty in understanding this is precisely the same as our difficulty in seeing how actual creation added nothing to God, though He could not be called Creator before the world began. The philosophical complexities of this difficulty, hinging on the distinction between a relation of reason and a real relation, have been gone into repeatedly in the course of these volumes, particularly in the treatment of the Trinity in Volume I. There is hardly any need to interrupt the story of the birth of Our Lord to go into it again.

Let us, rather, approach the thing from the obvious, com-

mon-sense angle; a woman is the mother of one whom she conceives and bears. Mary conceived and bore Christ, bore Him joyfully, without pain, without help, for she bore him virginally; He passed from her womb as through a closed gate. She gave Him what every mother gives her son. To deny Mary's motherhood would be to wipe all motherhood from the face of the earth; a decidedly difficult task. Because this Person, her Son, born in Bethlehem was a divine Person, Mary was the mother of God. Mary, of course, did not produce the Person of her Son; no mother does. In this case, a wholly unique case, the personality of the Child did not result from the union of body and soul within the mother's womb; it existed from all eternity. The Son of God existed from eternity, and it is the Person, not the nature, that is born. The Son to whom Mary gave birth was a divine Son; His mother was the mother of God.

We shall come back to this later on in this chapter. From what has already been seen of the Incarnation, its importance is evident. Just passingly, let it be noted that there is a special pertinence, peculiar to our day, to this analysis of birth by St. Thomas. Because it is the person who is conceived and born, we cannot dismiss the beginnings of life as something vaguely human, distinct from a person. From the first instant of life, all the sovereign majesty and inviolable rights of man belong to the newly conceived infant.

This sovereign Infant of Bethlehem had all the dignity of God as well as the dignity of man. Unlike other men, this Man could and did choose the place of His birth, and with all the infinite wisdom of divinity. Every detail, then, of that birth in Bethlehem is packed tight with meaning for us. He came when all the world was at peace, for He was the Prince of Peace. He, Who was to have one flock and one shepherd, came when all the world was under one ruler. He was the divine physician paying His call precisely when His chosen people would be most disposed to accept His help—when a

stranger sat upon the throne of Juda. He came in the night, just when day was preparing, for He came to bring light to those who sit in darkness. He came in mid-winter that from His first instant He might begin His suffering for us.

We shall see much more of the divine insistence on lowliness and helplessness if we keep the deliberate character of that divine choice well in mind. Consider the possibilities. He might have been an emperor's son, born in Rome to command immediate, world-wide attention. He might have come in a blaze of terrifying divine majesty, as He will at the judgment. His aim, however, was not to impress or to terrify men; it was to *redeem them and to win their love*. The means He used were not the human means of power, wealth or force; but the divine means of meekness and humbleness of heart by which men are made to see the frailty and vanity of human things rather than the alluring heights of groundless pride. So He came in the obscure town in fulfillment of a promise to David. Like that great king, He made His start in Bethlehem; like him, He found the fulfillment of His kingdom in the royal city of Jerusalem, a fulfillment of shame and disgrace in contrast to the glory and power of David. He came to Bethlehem, a word which means the city of bread, for He was the bread from heaven come down for the food of men's souls.

It is taken for granted that whoever can get home at Christmas, goes home; for this is the feast of home. It is the rallying point of all hearts, as home always is; obviously, it is a time for gathering around the family hearth. Indeed, it is a miniature picture of home: the Virgin, Joseph, and her Child. Yet, all that emphasis on home takes its inspiration from Bethlehem where "Christ Himself is homeless, and all men are at home." And He was really homeless. It was not merely the poverty and destitution of His birthplace, for these do not rule out the possibility of a home. It was not that His mother had crept under the last bit of cover available; nor that His crib was shared with beasts. Rather, He was born here as one pass-

ing through, as a vagrant; what he said later about Himself, that He had not whereon to lay His head, began to be true from the very first instant

In fact, there was a great deal of the vagabond about both Christ and His mother; the great moments of her life, as of His—His birth and His death—would come literally on the road far from home. Perhaps this was divinely arranged to enable us to realize how much home means to us, seeing Him without it. Perhaps it was to emphasize, from the very beginning, the extent of His love for us in His willingness to surrender so priceless a thing as home. At least, the same price has been demanded by Him from everyone who has since tried to carry on His work of love. Yet, in a larger sense, where Christ and Mary are, men are always at home. An even more profound message of this homelessness of Christ is that no man is at home; all men are on their way, pilgrims, until finally they come to rest with Mary and the Child.

Christ's coming to Bethlehem was a quiet affair. It has been so ever since; for His coming to us is not a matter of overwhelming our minds with evidence, but rather of winning our hearts by grace. If we are to receive Him at any time, it must be through faith. At the first Christmas, He gave our faith a little help, for His coming left no doubt of His humanity; but we shall never know His divinity except by the humble road of faith. In this life, men do not see the Godhead, they believe in it. On the cross, Christ could truly say: "they know not what they do"; Paul, later, could insist on the same truth, arguing "if they had known, they would never have crucified the Lord of Glory." All this was as true of the beginning as it was of the end of the human life of the Son of God; the Lord of glory must be humbly believed in, not proudly demonstrated

As it is now, so it was then; the coming of Christ was manifested to only a few. In the twentieth century, it is a comparative few who gather around His altar on Christmas Day to welcome Him. So it was then. But then, as now, these

few encompassed all classes of men. Then, as now, the secrets of divine wisdom are not given equally to all but, rather, immediately to some—less for their own sake than that they might carry the good news to the many others.

That the coming of Christ should have been made known to some is self-evident; otherwise, there was no point in His coming. That the knowledge of Mary and Joseph was insufficient to serve the divine purposes is equally self-evident; after all, that was a family knowledge which might well be suspect by a people already too willing to suspect. As a matter of fact, in such a case suspicion would be reasonable, as reasonable as our own tolerant acceptance of a mother's estimate of her own son.

There is food for solemn thought in the ushering in of Christ by terror in Herod and his royal city, and by the rivers of blood that flowed from the murder of the Innocents in Herod's attempt to cut short the reign of the new King in its infancy. This was a prophecy of the welcome of the Church of Christ in all ages; and a declaration of the futility of the hatred which inspires it, for the tyrant can never kill more than the body and even in this, his highest achievement and most serious threat, he gives his victim a martyr's crown and immediate entry into heaven. The tyrants, of course, continue to lash out, for the dignity of the heavenly kingdom makes earthly kings tremble; darkness cannot welcome the Prince of Light with any joy; and, too, every coming of Christ is a reminder of His ultimate coming as Judge.

Divine wisdom gathered a motley crowd to the coming of the Word of God: the carpenter and his wife; the shepherds, poor, ignorant, crude, with the smell of the herds fresh on them; the Magi, cultured, learned, powerful, rich; Simeon and Anna, the just pair of the Temple, wise with the weight of the years—Jew and gentile, young and old, sinner and saint, poor and rich, learned and ignorant. Such a crowd could be gathered only in the name of something that touched our common human nature deeply; such a thing as birth, or death,

or life's ultimates. Here, there was all of that and more; here was something that touched even on the common spark of divinity which glowed so faintly in all that crowd. For here was life, the death of sin, the birth of the Infant, the long-awaited coming of God.

In this light, the light of the appeal to our common human nature, it is interesting to glance at the list of the uninvited. No invitation was issued to the Greek philosophers who had turned to sophism away from truth; to the Scribes and Pharisees who had turned to formalism away from the law; nor to the Roman tyrants who had turned to force and greed away from justice. It is as though the divine secretary, drawing up the select list, had looked to those who still held fast to human things; for only those who still esteem the human are capable of divine things.

The shepherds first saw the light, on the very day of the birth of the Son of God. Some thirteen days later, the Magi arrived; some forty days later, the mystery was made known to Simeon and Anna in the temple. In the order of this manifestation there is contained an account of the manifestation of Christ to all the ages. He manifested Himself first to the people of Israel; then He was made manifest to the gentiles from all the ends of the earth; finally, before the last page of the world's history is written, He will be manifested to all the Jews prefigured by that just couple in the temple.

Humanly speaking, the beauty and charm of the Christmas story lies, to a great extent, in the fact that it is a child's story of a Child's feast nicely proportioned to the fresh loveliness of a child. In a sense, only a child can understand it. It can appeal only to a child; so, because none of us ever entirely grow up, Christmas has a universal appeal. It is a divine fantasy; in the sharpness of its contrast and the richness of the fields it opens to the eyes of man, it is comparable to, even surpasses, the most gorgeous fairy tale of childhood. Christmas brings the Child's gifts which break the wicked enchantment of blindness and transform the world. Things are not at all

what they seem: shaky, dirty tenement steps are a golden stair to heavenly mansions; the dull, gray, meaningless existence now becomes a high romance, an adventure with every moment a desperate gamble for heaven or hell; there is no human life without meaning, no moment of human life which does not demand courage and high resolve; what was a bit of bread is the body and blood of the Son of Mary; a dash of water bursts open the gates of heaven; a murmured word in a dark spot does away with the stain of sin; life is a race run with ferocious speed to a goal that is incredible except to one who has the eyes of a child opened by the divine Child of Bethlehem.

After the Child and its Mother, who are always the center of it in a child's mind, the details of the feast that delight a child are especially the multitude of the heavenly hosts singing in a sky split open to let down the light of heaven, and the kings from the East with their gifts and their guiding star. To the eye of the cynic, all this seems like extravagance greater by far than a modern debutante's coming-out party, God parading His superiority in rather questionable taste. In actual fact, it is not extravagant but homely, proceeding from solid and familiar grounds, grounds as simple as a syllogism or as the methods of our first teacher. We learn step by step going on from what we already know to a knowledge of that which is as yet unknown. In precisely this human way, God gently led men to the knowledge of the coming of His Son; with the usual divine thoughtfulness, He stooped to the limitations of men, dealing with them in terms with which they were familiar.

To the just, who were familiar with the movement of the Holy Ghost, the message was delivered with no external agency; Simeon and Anna heard it in their hearts. To the shepherds, as Jews familiar with angelic messengers, the news came through angels; to the Magi of the East, long used to scrutinizing the stars, the message was brought through a star. Even where the medium of this good news to humanity was

sensible signs, the signs were always heavenly. angels and stars, for a heavenly kingdom and a heavenly King were being announced.

All through this tract, St. Thomas has crowded his *Summa* with rich quotations from the Fathers; the Fathers, too, were in love with the feast of children. There is a great temptation here to linger; but it is a temptation that must be set aside. Not altogether set aside, of course, we shall go ahead, but slowly enough to glance over our shoulders now and then at the star and the kings it guided.

This affair of the star is not at all an approval or vindication of astrology. Clearly, here it was not a matter of a star dictating the time and details of man's life; man did not measure up to a star, but rather a star bent down to a Man. It was just such a delicate gesture of celestial bodies as was made in sorrow on Calvary when the sun was darkened; a gesture made to the Lord of all things alike when He was helpless in a manger and dead on the cross. Down through the ages, men have made efforts to explain the star of the Magi, and by explaining, of course, they have really meant to explain it away. The most modern example is the special Christmas show put on by the planetaria of large American cities; the sky is shown as it was on that first Christmas while it is carefully pointed out that at that time three planets converged to give the extraordinary brilliance which has come to be known as the star of Bethlehem. Really, it is not any one detail of the Christmas story that makes it necessary to explain the whole thing away—not the star, nor the shepherds, nor the angels, nor the kings; it is only because the story of Christmas demands too much of the hearts of men (not their minds) that men resort to a smoke screen of science to dodge it.

Obviously, this star is not susceptible to human explanation. It did things that are not done by well behaved stars, even by the imps among the stars. It had its own private path, followed by no other star, a path that led to Bethlehem. It did not wait until night to step out shyly with the other stars; it

appeared brazenly day and night. It was temperamental; sometimes suddenly disappearing, as when the Magi approached Jerusalem, then reappearing after putting the Magi to exhaustive inquiry and upsetting both Herod and all Jerusalem. It was a light-footed star, its movements visible even to the naked eye; it not only moved, it stopped and started again, as though waiting for the Magi to catch up with it. Finally, it came to its last stop, and did what a good star never does; it came down, not crashing to earth, but in slow majesty from the heights to rest gently above the manger-bed of the Infant until even the Magi could have no doubts as to its meaning. A converging of planets indeed! Here was the end of their journey; indeed, the end of all journeys. Here was the goal of the feet of men; this was the place to stop.

Then there was an astonished cave and a proud star. It is not every night that a star descends so low as to point out one cave in a huddled town like Bethlehem, its hillside cluttered with caves. It is not every night, in fact, it is only on one night, that a star is called on to conduct kings to the King of kings. The great brilliance of the star need not have been merely from its closer approach to earth; it might well have been from the proud satisfaction of the star in an extraordinary job perfectly done.

It was odd that kings should have come seeking a King. It is more odd that they should have come without arms and armies, generals and advisers; that they should rather have come alone with gifts for a prophet, priest, and king—with gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Even they must have understood why the star disappeared at Jerusalem, seeing the astonishment that met their inquiries. Of course they were rushed into the presence of Herod; of course the Sanhedrin was quickly called to investigate the question. Surely, by then the Magi realized that they, in their turn, were messengers of a King they had not yet seen.

It was odd, too, that they should have been so completely satisfied to find, at the end of their long trip, a carpenter, his

virgin wife, and an Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes. It was even more odd that they should have fallen down in adoration with the same simplicity as the shepherds and have opened their treasure chests to offer royal gifts to an Infant. It is odd—but only to those whose eyes are not opened to faith, to those who cannot see. To the others, well, obviously, God would not send a star to light their path and leave their hearts and minds in darkness. They knew.

They knew from the beginning that it was not an earthly but a heavenly King they sought. They knew He would have none of the trappings of an earthly kingship. They knew He would choose the weak things of the world to confound the strong. For they knew the saving truth: God was made man; the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. Warned by an angel of the perfidy of Herod, they went back to their own lands by another route, not with a star over their heads, but with the Sun in their hearts. So they pass out of history; but they never travel far enough to pass out of the hearts of children, even of the children who take childhood with them into mature responsibility.

Eight days after the birth of Our Lord, between the visit of the shepherds and the Magi, the Child was christened in the quiet privacy of the family. In the practice of the Jews, that meant that He was circumcised and given a name. The name He was given was not one handed down by a long line of ancestors, but one appointed by God, a name that stated the stupendous mission which explained the coming of the Child. He was to be the Savior of all men; so, quite simply, He was called Jesus Christ, the Savior, the Anointed One of God. It would be Joseph who attended to the circumcision; so it would be this most gentle of men who would bring about the first shedding of the blood of God for men and give to the most sceptical tangible evidence of the truth of the humanity of the Son of God.

Circumcision was the baptism of the Old Testament. Christ, Who was without sin, needed no baptism; still He

should have been baptized, if for no other reason, to give divine approbation to the instrument by which so many of the patriarchs had found friendship with God. God's dealing with men is always so quietly thoughtful, even when He takes something from them to give them something better. So here, there was a divine approval for that which was to lose its efficacy, an accolade for the race of Abraham, and an insistence that His divine Son be unmistakably one of that race. There was, too, an example of obedience to law and the first of those assumptions of the full burden from which Christ had come to free others. With all that, there was the divinely gracious removal of this least of possible physical stumbling blocks to the acceptance of Christ by the Jews.

Forty days after the birth of the Child, we have another example of the divine respect for the institutions by which men live and of respect for men's attachment to these institutions. The days of the purification of Mary, who, as a Virgin, needed no purification, being finished, the Child, in obedience to the law to which He was superior and of which He was the author, was presented in the temple. According to the law, sacrifice was offered in expiation of sins for Him Who had no sins, and in consecration to God of Him Who was already God's Son. As He had come for us, not for Himself, so all these demands of the law were satisfied, both by Him and by His mother, that from the very beginning we might have a constant example of obedience.

With the legalities over, Joseph, Mary, and her Son, after the hurried flight into Egypt and the return to Nazareth, drop completely out of sight except for the one brief glimpse of the anxious search of Jerusalem for the lost Christ Child. There is just this one gesture of the supreme Teacher made on His entry into manhood. All those hidden days are summed up in the same words which sum up all of His life which has been described in this chapter. He was subject; the helplessness of God. In the manifestation of His birth, in the fulfillment of the law, Christ Himself took no active part; His was

rather a passive role. There was one more manifestation to come, one more act in which Christ was wholly passive, a manifestation that marked both the transition from the hidden life at Nazareth to the public life of labor about His Father's business and the transition from the Old to the New Testament. This was the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist in the river Jordan.

John the Baptist was a fitting figure to bridge the gap between the Testaments. He brought to his labors all the sanctity, the gaunt strength, irresistible singleness of purpose, and burning zeal of his predecessors, the prophets of the Old Law of whom he was the last. He came, not with the weapons on which they had depended, but with a new one taught directly by the Holy Ghost, the instrument of baptism.

It is not hard to visualize the emotions of John on that day, standing in the shallow waters of the Jordan, when Christ came down to be baptized. John had met Christ once before, at the time of the Visitation; then, even in the womb of his mother, John had leaped for joy. Now, again, his joy would be no more capable of restraint: it must break out in a protest of his unworthiness; it must give fearless testimony to the Lamb of God Who was to take away the sins of the world. Never did man look more joyously on the closing days of his labors; never did man see another progress, while he himself diminished, with more whole-hearted rejoicing. For John was the friend of the bridegroom.

This last of the prophets wielded a new weapon, a public thing that drew crowds to whom he could be the precursor of the Lord. This was the weapon, baptism, to be consecrated by Christ Himself and, later, when given divine institution and divine powers, to be the gateway to heaven. For the present it could make no such pretensions. What it could, and did, do was to prepare men for Christ and for a worthy reception of His baptism by leading them to penance and accustoming them to the ceremony which, under Christ, was to be the absolutely necessary means of salvation.

There is a sharp distinction between the baptism of John and that of Christ, for the former did not give grace. Rather, like all the life of John, it was a preparation for grace as it was a preparation for Christ. As a preparation, it was not ordered merely to the baptism of Christ Himself by John. The multitudes that flocked to the Jordan did not come in vain; they needed preparation for the coming of such a King, needed it badly, and here they got it. Why did John not stop baptizing once Christ had come? Well, men still needed the preparation of penance. Men still lived in the shadow of the Old Testament and the full light of the New had not yet fully dawned. John had come to prepare, not to present an obstacle to the approach of Christ. Yet, had he stopped at once, he might easily have been suspected of envy or anger, surely he would have aroused envy in his disciples; his very continuation, indeed, gave him just that much more opportunity to send men to Christ.

Christ stepped into the Jordan River, through which the Israelites had come into the Promised Land, that He might begin that march into the kingdom of God. He was what St. Thomas considered the perfect age—just thirty. This was, after all, the beginning of his public career as a teacher, priest, and victim; it was not work for a child, or a boy, but for a man. He had spent enough of His life observing the law so that none could ever say He overthrew the law because He could not keep it; in thirty years a man can commit a fairly representative crowd of sins if he puts his mind to it. There is no sin a man could not commit in that time, and there was no sin that Christ did commit. In a deeper sense, the perfect age of Christ at His baptism is a statement of the truth that it is baptism that makes the perfect man.

He came to John and was baptized, cleansing the waters for all time, and taking on Himself, as He always did, that which He commanded to others. That baptism, which opened up His own life among men, began His Testament, and swung slowly shut the gates of the Old Testament, was one last gesture of

reverence and submission to the giants of the Old Law, the greatest of whom was His instrument in introducing the New.

The divinity of Christ was well hidden in the garments of His infancy at Bethlehem. The testimony it received was by the implements of God and for the very few. At His baptism, that divinity was no less hidden, but its manifestation was by the direct approbation of God Himself; for this was the beginning of the career of the Way and the Life, and here was the divine statement of His full authority to form the hearts of men and redeem their souls. As John poured the water, Christ, in a vision peculiar to Himself, saw the heavens open. And well He might. For this was the beginning of the battering down of the doors locked since the sin of Adam. He, the Son, stood in the Jordan; the Father's voice declared that this was His beloved Son; and the Holy Ghost hovered over Him in the form of a dove. He Himself later instructed His apostles to baptize all men in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, here, in His own baptism, was the solemn approbation of the Trinity.

There ended the purely helpless stage of the life of the Son of Mary. From then on, He was not only to receive but also to give. To understand the rest of His life in the later chapters of this book, as well as for a fuller understanding of what has been said in this chapter, let us go back to the notion with which this chapter was started; the notion of helplessness.

Christian helplessness demands a nice blend of humility, magnanimity, and courage. It demands a recognition both of our limitations and our abilities. It demands the acknowledgment of the obligation to give, imposed by perfection and ability; of the need to receive imposed by imperfection and limitation. The followers of Christ are children of God: as children, they are always in need of help; but they are also men, capable of such extreme offerings as martyrdom itself. They are imperfect, but sovereign; they are helpless, but of unlimited capacity. They are not God, they are not slaves; they are not automatons, but they are Christian men.

Pagan helplessness bases its claim to help, not on limitations but on exaggerated perfection. Its one basis is pride, with free rein given to one or another of the sense appetites. In a soft, effeminate form of sensuality, or in a base, ruthless form of avarice, it is an inhuman and disgusting thing that merits the revulsion even of the pagan. The extreme of this revulsion, no less revolting in itself, is seen today in the idolatry and brutality of power, even of physical power.

Actually, all three of these are basically the same. All three demand service from inferiors while admitting no obligation to serve. All three are based solidly on pride in one's own perfection; all three unleash a sense appetite. As inevitable corollaries of all three, there is the ruthless attempt to implant in others a sense of limitation without a sense of perfection, a knowledge of weakness with no courage or pride; for it is only in this way that they can guarantee themselves the service they demand. These men call themselves gods and deny they are men; in their world there is room only for unholy gods, for slaves, and for automatons. In all three, the inevitable conclusion is finally reached: a denial of the personality of man, of his humanity, a substitution of the mass for the individual. For in this pagan world, man is not human either in his power or in his helplessness.

These mockeries of Christian helplessness miss the truth of the sovereign, undying spirit of man, his inalienable rights, his ordination to God; above all, they miss the truth of the supreme *Vindicator* of these truths. Our present theory and practice in regard to the unborn child, toward despised classes, races, or parties is indication enough of the lengths to which this paganism has already gone in our times. We have lost the meaning of man's helplessness as well as of his power, from the unborn child up and down the whole line. Indeed, the truth of man himself is lost even in those who ride the crest of success; they have forgotten that they, too, are men.

The Christmas story is a devastating test of the humanity of any age. It is a story only to be understood by understand-

ing children; perhaps that was part of the meaning of Christ's demand that we become like little children. For it is only when we can fully appreciate the child that we can know the man. Often enough, it is a hard thing for the pride of a man to become like a little child, particularly in a world which worships at the altar of material success; for childhood means helplessness and, in such a world, helplessness is a badge of servitude instead of rightly a claim to the most precious gifts others have to give, while success is a title to service rather than an obligation to serve. In such a world, a man cannot become a child because he has forgotten what it is to be a man.

CHAPTER IX
(OUTLINE)
CHRIST THE MAN
(Q 40-45)

1. The Way of life
 - (a) Stages marked by the divine Exemplar of human living.
 - (b) Reasons for the order of these stages
2. Divine lessons in human living
 - (a) Four activities of man
 - (b) Their modern contraries
3. Christ the Man—His converse with men
 - (a) Essentials for social intercourse justice and charity.
 - (b) Fittingness of Christ's life among men
 - (c) Its characteristics
 - (1) Not solitary and austere
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 - (4) Victorious over Satan—Christ's temptation:
 - a Its reasons
 - b Its circumstances
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4. Christ the Teacher
 - (a) The doctrine of Christ
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 - (1) Not without offense.
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 - (a) The miracles of Christ:
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 - (a) Its fittingness
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Conclusion

1. Ways of life.
 - (a) Christ's way.

(b) The way of the modern world

(1) The world and men.

(2) The world and truth

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2 Dangers to social life.

(a) Injustice—met by law.

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(3) Growth

3. A test of divinity and humanity

CHAPTER IX

CHRIST THE MAN

(Q. 40-45)

THE improvement of communications aroused a persistent and increasing curiosity about peoples on the other side of the globe by shrinking the world. A desperate world war with ultimates at stake changed that curiosity into a consuming interest that set everyone peering over the back fence into the most detailed affairs of the family just around the world. It was to accommodate this curiosity, to satisfy the urgent demands of this interest, that newspapers adopted a steady policy of presenting this or that particular international back yard in the form of daily maps.

These maps were small, simple, easy to follow and were particularly appreciated by those who had come into contact with much larger, more detailed maps. Thus, for instance, the contrast between the newspaper map and a federal survey map of a rural district is almost like the contrast between the finite and the infinite as far as detail is concerned. The newspaper map is better for our ordinary purposes, perhaps, because it is so much easier, simpler, much more helpful. But it will stand only a first glance; by it, one cannot even follow the account in the same newspaper of the military moves the map was drawn to make clear. On the contrary, the federal survey map is so detailed as to be almost frightening; it will, however, stand a second scrutiny. In fact, the more we study it, the more we appreciate it: every road, every creek, even every house is plainly located. With such a map, a stranger can safely pass through this territory.

Christ, as the divine model of human living, gave us a map of life. It is a perfect one, because it is divine; as perfect, it cannot be obvious or easy, certainly it cannot be dismissed as completely absorbed in one glance. Rather, the more deeply it is studied, the more it is appreciated. We may examine it any way we like: we may take a corner of it, study that intently, weighing every line of its detail; or we may stand off a bit to see the map as a whole, with a resulting view of the whole terrain comparable to an aerial photograph.

Looked at in this latter way, three quite different types of countryside are easily distinguished bordering the road a man must take home. There is first of all the space between birth and adolescence, a quiet, carefree, happy time; this time Christ passed principally in Nazareth. This is ordinarily followed by the period, long or short, that is taken up with the prosaic work of living, a time when a man meets only the ordinary obstacles that enter into a human life. Thus, in the years of the public life of Christ, in spite of petty persecutions, the nagging of the Pharisees, the dullness of the apostles, and the unappreciative stubbornness of those He was helping, He was engaged in the business of living. It is only later, toward the climax of His life, that He faced the bitter territory of suffering and dying which, quickly or with agonizing deliberation, brings every man's life to a close. This is the large scale map of man's life: living, suffering, dying. The path is plainly marked by the feet of Christ, indeed, in the last stages of the journey, the footsteps are drenched with blood.

It is not without importance that Christ, the divine model, spent some thirty years of the thirty-three He had to live at the business of living before plunging into the last two stages of suffering and death. In this, as in other things, Christ took the hard way. Living is a preparation for suffering; above all, it is a preparation for death. It is the long, slow, patient hours of preparation that gall the heart of a man; yet it is only a master in the art of living who knows how to suffer, and only those who know the meaning of life can know something of

the art of dying, for that is the art of plunging into another life.

In a sense, suffering is an intensified course in the perfection of living. If at the start of our suffering, we do not know very much, we must learn shortly for suffering plunges us into the Master's role. We make some curious mistakes, do some incredible fumbling, but we catch on because we have to. When we have learned the lessons of living and suffering, then we are ready to die; for then we are ready to try a greater life.

Thomas treats these three stages in the life of Christ as distinct chapters, going easy on us with the knowledge that our minds must learn slowly, step by step. To plunge into a consideration of suffering, by-passing living, would be like plunging into calculus before having learned the meaning of numbers. In life itself, there is always the fear that suffering, coming too soon, may result in cowardice, bitterness, self-pity, and, ultimately, despair. The conclusion would seem to be that only the old, and therefore wise, should suffer were it not for the easy grace and masterly perfection with which a Christian child suffers. Since Christ came, you see, even a child can be wise, can taste of the fullness of life.

In this present chapter, we shall limit ourselves to the first of these three stages of human living: the prosaic business of ordinary living as it was carried out by Our Lord, Jesus Christ. If we isolate this spot on the map of life left us by Christ, standing back a little to get the whole view of this little section, several high points immediately stand out. There is, for instance, His converse with men; then His doctrine; His temptation; His miracles; and His transfiguration. Remembering that this was the divine Exemplar of human living, we can understand that these outstanding activities of Christ are a model for the activities of every man; a truth that is immediately seen when it is translated into the language of ordinary life.

Thus translated, we see the life of Christ as plainly marking out these four activities of men: the fast hold on human things,

which is to say the embrace of other men and the rejection of the devil ; the offering to others of the abundance of one's own mind and heart, a task which, of course, supposes both the abundance and the willingness to share it ; then the arrangement of the furniture of the soul to make room for divine things, working the wonders that God has given men to work, fitting oneself to be an instrument of divine power ; finally, the appreciation of the inner glory of oneself and of all other men. In other words, Christ, by His living, brought special emphasis to bear on the fundamental actions which must find their way into the life of a man. These are the things a man must do if he is to live up to his high destiny ; this is the perfect test of success or failure of a life.

An age that had failed by this test would look something like this. Instead of embracing other men, there would be a world-wide contagion of hate ; rather than shun the devil, such an age would embrace the devil himself if he furthered the purposes of such an age. This, of course, need not be so crudely stated, the same thing could be accomplished by a series of catchwords like "business is business," "ethics is a personal matter," "right is what is good for the party, the race, the class," and so on. Instead of advocating the sharing of the abundance of mind and heart, such an age might urge every man to be a rugged individualist, working entirely for himself whatever the cost to others ; again, the thing might be said less crudely by insisting that men were really working for a far distant ideal, like the perfection of humanity, the race, or the party. Such an age, rather than insisting that men make room for divine things in themselves and fit themselves to be instruments of divine power, would ask men to narrow their minds down to the world of the senses and the goals that are proper to masses rather than men. No man would be encouraged to look for enduring glory either within himself or within other men ; for that would be completely fatal to the aims and ideals of mass movements since, in that case, all other things would have to serve the individual. A vision of glory man must

have; so this age would speak movingly to him of the glory of the state, the race, the group, of humanity.

However, a human way of living is not to be attained by destroying either the group or the individual. That is a modern method of meeting complexities, a method which, if adopted by the medical profession, would result in doctors shooting the patients whose diseases they could not diagnose. These are ways out of a difficulty, surely; but in the first case the humanity of life is destroyed as effectively as the second destroys the life of a human being.

Men are made to live together, to associate, to converse. That very word, "converse," contains the whole story; for its original meaning is to turn, to swing about frequently as a star swings serenely in its orbit as in the place where it belongs. This is where men belong; in association with other men. The life of a man turns about, around, even within the lives of others; indeed, this is so true that we keep the circle of our lives small enough to make that constant and frequent turning possible. In other words, all men live in a small town because they are men. A New Yorker might be indignant at such a statement, thereby proving it; for his beaten path does not allow him to see much of the city. Anyone else would discover in very short order that New York City is made up of thousands and thousands of small towns. Every man is constantly putting up fences, marking out paths, placing limits to the activities of his days in order that he might swing through the daily orbit familiarly, easily, with a pleasant sense of belonging.

That same rich word, "converse," with its insistence on frequent turning, carries a warning of the difficulties of social life. The frequent contact with men easily brings with it the danger of friction, of heat, of wearing, with the possibility of disintegration coming precisely at the point of contact. Certainly these dangers exist in social life; to an age as mechanically expert as our own, it should be immediately clear that men living together must have a social lubricant of some kind

The lubricant of society is justice; for the very least that must be given to men, if they are to live together, is that which is their own. Men's rights must be respected; otherwise there will be, at the point of contact between lives, a disintegration either of the society or of the individuals composing the society. If men are to live together perfectly, living at the intense degree that perfection demands, the added, high-grade lubricant of charity is absolutely necessary. It is charity which brings not only the rights of other men into consideration, but also the very needs of others. Without these, charity and justice, society has no chance for continued existence as human.

All the centuries have been surprised that God came down to live in the tenement of human society. He must have known that there His life would be crowded into the lives of others, would bump into them, clash with them, cling to them, bounce off them. Who could have believed that God would live so with men, humanly, familiarly, pulling the walls of His world about Him in a circle small enough to be completed again and again? Yet, in fact, He had His own country, His own city, His mother, relatives, friends, acquaintances. God did indeed come very close.

He might very well have insisted on the infinite superiority of His divinity and, while taking on a human nature, have lived off to one side, solitary, hidden from the eyes of the vulgar horde, much too good to mix with them. Fortunately, snobbery is not a divine trait or there would never have been an Incarnation. God came to teach men truth and to free them from sin; so He came to the places where truth was threatened and sin flourished. He elbowed His way into the crowded market-place, walked the dusty roads, thundered against the violation of the temple at the very height of a feast. He did not sit back, like the mythical maker of a perfect mouse-trap, content with His perfection and graciously stooping to forgive any sinners who might come to Him. He went out on the highways and byways seeking the sinners, pursuing

them like the Hound of Heaven He was, eagerly, anxiously, relentlessly.

He came that through Him we might have easy access to God. We needed His help, for it is not an easy thing to go to God, particularly when we are weighed down with sin; even though we know there is no place else to go, we still have our human pride and our human fear. The enemies of Christ unwittingly made clear to the sinners of all future ages what confidence and courage His familiar life with men had poured into the human hearts of His time by accusing Him of surrounding Himself with sinners and publicans. Sinners ever since have laughed with joy to learn that the men who had the most reason for terror were precisely the ones who came to the feet of the Son of God.

Of course they came to Christ; He had made Himself one with men. He did not embrace the rigid fasting and penance of John the Baptist, for He did not wish to tower above men, striking terror into their hearts; rather He came down among men that they might more easily walk into His divine heart. He gave a perfect example in the absolutely necessary things and among these rigid abstinence from food and drink is not included. Abstinence is not an end in itself but a means by which men might attain to control and continence; the sinless Christ had no need of this means, so He lived as other men, eating and drinking.

True, He slipped off from time to time alone: to a high mountain to pray, into a desert to fast. But that was not to mark Him off sharply from other men or to furnish Him with an escape from social intercourse with men; it was to etch more deeply into the hearts of His apostles the truth that he who would give the fruits of contemplation to others must himself have some physical quiet, some time to pray, to stand off a little from the roar and confusion of life that he might keep his own values safe. For there is always the danger, in such work, of taking personally, and seriously, the honors men

pay to an office; not to speak of the danger of starving the appetite for the things of God.

All through His life, Christ felt the privations and tasted the joys of poverty. On His own testimony, He was hungry, thirsty, and without a place whereon to lay His head. Nor was this a condemnation of riches. It was no secret in Christ's time that riches can be an occasion of pride and offer opportunities for sins that are not open to the poor man; but then neither were the men of that time ignorant of the fact that poverty can be no less an occasion of sin, indeed, an occasion of all those sins a man will commit to seize the riches upon which his heart is set. It is neither riches nor poverty that count; but the poverty of spirit which is a casting aside of the trinkets of the world in the realization of how little they contribute to the perfection of man's life.

Christ's divinely deliberate poverty was a bold declaration that man's life is not one of the body but of the spirit. Too, it was a thundering warning to His disciples. They were to give their whole time to God, not to become involved in the world of business; their teaching must not be open to the suspicion of avarice; their hunger and thirst must be a testimony to the world that they had come, not in search of corporal riches, but to dispense spiritual wealth. They would conquer the hearts of men not by human power, but by divine power through human weakness.

Men do not need riches for human living; they simply cannot get along without fellowship and law. It is small wonder that Christ insisted so strongly on these two. He came to perfect the imperfect law, yet His observance of that imperfect one was most exact; He came to liberate men from the burdens of the Old Law, but first He carried the burden Himself. None of His contemporaries could accuse Him of sin. He was no lawbreaker; for He would not have us miss the fact that the fruits of sin are degradation, subjection, and tyranny, not the liberty and perfection He came to give us. Even His indignant declaration that the Son of man was Lord of the Sabbath

was not a rejection of law but a condemnation of a misinterpretation and a vicious perversion of law. Clearly the law of the Sabbath was not meant to forbid divine works; it did not prohibit the works necessary for life, even for corporal life; above all, it did not prohibit what pertains to divine praise and worship.

Now and then, the commands of the law seem unbearably heavy. If our human nature does not point this out to us, there is an angelic nature always ready to whisper it to us; for our fight for perfection is not only against our own nature but against the princes, the powers, the dominations of the angelic host who lost their own battle long ago. The abstract assurance of divine help against these vastly superior forces is a grand comfort; in the actual heat of the battle, it is a more solidly comforting thing to our human hearts to have before our eyes the concrete story of divinity's own strategies against satanic cunning.

The temptation of Christ was just another of the devil's bad mistakes. He had to guess; and he guessed wrong. Not even an angelic intelligence could pierce through to the divinity of Christ, for that is something to be believed, not seen; the devil could see the sinless life of Christ and suspect the mystery, then remember the infant helplessness of Christ and doubt that God could make Himself so lowly. He could not believe, for belief flows only from a good will. Up to the last minutes of Christ's life, then, the devil was on tenterhooks about this strange Man; was He really God, or was He merely man?

It was fortunate for us that he made the mistake of trying to find the answer to that question. At least, his mistake protects us from foolish pride or smug security in our own sanctity. For sanctity is no guarantee against temptation; it is an invitation to it. The devil hates saints, they approach so closely to God; and, with the stupid stubbornness that has marked all of his career, he continues to batter his head against the divinely protected wall again and again. Really, sanctity and good works constitute a kind of diabolic desert where there

is neither shade nor rest for the evil one. Indeed, sanctity is a desert place in another sense, for the corridors of sanctity are seldom crowded and man always faces his greatest dangers alone; so it was that Christ underwent His temptation when He was alone in a desert place. It was His invariable custom to face first the hardest of the things He demanded from us.

He went at that difficult task in a fashion that leaves no doubt in our minds as to the method we must pursue. There is no better preparation for future temptations than present fasting and penance. We know very well that there is no time in our lives when we can depend upon quiet security, rest on our arms idly waiting for the next fight to come up; surely we cannot take any chances on the grounds that we have worn down our strength with laborious good works. It was to a tired and hungry Christ, tired and hungry from fasting and penance, that the devil came. Whatever the cause of the fatigue, it is just at that time, with our body protesting a bit, that the devil is most likely to make his attack; he was never one to overlook so powerful an ally as our sense appetite.

His diabolic strategy in the temptation of Our Lord is worth noting well. Since temptation must always come from the outside as far as our soul is concerned, it must be by way of a suggestion. Being what we are, suggestion has no chance for infiltration except along a path already made smooth by the journeys of our heart. The devil does not shock a saint into alertness by suggesting whopping crimes; he starts off with little, almost inoffensive things to which even the heart of a saint would make only a mild protest. So it was with the temptation of Adam; so also with the temptation of Christ. These two heads of the race could not be grossly attacked; they were to be subtly fooled. To our first parents, the devil made an intellectual appeal, a suggestion to that element of curiosity in all of us, asking: "Why did God forbid this particular fruit?" With that wedge securely in, he became bolder, appealing to pride and vainglory with a promise that their

eyes would be opened; it was only when definite progress seemed to have been made that the full horror of the temptation was made plain in his invitation to the extreme pride of rebellion—they should become like gods.

When the devil approached Christ, he used practically the same strategy—there is, after all, very little room for originality in the line of sin and temptation, he was perhaps a little more subtle with Christ, paying Him the same dubious compliment a bandit pays his victim in approaching him with extreme caution. He tempted Christ first with what even the most spiritual of men desire, the food necessary to sustain the body: "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." From there, he went on to that to which even spiritual men are too often victim, ostentation and vain-glory. "If thou be the Son of God, cast thy self down . . ." (from the temple). With inevitable grossness, he advanced a temptation that appealed not to spiritual but to carnal men, the appeal of the riches and the glory of the world, going even so far as contempt of God: "All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me."

The devil, of course, understood that the desire for food was no sin. By reminding Christ of His hunger, the devil could at least discover whether this mysterious Man were willing to call on God for a miracle instead of taking ordinary means to obtain food; means such as John the Baptist had used, subsisting on locusts and wild honey, or the even simpler means of turning about and going to the nearest town for food. If Christ were willing to do these things, He might be guilty of gluttony in resorting to miracles rather than waiting for His food; there would be an even greater possibility of a taint of pride entering into His life.

The first thrust was not successful. Wisdom in the tempter would seem to indicate a complete change of attack, a search for some even subtler approach. But the devil is not wise, which is one of the reasons why he is a devil; the planned attack had to go forward, in spite of the failure of the first

necessary maneuver, stupidly becoming clumsier at every step. It is no sin to trust in God, quite the contrary; but to plunge off a great height in deliberate temptation of God, demanding a miraculous rescue, that is something else again. To desire riches and the honors of the world is not necessarily wrong; but to be willing to abandon God and adore the devil to attain those ends, there is no excuse for that. Christ was quite patient with the first two temptations, for, after all, He had come to conquer the devil by justice not by overwhelming divine power; at the third temptation, He lost all patience. He did more than reject the temptation, He dismissed the devil with a brusqueness that must have been gall to so proud a spirit. This was something not to be tolerated for an instant; for this was a direct attack, not on the things of men, but on God Himself.

That outburst of divine indignation sent the devil slinking away, still mystified by the God-man. When he had gone, the angels came and ministered to their Master. We shall read once more of an angel ministering to a tired Christ; then it will be on the edge of His passion, as here He was on the threshold of His public life. Each was a beginning; and it is at just these moments that comfort is needed, for beginnings, particularly beginnings of divine things, are hard. Since then, it is not angels but the Master Himself who brings comfort to the hearts of men courageous enough to begin.

From the desert, Christ returned to the cities of men and set off on His career of bearer of divine truth to men. Much later, this part of His life would be summed up with a simplicity whose beauty forbids adornment: He had done all things well. He spoke with the appeal and persuasiveness of an orator reading the hearts of his audience as plainly as the page of an open book; He denounced evil with the thundering authority of a supreme legislator; He confirmed His doctrine by stunning miracles, even more by the calm, persistent, quiet sinlessness of His life. All this was but the vehicle of His message. The doctrine itself surpassed anything that teachers of

men have ever conceived; and it answered the deepest demands of the hearts and minds of men.

Yet, looked at objectively, the actual proposal of this doctrine seems to have been miserably limited. It was strictly held within the narrow limits of Palestine and, even there, was restricted to Christ's own people, the Jews. Why did not Our Lord preach to all men? How could He expect the same results from the lesser teachers to whom He commissioned this world-wide preaching? The point is that the lesser teachers actually achieved greater results, thereby showing more plainly the power behind that teaching. Obviously, it requires more power, not less, to accomplish through other, frailer instruments, than to work from the abundance of one's own expertness and power; only one who possesses an overflowing abundance can safely and effectively share it with others. It was the divine power of Christ that could send His small band of apostles to convert the world—and have them succeed.

Christ's restriction of His preaching to the chosen people was part of that orderly procedure so perfectly proper to God's action. The promises of a redeemer and a messiah had been made to the Jews, not to the Gentiles; the Jews, then, should receive the fulfillment of these promises. They were the chosen people, they had had generations of preparation; they should be given the first chance to welcome the Messiah. From them, as a final, perfecting preparation, all excuse for rejecting the Messiah should be removed. But why did Christ not branch out in His teaching after the initial rejection by His people? That is not the limit of the patience of God. Seventy times seven was the number He gave Peter, and Peter was only a man. No, God keeps knocking tirelessly at the door of a soul until the rejection is ultimate, hopeless; until God Himself is put to death and an end made to His teaching.

He came to the Jews in fulfillment of divine promises, in the name of God's love of the race. His love was the strong love of God, a love great enough to be terribly severe. By their malice, the leaders of this chosen people were impeding the

salvation of the whole race; they were rejecting the doctrine of Christ which alone held out hope of salvation; their vices were corrupting the life of the people. This was not the time for a lover of the people and a teacher of truth to tread gently lest he hurt the feelings of some who were considered great among men. Of course Christ roared against them, sparing them nothing; yet there was the full vigor of divine love in that violence, a love that embraced the leaders perhaps even more strongly than the people who followed them.

To curry favor at the expense of truth may serve the disastrous ends of cowardice and selfishness; it can do no good to men or truth, for there is no price at which either men or truth can be sold. It does no cause good to sacrifice men in favor of power, for it is men and God who are the sources of power. On the other hand, it did the cause of Christ no harm to uphold the truth at all costs, to place men before all else. The people of His time, as those of every age, knew well the corruption of their leaders. If Christ had venally won the whole-hearted support of these corrupt leaders, He would probably have lost the few hearts that clung to Him as the sparse fruit of that three years of sowing; He would certainly have lost the millions of hearts that have since come to Him as the full harvest of His labors.

When, in the last days of His life, Christ was called to account, He could say with complete truth: "I have spoken nothing in secret." He had not come to hide divine truth but to manifest it; He was not a miserly Master huddling over His knowledge in dark corners, gloating over His exclusive possession of it, afraid to share it lest He lose His mastery. The things He had to say needed nothing of the garments of sly ambiguity which hide the ugliness of the obscene and allow it to slip furtively into the souls of men. Christ taught publicly: to crowds in the temple, on the sea shore, in desert places, on the high road. To the little group of apostles and disciples, He talked incessantly. He let slip no opportunity to publish His truth. Some things He spoke to the multitudes in parables,

giving them the milk of children because they were not capable of the meat of men; clearly, it was better for them to have this than nothing at all. Even these parables were explained in detail to the apostles to whom it was given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God that they might instruct the children of men.

Many years after, closing his own attempt to put the teachings and deeds of Christ in the prison of written words, St. John admitted the hopelessness of it: "There are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written." The world could not contain the books, only heaven can; it is quite impossible to contain the sublimity of the teachings of divine wisdom within the narrow confines of words. Christ Himself wrote no words beyond those few He scrawled in the sand to scatter the accusers of the adulteress; how significant that it should have been sand in which He wrote! He did His real writing on the hearts of men and thus forever scotched the petty error that His doctrine was not more than is contained in the written Scriptures.

Writing seems somehow unworthy of the dignity of God. There is, first of all, the slavish character of the labor; then, too, the written word is thrown broadcast with just a faint hope for the best, like the seed of a sower thrown into the wind. Christ reached all men, sending His words carefully, from hand to hand, down the long line of infallible teachers to whom His word was entrusted. The complaint against His lack of writing has no justification. Those who make the complaint would not believe if they were given books autographed by the Son of God, any more than the brothers of the rich man in hell who would not receive Moses and the Prophets would have believed one returned from the dead. For it is not lack of truth, but lack of the courage to desire truth that is truth's chief obstacle. It is hard to see how the autograph of Christ would carry more weight than His summons to Lazarus

already dead four days. Yet the result of that miracle was not a complete conversion of all its witnesses; you will remember that there were some who sought to kill Lazarus that the miracle might be denied, as though the second death would be more irrevocable than the first.

While the written word did not befit the dignity of Christ, His miracles certainly did. There was nothing confining about them; rather, they threw open the vast spaces of infinity to the human mind. Indeed, their whole service is to lift the mind of a man above the limits of nature by bringing him into sharp contact with the Author of nature. A miracle is a wave of divine power that lifts men up to the crest and lets them see the distant shore if only for an instant. More concretely, they are worked either to confirm the truth or to show the presence of God in the man who does the works of God. On both counts, Christ fittingly worked miracles.

The miracles of Christ, like all true miracles, were worked by divine power, for miracles are such precisely because they outstrip the powers of nature. It is true that Christ reached out and touched the leper to cleanse him, it was His human voice that awoke Lazarus, Magdalen knew from His loving glance long before He spoke that her sins were forgiven; but the hand, the voice, the eye were merely instruments of divinity, channels which carried the power of God. Christ, even as an Infant in the manger, had both the divine power and the human instrumentality of that power, for He was both God and man. It is, however, an extravagance of unbridled imagination to picture the childhood and adolescence of Christ as a gloriously triumphant journey leaving an uninterrupted wake of miracles behind it. If there was bread in the house at Nazareth, it was because it had been earned by Joseph and his Son; if the clothes were clean, it was because Mary had washed them.

There was no point in miracles until some truth was to be confirmed; until it was time to manifest the divinity of Christ to all men. The first miracle, then, is that recorded as such

by St. John, the changing of water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana. It is comforting to remember that this first miracle was worked at Our Mother's request, that it was for such a human end as saving the host of Christ from embarrassment, that it was a benediction of such a holy thing as marriage. I have often wondered what the bridegroom said to the master of the feast in answer to his complaint about saving the better wine until the last. Probably he just smiled knowingly and shrugged his shoulders, hoping Christ would not give him away.

From this beginning to the very end, all the miracles of Christ had the common purpose of confirming the truth of divinity, of manifesting to men the presence of God among them. All were, of course, works transcending natural powers; all were done in Christ's own name. Again and again, He insisted that it was in confirmation of His claim to divinity that He worked miracles; if what He said were not true, then God Himself would have collaborated in a gigantic lie.

Certainly, the scope of the miracles of Christ was a plainly written documentation of His mastery over all the universe, that is, of His divinity. Angelic beings bowed to His command in every expulsion of the demons from their possessed victims; the heavenly bodies offered their homage and submission when they covered their face against the spectacle of the death of God. Most constantly, however, His miracles revolved around His fellow-men; of these, the outstanding ones are the healing miracles, the miracles whose final goal was not the salvation of the body but of the soul. After all, He had come to save men, to enlighten their minds, and relieve them of the burden of sin. That no least doubt of His divinity might remain in the minds of men of good will, all irrational creation gave Him unquestioning obedience.

These were proud days in the lives of the apostles. The simple fishermen of Galilee were living familiarly with the Lord of the universe. Before their eyes, nature tumbled over itself in its eagerness to obey Him; the eyes of faith showed them

the greater miracles of grace within the souls of men; they shared His confidence, listened to His patient reiteration of divine truth, even partook of something of His infinite power on that mission where they were told to heal the sick, raise the dead, give freely of what they had freely received.

They returned from that journey bubbling over with enthusiasm, swelled a little with consciousness of self, to be met with the laconic word of the Master: "Let us go apart and rest awhile." That is, let us stop for a minute to think, to remember, to pray; after all, you are the same men you were before, not God. As the days of His life grew shorter, His warnings of His passion and death grew more plain; to the apostles, they were steadily unwelcome, even a little frightening, shaking that confidence and sense of power that had so recently come to them.

They had some reason for fright. He was starting them off on a long journey over a road that was rough and steep. His divine wisdom could easily understand that the comforting memories of three intimate years with Him would hardly be enough for them. In the kindness of His heart, He gave them concrete, ocular evidence of some of the joys that awaited them at the end of the journey. For an instant, there on Tabor, Christ unveiled to His beloved three the glory of His human soul shining through His human body.

Understand, this transfiguration was a revelation of human glory. It was essentially the same brilliance that is a permanent quality of the bodies of the saints after the resurrection, the brilliance that would have been constantly shining forth from the body of Christ had not a constant miracle been worked to prevent what would have overwhelmed men as it did the apostles on Tabor. This glimpse of glory completed the dim sketch of the glory of the human body after the resurrection. Other vague details had been drawn when Christ passed through the closed womb of the Virgin, when He walked upon the water, when He passed unharmed through

the hands of the Jews who attempted to apprehend Him before His hour had come.

This apex of human glory was not only for the men who were to come after Christ, but for those faithful ones who had preceded Him. Fittingly, then, Moses and Elias were present at that preview of glory in the name of all who had gone before; Peter, James and John, in the name of all who were to come after. Those five witnesses were really a mighty company: the Law and the Prophets, the Head of the Church, the first of the apostolic martyrs, the most beloved of the disciples and greatest of the evangelists, the Sons of Thunder, and the Rock upon which Christ was to build His Church.

The transfiguration of Christ was really a revelation of the full significance of our position as adopted sons of God. By that adoption, we are made conformable to the natural Son of God, imperfectly now by grace with its glory for the soul, perfectly in heaven with its glory for the body and soul. We enter the life of grace by baptism, the life of heaven by the light of glory. As at the baptism of Christ, so here again at His transfiguration, there is the divine witness to His natural Sonship and a divine promise as to our adopted sonship. As at the baptism the Son was baptized, the Holy Ghost appeared hovering over Him in the form of a dove, while the Father's voice was heard approving; so here on Tabor, the Son was glorified, the Father testified, and the Holy Ghost hovered over the scene in a luminous cloud.

They came down from the mountain a little shaken to set about the business of suffering and dying. But now, what a different task it was, not only for them but for all men; for here was the goal that explained all the hardships and difficulties of the journey—the vision of glory within a man now, shining through his very body in heaven. Here was the secret of the glory of man: a human sharing in divine life.

These were the high points of the divine lesson in human living. This was the way for a man to live and this was the

reason for a man's living as a man: to live intimately with men, holding fast to the roots for respect and love of all other men that reach into divinity itself. For in every man there is a spark of the divine, and the promise of consuming brilliance which is a dim reflection of the reward for human living on a divine plane. This is men's reason for embracing men and for their recoil in horror from the satanic enemy of all men. In this human life of God we can see the inner depths which house the treasures that are to be shared with other men; here is an indication of the part divine things are to play in a man's life and of the wide room that must be left in a man's heart for those divine things. This is the culminating glory reserved for that sovereign being who is a man.

Christ's way of living cannot, of course, be the mode of life in a world that has banned the spiritual to give itself wholly to the material. On a material basis there is little to love in men, nothing, certainly, to make us embrace other men; even if there were, it would be quite impossible for us to get out of ourselves. In such a world, the devil is not an enemy if he serves our material wants and goals. There are no treasures to be shared with other men, for in such a world every man is bankrupt of human riches; men must rather grope about in the refuse heaps of the world, increasing their hunger by satisfying only their animal appetites. In such a world, there is no room for divine things, for the divine is not to be encompassed within the material. Here, indeed, there is nothing of glory for man where his nature is distorted, perverted, degraded.

In such a world, human living is impossible. There cannot be social life among men without justice, and justice is impossible if men cannot get out of themselves, cannot see others, their rights, and the obligation to respect those rights. Injustice, then, is the fundamental social threat, a threat normally met by the regime of law; but what law can there be in a materialistic world beyond the law of force?

A more intimate threat to social life springs from the penetrating knowledge born of familiarity; and this threat can be

met only by absolute perfection—as in Christ where deeper penetration only uncovers greater perfection—or by seeing deeply enough into man to discover the spark of the divine in him. There is a real danger in familiarity of exhausting the grounds of appeal and coming upon a vast territory of defects and imperfection that drives us in revulsion away from our fellow men. The threat is neutralized if once we see the eternal in man, the spark of the divine life that makes the meanest of men a messenger of the sublime truths of God by his very existence; the threat is extinguished by a steady growth in perfection, a fanning of that divine spark into a flame of charity that will culminate in the holocaust of heaven. In a material world, men can get terribly disgusted with men. Obviously, in a material world there can be no absolute perfection; just as clearly, there can be no perception of the eternal in man by men who deny the eternal; and growth can only be the crass material thing that, in any man, is a constant threat to the life and joys of every other man.

We might say that the human, that is the social, way of living presented a severe test of the perfection of Christ. In the sense that His divinity was His title to superiority, it is not hard to see social life as a test of His divinity. It is not easy for a superior to live intimately with his subjects, yet hold to his dignity and authority; in the human order, his defects will inevitably be discovered. It is difficult for a superior to win the affection of his subjects and keep it, not only because some of his acts will inevitably displease some of his subjects, but also because there will inevitably be some defects in his commands, his laws. Christ, the supreme Lawgiver, lived intimately with men, met this test and passed it. Strangely enough, His very success in the test was reason enough for men to shun Him. Not that they had found His law defective; the trouble was there was no defect in it. It was not that they found an imperfect superior; but rather one so perfect that subjection to Him was demanded. Men were not anxious to give up the things that the perfection of the Lawgiver and His law de-

manded. Something of this crops up in the daily life of every age when the pure are mocked by the impure, the just by the unjust, the truthful by liars, the merciful by the pitiless, the wise by the stupid, the industrious by the lazy. Not that these things are not valued; rather, because the recognition of them in others constitutes a stinging and constant rebuke.

Social life is a test of humanity, for it is a constant test of our awareness of the spiritual in man, of our own growth in spiritual things, of our straining towards perfection. It is only on the grounds of the spirit and its growth that men can live together as men; for man, you see, is also a spirit. He cannot be made to live as a mere animal, a plant, or a clod of earth for he is none of these things. He must live the way Christ lived or he must cease, slowly or quickly, to live as a man. He must hold fast to the vision of glory, even though the road be rough and long; for the loss of the vision will not make the road easier, it will rather make the whole necessity of the journey a thing of complete despair.

CHAPTER X
(OUTLINE)
CHRIST THE VICTIM
(Q. 46-52)

1. Men and the mysteries of suffering and death.
 - (a) The place of suffering and death in human life.
 - (b) Their significance for human life
 - (1) Meaningless catastrophes
 - (2) Inhuman events inhumanly met.
 - (3) Means to ends worthwhile
2. A divine prescription for success
 - (a) The way of the cross and its interpretations
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3. The suffering of Christ
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 - (2) Its degree
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 - (1) Negative.
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 - (a) The fact
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 - (a) Its reasons
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 - (a) Its fittingness
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Conclusion.

- 1** Philosophies of suffering.
 - (a) Philosophy of gloom.
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- 2.** Double basis of difference
 - (a) The sufferer a victim or a sovereign master
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- 3** The Victim Who conquered and His book of the cross.

CHAPTER X

CHRIST THE VICTIM

(Q. 46-52)

TO THE superficial observer, suffering is obviously an interruption of the motion of life, while death is its end. Naturally, then, men have felt keenly about suffering and death; they have felt even more keenly about their inability to understand them. When the two are thrust full force upon the attentions of men, as when the world is subjected to a siege of severe suffering and violent death, philosophies of protest spring up like mushrooms to mark the soil made fruitful of doubt by the flood of mystery. From the early nineteen-twenties, for example, philosophers rebelled at the idea of a providence, of a good God, of an orderly world because men had just been through a World War. No doubt in the nineteen-fifties, if human reason is still recognized, a whole new crop of protest-philosophies will rise up and set themselves against eternal truths because men by the millions have suffered and died.

It is plain that the divine model of human living could not ignore these two spectres that dog the steps of every man. An extremely rare few may escape physical suffering; no one escapes death. Christ had come that all men might know by a glance at His life what they were to do at any moment of their own. To make sure there would be no mistake about these two crucial periods of man's life, He merged the two in a gigantic climax to His own life that the attention of these two thousand years might be focused on that part of His life. He did not minimize the importance of a knowledge of the meaning and technique of suffering and dying.

In one way or another, every man must meet these supremely hard facts of suffering and death. The way men have met them is an indication of what they have learned of the business of living, how much they have known of the meaning of life. To some men, stopping short at a superficial view of life, suffering was a thing of horror, a meaningless catastrophe which interrupted work, love, pleasure; the mystery, finality, the corruption, and inevitability of death were terrifying, it was the complete end of the only life, the only value they knew. In the face of these threatening unknowns, they fled; but of course they did not escape. They are still trying to escape by pushing the suffering of others from sight, by legalizing any means to avoid suffering of their own even though this demands the coming of such high, sounding names as euthanasia, therapeutic abortion, mercy killing, and so on for the dastardly act which has always been known as murder. Obviously, there is little of nobility or mercy in this sort of thing when death means what it does to these modern champions of escape—the end of everything.

Other men could find no human meaning in suffering; it was an inhuman thing and they met it inhumanly. Sometimes the weapon of defense was the perversion of sadism and masochism, a perverted wringing of pleasure from pain from which nature itself shrinks in revulsion. In their flight to an ecstasy of passion to block out all reason, these men faced suffering by digging down to a level beneath that of the animal. Still others met this inhuman thing by brutalizing their own sensibilities, by animalizing man. They submitted to suffering stolidly, like dead things, not because suffering had any reason to it, but in a kind of stupid endurance that was a denial of the individual's own nature.

Men who saw beneath the surface of life met suffering and death humanly. They saw that the motion of life was not merely the movements of arms, legs, lips, or eyes, but also of mind and heart. Life was, above all, a spiritual race to a spiritual goal; it was not to be held up by a physical impedi-

ment, any more than an angel is to be thrown by a stalwart football player. These men left suffering and pain intact, not denying them, not meeting them with brutal indifference, not twisting them into a horrible pleasure; rather they ordered them to the soul's high purposes which are not to be interfered with by any created force. They destroyed nothing of man, neither his higher nor his lower nature; rather they subordinated the lower to the higher in all reason, thus perfecting the whole man.

In His death on the cross, Christ gave the full human meaning of suffering and added to it the rich flavor of the divine. He was not merely submitting to suffering, making a virtue of necessity; He embraced suffering. So the graphic symbol of His last moments became the universal symbol of all His doctrine and His life. Those who watered down His doctrine in later centuries quite logically stripped the body from the crucifix; those who revolted against Him, trampled on the crucifix or made it a mockery. They were quite right. For on Calvary, by His cross, Christ gave the full statement of His way of human living, the full details for life to those who would come after Him. If we are to abandon His way of life, we should destroy the cross.

He Himself has said that the only way to follow Him was to take up the cross; and this has been astounding advice to human ears. It is strange to men that divine wisdom, in mapping out the best way for men to live, could hit upon no better way than that of the cross. This was not mere theory, even divine theory, for God took that royal road Himself; it was not a drastic exercise to round the spiritually flabby into shape, for He gave it to the most perfect of His friends—to Peter, James, John, Magdalen, and His mother. His methods have not varied. The very special gift to the followers of Christ has always been a full cup of suffering; their response to His gift has always been as astounding as the death of the Author of life on the barren hill of Calvary. To them, suffering was not a thing to be cringed from in terror; it was not a brutal dose

to be taken in dull stupidity; rather, it was a share in and a completion of the works of the Master to be joyfully embraced, a vital help to others, a safe, sure, short way to heaven. Above all, it was an opportunity for the concrete expression of love, for sacrifice.

On Calvary, Christ's way of dealing with suffering and death was mocked as evidence of effeminate weakness by those whose god was brute strength. The hedonists of the time, whose norm was pleasure, recoiled from it. The intellectually proud, who could not see beyond the walls of the world, looked on with pity or indifference.

The men of the world have not changed much since then. The Cross of Christ is still seen as an exhibition of weakness, a shocking, revolting thing, or a needless, useless loss. This paradox of a suffering and dying God is not to be understood by the world. The initial paradox was bad enough, that He Who had come that men's joy might be full should leave a prescription of suffering. The consequences of it have been positively bewildering: for the most joyous people in the world are those who most eagerly embrace suffering for themselves; yet these willing victims are the most thoughtful, the most kind, the most pitying towards suffering in others. But, then, isn't this a fairly exact correspondence with the Model Who had time and heart, even in His agony, to continue the work of healing the sick, comforting the distressed, forgiving sinners, and providing for the lonely hearts of the world?

The secret of this paradox, as of all the paradoxes of Christian action, is to be found in the union of the divine and the human. Those of Christ's own life flowed from the substantial union of human and divine nature in the Person of the Word of God, those of the twentieth century's Christian life take their rise in the participation of divine life by men through grace. Of course Christianity is a puzzling phenomenon to those who know nothing of God and little of man. The full implications for human living of the crucified Christ are gathered only by one who knows both God and man and

spends a lifetime of contemplation, with divine assistance, of both.

It is certainly true that any appreciation of the paradox of Calvary depends upon a humble study of the union of the human and divine in that tragedy. A whimper of pain immediately awakes some pity in us, for pain is well within the field of our own experience; when we have traced it down and found that a man and not a dog is suffering, our appreciation of the pain is deeper, our pity more profound, for we know how much more it means to a man to suffer than to a mere animal. On Calvary, we are trying to understand something of the sufferings of God. The work of this chapter is to look at the passion of Christ in itself, to see what it means for a God-man to suffer.

Obviously Christ did not have to suffer as the sea has to roar in a wild wind; He did not have to suffer as a man is forced to stand upright because he is lashed to a post. Had Christ not passed through the hands of His enemies untouched when they tried to seize Him earlier in His life? Even there in the Garden of Gethsemane, the crowd that had come roaring out for His blood fell down at the mention of His name. On His own word, He could have had twelve legions of angels when God knows one alone would have been more than enough. His word had called the world into being; and men came to reduce Him to helplessness with swords and clubs! What stupid weapons for a battle with God!

It is essential that we see clearly that Christ was not forced into His passion. What necessity was involved was that of a means to an end, the necessity a man is under to walk across the street if he is to get to the other side. Man was to be freed from sin, the humanity of Christ was to be exalted, the prophecies of Scripture to be fulfilled; and the passion and death of the Savior were the means by which these things were to be done. This is not a denial of the possibility of other means to attain these ends; the point is that this is the way that had been decided on by God, and God's are not changing plans

accommodating themselves to last-minute information pouring in from the ends of the earth.

His choice, then, of the means to the end of the Incarnation was a supremely wise, eternal choice. The passion and death of the Son of God were the best ways to obtain the things for which the Incarnation took place. The point is worth stressing. Perhaps we can understand it by a glance at the reasons for the superiority of the modern transparent, compact, extremely light raincoats for women over a raincoat made, let us say, of sheet-iron. The latter would certainly keep out the rain and so attain the chief end of a raincoat; but it would be folded into a hand-bag with extreme difficulty, would hardly be beneficial to the clothes beneath it, and might easily wear off a few layers of skin. It would certainly be no help to the disposition in hot weather, and be an irritating thing to find draped over a chair. The modern raincoat contributes many more things by which the end of all raincoats can be more fittingly attained. The Christ-child might have glanced around His stable nursery, given one baby smile, of infinite worth because He was God, and then returned to eternal glory. This would have been more than sufficient to redeem men, to attain the principal end of the Incarnation. But would that divine smile have produced all the other things which pertain to the salvation of men over and above the forgiveness of sin?

Would it, for example, have given them that unanswerable protestation of limitless divine love that would stop their human hearts and start them off again in a rapid, eager beat as they attempted to respond to that love? Would men have had that terrifying estimate of the price of their souls, with its consequent conviction of the grave necessity for avoiding sin? Would it have flashed before men's eyes the living examples of humility, obedience, constancy, and justice that were struck out from the flint of the cross? Would it have sent men down the ages with their shoulders a little straighter, their heads a little higher, their step a little firmer in the knowledge that man, who had been conquered by the devil, had turned about

and given his enemy a beating; that man, who had merited death, had conquered death by dying on a cross?

That cross against the sky with its arm flung out to the world was not a *beau geste*. It was not the exaggerated declaration of love from a cavalier professional in these matters. Hung between the earth and the sky, the blood that edged slowly down its rough surface to the earth beneath it consecrated the ground men walked on, while its arms purified the air as if to say a new world had been made. It stood there on the brow of the hill in a bold, challenging rebuke to the fears of men. This was the worst men could do and it could not stop the triumph of a Man, what, then, is to be feared from men? By the fruit of a tree, men had met defeat, by the bitter fruit of this tree, they conquered. Here was the new Moses with arms outstretched, praying. Here was a new rod, striking not the living rock but the very gates of heaven to swing them wide and loose a flood of grace upon the hearts of men.

Fighting men returning from war usually bring back a full quota of strange and interesting stories. It is to be noticed, however, that the stories revolve around the comic side of army life, the strange customs of foreign peoples, the compelling beauty of strange lands. These men have practically nothing to say of suffering and death. It is hard to go into the details of these things. It is much harder when the subject of the suffering is not merely a companion in arms but a companion in heart. Thomas, for all his reputation as a cold-blooded metaphysician, showed this same reticence when he came on slow feet to the very cross itself and looked at the divine Victim. He makes no attempt to detail every suffering of Christ; indeed, what human word could contain them, what human heart hold them? Rather, Thomas adheres to a generalization of Christ's sufferings, to a classification rather than a description of them.

Looking at the cross through the eyes of Thomas, it is evident to us, as it was to him, that there is no question of Christ facing the evils which affect the soul directly, such evils

as sin or the loss of grace. Nor could there be question of such intrinsic evils as sickness or the corruption of the body. What Christ suffered was brought upon Him from extrinsic sources. In this sense, Christ underwent all suffering.

Not that Christ underwent every individual suffering. Even the ingenuity of hate has its limitations. The officers of Elizabeth had to work fast to complete the sentence of hanging, drawing and quartering. Had a few more details, such as drowning, poisoning, shooting, scalding, and overeating been added, their complete obedience would have been impossible. Add a few modern touches, such as airplane crashes, train wrecks, plunging from skyscrapers, and it is fairly easy to see that no one man can possibly undergo every individual suffering. What Christ suffered was every *kind* of suffering. His passion was the work of Jews and gentiles, of men and women, of princes and their officials, of priests and people, of friends and enemies. What can a man suffer? Well, he can be deserted by his friends. He can be stripped of his reputation, robbed of respect and honor. He can lose his possessions, even his very clothes. His soul can be weighed down by the weariness of distaste, by fear, by sorrow. His body can be beaten and wounded. It was in this sense of a man utterly stripped that Christ hung naked on the cross.

A man's body can be made to suffer in a great variety of ways. His head, for instance, might be crowned with thorns, his hands and feet transfixed by nails, his face beaten and spit upon, his whole body torn by lashes. He might suffer in his sense of touch, in his sense of smell as by dying in a place long used as a depository of dead criminals, the place of skulls; his ears might be assailed by insults, obscenities, blasphemies; and his eyes might reveal to him the course of the tears streaming down his mother's face as she watched him suffering all these things. All these could happen to a man; all of them did happen to Christ.

He suffered every manner of suffering and His sufferings were greater in intensity than any other the world has seen.

Understand, we are still viewing the Victim under that merciful light of generality. It is quite possible that some other man be crowned with sharper thorns or carry a cross a greater distance; the question here is not of this or that suffering but of all these sufferings taken together in a subject Who was the Son of God. We have some notion of the intensity of Christ's sufferings even if we stop at their universality and the slow, exceedingly painful relief that comes through death by crucifixion.

A more penetrating light is thrown on this intensity of suffering if we keep in mind the interior sufferings of Christ. It must be realized that He was bearing the sins of all the world, bearing them with a wisdom and charity that brought the full horror of sin, every sin, directly before His eyes. We must appreciate something of the torment of His soul when we remember that He could look into the very souls of His executioners and disciples as they sinned; and He was God to whom nothing is more hateful than sin. This last point, the subject of these sufferings, brings out fully the length to which God will go in search of love from men. Knowing that this man was God, we can know with what suffering the Man Christ saw the slow approach of death, the loss of this life which was above all other lives, the life of God. The wine at Cana had astonished the master of the feast for, like all things miraculously produced, it was perfect. So was this miraculously produced body of Christ endowed with the keenest of senses, the sharpest responsiveness of appetite; it was most perfectly fitted to respond thrillingly to the lightest touch of joy and, by that very fact, to shudder with the utmost of agony under the brutal blows of pain.

In other men, pain may be assuaged by reason; the martyrs, for example, in their ecstasy could be insensible to pain, or a woman in labor be joyful in her pain thinking of the child who will soon be in her arms. A child might even rejoice a little in the misfortune of having to have a sliver removed from its finger, considering the reward promised for submitting bravely

to the process. There was none of this in Christ. He would not permit it, rather, He insisted that every faculty operate to its fullest for the redemption of man. All this suffering was in the most complete sense *voluntary*. He took upon Himself the amount and degree of suffering proportionate to the fruit that suffering was expected to bear—nothing less than the redemption of all men from all sin; proportionate, that is, to the sins of all the world. That He should have died so soon, after only three hours of agony, could be a surprise only to those who did not know what suffering He was undergoing, only to those who did not understand that this was the perfect Son of Mary Who was redeeming the world.

In insisting on the universality and supreme intensity of the suffering of Christ, Thomas is not forgetting that Christ enjoyed the beatific vision, the joy of heaven. This in no way interfered with or lessened the tragedy of Calvary; rather, the very absence of its resonance in the body of Christ is just one more word in the long recorded testimony of divine love

The superior reason of man is not a direct subject of sorrow; its object is truth. It becomes involved only in the suffering of the whole man. And it was by this superior reason that man sees God in heaven. Christ on the cross did not suffer directly in this superior reason; but intolerable suffering came to it indirectly from the suffering of the whole man. At the same time, the limitless joy of the vision was in Christ's will, but damned up lest one trickle of it relieve the suffering offered for men. In heaven, the flood of that vision to the body is such as to spiritualize the material, to glorify the body with the radiance that was seen in the transfiguration of Christ; but on Calvary, this played not the smallest part in relieving the suffering of the body of Christ.

Death seems so far removed from the young that it is particularly hard to watch a young man die. Christ died a young man, in His early thirties. There was this comfort in His dying: since he surrendered that life in the name of love, there could never again be any question of the unconditional character of

that love. The perfect age of thirty is a sad time to die. But it is the right time to bring out the full, deliberate offering of a life for love.

The hill upon which Christ died is just outside the old walls of the city of Jerusalem. It rises sharply from the very foot of those walls to a height that is just about level with the top of the old walls, and so close that a man could easily throw a stone from the wall to the brow of the hill or, peering a little, could read the inscriptions over the crosses of the criminals dying on the hill. Jerusalem was the place for Christ to die, for Jerusalem was a royal city and He was a king; Jerusalem was the killer of the prophets and He was the greatest of the prophets. According to St. Thomas, Jerusalem was the center of the world, the navel of the universe; and this is certainly true if we are speaking of the world of the spirit. It was a fitting place for Him to die. Whose death was to have repercussions to all the ends of the earth. He died outside the walls as the scapegoat of humanity, rejected and outcast by His people.

He hung on the cross between two thieves. Perhaps that special touch of disgrace was added in the hope that the people whom He had loved and healed, comforted and forgiven would identify Him with these criminals, if so the hope was vain. Ever since, the world has talked of His cross with hardly a word for the other crosses; kings have searched for and found and carried His cross, particles of it are still adored throughout the world. The others? They have played their part. They clustered around that central cross as around a judgment seat and heard a divine sentence passed. They showed to all men that suffering can be a soaring flight direct to heaven, or a weight pressing us down deeper into hell; for it was from the vantage point of a cross that one criminal recognized the throne and royal robes of the King, while the other saw only a dying criminal who could be safely mocked.

Christ, dying on the cross, was a willing victim but He did not kill Himself. It was not Christ Who stripped off His garments, drove the nails into His hands, or the spear into His

side. His enemies could and did kill Him; but only because He submitted to them. He could have rendered them impotent or, submitting, He could have brought His body unscathed through their feeble, human gestures of attack. He did neither. Life was not so much being taken from Him as being laid down by Him. Not envy, not hatred, not the power of His enemies, but the obedience and love of the victim tells the real story of His sacrifice; He was obedient even unto death. An unwilling sacrifice is no sacrifice at all; surely, it is not the means of such a sweeping reconciliation as Christ planned. Man had lost God by disobedience; here, God was regained by the obedience of a Man.

Christ laid down His life in obedience to the command of His Father; the obedience, like the command, was inspired by an infinite love for men. That obedience brought out the terrible severity of divine justice's refusal to forgive sin until the penalty had been undergone; at the same time, it revealed the infinite goodness of God Who sent His only-begotten Son into the world to die that men might escape the penalty of their sin. With the help of His own people, Christ was handed over to the Gentiles to be put to death; salvation follows the same course, from the Jews to the Gentiles, not for the destruction of God but for the happiness of man.

Strictly speaking, there were very many who had a part in Christ's death, but their roles were vastly different. His Father gave Him over to death moved by justice, goodness, and love for men. The Son surrendered to death from that same goodness, and from obedience. Judas betrayed his Master from greed; the Jews betrayed Him from envy. Pilate handed Him over to the mob because of a cowardly fear that made him tremble at the name of Caesar. The surrender of the Father and the Son will be praised for all eternity; the acts of the others will be condemned without end.

True, there was some little excuse for the Romans. What did they know about the Messiah and His coming? What interest did they have in the rumors they had heard of the

wonders worked by Christ? There was even some excuse for most of the mob that hooted at the heels of Christ up to Calvary; and then slunk away in terror to their homes. They had none of the expert knowledge of the Scriptures that would enable them to judge of Christ independently; even though they had been impressed and enthusiastic about His life and works, it was the function of their leaders to approve and disapprove. They themselves were easy subjects of deception.

But the leaders of the people—there is a different story. They had the Scriptures and they knew them. They had followed the works of Christ in detail and had examined them with expert eyes. They had the norms of discrimination between the works of God and the works of men. Like all the others gathered on Calvary to kill Christ, they did not know He was the Son of God; but they, above all others, should have known. They could have known only by faith; but they did not receive the faith that would allow their eyes to pierce the veil of His humanity because they did not want that faith. They put the impediments of hate, envy, and deceit in the way of faith, and only those of good will can see the things that belong to the eyes of God.

On them, as they wished, rests the blood of this innocent Man. Theirs was the greatest sin, a sin in itself greater than any other that can be committed. As we pass down the line of the executioners, the sin becomes less, for the norm of gravity in sin will always be the malice of the will; that malice lessened definitely after Judas and the princes of the people, coming down in a steadily decreasing degree to the common people, Pilate, and the Roman soldiers.

Some one has defined the efficiency of modern transport as the ability to get us a long way quickly so that we can start back sooner. This is really more than jest; it is an epitome of the fact and the vanity of our worship of activity. We have actually come to the irrational stage of seeing positive virtue in rush, hurry, aggression. As a corollary of that, there is pity in our hearts for the poor people who are condemned to live

their lives in one place, particularly a small place. To our minds, what a man does with his hands, his feet, or even his brain, are all important; we do not at all appreciate what a man can do with his heart. To the thorough modern, then, Christ on the cross is a picture of utter helplessness, of complete frustration; He could not go anywhere, could not get anything done. A religious-minded modern might ponder sadly on what those helpless hands of Christ might have done, what words the swollen tongue might have spoken, what sinners might have been sought out by the transfixed feet. As a matter of fact, it was when Christ was so helplessly fixed to the cross that He got the most done.

Divinity has certainly gone to extreme lengths to bring us to our senses, to a realization that in rushing around the world we are only circling back to the place from which we started. We move in circles, inevitably, unless it is our heart that moves. All that Christ had done in those busy three years in which He had not so much as time to eat, was as nothing compared to what He accomplished on Calvary. Just when the full causality of the God-man was unleashed, men stood mocking or pitying His helplessness. From that cross, Christ's divinity operated as the efficient cause of all the wide effects produced by the passion of Christ in the lives of men; Christ's human will, from the deep roots of grace and charity, merited all those effects; His flesh satisfied for the punishment due to our sins, freed us from the slavery of sin, and was the means of sacrifice by which we are reconciled to God. The efficient, the meritorious, the redemptive, the satisfactory, and sacrificial causality of the redemption of men flowed out from a man dying on a cross. This was God's way of getting things done.

A modern true to his training would immediately object that as far as could be observed, all that Christ did on Calvary was to die in disgrace and tear out the hearts of His friends. Just what did Christ get done there? To understand the difficulty of answering that question to the satisfaction of the

twentieth century, as well as to appreciate how far we have drifted today from the goals of men, it is only necessary to reflect for a moment on how little the revolutionary effects of Christ's passion mean to the modern world. What do these things mean today: liberation from sin, freedom from the power of the devil, release from the punishment due to sin, reconciliation with God, the opening of the gates of heaven, and the exaltation of the God-man, Christ? What a snicker such a litany would win in Union Square! What reasons for a man to die!

Yet, it is only by these effects that a man can win the fight of his life. Indeed, it is only the thoughtfulness of divinity and the divine respect for the powers of man that still keep every man's fight his very own. These effects of Christ have been won for us; but we must allow their application in our own lives. The life of man is a battle he must win himself, one that is worth winning for himself as an individual, but one that he can win only because God died on a cross. And the world shrugs in indifference!

When Christ bowed His head and died, His life ended, as every man's does, by His soul leaving His body. But it is a serious mistake to see that dead body in the arms of His mother as so much human wreckage, a mass of matter destined for corruption. The soul of Christ was not a tow-rope hooking His body to divinity any more than His flesh was a chain tying His soul to divinity. There was no intermediary of that union of God and human nature; the union was immediate and by reason of the Person. As He was taken down from the cross and during those three days of death, the Person of the Son of God and His divinity were still intimately united to that body, still intimately united to that soul, even though soul and body were separated. This Person did not result from the union of body and soul, nor from the union of human and divine nature; this was an eternal Person, not to be destroyed by the destruction of the union of body and soul. What God took,

He kept. That grace of union, like all grace, could be lost only by sin; and there was no more sin in the dead Christ than in the living one.

In this light, the care and love given to the dead body of Christ, the courage of Joseph of Arimathea in demanding it of Pilate, the sorrow of His mother receiving it from the cross, were more than the reverence that springs from loving memories. Everything suffered by that dead body, even though it were only the caress of love, had infinite value for the souls of men. It is true, of course, that during those three days, Christ was dead; that is, He was no longer man, for man is not a body, neither is he a soul, but a composite of the two. Here that composite had been dissolved. The dead body of Christ was a body without a soul; but otherwise it was exactly the same, still possessed by the same Person, still united to divinity through that Person. Christ had not merited death, but He took it; He had not merited corruption of the body, and this He would not take lest there be any slightest doubt of His divinity.

Indeed, it was not at all fitting that that body should suffer corruption; the fact that it did not has ever since been a serene comfort to men and an unanswerable refutation of Christ's enemies. It was a foregone conclusion that men would doubt Christ's death; even though Pilate sent a spear through His heart, and His tomb was sealed and guarded day and night. Precautions such as these cannot stop the doubts of men when doubt seems so much more comfortable a thing than belief; even though it may be necessary to stoop to stupidity by hiring sleeping witnesses to testify to events happening during their sleep, such men will have their doubts. Either Christ's death or His resurrection must be rejected under penalty of accepting every single detail of His life and doctrine. For us, who have no doubts, there is comfort in watching Christ placed in the tomb; from that time on, men could watch those they loved placed in a tomb and remember that the doors of every tomb are not eternally locked, that every tomb has an exit as

well as an entrance, that it is a gate rather than the end of a road.

Perhaps, too, the burial of Christ was to remind us that we are to die to sin by Baptism, to be buried from the world, and separated from the inordinate passions of men. Christ was in that tomb for two nights and a day that we might know it is a double death, the death of sin and the death of the body, that we escape by Baptism and its full consummation.

As His body drooped on the cross with the breath of life gone out of it, the soul of Christ descended into hell; not to the hell of the damned, but to the hell which we call Limbo. There was already confusion and despair enough in the devil's kingdom as the knowledge of His victory became more apparent; in Limbo the souls of the just awaited the opening of the gates of life by the death of the Author of life. It is not at all strange to us that Our Lord's first thought in death would be for others, as all the thoughts of His life had been. Only God knows how long the centuries had seemed, waiting there in Limbo; perhaps that was why He hurried so. Surely, only God can tell us of the hilariously joyful reception given the Savior of the world by those who tasted the first fruits of His sacrifice.

When the short visit was over, there would be a little note of sadness such as perpetually dogs the steps of sin. For there would be souls in Purgatory who had not yet satisfied for their sin and these could have no part in His triumphant possession of His kingdom until the last farthing had been paid; the souls in Limbo would still bear the stain of original sin, and so could never enter that kingdom. As for the damned in hell, He had not come to them, He had nothing to bring them, not the slightest bit of their punishment was relieved. They had chosen, and held fast to their choice; not even the Conqueror, the Master of the universe, the God of all, forces the human will to change even so stupidly disastrous a choice as this

Mary, on the arm of John, went down from the hill and its sepulchre into a city empty of Christ; but she carried with her

the secret that would change forever the view of men on suffering and death. To Mary and John, the mystery of death and suffering was cleared up by faith: its finality was done away with by the knowledge that it was the beginning of a new life; its corruption was more than matched by the glorification of the body that was the ultimate goal of death; death's inevitability was more than made up for by the certitude of immortality.

In other words, they entered that empty city in full possession of the Christian philosophy of suffering and death. They had learned from the dead Christ that suffering was to be joyfully embraced yet to be mercifully and constantly relieved in others. They knew now that suffering would be their lot in order that their joy might be full; that the way of the cross, for all its sorrows, was a joyful road leading to fuller, and perpetual, joy.

In sharp contrast to this, the materialistic philosophies of their age still shuddered before the sight of suffering and the terror of death. To them, suffering and death still remained mysterious, something for the most part hated, yet, paradoxically, something that is quite willingly inflicted upon others. Those philosophies were then, as they have been ever since, apparently dedicated to pleasure and to flight from pain; yet in actual fact, they were philosophies of gloom and pessimism not only to the victims sacrificed to their ends, but to the very champions of these philosophies.

Mary and John, and all who would come after them, faced suffering and death, not only as men and women, but as men and women who had been made partakers in the life of God. Their materialistic contemporaries, and ours, faced these mysteries of pain and death, not as participators in the life of God, not even as men and women, but in a fashion worthy only of something less than a man. Really, it should have been so; the basic differences of the two views clearly would allow nothing less sharply contrasted. To the Christian, the victim, the sufferer who dies, is in reality a sovereign master, wielding

even such terrible weapons as his own pain and death for his own high purposes, rising above the material and what the material can inflict upon him, always carrying within himself that spark that gives him independence of all that is less than the spirit. In the other view, the sufferer is simply and solely a victim of superior forces; he is beaten, vanquished. There is nothing within him to give him title to independence of the forces that crash upon him to his destruction; he is the slave of obviously superior forces; his outlook is one of hopeless despair.

In fact, the materialist has no reason for fighting against hopeless odds. He has no place to go, no goal worthy of suffering, nothing worth the price of death. The one thing he knows is the life he has in his hands, and he knows precious little about that; to preserve it, he should logically go to any lengths, scruple at no means however base. On the other hand, the follower of Christ along the way of the cross aims at goals that are not only worthy of a man; they are goals proper to God, goals so far superior to anything material as to make the loss of any material things, or all of them, a mere trifling price to pay. The Master's question still remains unanswerable: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" His incredible promise still holds: "He that shall lose his life shall find it." For there are some things worth the price of all the suffering a man can endure, even of all the sufferings that the God-man could endure; and there are some things to which death is not a threat but a gateway.

The world of our time, or of any time, gazing on the Son of God dead on the cross, looks at a willing Victim who conquered, at a Man who died and, dying, conquered death, at a Man who wrote in the indelible words of infinitely precious acts a fundamentally important lesson for all men to read. There it is written, never to be erased, that the spiritual is superior to the material, that all things in man's life, even life itself, are to be ordered to the good of his soul. In the crucifix,

the universal symbol of the life, doctrine, and death of Christ, He has left us the whole book of divine wisdom for human living. It is a compact thing, readily scrutinized by the most ignorant, though it is never exhausted by the most wise and the most holy. It has been the book of the saints. In that book there is the answer to the enigma of suffering and to the horror of death. There is the ultimate chapter on human living by the divine Exemplar of human life.

CHAPTER XI
(OUTLINE)
THE CONQUEST OF DEATH
(Q 53-59)

1. The double note in the conquest of death
 - (a) Of joy in the destruction of its finality
 - (b) Of fear in the guarantee of responsibility and judgment
2. Basis of the denial of the conquest.
 - (a) Fear of living
 - (b) Pride of life
3. The conquest and the Conqueror:
 - (a) The resurrection of Christ
 - (1) Its necessity and fittingness.
 - (2) Its primacy and cause.
 - (b) Body of the Conqueror
 - (1) Its reality
 - (2) Its qualities
4. Manifestation of the conquest:
 - (a) Its limitations
 - (b) The proofs offered
5. Causality of the conquest:
 - (a) As to bodies
 - (b) As to souls
6. Consequences of the conquest:
 - (a) The ascension of Christ.
 - (1) Its fittingness
 - (2) Its cause
 - (3) Its goal
 - (b) His place at the right hand of the Father
 - (c) His judicial power
 - (1) His title to judgment
 - (2) The extent of the judgment
 - (3) The second judgment

Conclusion

1. The battle of life and death
2. The conquest of life by death
 - (a) Its double aspect of relief and of sadness.
 - (b) Common significance of these two
 - (c) Their common consequences
3. The conquest of death by life

CHAPTER XI

THE CONQUEST OF DEATH

(Q. 53-59)

TO A young doctor just beginning his practice, or a young married couple setting out on their common life, it seems impossible that anyone can ever get too old to dream. In a sense they are right; but it is true that it is the youth of a man that is filled with dreams. As adolescence changes into manhood and womanhood, vast horizons open up to give birth to the dreams of the young. The long, wide roads are faced with a tingling joy of anticipation; yet in the very midst of the grand dreams of conquest, there is often a note of misgiving, a tinge of fear on venturing into this huge new world

If this fear actually takes precedence, an unhealthy state of indecision develops, spelling the end of effort, of accomplishment, even of life in the human sense of hearty living. On the other hand, if that fear is kept healthy, it is an invaluable check-rein on our plunging hearts, keeping them from running wild by insisting on caution and some measure of prudence in even our boldest efforts.

This strange mingling of joy, anticipation, and fear seems to be the common note of all the goals that open up new roads, the ends which are beginnings. It seems to be the genius of our nature to be forever seeking wider, longer, harder goals, to approach them with mingled joy and fear; yet to be stagnated, stifled without them. All this is, of course, true of the goal of death which opens up the horizons of eternity. From this point of view, the story of Our Lord's resurrection was particularly well told, with its note of fear on the part of the soldiers, of great joy on the part of the disciples; for the

combination of these two is typical of the emotions of every man as he reaches an end that starts him off again on a new road.

There is reason enough for joy in Christ's conquest of death, for it tore down the wall at the end of life's last blind alley, lifting the barrier of finality which lies heavy across the path of every human heart. A barrier is always a source of suffering for a human heart with its innate drive for newer, wider, higher goals, and which never has enough of traveling, since it was made for the infinite. When the last door, the door of death, swings wide, there is an immediate, joyous release from the haunting fear that perhaps there is an end of love, of knowledge, of accomplishment, and of all the other things that the human heart treasures, the fear that what a man presses on to so desperately for all of a lifetime may yet be taken away from him.

It is quite certain that life is not long enough by far. Youth surely does not know the deep values hidden in the roar and confusion of life; it takes time to appreciate these things, since we learn so very slowly. Life is a cathedral which must be visited many times to get more than a dim appreciation of the beauty of its lines; it is a masterpiece that must be looked at lovingly hour after hour, day after day, if our eyes are to see the soul of it; it is a book to be read again and again, each reading giving its lines new significance, new depths. When life is nearly over we begin to put proper values on such familiar, homely things as spring sunshine and the pure beauty of winter. Not even then have we more than scratched the surface of the mystery of love, of sacrifice, of selfless family life, and God's hovering benevolence. We need more time. It would not do to lose life just as we begin to penetrate its worth.

Yet, seeing this door of death swing wide into a new life, there is, too, a distinct and healthy note of fear in facing the endless stretches that will satisfy our hearts. For if death is conquered and life goes on forever, while the good is preserved, the record of evil, too, has to be faced. Man cannot wipe out

his deeds with the help of a faulty memory ; he must face his life, all of it, with responsibility for the evil as well as with pride and affection for the good. The man who is utterly fearless at such a prospect is somewhat of a fool. Briefly, the conquest of death not only opens up the possibilities of heaven but also of hell ; it guarantees judgment, complete and accurate casting up of all accounts.

This is a fearful truth for a man ; it is insupportable for a coward. To some men of every age, the news of Christ's resurrection has been bad news, so bad as to drive them to the childishly irrational extreme of refusing to read the news as though that would destroy it. A prospective lawyer who would burn the report of his bar examination for fear of learning that he had failed would soon discover that he could not begin his practice simply because he had destroyed that report, the men who refuse to read the news of Christ's resurrection must ultimately learn that they cannot go out and live just because they maintained their ignorance of life. In actual fact, what they have done is to give fear the upper hand, ending all real effort, real accomplishment, real living by going on record as denying anything in life worth living for, worth the awful burden of responsibility.

In a strange paradox, these cowards who are afraid of life put their denial of life on the basis of pride and thus join hands with others whose pride has gone so far as to submerge even healthy fear. Both conclude to the supremacy of man. One, by releasing him, through a denial of responsibility, from answering to any superior ; the other, by a strong, indignant rejection of dependence as a slur on human greatness. what we cannot reach by our human powers simply cannot exist.

It is hard for the hand, the eye, or the mind of a man to reach to the uttermost limits of truth ; so hard, in fact, as to be impossible. Though the truth that the soul of man is undying can be reached and has been reached by the human mind, these men will have none of it. As for the resurrection of the body to eternal life, that is incredible. After all, we have only

God's word for it; and we are not taking anyone's word for anything. We, they say, depend on no one. We live our own lives. We stand on top of the world. Though we had nothing to do with our own beginnings, though we have less to say about our own ending, though our knowledge of the space between these two is pitifully vague and our knowledge of the space beyond either beginning or end is necessarily second hand, we are supreme. After all, we can know more than a tree, a dog, or a cosmic force; so we must know all that can be known.

Pride and fear are no new things in human life. It is true that we have no record, in the story of Christ's resurrection, of the kind of fear we know so well today, the fear that destroys life in preference to living it. But we have a record of a pride that would go so far as to bribe witnesses to deny the uncomfortable truth. However, neither pride nor fear destroys truth. Christ rose again from the dead; man has his life to face, both its good and its evil.

In a sense, Christ had to rise from the dead. He had made the resurrection the test of the divinity of His mission; it was the supreme sign granted to the stiff-necks of His own generation. Without the resurrection, His doctrine and His life would have seemed to men only another episode in the long history of pseudo-prophets, continuing to our own day, who promise to return shortly after death and whose disciples have kicked their heels while they waited, feeling more and more foolish, more and more angry at having been duped, until, finally, they stalk off, through forever with the master who did not keep his appointment.

The Mother of Christ, in her triumphant song, had said of God that He exalted the humble and brought down the mighty. Her Son had insisted "The first shall be last and the last shall be first"; "He that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." He Himself had been humbled to the utmost degree, even to the disgraceful death on the cross. The exaltation of His resurrec-

tion was God's only fitting answer to the humiliation of Calvary.

The heavy hearts and slow steps of the disciples trudging to Emmaus are a faint picture of the feeble faith that would have flickered in the disciples of Christ had He not risen; Paul was right when he maintained that if Christ had not risen our faith would have been vain. Notice the bitter regret in the words of the two disciples making their way out of Jerusalem to escape the scene of their great disappointment; they explained to the risen Christ, Whom they did not know, that they *had* hoped their Master was the Messiah Who had come to save all Israel. This is only a faint rumbling hint of the thunderous, crashing disappointment that would have come to the hearts of men if Christ had not risen, a disappointment the more disastrous because of the great heights to which the hopes of men had been raised.

The coaxing phrase which they addressed to Christ, "it is now toward evening and the day is far spent," is much more than a statement of the time of day; it is a threat of the approach of an eternal night over the hearts of men if their Master be not risen. On the contrary, the high hearts and eager steps with which they rushed back to Jerusalem, not waiting for rest or food, shows us faintly to what faith and hope, confirmed by the risen Christ, will reach: no hour is too late, no day too fatiguing, no journey too long. For we have risen from the death of sin and the bright goal of eternity lies invitingly before us.

A half-finished job may be a testimony to a man's good intentions; in deference to these, we sometimes blind our eyes and still our tongue before this pitiful evidence of man's wavering will. That half-finished job is, in fact, an unanswerable declaration that its author was a victim of impulse. Perhaps it is because he did not realize the backaches that must go into a garden that he must now survey a healthy crop of weeds; perhaps it is because he did not see the hardships involved in what Stevenson has called "domesticating the recording angel"

that a man of today finds himself in a divorce court. At any rate, while impulse is a great beginner, it is a very poor finisher. God is not the victim of impulse. He never turns out a half-finished job, laughing it off or hiding it in confusion. What He starts, He finishes; that is why He started it. All this is, of course, true of our redemption. It is the work of God and so it is not left half-finished. Christ did not come merely to free us from evils, for that is only half the job; He came, finishing the job, to move us to good. Salvation means much more than throwing off the chains of sin; it means rushing forward to scale the walls of the kingdom of heaven. To achieve the first of these, Christ bore our evils for us; for the rest, He gave us a start, a goal, and an exemplar of the high things to be accomplished by the keen, sharp steel He put into our hands.

Perfect as the work of redemption might be with the full wisdom and power of divinity to guarantee its completion, men could still attempt to escape it. As is the way of God, He allowed men to go their tortuous way when they insisted on blinding themselves. But, again in His divine way, He foresaw and forestalled the vagaries of the human mind in its attempt to dodge a difficult truth. There was a human and divine nature in Christ; so, of course, some men would question His divinity, while others would doubt His humanity. God left no grounds for either uncertainty; if men must escape the truth, they would be forced to spin their doubts from the frail thread of falsehood.

If Christ had popped out of the tomb as soon as the guards arrived, not giving them time to settle themselves for a long vigil, they might have questioned the reality of His death, considering it a conjuror's trick with the executioners playing the part of accomplices. If He had let weeks, months, or even years roll by, men might easily have forgotten about His death, have surrendered hope, and actually have questioned the resurrection when it did happen. It was, of course, for Christ to choose the moment of His resurrection. That absurd gesture of the cords tied about the hands of God in Gethsemane

was no more absurd than the solemn sealing of His tomb and the establishment of a soldier guard before it; as if the Omnipotent were to be held by bonds that are efficacious against men.

As a matter of fact, Christ had tried to ease the reception of the news of the miracle of His resurrection by what might be called the practice sessions or rehearsals: the resurrections of Lazarus, the son of the widow of Naim, and the saints who walked the streets of the Holy City after His death. He could not hope that men would accept the fact of a man walking from the tomb quite as nonchalantly as they do the fact of a man walking from the door of his house in the morning; but, at least, the shock of contact with divine power in meeting death might be eased enough so that the minds of men would not be numbed by it. Of course, these were merely rehearsals; these men who had risen from the dead had to die again, and men saw them die. Christ was the first Who rose from the dead immortal; He was the real conqueror of death. The rest of us are to share in that conquest but it was first accomplished by Him.

It is obvious that a dead man can do little for himself, otherwise he would certainly not put up with the banked flowers that cloy the air with sweetness. Man's re-entry, like his first appearance on life's stage, is not written into the script by man himself. Christ the man was as helpless as any other human being. In fact, once He had bowed His head and died, that Man no longer existed; His soul was separated from His body and their reunion could not be arranged by either the body or the soul. It is to be remembered, however, that divinity was still united to that dead body, still joined to that separated soul; the Person of the Son of God still possessed both the body and the soul. By the divine power of that Person, the soul and body could be reunited, and they were. Christ raised Himself from the dead. It was by His own power that the soul and body were reunited and the Man walked forth from the tomb: not in answer to a command, as did Lazarus; not raised up by

the hand of another, as was the widow's son; but of His own power, for Christ was God.

All through this tract on the conquest of death by Christ, Thomas walks on the solid ground of divine authority. This is not material about which a man can afford to guess. These things are important. We must know them, and beyond all doubt, because they are the things that wait at the end of life and give it its fullest meaning. At that, Thomas's caution was no more than an imitation of the caution of God; for every detail of this conquest of death was expressly brought out by God Himself and carefully set down in His inspired writings. In this tract, every article of Thomas proceeds from an explicit text of Sacred Scripture.

From the darkness of the narrow tomb, through the daylight of that first Easter morning, came the same Man Who had died on the cross, possessed of the same body and the same soul. The body, kept incorrupt in the tomb for three days by divine power, was now reunited to the soul; the identical body that had been laid in the tomb by others now came forth by itself. There was no point in an apparent or fantastic body being shown to men that morning; that would mean that Christ had not risen and, as we have seen, Christ had to rise from the dead. Lest there be any doubt of the reality of that body of His, Christ invited the terrified disciples to "Touch me and see, that a spirit has not flesh and bones as I have." With the condescension to their defects, such as we make to the blind in allowing them to run their fingers over our face that they might feel what they cannot see, Christ allowed His disciples, spiritually blind, to feel what they could not believe they saw.

The body they touched, while the Son of God stood patiently suffering their incredulousness, was the same one they had seen nailed to a cross; now it was whole, integral, with every drop of blood lost in the passion recovered. Though Christ had come through closed doors, He allowed the disciples to touch Him; but even sight and touch were not enough.

They must have been strange with Him, tense, pretty well incapable of speech; after all, one doesn't have much chance to practice talking to a man who has just died. At any rate, something was needed to break the ice, some little human thing that would put everyone at his ease; with that subtle divine graciousness that is a compliment in its benefactions, Christ asked the disciples if they had anything to eat. At once they were at home with Him again. They had hold of His arm, they were sitting at table with Him, talking to Him again after the nightmare of Calvary.

Though Christ's body was the same, it was now in a quite different condition. It was no longer capable of suffering, for it was a glorified, a spiritualized body with all the sublime qualities of a body completely subject to the soul. Now there was no longer any need, as there had been in the beginning, to stem the flow of the double glory of Christ's divinity and His human soul. Christ came through closed doors, walked with the disciples to Emmaus and they knew Him not; He was at table with them and, when He willed, they immediately recognized Him and He disappeared from their eyes. He could eat food but was not dependent on it. He could move from place to place with the speed of thought. One quality of a glorified body He kept hidden, lest it overwhelm them as it had on Tabor, and that was the splendor that shines through the body from the beatific perfection of the soul.

At our own resurrection, considerable repair work will be necessary. There will be broken noses to be straightened, lined faces to be smoothed out, missing teeth to be recovered, gnarled hands to be returned to the fine beauty of youth. There was none of that repair work necessary in Christ. His body, being miraculously formed, had been perfect. The one thing that might have been done, the removal of the awful scars of the passion, was left undone; these scars were no longer awful but rather things of striking beauty. They were a badge of merit, an eternal prayer for men, a declaration and an inspiration to courage and unquestioning love. They were identify-

ing marks that would be worn in their turn by thousands of men and women who literally took up His cross; to others, who would refuse that cross, they would be an eternal rebuke, as unanswerable as unrequited love.

When we speak of the witnesses of the resurrection, following the lead of Scripture which itself uses the word, we must be careful to understand what is meant by the phrase. The resurrection of Christ was not the sort of thing that could be seen or tested by human means. Our knowledge has a wide scope, but it also has a limit; certainly, one of its limits is marked by the tombstone. What we know of the future life, we know, not by human investigation, but by being told, that is, through revelation; and the resurrection of Christ, being well beyond the milestone of death, certainly pertains to the future life.

We can see the punishment and pains of life; so men witnessed the passion of Christ. We see public rewards, and reasonably so, for these stir other men on as punishments give them pause. But the punishments and rewards that follow on death are not administered in a market place for all to see. They are God's secrets; through His goodness, they are told to some that the good news might be spread. So it was with the resurrection; it was not a public fête but rather the mystery of an Easter dawn.

We know nothing whatsoever of Christ's first visit with His mother, though merely on human grounds, leaving aside His divine thoughtfulness, we can have no doubt that His first appearance was to her. We do know, however, that, of all His other appearances, the first was to a woman, Mary Magdalen. That appearance was the climax of a story which has meant more to sinners than anyone but God can tell, showing them what they know deep in their own hearts, namely, that their capacity for great love is not less but more than their capacity for great sin. Even on Calvary, Magdalen had hardly reached such heights of loyalty, of unselfish devotion, and complete, unquestioning love. Of all His followers, she alone received

the risen Christ without question; in that scene there was no room for explanations, for protestations, for demands. He merely said, "Mary"; instantly, joyously, she responded in words that left nothing to be said: "My Master."

One turns from the scene regretfully, as though much more had been missed than had been seen, so much was there to see. Outstanding is the delicate thoughtfulness of God balancing womanhood's accounts; a woman had begun the sad story which ended in man's death, now a woman began the glad story of this Man's conquest of death. Then, too, there is the divine recognition and appreciation of human love. This woman had been faithful even to the end: when the disciples scattered before the threat of Calvary, she was under the cross; when they huddled in fear and doubt in Jerusalem, she was at the tomb; even though it was apparently empty, she clung to it, for it was all she had left of the Master to Whom she had given her heart. His first appearance to a woman was a rebuke and a refutation to the pride of men. For it is not by strength, power, or keenness of intellect that our place in the kingdom of God is determined; but by our success in living, a success which is measured by the heart's approach to God.

There were no eye-witnesses to the resurrection of Our Lord. True, the guards had good reason to suspect that something was happening: "there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and drawing near rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment like snow. And for fear of him the guards were terrified, and became like dead men." One can understand their terror; but it was terror of an angel, not of the risen Christ. The picture of a glorious Christ stunning the heavily armed soldiers by His splendor is more an artistic summary of the whole significance of the resurrection than a portrayal of the fact. This resurrection exceeded all human knowledge; it could be learned only from above. As the order of divine providence has always been to lead the lower by the higher, men learned of the resurrection through the angel who

sat on the stone where Christ was laid and answered men's unspoken questions: "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth. He is not here. He is risen."

For themselves, and for the rest of the world, it was important that the disciples know, and know well, the facts of Christ's resurrection. In making it His personal business that they should know, Our Lord stressed two points: the truth of the resurrection and the glory of His risen body. The first He brought home to them by appearing to them, talking with them, eating and drinking with them, permitting them to touch His body. The second, that is, the fact that He had risen to a different life, He brought out clearly enough by showing His body's dominion over matter; and even more impressively, from the standpoint of the human heart, by His refusal to return to that life of constant social intercourse and familiarity which had marked all His days with them.

Superficially, it would seem a mark of much greater love for Him to give them the full measure of the comfort of His presence during the few days still left before His Ascension. Actually, however, that would have been a rather feeble, nearsighted love which could not look beyond the moment into the future, beyond the surface into the depths of the souls of the disciples. They might easily have fallen into the error, had He lived intimately with them again, that would hide the full sweep of life after death, they might have been satisfied that He was among them again, falling back into old ways, taking for granted that His life now was as it had been before. There was no chance for this when the Master was here only for a moment and gone again.

As it was, there was no time to get used to Christ, to begin to take Him for granted. He came from nowhere and disappeared as mysteriously. Locked doors, great distances offered Him no impediment. To some, He revealed Himself fully and clearly, matching the clear, solid faith in their minds with the clarity of His appearance; to others, it was only with a veil of mystery about Him that matched the veil of doubt

and confusion that their tepid faith had allowed to drop before their eyes. Under such circumstances, they were always on tiptoe of mystery and expectation; their minds were sharp, their attention keen, their ears alert, faith digging deeper and deeper foundations in their hearts.

Christ did not attempt to argue His disciples into accepting the resurrection by overpowering them with syllogisms. This thing was not susceptible of proof; in its beginnings and in its goal, it was outside the whole scope of nature. What He did do again and again was to give them evident signs of His resurrection, signs of the credibility of the mystery. The signs were indeed necessary, for their hearts were not easily disposed to belief; their very slowness and stubbornness adds a force and validity to their testimony which place it above all suspicion by those who came after them through the centuries. In a real sense, we might say that all men put their hands into the side of Christ along with Thomas.

There was an abundance of these signs sufficient to satisfy the most exacting, the sort of abundance we have come to expect from God. There was, for instance, the testimony of the angels and that of Scripture to the fact of the resurrection. To assure men of the reality of His risen body, Christ did everything but put Himself under a microscope: the apostles saw His body, they touched it, they even put their hands into His side and their fingers into the wounds of His hands and feet. In testimony to the living character of this body, to its being vivified by a soul, Christ performed all the operations proper to man: on the side of the nutritive powers, Christ ate and drank; on the side of the sensitive powers, He saw and heard His disciples, answering their questions, saluting them; on the intellectual side, Christ discoursed with them, and explained the Scriptures. On the divine side, He showed the possession of divine power by the miracle of the fishes the apostles found already broiling on the shores of the Lake of Galilee when they scrambled from their boat to greet Him. To the glory of the resurrection, He brought the testimony of

entrance through closed doors, invisibility or visibility as He willed, and so on. In view of all this, it would be an unreasonable man indeed who would doubt that it is reasonable to believe that the Son of God had risen from the dead.

It is a truth well worth the believing. For it is the model, the exemplar of every other resurrection. Indeed, it is the cause that lies behind the rise of the countless thousands of men who have lived and died, and will live again; this is the fact that changed the rock at the door of the tomb from a blocking boulder to a triumphal arch. Perhaps we can see this best if we look at the life, death, and resurrection of Christ as an integral whole, as indeed they were, destined to destroy death and restore life. This whole was the instrument used by the first cause, divinity itself: thus the life, passion and death of Christ were the common instrumental causes of both the conquest of death and the beginning of eternal, glorious life; His resurrection, by way of exemplar, was the cause of the destruction of our death and the restoration of our life to immortality.

In exactly the same way, the resurrection of Our Lord is the cause and exemplar of an even more wonderful resurrection that goes on about us every day. the resurrection of the soul from the death of sin to the life of grace. That spiritual tomb is sealed by our choice of sin; it is guarded, not by the soldiers of Rome, but by the legions of Satan and the disorderly hordes of inordinate appetites, guards who do not fall asleep. Because Christ has risen, the soul can come forth from this tomb in its original splendor. Again, there are no witnesses; only the weeping Magdalen, our own soul, overcome at finding the Master and Friend once more.

We are never more conscious that we were not made for earth than after such a fresh resurrection from the tomb of sin; then, above all other times, we realize keenly that we are pilgrims, that our soul is a little lonely, a little out of place in a world of matter, a little anxious for the world of the spirit. In much the same way, the body of Christ was a little out of

place after the resurrection; it did not belong in a world of corruptible bodies, for it had begun an immortal and incorruptible life. It belonged in a heavenly and incorruptible place. So, when the time of consolation and instruction of the apostles had come to its close, the Master took them to the top of the hill overlooking Jerusalem, said His last farewell, gave the last assignments that would keep His followers occupied to the end of time, and ascended into heaven. Behind Him He left a lonely, frightened, helpless group which was yet the nucleus for the conversion of the world. That group was so stupefied by His loss that it took an angel to get them back into the city; there, they huddled in fear of their lives for ten days in an upper room.

Had not Christ said He would be with them always? Yes. He was and He will be by His divine presence. But He also said, "It is better for you that I go," and He was right, as God is always right. This was the work of strong love, not of that coddling, imperfect, weak love that saps all the strength out of the one loved. It was better, much better. It would be hard for them ever again to tear their hearts away from the goal of heaven, for He took a large part of their hearts with Him. It would never be hard for them again to hope, knowing He had gone before to prepare a place. Now, indeed, their faith would have its full scope, resting utterly without question on His word alone. He had given them a few days of consolation; now they must stand on their own feet, through His help; not attached to creatures, not dependent on men, not holding even to such a lovable thing as familiar, human life with the Man Christ.

Christ rose to the heights of heaven by the same power by which He had come forth from the tomb. He ascended to a place above every other created thing, a place worthy of His grace, His merits, His dignity. The Head of the Mystical Body blazed the trail in glory as He did in suffering, preparing our way. He is the high-priest entering the holy of holies that He might constantly intercede for us, taking His rightful seat at

the court of heaven as Master and Lord of all things, not forgetting us but rather sending us His divine gifts in new abundance. Of course He took our hearts with Him, deepening our reverence and awe for His glorious humanity, with no lessening of our faith, our love, our hope of one day standing before Him and saying with Thomas, but without his doubts, "My Lord and my God."

We may smile at the astonishing versions a child can give of the Apostles' Creed; but, after all, "Jack Dempsey shall come" does not sound so very unlike "from whence He shall come." It would be only just if the angels smiled at an adult's no less childish mistake of trying to picture the right hand of the Father. The phrase, of course, is not to be taken literally; it contains no slight to left-handed people, indeed, a left-handed God would be no more absurd than a right-handed one. The phrase is a vivid metaphor with at least three senses. The right hand figuratively means the glory of divinity, the happiness of heaven, or the judicial position of the Judge of the world. For Christ, then, to sit at the right hand of the Father means that with the Father He has the glory, the happiness, and the judicial power of divinity. By His divine nature, Christ sits at the right hand of the Father inasmuch as He is equal to the Father; according to His human nature, He occupies that position because He is in possession of the divine goods of heaven in a more excellent degree than any one else in that kingdom. But it is precisely as judge that the risen Christ captures our fascinated eyes.

To be a judge, clearly it is not enough for a man to look like one, talk like one, or walk like one; he must have power. Even possessed of power, he is no judge whose judgment proceeds from anger, greed, or any other vice; he is a mock judge rendering mock judgment because he is not judging from justice. If these two, power and love of justice, are the predispositions to judgment, the very soul of it is the wisdom by which it proceeds. So true is this, that in human affairs that wisdom is not left to individual capacities; to the best of

our ability, we embody our common wisdom in the law by which a judge must judge. The predispositions to judgment are evident enough in Christ: He is the head of all men, the Son of God, with complete power and jurisdiction; He had died for love of justice, the justice of His offended Father. But it is particularly on the third count, the wisdom which is the soul of judgment, that His pre-eminent title to judgeship is clear; He is the incarnate Wisdom, the Word of God.

It is true that judgment, as a work external to God, is common to the whole Trinity; it is attributed, however, to the Second Person as to divine Wisdom. God is always the first source of just judgment; but, as in this life the power of judgment is committed to men relative to those who are subject to them, so in heaven the power of judgment is committed to Christ the Man. After all, He was a man himself, living His life intimately with His fellows. His judgment, severe as it may be, will not taste so bitter coming from one of our own. It is eminently fitting that the risen bodies of men be brought before the First of the risen and the Cause of the resurrection of all others; then men can stand facing their Judge, looking into His eyes as they have loved or feared to do during life.

Even if Christ did not have title to judgeship on the grounds of His divine nature, even if His supreme dignity as Head of the Mystical Body, His superabundance of sanctifying grace, and so of justice, be put aside, there is still the strong title of His merits. He had earned that judgeship. It was just according to the justice of God that He should judge Who had fought so hard for that justice, and conquered; Who had subjected Himself to the judgment of men and tasted all the bitterness of their unjust judgment.

The sweep of the judgment of Christ staggers the mind. If we attempt to conceive of a judgment that takes in every detail of one human life, we must confess our failure. Extend that to all men living at any one instant, or, indeed, to a judgment of all men dying at any one instant, and we are over-

whelmed by the massive detail involved. If we push it further to include all men who ever have lived and died or ever will live and die, and then go on to the myriads of the angelic host, at the same time realizing that we never have evidence for a complete judgment of any one human action because we cannot reach the hearts of men, it begins to dawn on us that judgment is God's work. Perhaps we had best leave the working out of it to Him.

The angels have already faced judgment by the Son of God when, in the beginning of the world, they fought their fight and lost or won; yet, they must face another judgment, as every man must, for the details of their lives, like ours, are not finished for years, for centuries, perhaps even to the end of time. An attempt to judge the damage done by fire is futile until the fire is extinguished. Neither can the life of a man be judged until its very last effect is accomplished; it is often only after the passing of time, even of long periods of time, that we can determine whether those effects are ultimately good or bad.

Our lives, you see, are not contained within the narrow boundaries of our years. Our smallest actions, because they are our own and we are answerable for them, are not to be measured by the distance a voice will carry or the fragile things our strength will crush. We have lived and we die; but we live on in the memory of men, a memory which may treasure a lie of ours that will endure for centuries doing its deadly work, a lie that must ultimately be damned to make way for truth. Our children live after us, and theirs after them. Who can say when the surge of our life dies out of theirs? The apostles preached for a few years before being crushed by the power of Rome; has the effect of that preaching yet stopped? The great heresiarchs—Arius, Luther, and the rest—were stopped by the barrier of death; their words and works were limited by the finite limits of a man's power, but the effects, which were their very own, are still being reaped by other harvesters though centuries have passed.

Something the same is true of the angels and the devils, for they play their part in the world of men and the actions of men. They have their work, a work of hate or of joy; they will have their rewards and punishments, meted out fully only when the last trace of that work has ceased to agitate or ennoble the world. The whole of a man's life is to be rewarded or punished, all of it; and the reward or punishment is given to the whole man, all of him, body and soul.

It is only when bodies and souls are reunited that the conquest of death has reached completion; only then can the last word be said on this conquest. It may seem odd that the word "conquest" has been insisted on again and again in this chapter. Really, no other word will do. It is a fighting word to describe a grand fight. Even in the physical sense, these two, life and death, are at each other's throat from the first instant of infant life; death is a threat, an enemy encroaching, an enemy who never gives up the fight. In the spiritual sense, the same battle of life and death, of virtue and sin, is on from the first dawn of reason, it is a struggle where no quarter is possible, no end in sight, until one or the other has lost.

It is not the kind of fight a man can stand aside and watch. There is no possibility of neutrality. He is plunged into it by his very manhood. He must take sides. It is paradoxical, but strictly true, that those who think too much of life, fight desperately on the side of death; those who think too much of the joy of life, fight unceasingly on the side of misery; those who think too much of the glimpse of heaven possible in this life, fight strongly for hell. Men must take sides and they do. Life or death must win in the career of every man. We have seen the results of the victory of life; how about the victory of death?

In the denial of the resurrection, that is, in the surrender of the palm of victory to death, there is a double note paralleling, at least on the surface, that of life's victory. There is, first of all, a note of relief, a sense of escape; one has succeeded in throwing off the stifling blanket of responsibility, escaped

from the haunting possibility of evil into a world without barriers, a world of new freedom. Man no longer has to answer eternally for his life and his acts; he is free. But the note is false. It is a release that sets man at the mercy of his desire, delivers him up to the animal world, makes him the victim of a civil war within himself and of slavery from without.

Along with this sense of relief, there is a hopeless sadness, a penetrating, tragic thing patient of no consolation; for man is convinced that life, love, knowledge, accomplishment, justice, companionship and all the rest do have an end. Man cannot stand that sort of tragedy very long. He copes with it, in some cases, by unreasoning resignation which produces a fatalistic calm and creates its own ends of vague generalities to minister the small comfort of empty dreams. In other cases, he meets it with an eager, desperate draining of the cup of life before it be dashed from his hand. Or, finally, he arms himself with a cynical refusal to live a life which has no meaning; it is this attitude which takes its ghoulish satisfaction in a mocking disruption of the lives of others and the destruction of its own.

Both these notes of death's victory take the heart out of human living. The first, in the name of freedom, delivers a man to slavery, a fact easily verifiable in any "age of freedom." The second either squeezes the meat out of life, destroying man's taste for the very things he started out to clutch so eagerly—leisure, pleasure, power, and the rest; or, in the case of the fatalist, it makes life a ghostly thing, a hollow, haunted existence. In these victories of death, men must walk in the darkness of unreason, if they are to walk at all, or frankly face the despair of it and surrender unconditionally.

In a word, death has conquered life and made of it a grim masquerade of the living dead. The air, the odor, the very color of death in its corruption penetrate the deepest reaches of life; the blinding darkness of the tomb hovers over all; its doors are already closed forever.

In Christ, life has conquered death. The air, the odor, the very color of life enter into the darkest corner of the tomb. Death is a gateway, as is life; a motion to high goals, as is life; a fulfillment of hope, an unveiling of faith, a consummation of charity, as life never is. Life's promises are fulfilled by death's opening up of enduring life. The rehearsal is over. death lifts the curtain, and the eternal play is on.

CHAPTER XII
(OUTLINE)
FRUITFUL SIGNS OF LIFE
(Q 60-65)

1. The dignity and mystery of a sign
 - (a) Its union of material and spiritual
 - (b) Its harmony with human nature
 - (1) An exclusive privilege
 - (2) A constant reminder
2. Divine supremacy of effective signs
 - (a) Contrast of divine and human signs
 - (b) Expression of divine thoughtfulness
 - (1) Stooping to man
 - (2) Continuing the life of Christ
3. The essence of effective divine signs—the sacraments.
 - (a) Metaphysical essence signs of sanctity
 - (b) Physical essence matter and words
4. Necessity of the sacraments
 - (a) In general
 - (b) In particular
5. Their effects
 - (a) Principal effect—grace
 - (1) In sacraments of the New Testament
 - (2) In sacraments of the Old Testament.
 - (b) Secondary effect—character
6. Their efficient cause
 - (a) Principal cause
 - (b) Ministerial cause
 - (1) The ministers themselves
 - (2) Conditions required in the minister
7. Their number.
 - (a) Actual number
 - (b) Mutual order
 - (c) Relation to salvation

Conclusion

1. A world rejecting the sacraments
 - (a) Angelism of pride
 - (b) Materialism of sense appetite
2. The indictment of experience
 - (a) Errors against the sacraments
 - (b) Lives without the sacraments
3. Contrast of living and dead churches.

CHAPTER XII

FRUITFUL SIGNS OF LIFE

(Q. 60-65)

A GOOD part of our everyday life is spent waiting for a traffic light to change, pursuing the arrows in a subway station, or scanning the announced destination of a bus. We see nothing to marvel at in such an expenditure of time; these are ordinary signs and signals and life is full of them. Some of them are comic, like those necessary to keep out the incorrigibly curious or to rescue men with a penchant for losing themselves; perhaps a new low was reached in this line when American railroads were forced to the conclusion that a man could not tell his back from his front, making it necessary to re-edit the sign "dining car forward" to "dining car in opposite direction." Other signs are terrifying, such, for example, as "contagious disease," or "explosives." Still others, usually dedicated to frightening a man into buying what no one possibly needs, are downright silly.

Yet even such prosaic signs as a policeman's exasperated wave at traffic or a small boy's derisive sounds are wrapped in dignity and mystery simply because they are signs. In all the world, these are the only things that can penetrate the material side of man and make their way into his mind; the mystery and dignity of that penetration has been more than enough to occupy philosophers from the beginning of philosophy. Indeed, in a larger sense, whatever penetrates to our minds does so by way of a sign.

In this way, all of the universe which we come to know is a divine sign; it has a meaning, it carries a message. In so far as it is a sign, it is a mysterious wedding of the spiritual and

the material, one of those apparently ill-matched affairs that still turn out so well. To change the figure, a sign is a hulking material figure which carries in its bulky pockets an elusive ray of the divine intellect. Of all the physical universe, man is the only creature capable of appreciating this strange mixture of the material and the spiritual; he is the only one to whom signs mean anything, and he alone can give that mysterious gift of meaning to dull, mute matter. There is, for instance, nothing about a red light that of itself commands us to stop, nothing until the mind of man has wedded its matter to his meaning; a mere painted "right" or "left" is serenely indifferent to our direction but, because there is a mind behind it and a mind in front of it, it steers the steps of a man.

There is something delightfully human about every sign. It is a perpetual reminder of the dignity and mystery of our own nature, for we, too, are the fruit of a union of spirit and matter, of soul and body; that intangible spiritual power and the clumsy limitations of matter find their way into all our work. We are like a happily married couple who, by the very fact of their own happiness, become incorrigible match-makers; we who are spirit and matter place the impress of matter and spirit on everything we touch. Indeed, now that Christ has come among men and died for them, a sign is a reminder of that greater dignity and mystery of the union of divine and human nature in the person of the Word, the Incarnation. Every smallest sign is an incarnation of the spiritual in matter; the star of Bethlehem was more than a guide, it was an image, a vague mirroring of that supreme union which springs, not from the minds of men, but from the heart of God.

All this is true of any sign; for every sign unites spirit and matter to carry a message through the senses of a man to his mind. It is within the capacity of the most illiterate of men to give material things this dignity and power simply because every man can understand and express understanding; every man has the power to give and to grasp meaning. This is man's unique privilege in the physical world, a privilege which

he has, not by reason of his state in life, his wealth, his fame, his education, but simply by reason of his humanity. Of course, when the power of God is behind them, signs exceed in mystery and dignity anything that man is able to produce in this line. The touch of the hand of Christ exceeded the gestures of any of His contemporaries; it did not stop at binding up a wound, it cleansed lepers. His word did not merely commiserate sinners, it forgave sins.

In other words, the signs of men penetrate to the intellect of others, and this is a marvel in the physical world; but the signs of God penetrate to the will, to the very essence of the soul. They not only signify, they actually accomplish what they signify. We grasp something of this if we can imagine a mother's counsel, "Now be good," changing a malicious child into a little saint. It is only in this way that we shall see that Christ's short sentence, "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee," was not merely a statement of hope, not a vague promise, not a word of counsel, but an effective destruction of sin.

If the divine signs had stopped short at mere meaning, at the articles of faith, for example, that alone would not have been sufficient to melt the hearts of men. It would have been a great kindness: a great Master's careful choice of words simple enough for a child to grasp. We are material as well as spiritual, while God is pure spirit; it would be generously thoughtful of Him to stoop to our level, using a medium accommodated to our lowest of intelligences, softening the bright glare of pure intellect for our weak eyes, by beginning His great actions in the field of the sensible.

But God does not stop at the merely kind; He constantly goes on to the surpassingly generous. He does not stop at mere meaning with His signs, He pushes them on to a really divine causality. He takes our familiar, tangible, homely things—like bread, water, and oil—both to signify and to accomplish the divine things that must be done to our soul if we are to live the life of God. It was as though God bowed

to the mechanic in all of us, respecting our childish insistence on taking things apart and seeing how they work, even when the things are supernatural mysteries. We clamor for a sight of the causes whose effects flow into our lives; while it is impossible to do away with the mystery of divine workmanship, God at least shows us the implements of His mysterious craft. He hands over His kit of divine tools for us to examine, to fondle, to marvel at.

Indeed, there is an even greater divine thoughtfulness in these effective divine signs we call the sacraments. We have seen something of the loneliness and helplessness of the apostles in the loss of their Master. Seeing that, we have some little indication of the loneliness and helplessness of age after age of sinners, some hint of what it would mean to weak men and women, or even strong men and women, to be faced with the hard things of Christ without the comfort of the Master's presence. Christ came to destroy sin, to give grace, to assure salvation, to win us a share in divine life; through the divine power and the instrumentality of His humanity, He ministered to the desperate needs of the men of His age. What a tragedy if His work were finished at His death, if only a memory of Him remained! There would always be sin, sorrow, and difficulty; there would always be the high level of divine life to be reached, a level much too high for mere men or mere women. If we had only His words of wise counsel and the gradually dimming light of His history, still weak, still sinning, still in need of help and courage as we are, we would indeed be lonely and helpless. This life of the God-man had to be continued through all the ages in which men would need Him; the fruits of that life had to be applied. With a generosity second only to that of the Incarnation, the divine power, again through the instrumentality of the material, worked to this incredible end of giving us Christ always. The disciples of Christ in the twentieth century are not lonely, as they were not lonely in any other century; the life of Christ goes on among them through the medium of the sacraments.

Generically, the sacraments are signs. As such, they link arms with the newsboy's whistle, the railroad man's signal, and the lover's kiss; much as the president of a nation, in his humanity, links arms with bootblacks and senators, derelicts and saints. In their primary signification, the sacraments have an order to things sacred. They are not sanctity but rather signs of it. And it is precisely in their relation to sanctity that they part company with all other signs, as the lover's kiss parts company with the railroad man's signal by the relation it has, not to stopping trains, but to stopping hearts with the sublime message of love. A sacrament is a sign of a sacred thing. As a sign, it is meant for man who is the only one who needs signs, and the only one who can use and appreciate them. Since the only thing pertaining to man that is intrinsically sacred is sanctity itself, a sacrament refers specifically to the sanctity of men. It is a sensible sign of sanctity or sanctification.

Perhaps we can make this a little more concrete by recalling that the sanctity of men is an internal thing produced by sanctifying grace. The sacraments, then, are signs of sanctifying grace; not past grace, or future grace, but the present grace by which men are made holy. To stop there is to consider only one signification of the sacramental sign; for seen in its entirety, it is a souvenir and a prophecy as well as a sign of sanctifying grace, signifying all that enters intimately into our sanctification. Surely, it signifies the passion of Christ which is the efficient cause of our sanctity; just as surely it signifies the eternal life which is the goal or final cause of our sanctity.

St. Augustine wisely remarked, and history bears him out, that men cannot be gathered together for any length of time in the name of any religion, true or false, without some visible sign to unite them, that is, without some sacrament. It could not be otherwise, men being what they are. We come to the knowledge of the intangible, intellectual, spiritual things only through the world of things that we can perceive by

our senses. Of what use would be a sign that men could not see, hear, or touch; of what help would be a treasure of spiritual goods of which men would forever remain ignorant? If the sacraments are to signify things to men, they must be open to the senses. And that necessarily sensible character of the sacraments is one of the homely, human things that brings us so close to God in so comforting a way—our own way. It is the bridge over the infinite abyss which separates the divine from the human as our human signs are the bridge over which we pass from the material to the spiritual.

In fact, the sacraments are a two-way bridge. In the use of the sacraments, our worship goes to God while our sanctification comes from Him. If the sacraments were a one-way bridge, we might very well pick and choose for there is no impertinence in our determination of the path our own feet will walk; but there is decided impertinence in attempting to lay out the path of the feet of God. The determination of the precise matter of the sacraments, the material of the sign, is not ours but God's, for determination means limitation to one thing and the limitation of God's power to this or that means is God's work, not ours.

In a word, we do not make our own sacraments; that belongs to God. But they must be made. They must be determined, fixed things because they are signs; indetermined signs, shifting signs with constantly variable meanings, are not signs at all for they have no meaning that can be grasped. The sacraments, as divine signs, are perfect; there can be no doubt whatever as to their meaning. To guarantee this perfection, each sacrament is made up not only of a material, sensible thing, but also of a consecrated form of words adding to the material thing the ultimate refinement of exact expression.

There must be no mistake in the meaning of the sacraments. Imaginative expression has its place, but not here; the goal of words in the sacrament is a sharp, clear-cut, altogether unmistakable conception. In fact, the union of words and matter in the sacraments is more than a perfect medium of

signification. Christ, the Author of the sacraments, was the Word of God united to the sensible flesh of human nature and the sacraments are a perpetual memorial of that union. Moreover, man, who is sanctified by the sacraments, is himself a creature of body and spirit; so, also, the sacraments are the fruit of a union of the word with matter.

Not just any words will do, you understand; these must be determined words, more determined, indeed, than the matter of the sacraments. For the words are the form giving the specific and detailed signification to the matter, beyond all shadow of obscurity. The minister of the sacraments may stumble over the Latin, for the years can do strange things to one's Latin; his missing teeth may produce odd effects in his articulation; but as long as the proper sense of the words remains intact, so does the sacrament. On the contrary, if a minister, torn by a passion for originality, decides to concoct his own form, deliberately inducing substantial changes, there is no sacrament at all. He must intend to do what the Church intends and use the very words that leave his intention cleanly exposed for all to see.

An odd paradox of our age insists that men limit their knowledge to that of the senses, whether those senses be nude or clothed in scientific apparel; and, at the same time, scorns the idea of beginning with the senses for a knowledge of the spiritual and the divine. Both ends of the paradox involve a pitiful ignorance of nature: the first part, implying a denial of the validity of man's intellect; the second, a denial of man's position beneath the angels and above the material, dependent on the material though capable of the divine. In each case, there is more than a little of that stubborn pride which so often leads to absurdities and refuses to admit even evident absurdities precisely because it is pride. If, by reason of that pride, men cannot see the psychological need for the sacraments, it is too much to hope that the moral need of them will be understood; that men will see, that is, that human nature, subjecting itself to corporal things by its sin, has lost

much of its appetite for things of the spirit and must recover that appetite through the medium of a mixed diet. Human nature, in its present condition, cannot stand the rich food of the spiritual; just as man cannot live by bread alone, so neither can he digest pure spiritual food. The remedy for his condition must come into a man's life by the same road as the disease; for by that disease all other roads are closed.

Indeed, in our state of fallen nature, our affections are so rooted in corporal things that we have extreme difficulty in pulling ourselves away from them. It is a testimony to the wisdom and power of God, a wisdom that might well be imitated by reformers, that He does not try to tear those affections out by the roots; rather, He turns them to the high ends of His divine plan, using such sensible works as anointing with oil and whispering in the complete privacy of the confessional box as the means by which our affections are purified and turned to Him.

The perfection given to a man by the sacraments, the fervor they awaken in his soul, the help they bring are enough to impress the mind of a man profoundly. Many theologians were so deeply struck by these things that they were of the opinion that even in the state of innocence enjoyed by Adam there would have been sacraments. Thomas is in flat disagreement. His conclusions are not the result of a lesser respect, affection, or enthusiasm for the sacraments; but they are the result of solid reason. In the clear light of reason, there is simply no room for sacraments in the state of innocence. Thomas goes further. He insists that in that original condition of men, sacraments would have been useless, even disorderly things. If there were sacraments then, it would have meant that the soul of a man was perfected by some corporal thing; whereas the very essence of that state was the complete domination of the inferior by the superior: the soul by God, the body by the soul, the world by man.

It was a different story after man had sinned. From the first moment of his sin, man lost that complete domination of

spirit over matter; from then on he had need, desperate need of sacraments. In every age since then, there have been sacraments. Before the establishment of the Old Testament, there were such sacraments of the natural law as a kind of baptism through the prayers and faith of the parents for the child, sacrifice, tithes, certainly a kind of penance. Before the coming of Christ, the Old Law operated by anticipation of Christ's redemption through such sacraments as circumcision, the Paschal Lamb, the loaves of proposition, the purification of women, the consecration of priests, and so on. With the coming of Christ, our own sacraments were instituted by Him.

These three stages of sacramental life mark a gradual advance to perfection, the matter of the sacraments becomes more determined, men are given surer guarantees of the paths to God, until, with the sacraments of the New Testament, complete determination and clarity put men's minds serenely at ease. As we shall see later on in this chapter, the great difference between the sacraments of nature, of the Old Testament and of the New Testament, was that only the latter contain and effect the things they signify; the others are limited to mere signification, exciting the heart of man by what they signify to the necessary acts of faith, hope, and love. To say this briefly the scholastics explained that the sacraments of the New Testament work *ex opere operato*; the others, *ex opere operantis*. We can see this difference in an historical setting if we remember that Luther never got beyond the natural and Old Testament conception of the sacraments. He never arrived at the point of accepting literally the saving words of Christ: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."

There is a point worth making here by way of forestalling many an objection. The variety in the sacraments in these three stages of man's history is not an indication of a puzzled divinity gradually discovering better and better means of saving men in the hard school of experience. It is not because of a wavering, indecisive mind that a father orders his chil-

dren to wear one kind of clothes in summer time and changes his orders when winter comes. The sacraments are fitted to the times of men. Before the Old Law and before the Incarnation, the sacraments were essentially prefigures of that central event in history which is the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ; after the story of redemption had been told, the sacraments no longer looked to the future but rather dealt with the present and effective salvation of men.

It is a little unfair to leave Luther all alone with an erroneous conception of the nature of the sacraments; his error was, in fact, common to all the reformers and their various successors in our modern sects. The error traces its ancestry to that stubborn attempt to fit all things into the human mould, to an essential pride which cannot see beyond the fact that we are wonderful creatures. Of course we are, and we are ever ready to admit it. How, then, can a drop of water on the head of an infant wash away sin from the infant's soul? We cannot see it done. It certainly is not an inherent quality of any water we know. We ourselves cannot give water that property. So it cannot be done. It is just a sign calculated to awaken us to a recognition of our need for forgiveness, for cleansing, and for the faith by which this will take place.

Nevertheless, that bit of water does wash away sin. It is a doctrine of faith that the sacraments are sensible signs instituted by Christ to give grace, not merely to signify it. Every Catholic must believe that the sacraments cause grace independently and of their very nature, not dependently on the disposition of the minister or the fervor of the subject; that they contain the grace they cause and effect that grace by way of an instrumental cause. Theologians may dispute as long and subtly as they like about the circumstances or modes connected with the sacraments; but the essential truth of their independent and effective causality must be held without question.

The sacraments are a means instituted by God to incorporate man into the Mystical Body of Christ, to elevate him

to the supernatural plane, to allow him to participate in the life of God, knowing and loving God as God knows and loves Himself. That participation in the divine life is, radically, habitual or sanctifying grace which inheres in the essence of the soul and does for a man supernaturally what conception and birth do for him naturally. It gives him life. No one imagines that the water of baptism seeps down through the head of a child to his soul like a cleaning fluid aimed at the unsightly spot of sin on the soul. No one pretends that mere water, as such, hides within itself the life of God. It is God Himself Who is the principal cause of grace in a man's soul; it is He Who possesses divine life essentially and from Him it must be shared. The words and matter of the sacrament are the instruments of the divine Workman, specially selected by Him for effects that only He can produce.

They are, however, real causes; they are not mere signs, mere hopes, mere declarations of faith. They cause grace as truly as a hammer in the hand of a carpenter drives a nail or as an axe wielded by a woodsman fells a tree. The sacraments contain grace as an instrumental cause contains the effect it produces by the power of the principal cause. In other words, grace is in the sacraments as in an instrumental, passing power which belongs not so much to the instrument as to Him Who uses it.

Seen in the concrete, this truth is really not difficult. If the infant to be baptized has been brought through a freight-yard on the way to church, it may have some soot on its head; in the course of the baptism, the soot will be washed off, streakily perhaps, by the water of baptism. This effect is a proper and natural effect of water; water has this power completely and naturally, so that, relative to this effect, water is the principal, not the instrumental, cause. Over and above the effect of soot-removal, there is the effect of sin-removal which is the real reason why the infant was brought to the church at all. This sin-removal is not a proper and natural effect of water; this capacity is not had completely and naturally by water,

but passingly in so far as it is used as an instrument, as a hammer has power to drive nails only when it is used by a carpenter. That sacramental power, causative of grace, is nothing less than a passing movement of God, elevating and applying the instrument He has chosen. The difference between God's use of the sacrament and the woodsman's use of his axe is that the latter only applies the instrument, while God not only applies His instrument but also gives the instrument the power to flow into this extraordinary effect.

If we go back to the carpenter and his nail-driving, we have a rough parallel which tells the whole story of the causality of the sacraments. The carpenter is the principal cause of the nail being driven. His hand is an instrument, but a conjoined instrument, one immediately united to the principal cause, indeed, an integral part of the carpenter. The hammer is also an instrument, not conjoined but separated, put to work through the medium of the conjoined instrument, the carpenter's hand. In the sacraments, the principal cause is God. The humanity of Christ, substantially united to the Word of God, is the conjoined instrument, finite, created. The sacraments themselves, matter and words, are separated instruments wielded by the principal cause only through the medium of the conjoined instrument, the humanity of Christ, for it is by the passion of Christ that grace has been given to us and the sacraments are an application, a continuation of the work of the God-man, Christ.

None of this was true of the sacraments of the Old Law. They were in no sense principal causes of grace, for they were not God. Nor were they continuations of the life and work of Christ Who did not as yet exist. They did not cause grace. They signified the justification of men which was to be had by faith in the coming of the Messiah. They were signs and no more than signs.

There is another point, often neglected, to be mentioned before leaving the subject of the grace caused by the sacraments. The reason for the variety of the sacraments of the

New Law is precisely because of the variety of the work to be done by them. Each sacrament ministers to a different need of men. Yet, the habitual or sanctifying grace of all the sacraments is exactly the same; the difference, then, lies not in the sanctifying grace, but in the individual effect proper to each sacrament, an effect which we know by the name of sacramental grace. This is, at least, the habitual grace with a definite title or right to special graces necessary for the work this particular sacrament fits a man to do. The sacrament of matrimony, for example, will produce sacramental grace or titles to all the special graces necessary for the whole long length of married life, the grace to walk the baby patiently at night, to bite one's tongue in the midst of a family quarrel, or to deal with the other party in marriage with a charity that far surpasses the demands of justice. Confirmation will give the sacramental grace which is a right to the graces necessary to play our parts as spiritual adults; and so on, with each of the sacraments.

A few of the sacraments have still another effect, over and above this rich deposit of grace; the sacramental character. It is a mysterious thing called mark or character only metaphorically, for it is thoroughly spiritual. It is a badge of our membership in Christ, a participation of His eternal priesthood by which we are dedicated to the sacred things of divine worship; above all, it is a dedication to that perfection of divine worship within ourselves which is our own spiritual life.

Stripped of its metaphorical language, the sacramental character is an instrumental power of the soul by which we are rendered capable of receiving or conferring spiritual things, according as that power is an active or a passive one. Thus the character of Baptism, a passive power, gives us title to the reception of the other sacraments; that of Holy Orders, an entirely active power, gives a man the capacity of conferring the sacraments on others; while that of Confirmation, partly passive and partly active, both admits us to the sufferings to be

undergone by the followers of Christ and fits us for the stern, positive action that spiritual manhood demands.

Only these three sacraments imprint this indelible mark upon the soul. The character of all three is an eternally enduring thing, for all three are a participation in the incorruptible priesthood of Christ and are subject in the incorruptible soul of man. Only these three confer character because these alone are directly ordered to action, to reception or bestowal in reference to our spiritual perfection, and to the worship of God. Because it is a question of action, these characters are imprinted on our faculties, not on the essence of the soul; to be more precise, they are imprinted in the faculty which is the immediate source of action in man, the practical intellect. The practical intellect, then, by this character is constantly protesting its faith, its submission to the authority of God; even a heretic in hell is thus eternally giving witness to faith in God by the character imprinted upon his practical intellect.

Since these effects are produced in territory that is open to no one but God—the soul of man—they are obviously God's works. A priest, absolving the penitent sinner, never thinks to puff out his chest in pride at the great load of sin he has done away with. He knows this is God's work, that he is only the minister, the instrument in the hands of God. Even without further consideration of the nature of the sacraments, it would be clear from this alone that no priest, no bishop, no pope can institute a sacrament, all these men are instruments for the use of the sacraments, not authors of sacraments.

The sacraments are in strict truth the determined channels down which the power of God flows into the souls of men. Who is to plot out the course divine power will follow? Indeed, who would have dared suspect such subjection of divinity to the human will had not God Himself commanded it? It is no exaggeration to say that the sacraments have subjected divine power to our wills, for by them the flow of grace is put as completely at our command as water is by a faucet or music by a radio set. There is nothing to it; just receive the sacraments,

and there you are with grace. Nothing to the participation of the life of God! We walk through a wonder-world idly, not at all abashed, hardly impressed, at home. Of course, things at home are to be taken for granted!

Christ Himself could not make men the first, or principal, cause of the sacramental action. Yet, by reason of His own supreme excellence, He could have given His ministers a greater participation of His powers relative to the sacraments. Indeed, He could have gone so far as to allow them to produce the effect of the sacrament, grace, without the sacrament itself; or even, as secondary causes, to institute new sacraments. The fact is that He did no such thing.

Nor was this a matter of jealousy on the part of Christ. He was not hoarding His power but rather guarding the faithful from the ever-present danger of placing their hopes in men rather than in God. It does not take much imagination to see what a tremendous multiplication of sacraments, true and false, there might have been otherwise; nor what hopeless bewilderment and ultimate discouragement would have invaded the hearts of the simple faithful. These human ministers were to feed the sheep of Christ; but the Master reserved the preparation of the food to Himself. The sacraments were not designed as frail helps depending utterly on a holy priesthood; they are solid supports depending directly on God. They may be administered by men who lack faith, hope, and charity, who are positively steeped in sin; but their effect on the faithful is in no way diminished, though, in these cases, they are poison to the ministers.

The one thing demanded of the human minister in all the sacraments is the intention of doing what the Church does. He is an instrument, it is true, but a living instrument; he is not only moved, he moves himself, and that self-movement is essential. The water he pours might be poured in just this way for a dozen other purposes; it is tied down to this one sacramental purpose by his intention. An atheistic doctor, baptizing a baby to reassure the mother, may think the whole thing

is pure mummery; but if he intends to confer the sacrament, the sacrament is conferred. These are sacred things. They are not to be conferred, as Luther alleged, by drunks, idiots, or jokers with no sense of humor; but by men actively participating, for that instant at least, in the priesthood of Christ.

That priesthood is a sacred office of eternal consequence reserved by God for men; for it is man who is thoroughly conformed to the High Priest in His human life and human sufferings. Angels could administer sacraments if God so willed it. Indeed, angels have distributed Holy Communion, as was the case with Blessed Imelda; but it has happened much more frequently that angels have summoned a priest to administer the last sacraments to a man or woman dying alone. Obviously, then, since the ministration of the sacraments depends on the will of God, all diabolical participation in this matter is absolutely precluded. It would be as easy to imagine God allowing the devil to sing the infant Christ asleep in his arms as to conceive of God permitting diabolical administration of the sacraments.

We shall see each sacrament in detail in the following chapters. For the moment, let us take one quick glance over all of them that we might see them in their proper place, grasp their interrelation and proper evaluation, lest the abundance of detail later on obscure the beauty of the whole structure. It is of faith that there are seven sacraments; a definition directly against the reformers who picked and chose as they liked. That there should be just seven, no more and no less, Thomas shows in an article of surpassing beauty.

The sacraments were instituted for a double end: the worship of God through the spiritual perfection of man; and the remedying of sin and its defects. On each of these counts, there is solid reason for precisely seven sacraments.

Just as in his corporal life, a man's perfection is both individual and social, so also in his spiritual life. In the field of the corporal, he is individually perfected by the acquisition of life through generation, its preservation and increase through

growth and nourishment; while sickness and weakness, the great impediments to life, must, of course, be provided against. In his spiritual life, these things are given to a man by Baptism which gives him birth, Confirmation which gives him growth, the Eucharist which gives him nourishment; while Penance and Extreme Unction remove the impediments to spiritual life which are sin and its after-effects. Spiritually as well as corporally, man is taken care of in his community life by the establishment of public authority, with its right to rule and exercise public acts, and by natural propagation; both of these are provided for spiritually through Holy Orders and Matrimony.

The same number seven is arrived at if we examine the sacraments from the aspect of their supplying for the defects of sin. Baptism is directed against the death of the soul, giving life. Confirmation works against the infirmity of spiritual infancy, giving strength. The Eucharist is against the weakness of the soul for sin, giving nourishment; a spiritual food to offset the cravings of man's appetite for carnal food. Penance is against actual sin; Extreme Unction against the vestiges of sin left on the soul. Holy Orders works against the deception and dissolution of the community; while Matrimony is ordered against concupiscence and the extinction of the community.

The same complete beauty of the sacramental hierarchy is seen even more clearly when the sacraments are referred to the virtues. Thus, Baptism, corresponding to faith, is against original sin; Extreme Unction, corresponding to hope, is against venial sin; the Eucharist, corresponding to charity, is against the malice of the will; Holy Orders, corresponding to prudence, is against ignorance; Penance, corresponding to justice, is against mortal sin; Matrimony, corresponding to temperance, is against concupiscence; and, finally, Confirmation, corresponding to fortitude, is against weakness and cowardice.

There just isn't room for any more; there are no gaps to be filled. The sacraments greet man coming from the womb and

usher him to his tomb. They take care of his infancy, his adolescence, his manhood. They guard his personal, domestic, and social life. Through all the wide field of the virtues against the defects of human nature, man advances confidently, a spiritual warrior fully equipped with supernatural weapons that will not be outmoded. There is not a moment of his life, no part of his being, no phase of his career which is neglected; he is saturated with the supernatural. He has become a member of the Mystical Body, raised to the divine plane to live the life of God; not at this time or that time in his life, but always

It is to be noticed that in all the enumerations of the sacraments, except where they were aligned with the virtues, Holy Orders and Matrimony come respectively sixth and seventh. This is not coincidence. Man's primary work is to save his own soul, as against the social service idea which has been recently substituted for the kingdom of God. The things that pertain to the perfection of the individual soul come first; then, and only then, the sacraments referring to the community. Holy Orders precedes Matrimony because the latter has not so full and exclusive a participation of the very essence of spiritual life. Of the sacraments dealing with the individual as such, Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist are always mentioned in that order. Again, there is no coincidence. These three should precede Penance and Extreme Unction for they are directly ordered to perfection, while the latter two are only accidentally so ordered, by reason, that is, of the deplorable calamity of sin. Of the first three, Baptism obviously is first, for it is spiritual birth; Confirmation is next, for it is growth to manhood; finally, there is the Eucharist as the fullness of perfection, directly ordered to the end of all man's spiritual life, eternal union with God.

Of all the sacraments, the Eucharist is supreme in dignity and excellence; for it is the body and blood, soul and divinity of God Who is the author and end of the sacraments. All the others are ordered to the Eucharist as to an immediate end,

revolving around it like so many planets around the sun. Holy Orders, the sacrament of the priesthood, is obviously ordered to the Eucharist. By Baptism we are born that we might be united to Christ; by Confirmation, we are strengthened lest shame and human respect keep us away from the sacrament of His presence. Penance and Extreme Unction are ordered to a completely worthy reception of it; while Matrimony, in its essential significance of love's complete union, is the consecrated sign of the union of Christ and the Church as well as the instrument by which is guaranteed the long line of the future children who will come to be received by Christ and to receive Him. In ordinary practice, the reception of the other sacraments is bound up with the reception of the Eucharist, this is even true of Baptism, if the baptized be an adult.

From the point of view of necessity, Baptism is the one absolutely necessary sacrament for salvation. Penance, of course, is no less necessary once mortal sin has been committed. And Holy Orders is completely essential for the community. All the others are necessary, not absolutely, but rather for the most fitting, the most perfect attainment of the goal. In the language of modern theologians, Baptism is necessary by a necessity of means, that is, without it salvation is utterly impossible; the others are necessary by a necessity of precept, that is, although salvation is possible without them, they *must* be received because they have been commanded.

The beauty of the sacraments, which we have touched on in this chapter and will continue to examine in the following chapters, will to a great extent be lost on the world of the twentieth century. Ours is a world that is without sacraments because it has deliberately rejected them. That rejection began in a pride that sought to elevate men by denying half their nature, insisting that religion of the spirit alone was worthy of man. It was a kind of angelism that caricatured human nature by degrading its material side. In our own day, we have seen the same pride turn its energies to a championship

of the material in man at the expense of the spiritual. Obviously this is no less a caricature and a degradation, for it denies man's soul and man's God, turning him lose as an animal, a slave to his sense appetites whether those be appetites of strength or of pleasure, of the bully or of the effeminate weakling. The sacraments, of course, insist upon both man's spiritual and material nature.

The first of these perversions of pride has not worked, nor will the second. The short span of years since the reformation has seen the degeneration of the wholly spiritual religion, more or less free of sacraments, into a subjectivism and ultimate indifferentism. Its decline can be traced step by step through the sickness and death of formal protestantism. That slow death was no more than an expression in fact of the truth that man cannot live on the spiritual alone, that he is no angel; and, above all, of the more profound truth that man cannot live on man-power alone. No more will the second last, powerful and energetic as it seems now; for it is no less true that man cannot live by bread alone, that he is not just another animal. It is no less true now than it has been from the beginning, that men and nations, whatever their strength, cannot live without God.

Perhaps the death sentence of a world that rejects sacraments is to be read in the one truth that man cannot live by lies; his diet must be truth. From the very beginning, errors against the sacraments or denials of them have been falsifications of absolutely fundamental truths. They have necessarily included errors on physical nature, explaining, for instance, that all material was evil; on divine nature, making God powerless or impersonal; and on human nature, making man an angel or a beast. Inevitably they have scorned the Church's guardianship of truth and the faith which is the guarantee and the liberator of the minds of men. Man cannot attack truth without having the universe come tumbling down upon his head.

All these religions without sacraments, whether the object

of their worship be political, humanistic, or even a kind of degraded divinity, are sad, hopeless things, as sad as the disciples in the upper room after the Ascension of Christ; for they are religions without Christ. Their acts of worship are a kind of gloomy memorial service through which a man walks embarrassed, self-conscious, hushed, on tip-toe lest he awaken the dead; or they reverberate with a loud, thundering fanaticism which is afraid of quiet, afraid of being alone, lest the rumble of despair destroy the last vestige of courage. Both are religions of death.

For them, the life of Christ is over, if it ever began. Certainly there is no continuation of that life, no perpetuation of the work that men need so badly. In direct contradiction to them is the living Church for whom Christ's life goes on in the sacraments. There one can always find the joyous shouts of children, the rejoicing of the friends of the bridegroom; for here, Christ still dwells among men. This religion is necessarily open, sunny, human, even divine; for the life it perfects is completely human and gloriously divine. It is a life made free by truth; the truth of physical nature, of human nature, of divine nature; the truth of the Church and of the faith. It is a life made possible by the sensible signs instituted by Christ to give grace, the signs which are the seven sacraments.

CHAPTER XIII

(OUTLINE)

SPIRITUAL INFANCY AND MANHOOD

(Q 66-72)

1. The mystery of birth
 - (a) Of all birth
 - (b) Of human birth
 - (c) Of birth to divine life
- 2 The mystery of growth
 - (a) In human life
 - (b) In participated divine life
- 3 Basis of appreciation of the birth and growth of a man
4. Birth to the life of God—Baptism
 - (a) Its essence and institution
 - (b) Its physical nature
 - (1) In itself—matter and form
 - (2) The conferring of it
 - (c) Emergency births—Baptism of fire and of desire.
 - (d) The instruments of birth—the ministers
 - (e) The spiritual infants
 - (1) In general
 - (2) In particular.
 - (3) The effects of birth;
 - a Regeneration—opening of the gates of heaven
 - b Enlightenment—equipment of the virtues
 - c The family likeness—character
 - d Equality of and impediments to the effects
 - (f) Contrast of birth in the Old and the New Testament
- 5 Growth to spiritual manhood—Confirmation
 - (a) The sacrament and its essence
 - (b) Its effects—character and grace
 - (c) The persons involved—subjects, patrons, and ministers

Conclusion:

- 1 The double life of man, natural and supernatural
 - (a) The tragedy of stopping at the natural
 - (b) Distortion of the natural by enemies of the supernatural
 - (1) Distortion of birth
 - (2) Distortion of growth
 - (3) Distortion of manhood
2. Bethlehem, Calvary, and the appreciation of man
- 3 Men signed by Christ.

CHAPTER XIII

SPIRITUAL INFANCY AND MANHOOD

(Q. 66-72)

EVERY beginning has about it that which demands a tribute of admiration from the most sceptical of men. With our gift of vision, we can see the long roads it opens up, the obstacles that must be hurdled before the far distant goal which has called it into being is reached. At the very least, there is a stirring courage in every beginning; it is the launching of a ship in spite of the long history of giant waves, pitiless storms, wreck, and disaster. It is the story of the universe in miniature; something new has come in, something old must pass on. Beginning, even to the dullest of us, is a word that means battle, fatigue, desperate effort, triumph or failure.

Never is that more true than when life begins. It is true that the very nature of life puzzles us, we cannot dissect it scientifically, cannot as yet reproduce it; but that is not the whole of the story. No little of our interest in birth is contributed by our own knowledge of all that life entails; its possibilities and threats, the tragic finality of its loss. Birth itself is wrapped in mystery; so much so, that, were it not so common, it would leave us as terrified as the Roman soldiers who gaped at the empty tomb of Christ. For birth, too, slowly swings back the heavy gates that bar the entrance to life; it is an issuing from the dark isolation of the womb by one who is not dead but lives, equipped for the struggle of life.

In the presence of human birth, the tribute which spontaneously issues from our hearts is one of deep respect, of tenderness, and, above all, of humility. Even the superficial observer cannot miss the quiet pride and complete self-satisfaction of

the mother, nor the almost gloating, insistent, even boresome exultation of the father. These are the things anyone can see; the deeper, more sacred emotions are not for public display. Actually, in the heart of every parent there is more than a stirring of awe at this mystery which readily brings out a deep humility enslaving the parent to the child; there is even a kind of adoration, so lowly does the parent feel in this presence.

Small wonder. Here it is not merely a matter of tearing down the barriers to life, of a triumphant exit from the tomb of a mother's womb; here is the first small gleam of the spark that will break out into an undying flame. We are present at the establishment of a kingdom which will demand constant government, will include complete sovereignty, and impose heavy responsibilities; we are foreign kings come to lay our gifts at the feet of an infant king, where, of course, they belong.

Here, God knows, is mystery and dignity enough; but this is not all of the mystery of the birth of a man. The infant is still to be born into that life which is proper to the omnipotent Lord of life. He is to see the things that are properly for the eyes of God; to love with a love that in its object and its beginnings is nothing short of divine; to live the life of God every moment, even though he is immersed in a world of men. Whether it be a question of the kitchen slavey or the first lady of the land, once that second birth has taken place, it is a divine life that is being lived. By this birth, man is incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ; he is endowed with the long reach of love that is stopped by no barriers; he is given hosts of helpers in the communion of saints. His smallest acts are given an efficacy which moulds the hard metal of life into an eternal masterpiece of divine grace.

There, indeed, is a beginning. It is as superior to human birth, in the visions it calls up, the struggles it prophesies, the triumph it promises, as the birth of a man is to that of an animal. Indeed, it is infinitely more so. This second birth

entails no long months of preparation, no excruciating pain; it takes place in an instant, suffering no threat to its success.

This same contrast is present between natural and supernatural growth. In the natural order, a man's years from infancy to manhood are glorious things compared to the rest of the physical universe. Every animal goes through a stage of automatic, inevitable building up of physical strength in order that it might quickly pass on the species. It has nothing to learn, nothing to govern, nothing to look forward to; no enemies within itself and no enemies without except equally blind or instinctive forces against which the animal will blindly and instinctively react. But the years of human growth are uneasy, slow, dangerous times; there is so much to learn, so unruly a kingdom to govern, such difficulties to overcome, such threats to life and learning, such hopes to face courageously. Growth in the supernatural order is an instantaneous thing, as is supernatural birth. In an instant, the infant passes to manhood; instantaneously he has courage, strength, the force that enables him to look out on a world that would take the breath away from an angel and be eager to get into the fight because he is so eager to win to its end. It is a growth that will always remain mysterious to us as the things of God must always remain mysterious to the minds of men, as the things of men must always remain mysterious to the world of the animals.

There is a very odd thing to be noted about this supernatural life of man. It is not to be conceived as an extra coat put on against colder weather or an added pillow for more luxurious rest; it is not a bit of cosmetics artistically added to improve the beauties of nature. It is much deeper than this; so deep, in fact, that, historically at least, without its consideration men have always erred grotesquely, horribly, about the natural birth, the natural growth, the natural life of man. Divorced from the supernatural, they have studied man as a primitive might study an airplane, blind to its sky-soaring purpose; they have been as biting critical of the human design as a stub-

bornly ignorant man might well be of the design of the ship if he had never heard of an ocean.

As a matter of fact, human life exists only on a supernatural plane; all men are ordained to eternal and supernatural life with God. Aside from the necessity of understanding the essentials of supernatural birth and growth for the successful living of human life, we simply cannot make a just estimate of our humanity without that understanding; we must have it if we are to respect the material side of our nature and embrace the spiritual, if we are to avoid making ourselves ghosts or beasts. Exclusion of the supernatural has led men again and again to complete pessimism or the silly illusion of omnipotence.

This birth to divine life is as easy to perceive as the birth to our natural life because it comes by way of a sensible sign; yet, it is as impossible to understand as the eternal acts of God, for it is a divine thing. Like the life it generates, it puts something of the infinite into finite hands, and we find this a concept as elusive of our mind as that of a ray of sunshine wrapped in cellophane and sent through the mail. Yet the divine gift is as easily traced as the package shunted along by the postal service. For the sacrament of *Baptism* is a sensible sign instituted by Christ to give the first sanctifying grace which is the birth of a man to the life of God.

In this sacrament, as in all the sacraments, there is a double element to be considered: the sacrament or sensible sign signifying, and the effect signified and produced. In the three sacraments which leave an indelible character on the soul of man, there is an intermediary between these two; that is, there is a sign that signifies, an effect which is signified and in no way signifies anything else, and a sign which, while signified and caused, also signifies. All this sounds extremely complex until it is stated in concrete terms. The complexity is immediately dissipated when it is said that the *character* of the sacrament is intermediary between the external, sensible sign and the grace produced by the sacrament. The character

is signified by the sensible sign and produced by it; in turn, it signifies the sanctifying grace. It is, of course, the sensible sign itself which is properly the sacrament. Thomas, using the phrase consecrated by the Fathers, expressed all this briefly by distinguishing *sacramentum tantum* (sensible sign), *res et sacramentum* (character), and *res tantum* (sanctifying grace).

The full importance of this will be seen later on. Just passing for the moment it may be noticed that the character-imprinting sacraments are particularly safeguarded. They are given but once; no chance can be taken with them, for that original conferring must endure. It is as though God, to protect man from himself, made allowance for the possibility that a man would not be in the best of shape to receive these sacraments when they were conferred; He attached a receipt (the character), always good, which assures full delivery of grace if presented when a man does get into shape for these sacraments. It might be that the containers of a man's soul are all filled up with the heady wine of the world; when some room is finally found, God is waiting patiently to deliver the wine of His life.

The institution of Baptism represented quite a step up for ordinary water. It had been used as a means to cleanliness from the beginning, no doubt with perpetual regret by children who are never fussy about these details, sparingly perhaps by the less socially minded, shiveringly by the men to whom a cold bath is an act of heroism. As a matter of fact, water was never a particularly brilliant agent of bodily cleanliness until, to its humiliation, soap was introduced as its helpmate. Of course it made no slightest pretensions towards cleansing the soul; it was humble enough, going about its business quietly or boisterously, falling from clouds, meandering through deep river beds, crashing the ships that showed contempt for its power in the open sea.

For all its invincible might far from land, men in their own element made water a lowly household drudge, too sluggish, too dull, too beaten to protest. It was the family workhorse

plodding on its gray routine without a thought of congratulations or special favors. Then on one day, as suddenly as the Virgin of Nazareth became the Mother of God, and by the same agency, plain water was elevated to undreamt of heights; in a sense, it was made the mother of the men of a new race, for it was chosen by God as the instrument of divinity in cleansing the souls of men and bestowing divine life upon them.

That day started off like any other day for the mass of water all over the world. Men were drinking it, washing in it, sailing through it, idly fishing in it, or just sitting by it dreaming the dreams evoked by water's restless life. One man was standing in the shallows of an historic river, pouring water on the heads of others as a sign of repentance for sin. That was a strange ceremony in the land of Israel. It was strange to the river Jordan. To the Baptist came another man, Who was also God. Over the protests of the prophet of the Messiah, He, too, was baptized; but here, as in all the rest of His life, the important thing was not what men did to Him but what He did to men. In this case, it was not what the water did to Him, but rather what He did to the water that made all the difference in the lives of all the men who were to come after Him.

In the instant of the baptism of Christ, plain, ordinary water was consecrated by this contact with God. From that time on, wherever it existed all over the world, divine power would flow through water to the souls of men when it was rightly applied. It is true that this new instrument was not to be used by God immediately; it was a marvel of the New Testament, and the Old had yet to die. When it had died with Christ on the cross, and when the New Testament had come forth with Him from the tomb, then water entered into its divine rights.

From then on it would wrap men as a shroud, ushering them into the tomb of Christ that with Him they might issue forth from the grave into a new life. Its power to drown men,

cutting off their supply of life-giving air, was transmuted into the supernatural power to strangle sin by giving life-giving grace. It became at the same time a means of burial with Christ and a resurrection with Him to the life of God.

It was powerful, and wonderfully kind, of God to use the worn, dog-eared little book that plain water had always been to men in order to tell the story of supernatural birth; as kind and as powerful as His use of the familiar star to tell the story of His birth to the students of the stars. Between the lines of the familiarly soiled pages of this book, the mysterious chemistry of faith brought out the words written in invisible ink by the finger of God. There was the extension of the mercifully fertile capacity of water beyond the refreshment of desert earth, of drought-stricken, feverish bodies, to the regeneration of souls parched into desert barrenness by sin. In water's calm, cooling touch was now to be seen the merciful abating of the fever of passion; in its limpid clearness, something of the visions vouchsafed by faith.

This consecration of water tells the mysterious story of another birth, death, and resurrection by which all men are born, die, and rise to a divine likeness; but above and through all this is the comforting assurance of the limitless generosity of God. Originally, He had bestowed water on men with positive extravagance; with the same free hand, He shared His divine life with them. For men are not to be found where there is no water; so that wherever men can live their human lives, there they can be born again to divine life. That divine birth is much more essential to the success of the life of a man than water is to his very existence; and what is necessary, naturally or supernaturally, has always been made easy by God, as easy as breathing or seeing, as accessible as water, as universally within reach of the hands of man.

This prodigal generosity of God with His own life is seen more clearly when we realize that the water necessary for Baptism is plain, ordinary, natural water. The means of divine birth, then, is not a precious treasure handed down in

a privileged family, not a rare thing transported with great care to the ends of the earth; rather it is to be had by walking down to the sea, stepping into a river, bending over a spring, or putting a vessel out in a spring shower.

The words which make the sensible sign of Baptism clear beyond all doubt, the form of the sacrament, are classic in their simplicity and completeness: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Just those few words coming from human lips, be they lips of saints or sinners, believers or infidels, those words and a little water, and man is born again. Yet, brief as they are, these words clearly declare the living instrument (the minister), the material instrument, the actual baptizing, and the principal cause, the triune God.

There is the same deceptive simplicity about this bestowal of divine life that marks all the works of God with their own special beauty. It was an altogether simple prescription for living, for instance, that was written in ten short sentences by the finger of God; yet it would strain all the energies of men of every generation. For all the long, patient hours of His teaching, Christ's final orders to His apostles were simplicity itself: "teach ye all nations, baptizing them." Yet that magnificent simplicity has consumed the lives of the most heroic of men. Obviously it does not do to tamper with the simple-looking works of God. This is how the sacrament of Baptism was instituted by Christ, with divine simplicity; so only can it be conferred.

From the artistic point of view, there may be only one way for a human face to be washed, for of course the artist would try, even against such odds, to preserve dignity and grace. From the essential angle of cleanliness, however, there are possibilities of exuberant variety. The task can be approached with the calm impersonality and economy of a cat. It might be gone at cautiously, applying water to the spots that are obviously soiled. There are face-cloths for the fastidious; or the individually satisfying, though socially distressing, splash-

and-splutter methods of the rugged individualist so popular in crowded Pullman cars. Whatever the leanings of personal taste, the point is that all these methods accomplish, more or less, the essential task of cleansing.

It is precisely this sensible sign of washing that is demanded for Baptism. As far as the validity of the sacrament goes, it makes little difference whether the water is poured on a man's head or whether a man's head is poured into the water. Indeed, we might refrain from both and simply sprinkle water on the subject to be baptized. The limitation of the process to a "pouring" of water in the Latin Church is not a matter of validity but of lawfulness; it must be done this way under pain of sin for the minister, but not under pain of nullity for the sacrament.

Over and above the bare necessity of the sacrament, there are the rich beauties of the liturgy, as over and above the bare, essential four walls and roof of a home, there are tasteful decorations and convenient furniture. These latter add nothing to the protective power of the house against the elements; but they are far from superfluities. The liturgy of Baptism adds nothing to the essential effect of the sacrament; nonetheless it completes the beauty that might be expected of a work of God. That completion is made up of a call to our inner devotion, a wealth of instruction, and direct action against the powers of evil.

Men must sometimes be satisfied with bare protection against wind and storm; obviously, too, all men cannot have the rich beauty of a solemn birth to divine life. Not infrequently, it is a matter of clutching desperately at just the one moment of life granted after birth; sometimes it is even necessary to invade the mother's womb to win another citizen for the kingdom of God. Indeed, millions and millions of men can never enjoy the sure, safe delivery into divine life effected by the sacrament of Baptism; nor does this mean that they are spiritually still-born, barred forever from the divine life they might have had. The sacrament of Baptism is the means of

normal supernatural birth. Besides this, there are two abnormal or emergency exits from the death of sin into the life of grace. One, the path taken by the martyrs, is known as the baptism of blood, and is a complete destruction of sin along with full infusion of the life of grace accomplished by the infallible power of God in return for the supreme witness of martyrdom. The other, baptism of fire or of desire, destroys sin and brings life to the soul by reason of the very dispositions of the individual; he has turned to God in his unconditional desire to do all that must be done for salvation.

All three Baptisms—of water, of fire, and of blood—concur in their common effect of sanctifying grace, in birth to the divine life. But only one of the three is a sacrament; for only one produces its effect of its very nature by reason of its institution, only one is a sensible sign signifying and producing grace—the Baptism of water. This is, therefore, the only one of the three which produces that indelible mark of fellowship with Christ which is the character of the sacrament. Consequently, it is only the Baptism of water that requires a living instrument of divine power, a minister, surely, it is clear that there is no minister of the desires that spring from the depths of a man's heart, while to classify a lion in a Roman arena as a minister of Baptism would be stretching things somewhat.

Because men cannot live a supernatural life without supernatural birth, we have seen that God chose the most common of materials as the matter of the sacrament of birth to divine life. The material for Baptism, ordinary water, is to be found wherever men live; and wherever men can be found, there, too, there are ministers of Baptism. It is true that the ordinary minister of solemn Baptism is the priest, and fittingly so; he is the minister of the sacrament of unity which is the Eucharist, and by Baptism a newcomer is admitted into this unity. But in case of necessity, anyone who can lay claim to humanity in his actions can be the minister of this supernatural birth of Baptism. Men, women, or children, laymen or clerics, be-

lievers, infidels or heretics—all are valid ministers of the sacrament; subject, of course, to the essential limitations demanded by the sacrament itself, that is, valid matter, correct form, and the intention to do what the Church does, to confer the sacrament. It is obvious, then, that the sacrament is not to be conferred validly by an idiot, a drunk, a complete paralytic, a mute, or a practical joker.

The usually clumsy and self-conscious god-father and the inevitably confident and self-assured god-mother are really the nurses and instructors of the spiritual infant. They do not play an essential part in the supernatural birth of the child any more than a nurse or governess does in natural birth. Their office pertains to the full beauty of solemn baptism. By their part in the ceremony, they take on the responsibility for the spiritual education of the infant should their efforts be necessary, and thereby contract a spiritual relationship with the child.

To get back to the comparative examination of the three Baptisms, it must be noticed that, while baptism of fire and of blood share with baptism of water the honor of ushering a man into divine life, the first two reach only to the barest of essentials. Wherever it is at all possible, Baptism of water must be received, for Christ has commanded it and with good reason. It is only by Baptism of water that a man receives his badge of membership in Christ, his titles to the reception of all the other sacraments, and his incorporation into the visible Church; no small items, by any means. Then, too, Baptism of fire may stop far short of a total remission of sin since it is so dependent on the dispositions of the subject; while Baptism of water is a complete remission both of sin and the punishment due to it, a secure remission infallibly producing its effects, not by reason of the dispositions of the subject, but by reason of the institution of Christ.

The truth of the complete purification by the sacrament of Baptism suggested a wild scheme to some heretical minds by

which they might combine the full, though doubtful, luxuries of a sinful life with the eternal joys of the vision of God. Why not delay Baptism until just before death? Meanwhile, all restraints could be tossed aside with impunity. It was, of course, a silly notion based on the assumption that the human hand was quicker than the eye of God. It is a terribly dangerous thing to attempt to fox the Omniscient. Looking at it sensibly, it should be clear that the beginning of life is not to be dodged, under penalty of missing all of life and life's goals; nor is it to be delayed. It must be had as soon as possible; so we baptize the infant within a few days or a week; if necessary, immediately at birth. An adult, unless he be in danger of death, must, of course, undergo instruction on the nature of the supernatural he is being introduced to. Since he must start living that supernatural life immediately after Baptism, he must know what it is all about.

Christ's words were absolute: all men were to be baptized; not when they pleased, not at the moment of death, not when they had finished sinning, but without any limitation whatsoever. Should sinners be baptized? Well, if they were barred, Baptism would long since have rusted away in the tool shed; for all men, from the youngest infant to the oldest patriarch, are sinners. There is, however, a distinct difference that separates sinners cleanly into two groups. there are those who are fighting sin and those who embrace it. The only difficulty, relative to Baptism, comes up in regard to the second group. Can a man be separated from the sins he still has his arms around? Of course not. If he were baptized, the sacrament would be a false sign inasmuch as the grace it signifies would not be produced.

Nevertheless, if such a one is baptized, the first thing signified by the sacrament, the character is produced; this man, then, has in his possession the divine receipt on whose later presentation the full payment of grace is made by God. The one condition absolutely demanded from an adult receiving Baptism is that he have the intention of receiving the sacra-

ment; granted this much, no disposition of his can utterly defeat the sacrament. Perhaps later in life he will come to his senses and regret his sins, then the full blood of the graces of Baptism, dammed up so long, is let loose on his soul.

The much more normal case is that of the sinner who comes to Baptism sincerely sorry for his sins, here, there is a direct and immediate application of the merits of the suffering and death of Christ. His sins and their penalties are completely forgiven, not by reason of the disposition of the newly baptized, but by reason of the infallible power of God. No penance is imposed on this man after Baptism, for his soul is pure of all stain. He is not required to go to confession. Indeed, how could he be? Before Baptism he is incapable of receiving any other sacrament; after Baptism, he has no sins to confess. It is only in the case of conditional Baptism that the individual immediately goes to confession and receives conditional absolution, for there is the possibility that the former Baptism was valid, necessitating the sacrament of penance as the only means of forgiving sins committed since that first Baptism.

To the Catholic mind, Baptism will always be the sacrament of children. It ushers a newcomer into the family. It lays the cornerstone of an eternally enduring domestic edifice. In a larger sense, it makes children of us all, children of God. Surely, there is no age at which a child cannot receive Baptism; the very youngest has tasted death in Adam, of course it can taste life in Christ. To be nourished in that supernatural life from infant days makes everything about it easy, homely, familiar, part of our blood and bones. Perhaps that is one of the many reasons why there can never be a substitute for Catholic education; home is, after all, the best place for a child.

Yet, this is no reason for a misguided zealot to invade a family of Jews or infidels, baptizing their children by force, or to slip into an insane asylum and baptize all the inmates. There are cases, of course, in which the Baptism of a non-

Catholic infant is entirely reasonable; if the child, for instance, has been abandoned; if one of the parents has been converted to Catholicism and wishes the Baptism of the child; or if the infant is at the very point of death. Outside of these cases, the guardians and parents have natural rights over infants before they become masters of their own lives and over the insane who have never enjoyed the use of reason. These rights are not to be violated. It is, of course, evident that parents or guardians do not have power of life and death, either natural or supernatural, over their children; but it is only when the child is in danger of natural death without Baptism that the question of Baptism is a final question of supernatural life or death. Nevertheless, Baptism, once conferred on such minors is valid; it produces its eternal effects, for it operates effectively by its very nature.

Sudden spring rain falling on barren earth to recall it to life and make it richly fruitful is only a faint suggestion of the effect of the water of Baptism on the soul of a man. The infant coming forth from its mother's womb is a little better image; it is, after all, making an entry into life; but it is not coming back from death. Christ's resurrection is perhaps the best picture of the first, astounding effect of Baptism; the effect of regeneration, of resurrection from the death of sin to the life of grace. For Baptism flings open the gates of heaven; after that, there is only the long road to travel by which we approach the gates that wait open for us.

The full rich equipment that comes into our soul with the grace of Baptism is hardly less impressive to our penurious minds. Not only is all sin remitted, both actual and original; not only is every last punishment wiped out; but the means by which we can walk the long road home with firm, giant steps has been given to us. Faith, hope, charity, the four cardinal virtues, all the gifts of the Holy Ghost spring up with a sudden vigor that makes an Alaskan summer's approach look like slow motion in nature. In the infant, these virtues

wait poised for action until the infant's faculties are capable of that action; but in the adult, their supernatural fruitfulness makes itself clear to the eyes of God and His saints instantly, even though we, who "see through a glass darkly," can mark no difference from the previous actions of this man.

But why did God stop there? Could not the death and the merits of Christ have gone all the way in undoing the damage of original sin? Why didn't He win back for us the preternatural gifts that supply the inherent defects of human nature; why did He not assure us freedom from suffering, from civil war within ourselves, from death and the chance of complete failure? God knew it all along; for the rest of us, well, it seems we must learn for ourselves that men can never be given enough, that a gift is as likely to awaken a roar of protest at its limitations as to evoke a murmur of gratitude for its perfections.

Yes, Christ could have done all this; but He did not. He made us members of His Mystical Body, full of grace and truth, like unto Him Who fought His fight, carried His cross, and won His triumph. We, too, have to fight. So much the better. We shall appreciate the goal to which we fight; we shall earn it; we shall make it our own. We shall suffer, and it is better so; our Master suffered to show us the divine shortcut to heaven. We also shall triumph, but only if the battle is won, only if we refuse to quit, only if we wield the weapons put into our hands and wield them with a stout heart. Put these same questions honestly and see what happens to their semblance of justified complaint. Why is courage necessary for life? Why must I face the possibility of losing? Why must I carry the responsibility of human life? Or, to put it all in one word, why was I ever born a man?

Baptism brings the gifts of divine life and complete destruction of sin to all who receive it. To all infants, these gifts come equally; they are proportioned to the disposition of adults. They can be held up on their way into the soul by

barriers of infidelity or defective sorrow for sin, except for the one effect of the indelible character; and this is itself a guarantee of the other effects once a man has removed the barriers he has erected. In the character of the sacrament is to be found the family likeness of the adopted sons of God. This likeness cannot be marred, as might a natural family likeness, by talking out of turn in somewhat rougher company than we are accustomed to; it cannot be destroyed by even so crushing a fall as that from the heights of sanctity to the depths of sin. Its recognition does not require anxious peering for a family likeness at the request of an imaginative mother where we can hardly recognize humanity. This likeness is beyond all doubt; it is clear for all of an eternity. It is not necessary to trace its outline again and again; it will not be eroded by the winds and rains of life; it will not wear out. It has the marks of the chisel of the divine Sculptor about it; and He works for eternity, not time.

All this is not mere promise, not a matter of prefiguring, not a prophecy. It is not a profession of faith in the remission of sin by the future merits of Christ. All this circumcision, the baptism of the Old Testament, was, this and no more. The character of Baptism, however, is a positive, divine stamp; indelible, adequate, complete, with all the effectiveness and finality of the word of God.

For all its sublime effects, Baptism is only supernatural birth; it produces infants, not giants. Yet, for men to live the life of God is a giant's work, particularly when that life is to be life among men and in the midst of enemies who are no less than angelic powers. By Baptism a man is a child; and, in a way, a child lives a life all its own. Its existence is individual rather than social, for it has not yet arrived at the fullness of life which will enable it to communicate of its riches to others. Childhood, then, is a preparation for manhood; surely, individual life is unworthy of man who, like God but in his own humble way, does not move along determined paths but roams the world, master of his life, distributing his riches in

lordly fashion. He is a social being; for him, then, supernatural birth is not enough.

We must be brought to spiritual manhood, to the fullness of spiritual life, that we might do the things of a man. This full spiritual growth to perfection is the purpose and the effect of that sensible sign instituted by Christ which we call *Confirmation*. It is true that we may search the Scriptures in vain for an account of its institution; but then, John had warned us long ago that not all the deeds of Christ could be written in a book. For our comfort, however, there is the scriptural account of John and Peter's descent from Jerusalem to the faithful who had not yet received the Holy Ghost, though they had been baptized, when the apostles arrived and laid hands upon them, they all received the Holy Ghost.

The fullness of life, the coming of the Holy Ghost and His grace, is signified by the olive oil used in the sacrament; no doubt, because of its richness, the perpetual greenness of the olive tree, the nourishing, soothing, and healing powers of the oil, the symbolism of peace of the olive branch. The communication of that fullness to others, the supernatural social life, is signified by the balsam which is mixed with the olive oil and whose fragrance permeates to the far corners of the church. This mixture is the chrism of Confirmation with which the cross is signed on the forehead of the spiritual infant in consecration to perpetual warfare; it is the proud symbol of the warrior Chief carried boldly by all of His followers. The same union of the ideas of adult manhood and courageous fighter is to be seen in the very administration: the bishop, who possesses the fullness of power, lays his hands upon the subject, then gives him a gentle tap on the cheek that is both a warning and a promise.

The form of Confirmation is simple and solemn. The bishop says: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Simple as they are, the words clearly determine the material sign beyond all doubt,

and assign both the living instrument (the bishop) and the principal cause, God Himself. The words should be solemn. For the spiritual infant, while brought before his Chief by a patron, indicating his childish need of being sustained by his elders, in the few instants demanded for this signing and anointing, in the few simple words uttered by the instrument of God, the boy is changed into the man. More sanctifying grace has poured into his soul, bringing with it the titles to all the future graces he will need to meet the emergencies that will come to the adult soldier of Christ. On his soul, there is stamped the indelible identification of his membership in the band of fighters who march undaunted behind their Master to face incredible odds; the fighters for the faith.

Just as infancy and adolescence are ordained to full manhood in the natural order, so Baptism is ordered to Confirmation in the supernatural order; Confirmation is as necessary in the supernatural order as manhood is in the natural. Yet we must be careful about carrying images over from the slow-moving material world into the altogether spiritual world of the sacraments. In this world, independent of the limitations of matter, a weary old man can be born again and become a spiritual infant; while a small boy becomes a spiritual man within an instant.

In this swift moving spiritual world, the essentials of life are had by the smallest infant. Confirmation, then, has nothing like the absolute necessity of Baptism about it. This could have been seen easily enough from the very difficulty of its material and administration; God has not made it too easy, so it cannot be absolutely necessary. Its material is not easy-going, natural water, but a mixture of olive oil and balm; its minister is not just any human being, but the possessor of full spiritual power, the bishop; nor are its subjects all men, but only those who have already entered into life, who have been born by Baptism.

It is this second, and supernatural, life, completing and perfecting the natural, that is all-important for man. This is

the life for which all else must be sacrificed when sacrifice is necessary: youth, beauty, health, comfort, even natural life itself. Perhaps one of the bitterest, certainly one of the most cryptic, expressions of the importance of supernatural life is Bossuet's terrifying sentence: "Those who give us birth, kill us." Unless the generation be double, both natural and supernatural, there is profound truth in that indictment.

Weigh the sentence carefully for a moment. We can pity the still-born child and appreciate something of the bitter disappointment of the parents; they had looked along the road that this life will now never travel; they had seen visions of its possibilities, its fineness, its courage, its triumphs. What a horror it would be were still-born children to return year after year to saturate the walls of the home and the hearts of the parents with their own bitter disappointment at being excluded from life. How infinitely more horrible it would be if the parents themselves insisted both on the birth that is death and the ceaseless, ghostly wandering of dead children through the house.

In a very real sense, that is what has been done by the men and women of an age that scorns supernatural life. They have given their children only half a life, insisting that their children be supernaturally still-born; and, consequently, that these living-dead children haunt the halls of home and the hearts of parents. The children have been barred from the life of God, yet they live forever. We are blind indeed to mistake the dead for the living; we are mad to be complacent in that mistake. That very blindness hides from our eyes even the little that is left to life without the supernatural; for the natural life of man has been thoroughly understood only by those who saw beyond it to higher goals, by those, that is, who saw in man not only the image but the son of God.

Men deprived of that vision can cherish grotesque notions in place of respect, love, and understanding of the natural life of man. Birth can become a thing to be sedulously limited, even when it is not taken as an evidence of vulgarity, of

animality, a biological accident, a matter of political policy, or of social and emotional convenience. The strength of a man can easily become a thing to be surrendered eagerly that men might feel the cowardly comfort and release from individual responsibility that are the rewards of incorporation into a mob.

Man can be denied both his childhood and manhood, even when, grudgingly, he is given birth. Normally, childhood is a time of carefree development and of protective habit building; to be shielded from life, from evil, from struggle until the child is able to handle these things itself. Without the vision of the long goals of men, it can easily become a naked revelation of life, an institutional existence at the mercy of impersonal officials, to be followed by a cancellation of adolescence which pretends that high school children are university men, while undergraduates are statesmen directing the whole of national life.

Why should these youngsters wait for that which never arrives? As the purely natural view becomes more solidly entrenched, it becomes more and more impossible to achieve manhood and womanhood. Under such circumstances, a philosopher could find many a pertinent question to ask. What principles and what ideals are there for man to defend? What is there for which he can struggle? What is there worthy of unending love? When the whole story of a man's life is told, what difference does it make? If it made any, what could he do about it? The questions would pile up; but the only answers available would fool only those who had been duped from the beginning of their intellectual life.

We must have bent our stiff necks to enter the low doorway at the cave of Bethlehem if we are to appreciate any infant. We must know that man must be born again to understand his first birth. We must have stood on Calvary as that dead body was lowered and placed in a tomb, sealed and guarded, if we are to know something of the life of man. We must see

the shroud of Baptism envelop a man before we can see him rise again.

It is only by seeing men who are signed with the sign of Christ that we can know what it means to be a man and, knowing, understand why the "men signed of Christ have wars they hardly win and souls they hardly save, yet go gaily in the dark." It is by this knowledge that we can trace the majestic lines of the Lord of the world in the red, wrinkled features of the infant or the white, wrinkled features of old age. Man must be born to live and grow to manhood; he must be born again, enter into another life and reach another manhood if he is to have full understanding of his fellow-men, his own life, and his God.

CHAPTER XIV
(OUTLINE)
THE BREAD OF LIFE
(Q 73-78)

1. The way to a man's heart:
 - (a) An open road—by the need of man
 - (b) A double road—by reason of double need
 - (c) Roads that are thoroughly mapped—man's interest in food.
2. A contrast in foods
 - (a) The body nourished by inferiors
 - (b) The soul nourished by superiors
 - (c) Process of corporal and spiritual nourishment
3. A case of spiritual indigestion and its history
 - (a) The regretful renouncement of food
 - (b) The progress of starvation
 - (c) Reasons for the starvation—the predispositions of the mystery.
4. The fact of the mysterious food
 - (a) Essence and existence of the Eucharist
 - (b) Fittingness of its institution
 - (c) Its necessity
 - (d) Its prefigures
5. The mystery itself
 - (a) The mystery of the matter:
 - (1) Ingredients of the mystery—bread and wine
 - (2) Process of the mystery
 - a Passing of the substance of the bread
 - 1 The change itself—transubstantiation
 - 2 Its effects in relation to substance, accidents, and substantial form
 - b Existence of Christ in the Eucharist.
 - 1 As to subject
 - 2 As to quantity
 - c Continuation of the accidents.
 - (b) The power of the form

Conclusion

- 1 What men live by
- 2 Hunger strike of the twentieth century
- 3 The Angelic Doctor and the Bread of Angels.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BREAD OF LIFE

(Q. 73-78)

THE explorer of the virgin regions close to a man's heart who reported his findings with such classic brevity was either the perpetrator or the victim of a great injustice. He might have supposed that all the world would understand his "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach" was no more than an inadequate metaphor for a truth too long to be fully told; or he might really have thought he had reached the end of the road when he had come to the outer boundaries of the physical nature of man. In the first case, he deserves the sincere sympathy of all the millions of misunderstood authors; in the second, well, at least he has plenty of companions who stop with him at the half-way station thinking it is the end of the road.

In actual fact, catering to a man's stomach has more immediate effect on his waist-line than on his heart. Let us give the author the benefit of the doubt and accept his metaphor. Then the roads he points out are really the highways of beneficence. When it is pity that is being kind, there is a certain tenderness awakened; but pity rarely leads to love because by its nature it emphasizes the superiority of the benefactor, and love cannot but be humble. Sheer generosity, on the other hand, is such a selfless thing as to be of the immediate family of undying love. Man is grateful for gifts; in his gratitude, he is prepared to start gratitude's endless circle by giving gifts in return, even giving himself in return.

The degree of the recklessness of his return gifts will depend to a great extent on the bright flame of generosity that inspired

it and the need to which that generosity ministered. A man is grateful for the small beneficence of a match with which to light his cigarette, but not exuberantly grateful; he is more grateful for a roof to keep off the weight of the world, for clothes to maintain his dignity, and friends to buoy up his heart. When the ministrations are to his radical needs, when he is given the things by which he lives and without which he dies, his gratitude can easily be turned into the earth-shaking force we call love.

No question about it, a man needs food. A comfortably lined stomach, too, is unquestionably a necessary disposition to romantic moods; at least, the perfume of a bakery shop will rudely interrupt the most romantic protestations of a starving man, and fasting has always been more closely allied to penance than to romance. Of course, the thing must not be carried too far; an overstuffed lover will be hard to keep awake. But beyond the matter of predisposition, the ministration of food evokes a singularly child-like gratitude from the most robust adult. It is almost as though he were not only grateful that his life was not allowed to flicker out for want of fuel, he is a little surprised that so lethal a weapon of food has been used to such beneficent purposes. Ignorance can work marvels of destruction with food; unskillfulness easily surpasses those marvels; it is only in our time that governments have discovered they can break the spirit of a man, mold his disposition, and determine his political and economic future by the simple device of depriving him of the proper vitamins. No wonder a man is surprised and grateful to rise from a meal not only unharmed but positively nourished.

Man, however, does not live by bread alone; he has a mind and a heart that are nourished by truth and goodness. If he is grateful for the things by which he lives physically, he is uncritically devoted, exorbitantly grateful for truth and goodness. Because there are none of the immediate protests of nature against poisonous or half-cooked fare in this order, charlatans and hypocrites have reaped a harvest of gratitude

and love with none of the labor of truth and goodness. But aside from that, in our time there is more than sufficient confirmation that the road of physical food is only one road, and not a through one at that, to a man's heart; the other, truth and goodness, is a wide open road that leads straight to the depths of a man's heart. Why else does the most mediocre of university professors move before his pupils in a pillar of cloud by day; or the major professor slightly obscure the sun for his graduate student?

If the original explorer meant that the road to a man's heart was by the things which support his life, he was quite right. There is nothing obscure about the fact, nothing hidden about the roads. Man's thirst for truth is amply testified to by his naive trust of the learned, his unquestioning sacrifice in the interests of education, his high honor for those who have professedly amassed a supply to distribute to others. His interest in physical food—well, there has never been much question of that; though there has been, perhaps, no greater, more detailed interest than in our time when vitamins, calories, carbohydrates and starches roll off the tongues of children like a litany of old friends. In a sense, anyone can find the way to a man's heart, because he wears the directions written boldly on his whole nature.

But there is much more to the nourishment of a man's soul than the truth he can discover from other men, or the goodness he can see glinting, now and then, in the sunlight of his own penetrating glance. Perhaps we can understand that best by contrasting the character of the food of the body and of the soul. That there is a considerable difference should be apparent to our times, of all ages. Not so long ago in America, when a depression made skeletons of strong men, we saw many a mighty spiritual feat from men who had scarcely strength to lift their feet: thoughtfulness, sacrifice, refusal to stoop to ways unworthy of man to avoid the spectre of starvation. We know then, that it is possible to have a well-nourished soul in a starving body; as if that evidence would not be

enough for our sceptical minds, the world has since been filled with millions of the starving who nourish the world with their heroism. It should not be too hard, then, to understand the possibility of a starved soul in a comfortably nourished body. These two do not flourish on the same diet.

The body needs the support of things beneath it. It feeds on them, destroying them, changing them into itself; and prospers in the process of bestowing a destructive nobility on the animal, plant, and mineral world. The soul needs the support of a superior; it feeds on truth, goodness, above all on God, not destroying these things, not assimilating them into its own substance, but rather being changed by them, and even, in the case of God, in some sense being changed into Him. The body is always losing something that must be replaced; the soul is always gaining something that need never be replaced but that so increases its capacity that only the infinitely inexhaustible could possibly keep it alive. Men are indeed interested in food, food of body and of soul, for men are interested in life.

Since a breach has been made in the walls of nature and man has slipped out into the fields of God, it is more than ever true that he does not live by bread alone. To live the divine life that is now his, he needs divine nourishment: truth that is proper to God; goodness that is God's own; yes, even the very body of God, the food of angels that yet has never graced an angelic table. When that food was first offered to men, many turned away in doubt and distaste; it was a hard saying, that promise, and the food was altogether strange to the diet of men. The saying is still hard for men who measure love by their own limits, generosity by their own check-book, and power by their own strength. The food is still strange to those who have yet to taste it; for one must taste and see the sweetness of the delights of divinity which are not to be imagined from the experiences of men.

Those who did taste it became enamored of it; they knew something of the truth of the promises: "He that eateth my

flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him." "I am the bread of heaven; unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you." They tasted and lived, lived as men had never dared hope to live; lived by the life of God. Little wonder, then, that men cherished the gift. For eleven hundred years, it never occurred to men to challenge it directly; it was too close to dreams, too wholly reality, too vibrant with life to leave room for a doubt. When, at last, the restless mind of a man struck out at this gift, it was with an undertone of the regret and shame a man feels when his fit of distemper aims barbed words at those he loves most. Berengarius denied the real presence of Christ, but with the proviso that the symbol moved man to create his own heavenly food for the nourishment of the life without which there was nothing to live for. Before he died, he knew the emptiness he had introduced into his own life, admitted it, and received again the Bread of Life.

He had shown a dark path to the human mind, irritated in the obscurity of faith. Still, men would have none of it. For men do not easily surrender the things by which they live; and more than time is necessary to teach men to see light in darkness, life in death, plenty in starvation. It was five centuries before the Eucharist was challenged again; and, again, the challenge was a regretful, even a half-hearted one in its beginnings. Luther could not bring himself to deny the divine presence in the Eucharist; Calvin slithered, rather than plunged, into it; it was Zwinglius who dared to step as far off the path of life as Berengarius had.

From then on, men steadily lost the taste for this divine food. In a way, it was inevitable. As men lost interest in Christ, how could they keep interest in His constant presence; as they lost hope for things beyond the stars, what point was there in feeding on the Bread of Angels; as they forgot Calvary, what meaning had the living memento of that gesture of friendship? The thing was inevitable as men lost sight of the far horizons of divine life. To eat this Bread, a man must approach

humbly to a food that is his Master, falling down in adoration; he must be stripped of the fundamental selfishness that puts himself before God, or he eats it to his damnation; he must have courage, the courage to face a human life divinely lived. This is too much to ask of a world whose prescription for life is rather pride in self-sufficiency, satisfaction at whatever cost, and escape from life rather than a challenge to it. Men have become so hungry that the food is distasteful; but they nonetheless starve for lack of it.

Yet, the food is there for men to eat; on the word of God, it was given to men, is still given to them. If that is not security enough, men must go hungry: for the mind of man, because it is not the mind of God, cannot encompass the supreme act of divine generosity. The sacrament of the *Holy Eucharist*, the divine food of man's supernatural life, was instituted by Christ at the Last Supper when He took bread, blessed it, and gave it to His disciples saying: "Take ye and eat. This is my body"; and taking the wine, in the same manner, saying: "Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins." By these words He fulfilled the promise which had sounded so incredibly hard to the ears of so many, the promise that He would give them His body to eat and His blood to drink. The fulfillment of that promise was in the sensible sign of the accidents of bread and wine, instituted to give grace, not, as in the case of the other sacraments, by the power of the Holy Ghost in them, but by containing the very body and blood of Christ Himself.

The promise should not have been so hard to believe, the food not difficult to take. After all, we do not expect an earthly father to give a child life, generating it, and then do nothing to conserve that life; why, then, suspect the heavenly Father of our supernatural life to bestow that life on us, generating us in Baptism, and not provide nourishment for the conservation of that life? Indeed He did provide, and much more than nourishment. For if we take the internal physical perfection

of a man, that which he attains by growth, as paralleled in the spiritual order through Confirmation, then the whole gamut of external perfections are paralleled in the spiritual order through the Eucharist: it is a man's food, his clothes robing him in new dignity, the house to which he flies to shelter, his companion, friend, his treasure, even, in a very real sense, his goal.

While Our Lord had promised all this long before, had had it in mind from the beginning of His human life, and eternally in His divine mind, He saved its actual institution until the last moments of His life. It was to be a souvenir of His passion and death, indeed, in its accomplishment as sacrifice, the very renewal of that precious death; what more fitting than that it should stand touching shoulders in the memory of men with the death of God that men must not forget? That Last Supper was a sad farewell which the silent gloom of the disciples showed they well understood; He was taking leave of them, yet would not leave them; He would no longer live among them in his proper human form, but He would never be absent from them under the sacramental veils. They were His friends. He was leaving them a gift; given at any time, it would be cherished by those who loved Him, given as His last gift it would be doubly dear, indelibly chiseled on the memories of those who would bring the story of His life and love to all ages.

Obviously, the Eucharist is by no means a divine superfluity, a flamboyant touch to the already divine perfection of humanity. Men need this Bread of Life. Indeed, if we look at it from the side of the unity of the Mystical Body which it signifies, men simply cannot get along without it; for to reach the goal of his life, man must at least belong to the soul of the Church. Considered in itself, however, it is not one of the utterly indispensable means to heaven. A moment's comparison with Baptism, with which we are now familiar, will serve to bring out clearly the exact degree of the necessity of the Eucharist. Baptism is necessary as the very beginning of

spiritual life, the principle of it; the Eucharist is rather the end, the consummation of it. Just as it is sufficient to have the end in view, in desire, to accomplish an action that leads to it, so it is sufficient to have the Eucharist in desire to lead the life that goes to the goal of union. Baptism of desire does remove the impediments that bar a man from eternal life, but it is possible only to an adult, for, clearly, as Baptism is the first of the sacraments, it cannot be had implicitly, in desire, in the reception of any of the other sacraments. Quite the contrary with the Eucharist: for all the sacraments are ordered to it as to their end, Baptism included; so that even an infant, receiving Baptism with the faith and intention supplied by the Church, also receives the Eucharist in desire, implicitly.

Having received God Himself in the sacrament, men lovingly traced the long history of its promise through the patient years of the Old Testament. There was, for instance, Melchisedech's sacrifice of bread and wine, foreshadowing the outer sign of the Eucharist; all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, particularly the expiatory sacrifices, prefigured the expiatory death of Christ which is signified and renewed in this sacrament; while its nourishment, sweetness, and heavenly delights were foretold in the manna, the heavenly-sent food that fell upon the Israelites facing the long years of life in the barrenness of the desert. But more than all others, it was the paschal lamb that foretold to men the fullest story of the Eucharist. The lamb was eaten with unleavened bread; it was perfect, spotless, and immolated by the whole people; its immolation was a sacrifice by which the Israelites were preserved from the destroying angel and delivered from the captivity of Egypt. The parallel is so perfect as almost to have torn away the veils of a figure to show an explicit promise of the Lamb of God.

Coming down to a more detailed examination of the Eucharist, we must look for the matter and form that constitute it, not at the moment of its reception by the faithful or the priest, but at the moment of consecration in the Mass.

From one angle, this sets the Eucharist apart from the other sacraments, for all the others are perfected, or accomplished, in their use, whereas the Eucharist is already in existence before it is administered; thus, for instance, it is not the blessing of the baptismal water or the consecration of the oil for Confirmation that constitutes these two sacraments, but rather the use of this material, the pouring of the water and the anointing with chrism. There is this common note, however, in all the sacraments; they are perfected, accomplished, at the precise moment when the form is joined to the matter, the words to the thing, to produce the perfect sign; this is no less true of the Eucharist than of the other sacraments, for it is at the moment of consecration that the words of the form are applied to the bread and wine.

In the determination of the matter of the Eucharist, the primary question to be asked is: "What did Christ Himself use?" As we have already seen, the determination of these channels of grace is entirely God's work; that Christ used this or that material settles the question of the matter of a sacrament. Yet, the mind and heart of man insist upon going further, searching for the reasons of the peculiar fittingness of this matter rather than that. In the course of these tentative explorations into the wisdom of divinity, the saints have come upon reasons much too richly beautiful to be lightly cast aside.

Certainly, then, the matter of this sacrament is bread and wine; for it was bread and wine that Christ used at the Last Supper. That it is beautifully fitting material is clear from a number of considerations. After all, this sacrament was instituted by way of nourishment, and bread and wine was the ordinary nourishment of the men of the time of Christ; God has a way of conferring awful dignity on simple, ordinary things. Then, too, this was the sacrament of Christ's passion, a truth beautifully brought out by the separate consecration of bread and wine, the separate consumption of the body and blood of the Lord. It was fitting that this sacrament, as the type of the unity of the Church which is made up of many

faithful, should be wrought from bread, made up of many grains, and wine, pressed from many grapes. Just as there are no determined number of the faithful in the Church, so there is no determined quantity, large or small, for the matter of this sacrament.

Christ consecrated wheaten bread, and unleavened wheaten bread. No other than wheaten bread, then, will suffice for the validity of the sacrament. The leavening, or lack of it, does not pertain to the essential validity of the sacrament; in actual fact, the Greek Church uses leavened bread as a protest against the heresy of the Nazarenes and its confusion of the legalism of the Old Testament with the sacraments of the New. What is necessary, that the consecrating priest avoid sin, is that he follow the rite of the Church to which he belongs; and, in the Latin Church, the bread to be used must be unleavened as the sign of the incorrupt body of Christ and the uncorrupted sincerity of the faithful.

The wine used in the first institution was wine of the grape; no other will do for the validity of the Eucharist. A little water is to be poured into the wine before the consecration as that was probably what Christ did in accordance with the custom of the country. This touch of water signifies the people sharing in this sacrament; for as the water, mingling with the wine, becomes one with it, so the people, by the use of this sacrament, are made one with Christ. As we have seen, this sacrament is not constituted in its use by the people but in the consecration of the Mass; consequently, this matter of the water mixed with the wine does not pertain to the validity of the sacrament.

There is little difficulty in determining the matter of this sacrament. Where the eyes of the mind go blind and the eyes of faith must take up the work is when we come to the revealed truth that the body and blood of Christ are truly present. By the words of Christ, repeated by the priest, the whole substance of the bread is changed into the substance of the body of Christ, and the substance of the wine is changed into the

substance of the blood of Christ. That change of substance to substance, completely unique in the whole field of change, is called *transubstantiation*. If that term is understood, all else that will be said about the sacrament will have nothing of the vague or indistinct about it; if the content of that term is believed, the whole truth of the Eucharist is known.

From the side of the fittingness of the thing, the truth of this sacrament has all the simple perfection of a supreme work of God. This is the full perfection of all the shadowy figures of the Old Testament, the reality come to dissipate the mist of its promises and prototypes. Christ Himself had declared again and again that the disciples were His friends; and what is more strikingly characteristic of friendship than a joyous and constant union of friends? Men had not been cheated of the merit of faith with regard to His divinity; why should they not be given the opportunity to accept His humanity in this sacrament on the same divine authority?

That there be no misunderstanding about the precise meaning of this mystery of the Eucharist, many questions may be asked, questions that are necessary only because of our human capacity for obscuring the obvious. There is, for example, the question of the substance of the bread and wine; do they remain in this sacrament after the consecration? Obviously not: what is changed does not remain, and the body of Christ is here, not by local motion, not by pushing the substance of bread into a little smaller space, like a last-minute customer edging his way into a seat on a crowded subway; it is here by way of change, by the substance of bread and wine being changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ. Christ did not say, "Here is my body," He said, "This is my body"; and this was no time for inaccuracy of expression. Moreover, the faithful would be trapped into idolatry, adoring a sacred host that was still bread.

Well, what happens to the substance of bread and wine in the consecration? Is it annihilated? Does it return to its component elements? The answer to both questions is no, because

the substance of bread and wine are *changed into* the substance of the body and blood of Christ. The whole effect must be measured by the sign of the sacrament, for the words produce precisely what they signify; "This is my body" does not signify annihilation nor decomposition, but change.

To the restless human mind, still protesting at the mystery of the sacrament, there seems to be at least one avenue of escape: how can the substance of bread be changed into the substance of the body of Christ? Perhaps the best answer to that question is: Figure out some other way! We know, on the authority of God, that this sacrament contains the true body of Christ; and there simply is no other way to get it there. If one demands that Christ come there by local motion, in His own proper species, then He must leave heaven, and take up His residence in just one host, not in the millions that are preserved in tabernacles throughout the world; for the body of Christ does not, cannot, enjoy the ubiquity of God.

There is reason for the restlessness of our minds. Certainly, we can effect no such change as this; our efforts do not revolve around the change of a whole substance, but of one or the other of its essential elements. We can produce changes in the matter of things, trimming them down, building them up, molding their shape and so on; we can produce formal changes, driving out one substantial form by the introduction of another to the goal of a substantial change. The power of God is quite another thing. If it did not extend to the whole of things nothing would ever have existed, for the first production had to be by way of creation, producing the whole of being; some power must extend to both matter and form, or there would be neither matter nor form for us to work on. It is this *whole* change, of substance to substance, that is transubstantiation.

That the accidents of bread and wine, in the philosophical sense of "accident," remain in this sacrament is something we can verify by our own senses. There is no deception here. What our senses tell us is true: there is whiteness, roundness,

the redness of the liquid, the odor of wine; if error is introduced, it is because we conclude from the presence of the accidents to the presence of their natural subject, the substance of bread and wine, pitting our minds against the faith that preserves us from error. After the consecration, these accidents exist without a subject, supported by nothing in the natural order but by the solidity of the power of God. They are not subjected in the body of Christ or His blood; He does not begin to look like bread and wine, to be as fragile as a host, as fluid as wine. This sort of thing cannot be done any more than we can transfer a smile from the face of a man to the leaves of a tree. What is done has nothing of impossibility; obviously, if God could give the substance of bread the power to sustain its accidents, He can support those accidents directly, which is what He does.

With this divine support, the accidents retain all their normal characteristics. They can nourish, be destroyed, corrupt, and so on; not because these characteristics are flowing from their proper substantial form, for if that were still present there would have been no change at all, but because it is God Who is miraculously keeping them in existence. The change by which the status of these accidents has definitely passed into the miraculous is not a slow tortuous thing of strained muscles, sharp explosions, or long, careful periods of preparation; this is God at work directly, and infinite power works in an instant. There is no period between the presence of Christ and the absence of the bread and wine; but in the one instant, bread is no longer there and the Savior of men has taken up His secret abode among men.

He had lived among men before, not secretly but openly, yet even the dullest had recognized there was a wonderful secret about that human life in Palestine. They recognized it by their rebellious or awestruck questions, spoken and unspoken: how could this Man forgive sin; how could He give His body to be food; how could He feed the hungry multitude, heal the sick, give sight to the blind, cleanse the lepers, raise

the dead? His divinity hid behind the veil of His humanity; some men believed what they could not see. Returning to His Father, He would not leave His own alone; so both His humanity and His divinity were hidden behind the veil of the sacrament where men could see Him with the eyes of faith, and not see Him with the eyes of the body or the eyes of the mind.

The comfort this doubly secret presence brings to men is not less but greater than the divine works of Palestine; and, again, men's questions are rebellious or awestruck: how can the whole Christ be in this sacrament, under each species, under each particle of each species; how can the physical quantity of Christ's body be contained in a wafer; how can He be in millions of places at once; how can a mere man move the Son of God from place to place with no more difficulty than he finds in carrying a tiny vessel?

The mind of man will not find adequate answers to these questions any more than it did to the ones posed during the three years of Christ's public life; but it can remove the appearance of impossibility that clings to the very form in which these questions are posed. Just as the notion of the entirety of the change of substance to substance removes the apparent impossibility in the questions about the substance of bread and wine and their accidents, so the notion of the *substance* of the body and blood of Christ being present by the words of the sacrament brings out the truth that it is the mysterious, not the ridiculous, that thwarts the mind of man in the Eucharist. In other words, a literal acceptance of the meaning of transubstantiation is really the intellectual foothold granted to our feeble minds by the graciousness of God: in this sacrament there is a *change* of the *whole substance* of bread and wine into the *substance* of the body and blood of Christ.

To appreciate the full significance of this, we must remember that our approach to the substance of anything is normally somewhat indirect. The substance of bread, for instance, is

got at from the outside. We see the color, the shape, the quantity of the bread; our eyes certainly do not see its substance. Yet we know that the smallest crumb is as substantially bread as the largest loaf; we know that the substance of the bread pervades the whole loaf and every slice cut from it. The precise point is, that we have approached that substance through the accidents of bread. Let us suppose, now, that by a miracle, this order was reversed, that the substance was the outer fortification through which we must pass to get at the accidents; obviously, our senses would be completely helpless for the substance is not to be seen or touched, our minds would fare no better for they would not have the prerequisite sense knowledge from which to begin their own operation. But, granted the knowledge of this state of affairs through the word of someone who could know, then we could understand that the accidents would enjoy all the intangible characteristics proper to the substance itself, since they would be existing there in the mode proper to substance.

In the case of the Eucharist, the substance of the body and blood of Christ is present, all of it, as the proper effect of the sacramental sign which produces what it signifies: "This is my body, this is my blood." The words of consecration of the bread, then, produce the *substance* of Christ's body; those of the wine, the *substance* of His blood. But because, in actual fact, the substance of the body of Christ in heaven, and the substance of His blood, are not separated from their accidents, nor from His soul and His divinity, all these are also present in the sacrament, for the words of consecration, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, produce the body of Christ as it exists at the time of consecration. The point to notice here is that the words produce the substance; all else follows on that substance because of natural union, or natural concomitance, with it. Whatever else, beyond the substance, is present must be present in the way substance is present; the natural order of our approach to the accidents has been reversed.

Is the whole Christ present in this sacrament? Of course.

Isn't the whole substance of bread present in bread? Is the whole Christ present both under the accidents of bread and those of wine? Of course. For the words produce the body and blood as they exist outside the sacrament: to the body, then, there is joined, by natural concomitance, the blood, the soul, and the divinity of Christ; to the blood, the same natural concomitance assures the presence of body, soul and divinity. Is the whole Christ present under every particle of the host and every drop of the consecrated wine? Of course. Isn't the whole substance of bread present in every crumb whether the crumb be separated or joined to the loaf?

Still, it seems ridiculous to maintain that a perfect man be somehow compressed into the dimensions of a tiny wafer. The statement can be made in this way only if we have pushed aside the statement of transubstantiation; and then we are not talking about the Eucharist at all. It is not a question of compression or shrinking. The substance of the body is present by the power of the words of consecration, all else, then, is present in the mode proper to substance, as intangible, invisible, as indifferent to the limitations of space as substance itself. The whole physical body of Christ is present, with all its proper dimensive quantity, but *in the mode of substance*, that is, as substance is present

Obviously, a priest cannot take Christ by the hand and lead Him to the Communion rail; all that is tangible in the sacrament is the remaining accidents of bread and wine. These the priest can touch, these he can carry, and, carrying them, He is moving Christ, not directly, but by moving that under which the substance of Christ exists. Christ, then, is in the tabernacle because the accidents of bread and wine are there; not because living quarters have been assigned to Him as a kind of alternate to the living quarters of heaven. Substance, by its own nature, is not properly in this or that place; it is located rather by the accidents which are in contact with the surrounding world. Here, the accidents in such contact are the accidents of bread and wine. Christ's body is not broken

when the host is broken; it is not disfigured when the host is profaned; it does not corrupt when the host corrupts. None of these things happen either to the substance or to the proper accidents of Christ; there is no way in which they can happen to a substance, and the accidents of Christ exist here by way of substance. Our Lord, then, does not have to leave heaven to be present sacramentally on our altars; He does not rush from church to church to give a little time to each one. Substance is not in place except through its accidents; the substance of Christ is present wherever the accidents of bread and wine remain after consecration, and this without any prejudice to His continued presence in His glorified body in heaven.

We cannot see Him, either with bodily or intellectual eyes, any more than we can see the substance of bread if the substance veils the accidents rather than the accidents veiling the substance. We see Him by the eyes of faith, and in no other way. Not even an angel or a devil can see Christ in this sacrament; His presence here is entirely supernatural, entirely beyond the natural powers of a mind, even so powerful a mind as that of an angel or a devil. He can be seen in this sacrament by those blessed in heaven who enjoy the vision of the essence of God

Now and again, to bolster a wavering faith, to shock a sceptic out of his smugness, or to give particularly vivid consolation to a saint, things have miraculously appeared in this sacrament: perhaps a few drops of blood, the face of Christ, the image of a child, and so on. Sometimes these visions have been accomplished in the eye or the mind of the individual for whom they were meant; at others, the appearance has been external, objective, seen by many. In no case, has it been Christ Himself in His proper physical presence Who appeared. The objective appearance is no more than a change in the accidents of the bread or the wine; in both the subjective and the objective vision, a sign has been given of the truth of the sacred presence of the Son of God.

The accidents of bread and wine, once transubstantiation has taken place, remain without their proper subject. The substance of bread or wine is no longer present, these things cannot now take root in the substance of Christ; they exist miraculously supported by the hand of God, the First Cause, doing directly what He normally does through a second cause—the substance of the bread and of the wine. There are then two miraculous operations in this sacrament: the change of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of the body and blood of Christ; and the maintenance of the accidents by the direct operation of God.

These are not ghostly apparitions of accidents. They have not been weakened, changed, frozen in some strange condition. They have been maintained exactly as they were. Consequently, anything that could normally happen to accidents of bread and of wine—be broken, spilt, trampled on, corrupted, used for nourishment—can happen to these accidents. In other words, our senses do not deceive us when they report the presence of real accidents of bread and wine; we deceive ourselves when our intellect, pushing aside the supernatural revelations of faith, concludes from this report that the substance of bread and wine are present, as if this whole affair were entirely in the natural order.

It has been noted earlier that the Eucharist differs from the other sacraments in that it is perfected or accomplished, not in its actual use, but in the very consecration of the material; and that, unlike the other sacraments, the consecration of its material is not in a blessing by which the matter receives instrumental power, but in the miraculous conversion of the substance. Necessarily, then, there is a difference in the double form of this sacrament compared to the forms of the others. All the others contained the notion of the use of the sacrament—baptize, confirm, anoint, and so on—while this one implies no more than the actual consecration; as a result, the forms of all the others are expressed in the person of the minister, by way of command, or by way of prayer; the

words of this form proceed as from the person of Christ Himself speaking, giving us clearly to understand that the minister does nothing but speak the words.

A momentary glance at this double form will help to avoid some rather serious misunderstanding. Thus the form of consecration of the bread is: "This is my body." Notice that it is not said that "This is made my body," or "This is becoming my body"; for this change is instantaneous and must be expressed in terms of an accomplished fact. In the expression of such a change, the word "this" cannot refer to what is no longer present but to what is contained under the species or accidents, while "my body" refers to the proper nature of the substance now present. It is to be particularly noted that these words are to be taken not only as significative but also as causative, for the sacraments are signs which produce what they signify; consequently, these words do not presuppose a change already taken place and merely express it, they cause that change. And, since this change is instantaneous yet must be expressed in the necessarily successive medium of words, these words are not to be cut up, separated, but the whole expression must be understood with reference to the last instant of the words being spoken. Notice, too, that Christ did not say "This bread is my body," nor "My body is my body," but "This is my body," i.e., what was formerly bread and contained under these species is now the body of Christ. All of this is, of course, equally true of the form of consecration of the wine.

Both parts of this double form have the fundamental fittingness of perfect signs, that is, they clearly signify consecration. The form for the consecration of the wine is considerably longer than that of the bread: "This is the chalice of my blood, of the New and Eternal Testament, the mystery of Faith, which shall be shed for you and for many unto the forgiveness of sins." Thus, over and above the fundamental fittingness of this sign, there is the added expression of the triple purpose of the shedding of Christ's blood: that we might

receive the heritage of the Testaments, that we might come to justice through faith, and that our sins might be forgiven us.

Like the forms of all the other sacraments, the form of the Eucharist is an instrument; in the very words, then, there is an instrumental power making possible the accomplishment of an effect totally above the natural power of words. Each part of the Eucharistic form, that is the words of consecration of the bread and those of consecration of the wine, has this instrumental power and independently. So that, if it should happen that only the words of consecration of the bread were said, Christ would be present under the accidents of bread even though the wine were never consecrated. Otherwise, the words themselves would not, in fact, produce what they signify, indeed, they would be quite completely false.

Once the words of this double form are said by the priest over the proper matter, the Bread of Angels is prepared and ready for the tables of men. Possibly it will always be true that men will not throng the banquet hall where such a meal is served. They know well that they cannot hold to life and neglect the things by which a man lives, the difficulty for the men of all ages has been the complexity of life which is open to every man. That his animal life cannot be sustained without the nourishment offered by the things beneath him which exist to serve him has been clear to every man; a wrong diet, or complete abstinence from food in this order, has immediate and unmistakable results that refuse to be ignored. But man has not been nearly so keen in his perception of the vital needs of his rational life; he has been too often completely dense about the divine life that is his for the taking.

All ages have seen what truth will do for a man, and what goodness will do both for a man and all those with whom he comes into contact; the scholar and the saint, the two who have not neglected the nourishment of rational life, are signally honored in the history of men. In our own times, we are furnished with firsthand knowledge of what a diet of lies and error can do to a man, for we have seen more than

the perversion of the minds of men, the twisting of their lives, and the convulsion of their world; we have seen them commit intellectual suicide by denying themselves all basis of rational life. We are as familiar as any other age with the corroding effects of evil; we are more familiar with the convulsive death of things human brought on by a professed ignorance of any distinction between good and evil, or, indeed, of the very existence of one or the other.

If men can make such mistakes about their own rational life, it is understandable that the divine life to which they have been invited should suffer no small neglect. Originally rejected with an air of regret, that food has become a vague echo from history to millions of men today. Perhaps, originally, it was too much for the pride of men to accept a food that was so far above them that they must fall down in adoration before it even as they ate it; certainly it was much too rich in the demands it made on their minds and their hearts, too rich, that is, for comfort. It is not easy to live on the body of God, however sweet the heavenly food; and ease is one of the fondest illusions of the children of men.

Yet the fact remains that, spiritually, a man is what he eats; that he cannot keep his soul alive on the things beneath him, nor mangle the things above him for spiritual nourishment as he does things beneath him for physical nourishment. Because no man welcomes death, all sorts of substitutes have been concocted for the Bread of Life. Man cannot live without a superior to nourish him; the death of starvation was not warded off but made to look like a banquet when men made their own superior thing for their own nourishment. Sometimes it took the form of a class, a race, a party, a political ideal, the vague future of humanity; but in all these cases, it was men who were food for the absolute and who were destroyed by it, not the absolute that was food for men, perfecting them.

In other words, man dies whether he attempts to content himself with things beneath him or whether, realizing their

inadequacy, he attempts to create his own superior; in the one case, he is accustoming himself to the husks of swine, in the other he is munching on his own self. In both cases, there is not nourishment, not life, but degradation and death awaiting the diners. It is still true: "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you."

Thomas, then, had a double reason for pouring his heart out on his Eucharistic treatises: his grateful love of the God Who nourishes men, and his restless, sympathetic love for the millions of men who were nauseated by the heavenly food because they had not tasted it. At any rate, the Angel of the Schools outdid himself in writing of the Bread of Angels. His theological treatise in the *Summa*, the divine Office of *Corpus Christi*, his Eucharistic poems are masterpieces, fusions of mind and heart smelted by all the pent-up fury of Thomas's love; and the precious metals poured into the melting pot were no ordinary mind, no ordinary heart, but the mind of a genius and the heart of a saint. Since his time, the world has echoed with his music, in every church in the world his *O Salutaris* and *Tantum Ergo* say for all men what every man must say as he bows in adoration before the Bread which came down from heaven.

CHAPTER XV
(OUTLINE)
THE UNDYING VICTIM
(Q. 79-83)

- 1 Limitations of help:**
 - (a) The fact and bases of limitation in general
 - (b) Prerequisites of help
- 2 Help of the undying Victim:**
 - (a) Need of a victim
 - (b) Need of food
 - (c) Anemic rebels and rebels in starvation
- 3. The bread of life**
 - (a) Relative to those receiving it
 - (1) Its direct contributions to life
 - a Grace, sanctifying and sacramental
 - b Glory
 - (2) Its indirect contributions to life
 - a Remission of sin
 - b Preservation from sin
 - c Remission of punishment
 - (b) Relative to those assisting at its accomplishment.
 - (c) Impediments to its effects
- 4. The banquet table**
 - (a) Manner of receiving the food
 - (b) Guests of the banquet
 - (1) In general—invited and uninvited guests
 - (2) At the first banquet—the Last Supper
 - (c) Servants of the table
 - (1) Of the accomplishment of the sacrament.
 - (2) Of its distribution
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- 5 The undying Victim**
 - (a) The substance of the sacrifice
 - (b) The accidents of the sacrifice
 - (1) Its time and place
 - (2) The words of its celebration.
 - (3) The acts of its celebration
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Conclusion

- 1 Two forms of unity:**
 - (a) Of absorption.
 - (b) Of friendship
- 2 The bonds of the unions**
- 3. The Victim and the victims.**

CHAPTER XV

THE UNDYING VICTIM

(Q. 79-83)

MORE is necessary than a full, flowing stream if we are to get a pail of water; at least we need an empty pail. More than a generous heart is necessary if we are to help others; yet, even emptiness on the part of the one we are trying to help and willingness to help on our side are not enough. Concrete proof of this statement is had from the floods of knowledge that pour from the lips of teachers day after day in America, rushing over the empty heads of thousands and thousands of children; when the flood is stopped at the end of the day, many a pupil emerges unscathed. Surely, an empty-headed pupil and a learned teacher do not complete the recipe for successful communication of knowledge.

Nor is this peculiar to the art of teaching. A superior soon recognizes the difficulty of giving correction to a proud man; a parent quickly sees the futility of much of the advice he gives to the young; while the flatterer is constantly balked and bewildered in his attempts to inflate a humble man. This is a peculiarity of man which is the basis of his social life and of the possibility of the negation of that social life. He can communicate with others, giving and receiving; but he can also refuse to communicate. He has the unique privilege of saying "no."

In fact, man can go much further than a brusque refusal; he can argue himself into the most untenable positions, and hold them. He can, for instance, blind and deafen himself to the point where he does not, positively cannot, see his need

for help. This is the foundation upon which most of the helpless who will not be helped build their strange fortresses. Ultimately, no doubt, the whole thing must be traced back to exaggerated self-sufficiency; at least, the acceptance of help is a humble, and often humiliating, business.

There is a clear expression of the prerequisites of help in the charming and familiar story of the prodigal son; finally casting aside the husks of swine which were his only food, he returned to his father's house protesting his unworthiness, and was fêted with music, dancing, and the fatted calf. It is to be noticed that he first came to a realization of his starvation; then went on to an acknowledgment of his unworthiness and rebellion against the rule of his father's house. There would have been no prodigal son had he so accommodated himself to the diet of swine as to be blind to his own starvation, or if he had forgotten his father's house and had remained unconvinced of his own unworthiness. Even with all these, the story would never have been told had there been no return and subjection to his father.

Christ, the undying Victim, hanging on the cross or renewing that sublime sacrifice in the Mass, brings infinite help to men; but not if they are blind to their need of a victim. The Living Bread that came down from heaven offers rich nourishment to the souls of men; but vainly if they are unaware of their starvation. Well, the modern objects, why should we need a victim? We have got along some three hundred years without sacrifice. Why should we need food? We have been doing well enough without it.

You see, men can blind themselves, particularly when they stare into the hypnotic eyes of pride. Man needs a victim because he is not God; because he has superiors above him as well as inferiors beneath him, because the Supreme Superior is the almighty Lord of all things. In the name of the truth of his own nature and of the divine nature, man must recognize divine sovereignty; or, what amounts to the same thing, he must recognize his own position in the universe. Moreover,

that recognition must come in an expression harmonious with his nature and significative of the supreme dominion of God. In a word, sacrifice must offer to God a sensible offering in whose consumption or destruction is publicly declared God's supreme dominion.

He would need a victim, this man, even had he remained totally innocent of sin and on a purely natural level; for he would still be man, and God would still be God. Since he has been raised to a divine plane, invited to live the life of God, an acknowledgment of that divine supremacy is even more pressingly necessary; it should be more readily seen and more easily given. When we add the fact that man has rebelled against truth by sinning, we have noted the added necessity of reconciliation to truth's proclamation.

Why does man need food? Again, because he is not God but man. He needs food for his soul as well as for his body because he is a man and not merely an animal. He cannot live on himself, for his life is not from himself; he cannot live on things beneath him, because a part of him is not ennobled or enlivened, but degraded and sickened by feeding on the things of earth. We might say that a Catholic is an anemic creature spiritually who needs a victim and food; a Catholic sinner is still more anemic and in need of food and a victim both for nourishment and reconciliation; while the modern pagan is a rebel in starvation who denies his rebellion and smiles away his starvation.

Need of a victim and food really means the need of truth, peace, and plenty. Without a victim, man can never have truth or peace, for the denial of God's sovereignty is a declaration of war on the First Truth. Without food for the soul, there can never be that plenty in man's life which is the fullness of life, of love, of union with God. The modern pagan surrenders hope for peace and plenty, yet, strangely, talks unceasingly of security. He has officially joined the band of the helpless who will not be helped.

Though its uniqueness is sufficient title to a place in history,

that is not exactly the point of my mentioning here that once upon a time a procurator served Camembert cheese in an American Dominican refectory. The cheese went solemnly untouched past the uplifted nose of student after student; finally arriving in the professors' territory, it was immediately demolished by unanimously cooperative action due, no doubt, to the fact that an unlooked-for fruit of European training is the proper evaluation of cheese and wine as staples of life. This is not merely a matter of history; rather, it is a rough parallel of the Old Testament story of the Israelites whose souls were nauseated by the light food God had sent them in the form of manna. If we add just a touch more of disgust, we can grasp a not uncommon opinion of the sacred food of the Eucharist; it is the same reaction that greeted Christ's first promise of it: "These are hard words, and who can hear them?" Hard words, indeed, that man should live by the flesh of God.

Let us look at that food more closely. In previous volumes of this work, and more than once in this volume, we have seen that sanctifying grace is the supernatural life of the soul. Where one finds a sensible sign containing and producing grace and its effects, there is a sacrament feeding the soul of man. In this sacrament, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is really contained; His passion is here represented and renewed, a renewal of the fountainhead of all grace. As a consequence, this sacrament is a rich banquet which refreshes the spiritual life of the soul, sustaining it, increasing it, repairing the ravishes of daily life, flooding the soul with delight. It is food fit for a king.

That this is true becomes clearer as we focus our attention on the sacramental grace of the Eucharist, the special titles to graces necessary to attain the particular end of the sacrament. The precise object of the Eucharist is charity or the union of love between the members of Christ's Mystical Body and their Head. Just as the sacramental grace of Matrimony gives title to the helps necessary to meet the difficulties and emergencies of the long years of married life, so the Eucharist gives men

a right to the actual graces necessary to make acts of love of God, every act increasing, deepening, adding power in action to that common life we share with God.

The full implications of this truth are too often passed over; yet, they are plain enough and of profound significance. It will be remembered that in the preceding volume, it was said that the basis of friendship is a common ground. On the human level, an increase in friendship is a matter of increasing or deepening that common ground within ourselves, hoping that our friend will keep pace with us or, at least, keep that common ground alive; though there is nothing we can do about its dying out in him. If we realize that the supernatural life of the soul is precisely that common ground of divine life, sanctifying grace, and that it does not grow greater or less in God, to Whom it belongs essentially, but only in us, then we begin to see something of the full meaning of the special end of the Eucharist. It is to make fuller the life of God within us, to increase His friendship, not only at that instant in which we receive the sacrament, but for the future, giving us rights to the graces necessary constantly to increase that divine friendship by acts of charity. Once this is really understood, we can see the wisdom of Pius X in insisting on early Communion and appreciate, to some little extent, the torrent of divine love that overflowed the heart of the child Imelda on her reception of her first—and last—Communion.

This food is indeed the food of angels; yet, it is only a promise of what is prepared for us by this sacrament, a taste snatched in the kitchen before the heavenly banquet. It gives us Him Who has thrown open the gates of heaven, sowing the seed of eternal glory, sanctifying grace, with a complete assurance of strong, quick growth; it is, truly, a solemn pledge of the full bloom of that eternal glory. If grace is glory in embryo, as it is, then the Eucharist gives both the means and the promise of development of that embryo in giving us the right to the graces necessary for acts of charity.

Food is an engrossing subject, but only among healthy,

hungry men. It is rare that it is discussed over the cigars and liqueurs. A thumping headache takes all the reasonableness out of breakfast; a sick stomach makes us wonder how people can talk of anything so disgusting as food. With a little fever, food is out of the question; if we are really sick, then it is time for the cook to take her vacation and for the druggist's wife to price fur coats. All this is in the natural order; in the supernatural and spiritual order, things are quite reversed. This food creates a hunger for more of it; an overstuffed angel dozing in the afternoon sun is no less inconceivable than a human soul that has had too much to eat. It just cannot happen, for spiritual food enlarges our capacity rather than exhausts it.

As for illness, that is what this food is for; there are no spiritual drugstores. A slight spiritual indisposition—headache, stomach ache, a little fever—all these are grouped together under the name of venial sin; and they are directly destroyed by the food from this angelic banquet table. For the proper effect of the Eucharist—acts of charity—directly remits venial sin by the displeasure at sin which is contained in charity. Charity, you see, is always whole-hearted protestation of love of God, with no conditions attached; it simply cannot permit a treasured collection of snapshots of former lovers, beribboned bundles of correspondence, or regretful sighs at loving memories.

To look at it in another way, the wear and tear of daily life on our souls is not caused by the exercise of virtue; for virtue is not exhausting, it is invigorating. The tired business man in the supernatural order is a man who has been about the wrong business, the business of sin. The burning up of energy by activity in the natural order can be paralleled in the supernatural order only by the heat of passion and other venial sins which diminish the fervor of charity. Just as food and rest restore the energy burned up by physical activity, so the *Bread of Life* restores the brightness and alertness of charity and repairs the damage done by venial sin.

Not even a chef, acknowledged as supreme by his most jealous fellows, feels insulted when a dead man looks coldly upon his confections. A dead man has no use for food so, in an eminently practical way, he has nothing whatever to do with it; food ministers to life. This supernatural food, the body of Christ, is not for dead men, for men in mortal sin. To serve it to the dead and have them consume it would be a desecration of a sacred food; indeed, this reception of the sign of unity, when unity has been broken by mortal sin, would be a living lie, a mockery of the whole signification of the sacramental sign.

Such is the wonder of the divine order, however, that if a dead man, not realizing he is dead, approaches this sacrament, he is brought to life. For this sacrament contains Christ Himself, the source of all remission of sin; unquestionably He can make clean the foulest soul. It is true that the sacrament was limited, by Christ's own institution, to nourishment of the living; yet, it infallibly produces grace where the subject does not place an impediment and the mortal sinner who is unconscious of his sin has placed no obstacle to the sacrament. To put this in practical terms, there is no place for fear in approaching Holy Communion: we do not have to fear venial sin, for the sacrament forgives it; we do not have to worry that we might have forgotten some mortal sin, or that there is serious sin unforgiven through some accident or imperfection of our past confessions, for in all these circumstances, the sacrament brings us life.

Just as natural food builds up our strength and gives us resistance to disease, so the Eucharist, as food of the soul, is also medicine of the soul. It builds up the strength by which we can throw off the attacks of sin; indeed, it goes further and assures a constant weakening of the attacks of sin. For the acts of charity, which are its direct effect, flow from and increase the appetite for the things of God; automatically, then, it decreases the concupiscence of the flesh, the appetite for the things contrary to God. These two appetites are nicely bal-

anced against one another: as one increases, the other decreases; as one is plentifully fed, the other languishes; the starvation of one is the best diet for the well-being of the other.

Of course, the attacks of sin are not going to be annihilated; there will always be some fighting, even though it be no more than annoying guerrilla warfare by insignificant detachments behind the lines. We cannot organize a huge campaign against sin, crush it, and then embark on a program of disarmament; we must resign ourselves to a perpetual state of organized defense to meet the constancy of these attacks. This sacrament arms us with the weapon that makes all hell tremble, the weapon of the cross; for the sacrament is, in itself, a symbol of the passion of Christ, a last souvenir of friendship and suffering, a renewal of the story of Calvary. By it, God makes a living sign of the cross on the soul of a man; and that stark symbol is one Satan can never understand but has feared from that first moment when the cross stood against a darkened sky.

As food, this sacrament is not ordered to undoing the ravages of disease; the after effects of sin, that is, punishments, are not dealt with directly by the Eucharist as a sacrament. Nevertheless, its invigorating strength indirectly reaches out to destroy even this unhappy memory of evil days; for the sacrament produces acts of charity and the punishment due to sin is not fireproof against the white heat of charity's fervor.

The Eucharist as a sacrifice is another matter. Like that of the cross, the sacrifice of the Mass is offered to God directly in satisfaction for sin; to this end it produces its definite effect. In itself, this sacrifice, with the Son of God as the Victim and High Priest, is more than enough to remit all punishment due for all sins, for it is of infinite worth. Its effect has been limited (by the institution of Christ) to finite proportions from the side of the Church, the offering priest, and those for whom it is offered. Christ has made no limitation whatsoever on those who benefit by this sacrifice. He died for all men, and this is a renewal of His sacrifice; the prayers of the Canon of the Mass, then, which reach out their arms to embrace all

the living and the dead are an integral part of that divine compassion that stretched the arms of the Son of Mary wide on the cross. No one is excluded; but, of course, those who actually assist at the sacrifice can profit more by it, and still more if they actually partake of the heavenly food.

On this point, there has been a good deal of cavilling recently on the more or less consecrated phrase, "offering up a Communion." If we are to insist on the utmost technical rigor, we may argue that this term is inaccurate: we offer up the Mass, for it is a sacrifice; but Holy Communion is food, a gift, a privilege, something not offered but enjoyed. But as the phrase is ordinarily understood by Catholics, it is a handy expression of a fact that is both a little too complicated for ordinary language and much too sublime to be perfectly mirrored in words. We share a privilege; by reason of food's nourishment, we are stronger to do for others; an increase in friendship brings us closer to our friend and puts us in a more favorable position to demand much more for others. This is what happens in the intimate union with our divine Friend in the Eucharist. Perhaps, "I will remember you in my Communion," would be better than "I will offer up my Communion for you." At any rate, what we do is make a promise, and by that promise the thing is secured, that at the sacred moment when Christ is within us, we will plead the cause of others.

In this particular case, since our Friend is divine, a long list of desired favors drawn up beforehand carries no threat of weariness or displeasure to this intimate meeting of friends. On the contrary, it is an authentic confession of our need of Him—a profound consolation to any friend—and a clear proof of the wide embrace of our love of neighbor. From another angle, there is great generosity on our part in giving even a little of this divine colloquy to others. It is so completely ours, so intimately personal, and so completely effective for ourselves.

Indeed, nothing short of mortal sin can stop the primary effects of this sacrament in our souls; unless that impassable

barrier blocks the path of God's generosity, we infallibly receive sanctifying grace and charity. Past venial sins, however numerous they may be, do not hold up these gifts, not even venial sins actually being committed during the reception of the sacrament deter the divine Friend from completing the embrace of His love. For these divine effects, we need no more than the state of grace and the right intention.

We do pay a high price for tying strings to our heart at this time, playing with the trinkets of venial sin instead of entertaining the divine Guest; for actual venial sins do take our minds off this gesture of friendship, destroying our devotion, and robbing us of much, if not all, of the spiritual sweetness and consolation that might have been ours. From our side, it becomes an absent-minded kiss, but, because God has a part in it and His love is always creative, it has profound effects in our souls. As a penalty for our absent-mindedness, we hardly taste its sweetness.

Every man will take his food, even his supernatural food, in his own way; and with surprisingly different results. Shivering in sub-zero cold, a man can drink whiskey with no more effect than if it were water. In the heat of argument, a man can dash down a glass of wine and never know he has taken it, a man in love gets all the heady effects of wine without bothering to draw the cork; while the tired French peasant, in the leisurely quiet of the evening, takes his wine with slow, deep appreciation, reaping a richer harvest than nourishment. In the supernatural order, an infidel can eat the Bread of Life with no more effect than a sheep or a horse munching grass, even though this be a very chic infidel. On the other hand, infants, the perpetually insane, and half-wits who have been baptized all receive both the sacred sign and the grace and charity it signifies because of the spiritual power given them by Baptism. While a Catholic in mortal sin receives the sacred sign, but to his own damnation.

In other words, the Eucharist can be received only sacramentally, as in the case of infidels or Catholics in mortal sin.

It can be received only spiritually, as in a spiritual communion or a communion of desire. Or it can be received both sacramentally and spiritually, that is, both as regards its outer signification and its inner effects; this is what happens when a person in the state of grace approaches the Communion rail. These last alone are the invited guests, wearing the required wedding garments, though they come from the highways, byways, and dark alleys of the world.

A Catholic recoils in horror from the idea of an unworthy Communion. Nor is this revulsion explained fully by the fact that this is the gravest of all sacrileges, that, next to the sins against divinity itself and the humanity of Christ, it is the gravest of all sins. There is in the back of the Catholic's mind the memory of another false gesture of friendship, another kiss given in betrayal; and the threatening darkness of Gethsemane seems to gather in his heart at the thought of it. Fortunately for our peace of mind, since we all know our deep-seated unworthiness so well, an unworthy communion is not an easy thing to accomplish. It is never the result of an accident, of forgetfulness, or of inattention; it has to be done deliberately, on purpose. There can be no doubt about it. Even when it does so happen, it is often due in no small degree to human respect, shame, a bit of cowardice that has much more resemblance to the weakness of Pilate than to the baseness of Judas.

Still, if these uninvited guests approach the divine banquet table publicly, Christ is not one to cover them with confusion by refusing to give them the Bread they dare to ask; Judas, too, drank of the sacred cup. If the individual in question is a public sinner, one who by an unreformed life that is public knowledge has already gone well beyond the reach of confusion, then it is a different matter. If the priest knows there has been no repentance, he can and should refuse Communion; but that knowledge is so extremely hard to come by as to be almost impossible. The priest must *know*, know beyond all chance of doubt; for the arms of Christ have ever been

wide enough to embrace any and all sinners on the one condition of repentance.

If the approach to Communion is a private one, then both the public sinner and the secret sinner, whose sins are known to the priest, are to be refused the sacrament. But, again, the priest must know. Even though he has that difficult knowledge, the priest is not to refuse the sacrament if the approach to it is public, then the royal Guest is ushered into the disorderly house of that soul by His own priest. A day will come when judgment will be passed on this violation of a sacred thing, for the present, let the sinner learn the depths of divine love for him by the length of the patience of God.

The Church insists on a fast from midnight before the reception of this sacrament. The reasonableness of the command as a protection against drunkenness and gluttony is evident; this, after all, is not the place for a saturated champion of his own appetites. But we have missed much of the meaning of the fast if we stop at that purely negative purpose. It is a little gesture of reverence, this mortification of ours, a gesture by which we brush all the things of the world aside, even necessary things, that we might be utterly alone with Christ; we plug the doorbell, cut off the telephone, and lock the doors by way of assuring Him we want nothing to intrude on His visit. Indeed, that fast is a symbol of the perfection of the food we are to receive: the Bread of Life upon which we can live alone, live forever, and know only a hunger for still more of this same Bread.

There are cases, of course, when the fast from midnight is dispensed with. Obviously, it should be set aside if, otherwise, a man might go hungry for the nourishment of his soul or when, by this little gesture of reverence, a very great irreverence may be visited on the sacrament. Thus, a priest who is not fasting may complete the Mass of another who has taken sick. The faithful may touch the sacred Species and consume them, lest they be profaned by the enemies of Christ. Sometimes the broken fast must be disregarded to avoid public scandal, or to

receive Viaticum, a companion for the last few steps of the road home. Adults who have tasted salt in their baptismal ceremony may yet receive Communion immediately after. Finally, the sick, who have little hope of quick recovery, may receive Communion once or twice a week after taking medicine or some liquid nourishment. The Church, you see, has reaped no little harvest of wisdom and common sense in two thousand years of caring for men.

There might seem to be two extremes relative to the use of this sacrament, that is, not to receive it at all or to receive it every day. Actually, these are not extremes at all. One is absolutely forbidden in its complete denial of the use of the sacrament; we must receive it at least once a year. There is, in other words, a positive law against spiritual hunger-strikes. The other is urgently advised; we should receive Communion frequently, even daily and, while this latter is often a matter of a confessor's advice, it is not necessarily so. The reason for the counsel is obvious. We cannot get too close to God; there is no danger of too intimate a friendship with Him. We have nothing to fear, nothing to lose, and everything to gain; even a foretaste of the joys of heaven.

This was a last gesture of friendship. It is bread, not poison. The sacrifice of the Mass and the distribution of Holy Communion were introduced into the world as the one note of gladness in that last sad meal of the little company of Christ on Holy Thursday. On that night, Christ Himself said the Mass and gave His body and blood to His disciples, first receiving them Himself; as in all else, He observed what He commanded. Since that time, the priest has always received Communion under both the species of bread and of wine, thus completing the sacrifice; because of the danger of spilling the wine in distributing it to the faithful, this was early abandoned as a risk that was totally unnecessary since Christ is whole and entire under both species.

It is the opinion of St. Thomas that Christ Himself gave Holy Communion to His false friend, Judas, thus setting an

example for the treatment of secret sinners at the Communion rail; their judgment is for later. If this is true, it is not in the least surprising or puzzling to us who know something of the kind heart of Christ. What may well be puzzling about that Last Supper and first Mass, is the condition of the body which Christ Himself received, it must be puzzling, for it wears the intangible garments of mystery.

Consecrating that night, Christ said: "This is my body." Then, as now, the effect of those words was to change the substance of the bread into that of the true body of Christ, that is, the body which this Man, Christ, here and now possesses. At that first sacrifice, then, Christ and His apostles received a body capable of suffering, not a glorified body; for that was the condition of the true body of Christ. If a particle of that consecrated bread had been preserved through the hours of Calvary, though it could not have been spit upon, beaten or scourged, the body of Christ it contained would have died in the sacrament; during the days of Christ's burial, the body in the sacrament would have been a dead body. On Easter morning, it would have been a glorified body united to the soul of Christ.

All this is saying no more than that the Eucharist contains Christ Himself; not a sign of Christ, not a symbol of Him, not a memory of His body. The form of the sacrament, the words of consecration, has no power other than to produce the body and blood of Christ in the condition in which they exist at the time of consecration. Once produced, body and blood are real and, of course, in no different a condition in the sacrament from their condition outside of it; for they are one and the same body and blood.

In instituting the sacrament and sacrifice, Christ said to His apostles: "Do this in commemoration of me." He spoke to them alone; they and their successors have the power to consecrate bread and wine, and no one else. However faithfully others may imitate the rites of consecration, the effect of transubstantiation is not produced. It is only through the act of

the spiritual power given in the sacrament of Holy Orders that this wonder of God's generosity can be worked. It is the principal and exclusive work of priests. They accomplish the sacrament in the consecration of the Mass, not in the distribution of Communion to the faithful, though they are the ordinary ministers of Communion. In case of necessity, and by a special delegation, a deacon may distribute Communion; indeed, to give Viaticum even a layman may distribute Communion. For the consecration, however, no exception can be made; only one who has received the indelible character of Holy Orders has this power.

Once had, it cannot be lost. The priest may be in a state of sin, he may be a schismatic, a heretic, an apostate; the character remains indelible, the spiritual power at the root of effective consecration is not destroyed, weakened, diluted. A priest in such a condition evidently does not do himself any good by consecrating; the point is that, in spite of the damage of sin done to the priest himself, the sacrament remains intact. The Masses of such priests, and the official prayers they say in connection with it, are no less inherently effective than those of St. Thomas Aquinas, the poet of the Blessed Sacrament.

There are some few circumstances which justify the faithful in seeking the sacraments from unworthy priests; but, normally, the procedure is rightly indicated by the Catholic's instinct to shun the spiritual touch of such as these, as he would shun the touch of a leper. The sheep still know the voice of the shepherd and shy away from the voice of a stranger. Surely, nothing a priest does is so intimately connected with the care of the flock of Christ as his offering of sacrifice for them. Indeed, it is because of this that there is a solemn obligation on every pastor to offer Mass for his people on Sundays and holydays of obligation.

Beyond that, and short of some obligation of justice such as a stipend, a benefice, and so on, Mass is a privilege for the priest, not an obligation. Theologians agree that a priest must say Mass several times within the year. But this is hardly a

thing to which a man need be driven, especially a man to whom this must be the very center of life; a man does not need to be beaten to his own hearth, unless he has long since forgotten it is his. Then he is a homeless man making a gesture of home life that has no more truth in it than a forced smile or a handshake from an enemy.

For the priest is at home on the altar, and not much of anywhere else. He belongs there, and it is terribly important to the people that he be there; for they need the Victim and the sacrifice as an acknowledgment of the fundamental truth of God's dominion. They need the priest because man cannot subsist on a lie. It is not without significance that the Catholic Church, alone of all Christian churches, still has the Victim and the sacrifice at a time when the Christian world is losing its hold on the truth of God, the truth of man, and the truth of the universe.

Earlier in this book, we treated the notion of sacrifice in dealing with the death of Christ. Here, we must at least recall the definition of sacrifice as the destruction or immolation of a sensible thing by a legitimate minister, made to God alone in testimony of His supreme dominion. The destruction of the victim signifies God's mastery of life and death; its offering by a legitimate minister makes it an official act of the community; that it be a sensible thing is demanded because it is a human thing and a community thing, and it is only by sensible signs that men communicate with one another. In the New Testament, that sacrifice is Calvary and its renewal in the Mass. Our sacrifice, then, is a representation and renewal of the sacrifice of the cross: by it, Christ is offered and mystically immolated. or destroyed, in an unbloody sacrifice under the accidents of bread and wine. It is sacrifice offered by a priest in acknowledgment of the supreme dominion of God and for the application to us of the satisfaction and merits of Christ.

Those who deny that Calvary was a sacrifice must, of course, deny the sacrifice of the Mass. Those who question the presence of Christ in the Eucharist cannot admit the Mass as a

sacrifice, for they have denied the Victim. From the beginning, the doctrine of faith on the true sacrifice involved in the Mass was clearly understood and jealously cherished; it seemed so obvious in spite of accidental differences. Men saw, of course, that on the cross the sacrifice was bloody, while here it is unbloody; that there, Christ offered Himself immediately, here He offers Himself through the ministry of the priest; there, He paid the price of redemption, here He applies it. There is the same type of substantial unity and accidental difference between the Mass and the Last Supper. There, Christ Himself offered the sacrifice, here He offers it through the hands of the priest; there, He looked forward to Calvary, here He looks back to Calvary. But all three are substantially the same, indeed, they are specifically the same. From the side of the Victim and the principal Priest, they are numerically the same. They differ only from the side of the action of the priest offering the sacrifice.

It never occurred to the thinkers of the Church seriously to defend the sacrifice of the Mass because it was not seriously challenged. There is no such exhaustive examination made of the Mass as there is of many other truths of faith. It was only after the attack of the Protestant Reformers in the sixteenth century that theologians plunged into a detailed examination of the essence of the Mass and the formal reason of sacrifice in it. Today, it is generally agreed by theologians that the action of the sacrifice consists in the consecration alone, with relation, of course, to the consuming of the species as an integral part of the sacrifice.

There is, however, a wide variety of opinion as to what makes up the formal notion of sacrifice in the Mass. All admit that there is a mystical immolation or destruction. Some see this immolation in the lowering of Christ to the state of food and drink. Others place it in the mystical killing of Christ by the sacramental separation of body and blood which thus gives Christ the external garments of death. Perhaps the most tangible of these opinions is that which places the formal reason of

sacrifice in the sacramental separation of the body and blood by the words of consecration, in so far as they, of themselves, virtually kill the victim; the words of consecration, producing only what they signify, produce first the body and then, by the words of consecration of the wine, the blood. Thus virtually, or considering the proper power of the words, body is separated from blood; normally, this is certain death. This action, death-producing in itself, is impeded by what the theologians call "natural concomitance"; that is, the body produced by the words also has all that is naturally joined to it, namely, blood, soul and divinity, and the blood produced by the words also has all that is naturally joined to it, namely, body, soul and divinity.

This is not too difficult if we remember the difference between physical and mystical immolation. The former is a true immolation with the physical change or destruction of the victim; the latter is no less real and true an immolation, but without the *physical* change. Mystical immolation, then, is present when the sacrificial action—in itself and its reception by the victim fatally destructive—is impeded by some other disposition of the victim. In other words, the sacrificial action virtually, considering its own power, produces the effect of destruction.

Let us look at it in the concrete. John the Evangelist was thrown into boiling oil; by a miracle he emerged unharmed. The immolation was real, but mystical. It is true that such a sacrificial action, received in a person or thing existing under their proper accidents, can be prevented only by a miracle. But where the person or thing does not exist under its proper accidents, as is the case in the Eucharist, the sacrificial action falls, not on the accidents, but directly on the substance.

The immolation of John, though mystical, was real and sensible. The immolation of Christ in the Mass is mystical, real, but sensible only in so far as the words of the form and the immediate object, not through its own accidents but those of bread and wine, are sensible. It must always, of course,

remain the mystery of the Mass, as Calvary must always remain the mysterious offering of the death of God. In fact, the Mass is not nearly so mysterious in its manner of accomplishment as in the solemn fact that the Victim of this real sacrifice is God Himself. Only God could have thought of it; only God could have found ways to accomplish it; the ways of the Incarnation and the consecration. Only the generosity of God could have gone through with the incredible act of love; only men could doubt the gift of God they held in their hands.

Because of the august character of the mystery, the general law of the Church demands that it be celebrated only in sacred places; that is, in blessed churches and oratories which have not been profaned or polluted. For the same reason, sacred vessels, specially blessed, must be used, and only altars that have been consecrated. As for the time of the celebration, though customs have varied down through the ages, the common law today permits the saying of Mass from one hour before dawn to an hour after mid-day.

Wherever and whenever it is said, the Mass is always the perfectly constructed drama. It is not mere representation, but the drama of the death of God, written by God, with God as the central figure. God is a very good playwright. Every word, every gesture is packed with meaning. A total stranger to the faith, assisting at Mass, is mightily impressed; a wholly ignorant Catholic is lifted out of himself; while the Catholic who has familiarized himself with the detailed meaning of the liturgy finds the Mass an absorbing story, an earnest prayer, a high romance, as well as a supreme sacrifice.

In two articles, St. Thomas gives a detailed treatment of the words and acts of this drama; on the same topic, whole volumes have been written. Manifestly, it is impossible to go into great detail here. In a quick, free-hand sketch that just catches the outlines, we may notice here that Thomas, in the words of the Mass, distinguishes several steps. A period of intense preparation stretches from the beginning to the completion of the proper prayer of the Mass. A period of instruction extends

from the epistle and includes the *Credo*. The very heart of the Mass includes an offering or offertory; the consecration, extending from the Preface to the Lord's Prayer; the preparation for Communion, from the Lord's prayer to the Communion. Finally there is a short but intense thanksgiving.

The acts of the Mass can be roughly divided into those that commemorate the passion of Christ and those that pertain either to devotion or reverence. In the first group are the signs of the cross, the mystic number of times they are used, the outstretched arms of the priest after the consecration, and so on. In the second, are all such acts as the upraised hands of the priest in saying the prayers; while the third includes such as the inclinations made by the priest, the washing of the hands, the taking of wine and water after Communion, and so on.

Deficiencies at one time or another in the offering of the Mass are rendered certain by the fact that the minister of the Mass is a man. The priest may get sick, he may die, the church may be bombed; the material used may be imperfect, the priest may forget this or that part of the Mass, or not be sure he has said this or that word. And so on and on to the thousands of things that perpetually furnish young priests with ample material for worry. Every care is taken in advance that nothing will interrupt the sacrifice, nothing work to invalidate it; every possible situation is foreseen and provided for. If, in spite of this, some defects occur, there is legislation covering the situation either by way of supplying the defects or administering punishment to a negligent priest. It would be hard to ask more in the way of solicitude for the Mass.

In the beginning, God remarked, almost in an off-hand fashion, that it was not good for man to be alone. He might have made that much stronger by saying that man refuses to live alone. He must unite himself with others who are his equals or inferiors, he must attach himself to some superior being. He has admitted the truth of his loneliness in all his social activities from the beginning. He has insisted upon unity,

even though, at times, he paid much too high a price for quite the wrong kind of unity.

The wisdom of the East advocated a unity of absorption; by it, a man was united to the absolute, but to the complete destruction of his own individuality and personality. The program was thoroughly oriental in its whole outlook and genius; yet, from time to time, it seems to have had a subtle, reptilian fascination for small groups of men of the West. It is only in very recent times that it has dared, by an open appearance, to risk the wrath of men nourished on Christianity. Such a thing cannot be tolerated for an instant where there is an appreciation of the humanity of man. Its success in winning millions to the ideal of absorption into a process, a state, a group, or a race, is itself an evidence of how thoroughly man had been calumniated by his champions of the last three centuries.

The unity which has been the characteristic aim of the West insists upon a rigid safeguarding of the individuality and personality of man; its claim has been, not to a destruction of man which might delight the heart of a coward, but to a perfection of man that would challenge the great heart of a saint. In the concrete, this unity is one of order and of friendship, rather than one of physical absorption. The unity of order is accomplished by truth, a unity of intellect in the recognition of man's place in the universe; this recognition is adequately expressed by sacrifice which is a statement of man's dependence and God's superiority, bringing out at the same time, man's superiority to the material world in which he lives. The unity of friendship is accomplished by that unity of wills that lies at the root of unselfish love.

Obviously, the unity of absorption ties men together by slavish bonds that destroy the men themselves; the bonds of order and friendship, tying men to all the universe and the Creator of that universe by truth and love, are altogether unintelligible without the enduring sovereignty of the individual mind and will. The supernatural medium of this latter unity

is the Eucharist, both as a sacrament and a sacrifice; Augustine's description of it as "the bond of unity," understood in this sense of unity, states the very nature, the beauty, and the immeasurable value of the Eucharist to men.

In this sacrifice and sacrament, all the world partakes of the body of the Victim, as in the Old Testament the priest lived by the bodies of the victims of sacrifice. But here the food is not consumed to its destruction; nor does the adored object of sacrifice consume the men who worship it; rather the food, the sacrifice, and the men are eternally enduring, men lifted up to the heights of the God before Whom they bow. Here is man's road to peace and plenty: to the peace of order and the plenty of the fullness of love. Here, in this sacrifice, the Victim is God, an undying Victim Who gives His life but does not lose it. What we have overlooked in our own times is the profound truth that for unity either God or man must be the victim; and only God can be the undying, indestructible Victim by whom men are saved.

CHAPTER XVI

(OUTLINE)

THE CONSTANT RESURRECTION

Q 84-90, Suppl Q 1-28)

1. Mistakes and their makers
 - (a) The fool and the wise man
 - (b) The wisdom of the wise
 - (c) The outcasts of human action
2. The technique of the makers of mistakes:
 - (a) The child's technique
 - (b) The man's technique
 - (c) Their common helplessness
3. God's technique with man's mistakes
 - (a) Destruction of the inherited mistake—by Baptism.
 - (b) Destruction of personal mistakes—by Penance
 - (1) The sacrament of Penance.
 - a Its matter and form
 - b Its necessity.
 - c Its accidents
 - (2) The virtue of penance:
 - a Intrinsically considered genus and species
 - b Extrinsically considered subject, origin, relation to other virtues
 - c Its possessors
4. The effects of Penance
 - (a) On sin mortal and venial
 - (b) On punishment due to sin
 - (c) On virtues, merits, forgiven sins
5. Integral parts of Penance—contrition, confession, satisfaction:
 - (a) Contrition
 - (1) Its nature and object, distinction from attrition.
 - (2) Its quantity and quality.
 - (b) Confession
 - (1) Its necessity
 - (2) Its integrity.
 - (c) Satisfaction
 - (1) Its nature.
 - (2) Its necessity
 - (3) Its means and limits.
6. Minister of the sacrament of Penance:
 - (a) A priest with jurisdiction.
 - (b) His office and obligation.
 - (c) The seal of confession.

Conclusion:

- 1 The living Christ.
 - (a) In Palestine
 - (1) Key to His life among men.
 - (2) Its dramatic heights
 - (b) In the sacrament of Penance. a constant drama, the constant resurrection
2. The secrecy and difficulty of confession
 - (a) A hard truth for a cowardly world
 - (b) A balance of difficulty and effects.
3. The conquest of death.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CONSTANT RESURRECTION

(Q. 84-90; Suppl., Q. 1-28)

THERE has been much loose talk in our time of the worship of the machine, of the terror of the mechanical idol which is said to be a kind of modern Moloch before which men bow in adoration as it destroys their lives. Men of our time, or any time, may appreciate a machine as a most excellent means to other ends, they may make use of it with ruthless disregard for other men's lives; but the evidence is all against modern man adoring anything mechanical. It is easy to awaken a child's excited interest by giving it a mechanical toy; but it is practically impossible to fasten the child's interest on the toy for any great length of time. After seeing the toy do the same thing over and over again, the child tires of it, even though he does not, in an exceptional case, dissect it to see what accounts for this strangely monotonous activity. It is no trouble at all to gather a New York crowd in front of a window where a shiny, new machine turns out cigarettes or flapjacks as though by magic; but after a week, it is just another machine. Let a baseball or a football team function with machine-like precision to constant victory and the biggest games are soon indistinguishable from secret practice.

On the other hand, we can watch a craftsman work as long as we like, with no lessening of our fascinated admiration; we fondle his hand-made product, caressing it with praise long after we have dumped its machine-made counterpart in its appointed place to do its coldly efficient work unnoticed and unthanked. For all its perfection, for all the genius that goes into its design, there is a sameness about a machine that

quickly bores us. It is a product of human ingenuity and, as such, attractive; but it is human ingenuity that is lifeless, frozen, static. On the contrary, the product of the craftsman has an endless variety about it, plenty of elbow-room for imagination and originality, and, inevitably, some few mistakes.

The variety, imagination, and originality appeal mightily to the human in all of us; this is human individuality at its flourishing best. Perhaps, however, it is on the count of the inevitable mistakes that the deepest appeal is made; for here we can rightly feel we are one with the artist. In a way, a mistake is not only a bond of unity with the rest of frail humanity, it is a distinctive badge worn with a kind of shame-faced pride. For we are the only ones who make mistakes. If an archaeologist, examining newly unearthed relics of past ages, comes upon indisputable evidence of mistakes, he has an authentic record of the presence of men. The angels made only one mistake; neither the animals nor God makes any at all. Only men can put a letter in the wrong envelope or burn the morning toast.

A mistake is a genuine mark of human activity; moreover, it is a universal mark, for all of us make mistakes. The line dividing wise men from fools is not a line drawn between the absence of mistakes and their presence; rather it distinguishes the area of infrequent and dissimilar mistakes from that of frequent and similar ones. A wise man does not make the same mistake twice, but he does make others; whereas the fool cannot get variety even into his mistakes, their very character showing a lack of imagination and originality that approaches the monotony of a machine and recedes from the stamp of human activity.

The difference, of course, is much deeper than this. A wise man recognizes the reason for the distastefulness of mistakes. True, they are human things, but not agreeably human because they fall short of humanity's capacities; there is something the matter with them. Now that it is all over, we know we shouldn't have argued with the traffic policeman, that it

was a mistake to bring up the subject of illness before a hypochondriac, that the very small, very white lie was not so easy an escape after all. These are human acts, disfigured with pock-marks of unreason, of inhumanity, whether the particular pock-mark be one of ignorance, of malice, or of lack of control. One thing comforting about these disfigurements is that they need not be repeated, the disease need not be contracted again. A wise man can do something about them for the next time; and he does.

Nothing disfiguring and ugly is welcome; so mistakes are always uninvited guests in our lives. Yet, they are forever knocking at the door at the most inopportune times. Perhaps our enemies will give them a hearty smile of welcome; but for everyone else, there is an embarrassment and tension about their arrival like that set up by the meeting of a shady past with a brilliant future. The easy, pleasant flow of life's conversation is instantly hushed; in the dead silence, all eyes focus on us to see how we shall face the confusing moment, how we can show a mistake to the door suavely, without a scene.

The actual technique of dismissing a mistake varies with every individual. Some, clinging to methods found effective in childhood, brazenly deny the presence of mistakes through all the length of life; no one is deceived, of course, least of all these people themselves. Others employ strong-arm methods; the mistake is instantly hustled out of mind by a big muscled forgetfulness that never quite succeeds in ejecting the mistake the whole distance out of life itself. Still others put their trust in nonchalance. The mistake is greeted with a light, amused laughter that chimes on a desperate little note into a pathetic silence, like the tinkle of a doorbell into the ruined hopes of an abandoned shop. The silence is as portentous, and more tensing, than that of a hushed theater waiting for the point of a pointless joke. Then there is the whole class of timid compromisers, terribly anxious to keep the peace yet enjoy the spoils of war, who imagine that mistakes are handled effectively by an apologetic little cough or a muttered "pardon me."

Some of us, however, do grow up. Faced with our mistakes, we make no attempt to deny them. We admit them, look them in the eye; for it is well to fix their features in mind for future reference, it is good to study their strategy that we might meet them more successfully in the future.

But wise men or fools, perpetual children or fighting men, are all faced with a common helplessness in the face of their own mistakes. Almost any little boy can take a clock apart; no little boy can put it together again. The clumsiest assassin can snuff out a human life in an instant; the cleverest cannot restore it. A conquering army can destroy the treasures of centuries of genius by a few well-placed bombs; and then must stand as helpless as the barbarians surveying the ruins of Rome. For our constructive power is very much less than our destructive capacities. Once we have shattered the fragile perfection of a human act, there is absolutely nothing we can do about restoring its delicate beauty. We can be careful of future destructions, yes; but this is over and done with, and the best we can offer is our regret. In a sense, then, all mistakes are fatal; that is, in relation to the life of the act in which the mistake occurs. Some are horribly fatal in their effects, destroying what can never be restored, things like innocence, love, or life.

Such helplessness could fill a man's life with tears if it were not for the comforting difference between human powerlessness and divine power in dealing with the mistakes of man. The almighty power can do something, in fact everything; what is more, it does all that need be done. Not that God turns back the clock, decreeing that yesterday never existed; that is too much even for God. But the echo of the voice of Mary's Son has not yet died out of the world; befouled rebels against God still hear "thy sins are forgiven thee," throw off their filthy rags to put on the wedding garment, and are admitted to a feast of peace such as Magdalen found in the banquet room of the Pharisee. That divine voice still speaks its message of mercy in the sacrament of Penance.

The very externals of Penance are holy things. The words and acts of the penitent declare that his heart has turned from sin; the words and the acts of the priest promulgate the pardon of God. But it is not to the intrinsic holiness of these things that we must trace their divine effectiveness; that can come only from divinity. It is because these signs were constituted channels of grace by Christ that they loose a flood upon the soul which leaves it as pure as would the words of God Himself. Penance is a sacrament, a channel of grace, designating the course of divine action; as such, it produces what it signifies.

This sacrament, alone of all the sacraments, was constituted in the form of a judicial process. There is, then, a touch of misery in it, something of the tenseness of judgment, and all the finality of a terribly irrevocable sentence; for, as judgment, it necessarily revolves about crime, the crimes of men against God. However, instead of the ordinary judicial process's rigid protection of truth against human weakness, this judgment, with a truly magnificent confidence in human honesty and courage, puts truth at the mercy of man by recognizing the accuser, the witnesses, and the defendant in the one person of the penitent. These two, the sins committed after baptism and the acts of the penitent (contrition, confession, and satisfaction) submitting these sins to the priest, are the remote and proximate material of the sacrament of Penance.

Obviously, the matter of Penance is not to be sanctified as is the water of Baptism; rather, it is to be destroyed as is the substance of bread in the Eucharist. The full clarity of the sacred sign, leaving no doubt of the effect of the sacrament, is stated with sharp brevity in the solemn words of the priest which are the form of the sacrament: "I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." By those words, a man is reborn and sin is destroyed, the helplessness of man is rescued by the omnipotence of God, mistakes are undone and a man can walk the roads of the present and the future free of the awful burden of

the past; for this sacrament, like all the rest, effects exactly what it signifies.

The profound importance of this sacrament to human living has made the words of Christ, bringing it into existence, some of the most cherished that history records. There was a hint of it, of course, in Christ's own dealings with sinners; "Thy sins are forgiven thee" is not something men will forget in a hurry. An explicit promise of the sacrament was made when Our Lord gave Peter the power of the keys, saying "To you I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven." The direct institution of the sacrament came after the resurrection of Christ, putting it among those last minute treasures of His life among men, when He breathed on the apostles and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." As in the beginning God had breathed the breath of life into dead dust, so now He breathed the breath of life into all the generations of men who would die to divine life, falling victims of the heavy blows of sin.

Life came back to men. And the tree of that life was the cross of Calvary; this sacrament is its fruit which men, coming upon it thousands of years later, have clutched as desperately as Magdalen held to the feet of her Master. What a world of despair it would be if that fruit had not been given. By his very nature, man must try to remedy his mistakes, particularly those that threaten the success of his whole life; in sin, he was faced with a mistake that destroyed the very principle of the life of God within him, yet there was absolutely nothing he could do about it of his own powers. For there can be no salvation for men unless sins are forgiven; and only the power of God can remove the stain of sin.

It is true that, through the grace of God, an act of perfect contrition destroys sins and brings grace; we shall see more of

this later on in this chapter. But the sacrament of Penance is an instrument of forgiveness absolutely infallible in the production of its effects, as infallible as Christ's own words: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee." In fact, that perfect contrition which forgives sin itself includes, at least implicitly, a desire for the sacrament of Penance; so that we may say that, once a man has grievously sinned, the sacrament is absolutely necessary, either in fact or in desire.

Doubt or uneasiness about the effects of this sacrament really reflects on the power of Christ Himself. The sacrament is not something that has to be applied to the soul over and over again before a real lustre is accomplished, much as we polish old silver, never quite satisfied with the perfection of the result. Long years of heavy sighs, tears, bitter regrets, the long face of perpetual sadness, these are not the appurtenances of this sacrament. Indeed, they might well be suspect as children of pride. Their roots may go no deeper than the shocked vanity of the sinner who never gets over his astonishment that such a sterling character as himself could commit such sins, though of course they are easily understandable in others; it may be that he is still pitting his own power of sinning against God's power of forgiving and weeping at how badly the divinity comes out in such a contest.

There is no need for a lifetime of uninterrupted external penance. It is true that a man is, and should always be, displeased at the fact that he has sinned. A murderer who emerges from the confessional both delighted at sin's forgiveness and gloating over the murder he has committed, has wasted the priest's time as well as his own; it simply is not possible for a man to enclose both God and sin in the one embrace. In the sense of displeasure at the sins we have committed, eternal penance endures; but the proper emotion after confession is one of complete joy, of release from the slavery of sin, of gratitude and wonder at the friendship of God. Our groans add nothing to the effect; for it is only because God has

died that anything can be done about sin, it is only by the power of His passion that we can escape from the grave we have dug ourselves into.

Penance is not a coat of whitewash that wears off from time to time and must be renewed; it is infallibly effective, and its effect is the destruction of sin. It is, then, a radical obliteration of all that is inimical to divine life; it is complete and "for keeps." Yet, it is not a miracle that happens once in a lifetime; rather, its frequency is measured by the ability of man to sin and be sorry, and the divine capacity for mercy. We are rather sure of our constant capacity for sin; we are absolutely sure of the divine capacity for mercy. Let us look a little more closely at the virtue that brings us to the feet of Christ again and again, our ability to be sorry.

The virtue of penance is a noble thing that has been grossly treated by a world accustomed to think of men in terms of animals. A penitent is not a dog come cringing in terror to its master's feet; he is not the victim of a passing wave of shame and confusion beyond his control that hurls him into an abject posture before he can prevent it. Penance is a good habit, a thing of reason which enables a man to regret an act that was unworthy of his manhood. Supernaturally, it is an infused habit which enables a man to use the high grounds of regret furnished by faith and to begin the destruction of sin because it is an offense against his God.

We haven't yet arrived at the point of sneering at justice, yet that is precisely what penance is—justice to God. By sin, we have invaded the rights of God; by penance, we offer what compensation we have to offer, pitiful enough, God knows, in return for the pardon of God. We are not giving something to God by our penance, any more than an apology for unwarranted insult gives anything to the man who has been insulted. We do not belittle ourselves by penance, any more than the thief belittles himself by surrendering his loot. We are merely facing the truth and making amends for our violations of the minimum requirements of social life with God.

It is true that, offending the Infinite, we can offend infi-

nately, while our penance is necessarily a finite, human thing. That is why God died for us. But by this virtue, perfecting our will as all justice does, we bring our little part to the judgment seat; and in return we receive, not condemnation, but pardon. The fact that the beginnings of penance are to be found in fear is no condemnation of penance nor does it reduce the penitent man to the status of a cringing animal. There are some things a man should be afraid of, for only a fool is absolutely fearless. Certainly, a man should be afraid of the wrath of an offended God Who would justly leave us to our miserable choice of an eternal hell.

However, Catholic penance rarely proceeds from such fear alone. Most frequently there is an element, often enough an exclusive element, of filial fear which is a mixture of reverence and profound love. It is a fear that recoils, not so much from threatened punishment, as from injury to One Who has been so infinitely good; it knows no worse evil than final separation from One Who is so deeply loved.

In a stately parade of virtues, penance would have to give precedence to many another. But in the disordered bustle of everyday life, penance often finds itself first elbowing a way for its fellows. It is a rough and tumble virtue, fitted by nature to carry off the brawl with sin; a handy virtue, indeed, to have around in times of crisis, especially when it so humbly and unobtrusively gives away to its superiors when the immediate fight is over. In a life like that of Our Lady, where no brawling enters in, penance has nothing to do; and it does precisely that without a single regret. The habit, the infused virtue, was of course in Our Lady; for it comes with the rest of the supernatural equipment brought to us on our birth to the life of God by grace.

It is not hard to see that penance has not much to do in the saints in heaven except to give thanks for the sins that have been forgiven. In the angels, good or bad, there is no room at all either for the habit of penance or for its acts. For penance involves the capacity to change one's mind and the object of the affections of one's heart; in other words, to

change a course of action, to regret, and to do something in the opposite direction. The angels love but once and that forever, whether they have embraced sin or sanctity. They may regret the action for what it has done to them, but they have no notion whatsoever of revoking or changing that course of action; for what an angel does, he does once for all, just as what he knows, he knows completely, once for all. We may have our moments of discontent and grumbling as we munch our peasant fare in the tenements of rationality, thinking enviously of the royal palaces of intellectuality inhabited by the angels. But there is an advantage, too, in our lowly state; for it is only here that there is a second chance, that one can make a mistake and repair it, that one is not eternally committed, by the very nobility of nature, to one course of action without recall.

Spiritually, an angel can die but once, while a man can die a thousand times or more; for the angel dies forever, whereas man has life within his grasp even though he be dead. To understand better the resurrection that has been given us, let us suppose that a board of experts on sin, aided by a satanic council of strategy, had, after exhaustive study, declared that they had finally hit upon a sin that could not be forgiven by the sacrament of Penance. Then, let us say, they submitted their findings to Thomas for criticism, over the protests, of course, of the satanic members of the board

I do not believe Thomas would even look at the formulae, statistics, and equations; after all, life is short and there are so many important things to do. He would probably say something like this. "If there is such a sin, it is unforgivable either because man cannot be sorry for it, or because the sacrament of Penance cannot wipe it out. The first supposition is an insult to free will and the power of grace, a lie that conflicts with both natural and supernatural truth. The second, is a denial of the infinite character of mercy and the infinite power of the passion of Christ. Take away all the paraphernalia of your theorizing; there cannot be such a sin."

It is not only that Penance can and does destroy any one mortal sin; even though thousands of such sins were to herd together like a gang of toughs, they would be just as helpless to resist the blood of Christ. Penance forgives all sin. It cannot wash the face of the soul, leaving smudges here and there in less prominent spots; no mortal sin is remitted without sanctifying grace which cannot live in the same soul with mortal sin for the simple reason that the will of man cannot go in different directions at the same time. The sins that must be submitted to the tribunal of this sacrament are the mortal sins that have not yet been forgiven; these are the primary objects against which this sacrament is directed, what the theologians call "necessary matter." The free matter, which may or may not be submitted to the judgment of the confessor as the penitent likes, consists of mortal sins already forgiven and venial sins; but there must be some sin told in the confessional or there can be no sacrament. The priest, asking about sins of one's past life, is not whiling away the idle hours; he is making sure that there is matter for the sacrament, guaranteeing that the sacrament, with its infallible increase in sanctifying grace, will be received.

Venial sin can be taken care of without the sacrament. It does not require a new infusion of grace, since it does not expel grace but dwells, though not joyously, in the same house with charity. Of course, the forgiveness of venial sin demands something of the virtue of penance, at least that implicit displeasure at venial sin which is implied in an act of charity; for not even these slight sins are to be snatched out of a man's hands as a noisy rattle is taken from a baby by a nervous mother. Wherever there is a movement of the will to God and away from sin, there is a forgiveness of venial sin; so in every new infusion of grace, venial sin is forgiven. On the contrary, wherever the will of man clings to his venial sin, no force in heaven or on earth will separate him from it. In actual fact, there are thousands of occasions for the forgiveness of venial sins. The reception of the sacraments, a fervent Our Father with its

detestation of sin, acts of reverence to God such as the acceptance of the episcopal blessing, the use of holy water, genuflections, and so on, are all means of forgiving venial sin.

To get back to the sacrament, it is always as complete in its effects as a man is willing to let it be: mortal sin, venial sin, and the punishment due to sin are all wiped out in this sacrament. We enter the confessional box enemies of God, and leave it friends with a right to His eternal heritage. However, if a man enters the confessional clinging to a venial sin, he comes out with it still in his hand; if he wants to hold to some of the temporal punishment due to sin, no one will take it away from him. In other words, what there is of sin or its vestiges after confession corresponds to the glance we throw over our shoulder at the world of sin; if our turning to God from sin is really complete, then there is no slightest trace of sin or its debt of punishment on our souls.

It is to be remembered, however, that the effects of Penance fall on the soul, not on the body of man. A drunkard cannot expect to lose his taste for whiskey by a sincere confession. Physical dispositions and acquired habits are not whisked out of existence, short of a miracle; they must be worn down by steady battling. The point is, a man acquires the weapons of battle in the infused virtues, good habits directly from God, that come to him with the grace of the sacraments. Mortal sin, taking the life out of the soil of the soul, destroys most of the splendid growth of infused supernatural virtue; with Penance, grace falls with the refreshing effect of a spring shower, bringing all those destroyed virtues back to life.

The degree of this restored life will depend on the degree of grace a man receives in this sacrament, and this, in turn, is a matter of his conversion to God and away from sin. Infallibly, however, he will receive grace, its accompanying virtues, and the merits of past works that he lost through his sin. In the economic order, bankruptcy usually means that some one else has all the money this man has lost; in the spiritual order, the end of a depression means that a man has recovered much of

the treasure of merit he had piled up, perhaps all of his original fortune, or even a much greater one, depending on the intensity of his sorrow for sin and his love for God.

It is altogether too much to expect Penance to give life to works that were never anything else but dead. Good works done in mortal sin have never had title to an eternal reward; they are not to be given that title by Penance. They are the works of a dead man done in death and nothing will change them. In a sense, God undoes the work of man by restoring to life by grace what man has killed by sin, but man has no such power over the work of God; for what God destroys cannot be revived by any power of man. Thus, the sins destroyed in this sacrament are not to be called back to life the next time a sin is committed. They are dead, divinely executed, annihilated beyond burial. We may produce some of the same kind, but they will have to be brand new; we may weep over the memory of the forgiven sins, but we cannot very well worry about them without admitting that we are entering the shadowy territory of the non-existent in search of material for worry.

Up to this point, we have been looking at Penance as a whole, alternately marvelling at the power and love of God on the one hand, and at the renewed life of the soul of man on the other, but always seeing the sacrament in its completeness. The procedure was natural enough. After all, the beauty and character of a face impresses us long before we begin to study the excellence of individual features. Perhaps one of the reasons why love never tires of its object is that we come down to the last details so slowly, and never quite to their ultimate depths. Thomas was just coming down to such details of penance when the ink ran out of his pen. On his way to the Council of Lyons in obedience to a papal command, sick and terribly tired, Thomas was welcomed into the house of strangers to wait for his rendezvous with death. The intense, ceaseless labor of another son of Dominic came to a close when the bright, quick-burning flame of his life sputtered out. Thomas had paid the ultimate penalty for falling in love with truth.

Of the two human elements in penance, the acts of the accused and the judge, Thomas had just noted the three that are proper to the penitent—contrition, confession, and satisfaction—when death closed the cover on his *Summa*, putting an end to his search for truth by giving him supreme Truth. Here, we must leave the mature work of Thomas, take farewell of the *Summa* we have wandered through in these volumes, and, with a little envy of an older brother's quick trip home, fall back on the earlier works of Thomas for the completion of the outline he had sketched for his supreme work.

The three acts to which Thomas had given his last farthing of attention make up the proximate matter of the sacrament of penance. By contrition, the sinner wills to make recompense for his sin and to avoid the sin in the future; by confession, he subjects his sin to divine judgment; and by his satisfaction, the acceptance of the penance imposed, he makes the recompense demanded by the judge of this tribunal. To the Catholic, there is nothing complex or mysterious in all this; he has been expert in its knowledge and practice since childhood.

He knows, for instance, that on coming to confession he must be sorry for and detest his sins, firmly resolving to avoid them in the future. Sometimes, that sorrow of his is only imperfect contrition, that is, attrition, a sorrow that does not trace its ancestry beyond a fear of gaining hell or losing heaven; again it may be perfect contrition, that perfect sorrow which is contrition in its strictest sense and which turns from sin in disgust as an offense against a Friend Who is infinitely good. In either case, the Catholic completes his confession with an easy mind; for even attrition is sufficient for the sacrament of Penance.

Contrition, that is, perfect contrition, destroys sin of its very nature, though it always carries with it the obligation of submitting all mortal sin to the sacramental judgment. Attrition, on the other hand, is helpless of itself to get anything done about sin; yet is completely effective when coupled with sacramental absolution. The point to be noticed here, by way of anticipation of the demands of some who would be more

Catholic than the Church, is that both of these are supernatural sorrow, sorrow produced by the aid of grace, sorrow whose motive is supernatural, whether that motive be heaven, hell, or the infinite goodness of God. It is not necessary that a man feel upset, downcast, disgusted, or angry at himself as guarantees of his sorrow; in fact, none of these have anything to do with the efficacy of this sacrament. A man might, merely naturally, be full of loathing for the baseness of gluttony or drunkenness; what is demanded here is not the natural, but the supernatural, not a repugnance of sense appetite but a renouncement on the part of the will.

Over and above its supernatural character, this sorrow for sin, whether contrition or attrition, must be more than a matter of words or imagination; it must be real, for it is an integral part of a terribly real sacrament. Moreover, it is not a delicate hint, a subtle implication, or a generous but highly imaginative interpretation; it is formal, a positive act by which a man here and now sorrows for his sins. There are no cautious reservations to be tacked on to it as though it were a dangerous partnership agreement with God, it must be sorrow for all sins; nor can it be carefully measured, lest we go too far with it, it must be a supreme sorrow, a sorrow that regrets this sin more than anything else. It must, however, be distinctly understood that there is no question here of *feeling* sorrow; where feeling has any part to play at all in this sacrament, it is as an echo of the resounding rational sorrow, the sorrow of the will that is essential for the sacrament. Even on the side of rational sorrow, a man may be very much more intensively sorry about the death of his wife than at his own embezzlement of a thousand dollars. No one will try to change that fact. It is not necessary, in fact it is very often impossible, to have that supreme intensive sorrow for sin; what is demanded is that we be prepared to give up any other good rather than commit this sin or keep it on our souls. In the theologian's terms, the sorrow demanded for confession must be *appreciatively*, not *intensively*, supreme.

With all this in mind, it is not easy to understand how the word got around that confession was a license to commit sin and an encouragement of it. The recent convert to Catholicism is astounded that the rumor ever could get started. Our contrition is as firm and final a farewell to sin as the human will can speak. Its word is not a wish but a determination to avoid sin, even though it can have no guarantee against future sins. The point is that sin has lost its attractiveness and so we put it out of our heart, not tearfully, sighingly, half-heartedly, but emphatically. It may creep back later but only on condition of a change in our present disposition. At the moment we are determined; and that means that we propose to use all the means available to avoid future sin: prayer, caution, avoidance of the occasions, and so on. A license for sin? No indeed. But a brave defiance of all the attraction of sin.

This is not a blind optimism which disregards a long history of weakness to coddle a pollyanna attitude towards the future. We know what we are up against, coming to confession and facing the future afterwards. We are not ignorant of the defects in ourselves; in fact, we have honestly focused our eyes on them. Knowing them, aware of all the odds against us, all the enemies drawn up in full fighting strength, we are still willing to have another try at it; to pit our will, fortified by the grace of God, against them all in a fight to the death. It is this clarion courage in the weakest of sinners that is so constant a source of humility and inspiration to the priest in the confessional.

The notion of confession as an encouragement to sin becomes still more absurd when we realize that all that has been said refers to the first of three acts of the penitent. There are still two others, confession and satisfaction, which set up quite substantial barriers to comfort in sinning. Take confession, the telling of our sins to the priest, for instance. It might not be so hard if we could talk about the sins of others; but if we try this, we shall discover shortly, very shortly, that this is no place for gossip, if there is any place for gossip. The trouble is we

must tell our own sins, simply, nakedly, truthfully; not exaggerating them, minimizing them, excusing or explaining them away.

If anyone thinks this easy it is because he is an armchair penitent who has not yet personally made the long step over the threshold of the confessional. We are approaching a doctor of the soul; of what use is it to fake or hide a sin? We stand before a judge; how can he judge us if we give him false testimony? Yet, the things to be made known are those which no one but God could discover unless we revealed them; things we hardly can face ourselves. Confession is, indeed, difficult. It demands high courage and deep humility, secret though the telling may be; some inkling of the flood of grace which pours into the soul of the penitent can be had from the fact that the temptation to dodge this difficulty by cheating in the act of confessing hardly occurs to the Catholic. Perhaps it would not be so hard if we could write it out, or make our sins known by signs so that we would not have to hear the things we have done in the cold, clear tones of the spoken word. But unless there is a very good reason, even this softening of the difficulty cannot be allowed; the confession must be oral.

The difficulty must not overshadow the gracious thoughtfulness of Christ in leaving us this sacrament. This is not a high price to pay to be rid of sin. At any rate, by the command of Christ, our sins must be made known; He constituted the apostles as judges of the sins of men, so the material for the judgment must be furnished by the sinners. We must confess our sins and with a certain frequency. The bare minimum is fairly evident: a man must confess when he knows himself to be in mortal sin and he finds himself in danger of death; when what he is about to do, for example, to receive Holy Communion, demands the state of grace and this man, in fact, has not got it. But this procedure is not the high road to perfection; obviously, when a man has committed spiritual suicide, he should not see how long he can stay dead. Even where there is no question of serious sin at all, the infallible grace with

its strengthening of the virtues is good enough reason for really frequent confession; for there are no men who cannot stand a little more help from God.

In the confessional, we must tell all the sins that have not yet been submitted to the absolution of a priest, as far as, here and now, they can be or should be confessed. We must tell them all; that is, the kinds of sin, their number, particularly aggravating or minimizing circumstances, and the external acts which flowed from them. However, this does not mean that we must draw pictures for the priest. The point is not to give a perfect, detailed, exhaustive account of sin; but to give the priestly judge accurate information. In actual fact, this need for completeness or universality in our confession is no cause for uneasiness. If we walk into the confessional with the intention of telling everything, we approach an expert who has his own solemn obligation to get the evidence straight; if anything is not sufficiently clear, it is the priest's duty to ask questions. Our part consists in trying to tell our sins honestly and with what we consider sufficient frankness; the ultimate responsibility is the priest's.

Obviously, if we have forgotten some sins, they cannot be confessed; if we have only thirty seconds to live, we can hardly cover the forty year space since our last confession. In other words, there will be times when the material integrity, or completeness, of our confession may be, or even must be, dispensed with. But the formal integrity, the telling of all the sins that can be and should be confessed, never allows mitigation.

Perhaps all this is said adequately enough when we say that we must not try to hide things in the confessional; it may be dark and not swept very often, but it is still no hiding place for even so elusive a thing as a sin. If we are trying not to hide anything, then we are certainly not trying to encourage forgetfulness. Sometimes we shall have to do a little research work before confession, examining our conscience to make sure we do not mislay any of the bundles we should be bringing to the courtroom as evidence. Not that we must undergo a soul-

searing, tortuous self-analysis, determined to unearth the last detail and arrive at a mathematically exact statement of the number of our sins; it is to God that we are coming for judgment and He demands no more than a reasonably diligent attempt on our part to recall our offenses against Him.

With all the evidence in, we submit it with a contrite heart; the judge ponders it, makes his judgment and, before giving the life-restoring absolution, imposes a penance upon us. It may be only a light penance to dust off our wings, or a heavy one to blast out the remnants of sin; in either case it is a satisfaction for the temporal punishment due to sin. The priest has no choice, he must impose a penance; the penitent has no choice, he must accept it. For both the giving and accepting of the penance are integral parts of the sacrament; without them, there is no sacrament.

Normally, a penitent does not roar in protest at the penance; this sort of thing is expected in a baseball player's reception of an umpire's decision, but quite unexpected in a confessional. The results, however, are pretty much the same in both protests. Without uttering a word of protest, a penitent may bitterly rebel against a penance and decide not to say it; by that decision, he has rendered the sacrament invalid. For the imposition of the penance is the judge's work, not that of the accused; it can be changed or mitigated only by a judge sitting on the same case and with the same evidence. The penance must be accepted; if it is, the sacrament moves smoothly on to its incredible effects. Later we may forget the penance, or even neglect it; that will not undo the sacrament, though it may well leave us guilty of the sin of negligence.

The misfortunes of life, of which we are assured a fair share, almsgiving, fasting, prayer, are only some of the possible means of satisfying for the temporal punishment due to sin quite apart from the sacraments. But all such means must have the mark of satisfaction upon them; that is, they must be voluntarily done or suffered by way of recompense to God. In a sense, even so delicately beautiful a thing as an act of love of

God can operate to the destruction of temporal punishment, though this is rather by way of merit than by way of satisfaction. In a much stricter sense, charity is at the root of all strict satisfaction. Certainly, it is only in charity that we can satisfy for our own sins; and it is only by the bond of charity which makes us one with others that we can satisfy for the punishment due to their sins. Under any other circumstances, satisfaction for the punishment due to sin is much more a matter of God's generous acceptance of a trifle rather than a tribute to the value of our particular works.

The point of charity making it possible for us to satisfy for others is tied up closely with the comforting doctrine of the Communion of Saints. By charity, we are one, members of the same Mystical Body; we can operate for the whole or for any part of it. Indeed, the merits or punishments of any part are in a sense those of the whole. From this family helpfulness, the doctrine of indulgences is an inevitable conclusion, in spite of the calumny that has been heaped upon it for centuries.

An indulgence is the remission, in whole or in part, of the temporal punishment due to sin. It is not a license for sin, or a forgiveness of sin; indeed, it demands freedom from sin to be effective, for it depends upon the bond of union which is charity. The background of indulgences is made up of the superabundant merits and satisfactions of the saints, of Christ Who had no sin of His own and Whose merits were infinite, and of the sinless Mary with her charity above that of all the saints and angels. All these make up the treasury of the Church; for these works, unnecessary for their authors, were not done for this or that man, but for Christ and the Church. That treasury is dispensed by the Head of the Church on the conditions laid down by the Church and determined by it; but only to those who, by their charity, are living members of the Church.

All through this chapter, we have paid very little attention to the man on the other side of the confessional grill; probably, most of the readers of this chapter have hardly noticed the

omission, for this is the entirely normal degree of consideration given to him. Particularly in large city churches, he is more impersonal than the voice of a foreign radio broadcaster. He may never have seen the penitent, the penitent may never come in contact with him again; yet, in his quiet whisper, he wields the power of Christ Himself, saying whether this man is to rise from the dead or to rot in his tomb. It would, beyond doubt, be more accurate to say that it is the penitent who decides whether or not this priest shall be allowed to use the power of Christ on him; it is the penitent who denies himself absolution, for this cannot be denied to a penitent who is rightly disposed.

At any rate, that impersonal figure in the darkness of the confessional deserves a little more study. It is true that you may, if you like, confess your sins to a layman; you may shout them publicly at a revival meeting; it may even be that some day you will be allowed to broadcast them over the radio. But in all these cases, you need expect no absolution. This power is given only to an ordained priest; its source is the character of the sacrament of Holy Orders, an active spiritual power indelibly imprinted on the soul of a man. The character alone, however, is not a commission turning a priest loose on a world of sinners; his act of absolution is an act of government, an authoritative act, which needs what the theologians call "jurisdiction." That is, over and above the power of Holy Orders, the priest must be given a share in the power of government by one who has this power by reason of his office—the Ordinary, or bishop.

Moreover, the priest's office of confessor is hedged about with prerequisites and conditions in a manner calculated to make it fool-proof. Aside from the actual circumstances of hearing confessions, circumstances completely familiar to Catholics, there is the matter of the requisite knowledge of a confessor. Young Dominican confessors, on their way back every three years to face a two-hour grilling by a board of five examiners, will testify to the seriousness of this demand in actual practice. Surely, the confessor must have a solid posses-

sion of the virtue of prudence; for here he operates as the ruler and guide of souls. He must bring special excellence to the confessional in such Christian virtues as zeal for souls, that he might be all things to all men; indefatigable patience, to deal with the infinite variety of the unprepared, the ignorant, the tepid in such a way as not to lose a single sheep from the fold; a strong courage, lest he hesitate to admonish; and a purity which will enable him to reach out his hand to help others without soiling himself.

So equipped—and the responsibility for that equipment is his to be answered for eternally—he must sit in judgment on the deeds of men, judging with all the efficacy of Christ's own judgment. He must teach and admonish men, dispose them for contrition, correct their lives, lead some on to heights of sanctity, rescue others from the mire of sin, and, rarely, face the awful fact of his inability to give this penitent absolution. Aside from the physical considerations, such as lack of air, nervous tension, and the aching fatigue involved, this gives us some insight into the heroism of the Curé of Ars' ordinary day of from sixteen to eighteen hours in the confessional. Certainly it makes quite unnecessary my assurance that every young priest, equipped with all these things and adhering to all the conditions demanded, walks into the confessional for the first time in a state of terror. A doctor's mistake may, at the very worst, bring physical death; here, a mistake may mean eternal spiritual death for which the priest is strictly accountable.

It is probably the secrecy of the confessional more than anything else that has caught the imagination of every age. Probably the world outside the Church never really realizes how absolute that secrecy is. The world might understand, at least vaguely, that the confessional secrecy extends beyond sins to all the penitent has said in the process of sacramental confession, whether absolution is given or not; that is, everything that would make the sacrament onerous or odious. It could be easily understood that this included all that might redound to

the injury or even to the displeasure of the penitent; such things as physical defects, outstanding virtues, personal qualities, and so on.

The secrecy, of course, goes beyond this. These things not only cannot be told, they cannot be hinted at by the priest. They cannot be made known directly or indirectly; in fact, the priest cannot, outside the confessional, talk of these things even to the penitent without the penitent's permission. All this might be gathered by an outsider studying the records; he might even understand that the penitent himself is obliged to no such secrecy. The real mistake is made in comparing confessional secrets with professional or natural secrets. There is an infinite difference between them. Professional or natural secrets can be, indeed, sometimes must be revealed; certainly, in cases where their preservation would do serious damage to a third party or to the common good. These things, after all, are known by man. The knowledge of the confessional is not man's but God's; at no time does it belong to the priest. He cannot reveal it to save his own soul from hell, to save a nation from annihilation, to save the Church from being utterly obliterated. The priest simply does not know these things.

Some two thousand years ago in Palestine, the leaders of the people heard the Son of Mary say: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." They were indignant, demanding who but God could forgive sins. They were right; for this man was God. This act of forgiveness revealed, not only His divine power, but the whole purpose of His life among men. He came that men might have life; therefore He came to raise them from the death of sin. For this He lived, suffered, and died, that men might be free of the chains of death they had voluntarily embraced.

A subtle realization of that central fact in Christ's life has led men to single out particular moments of that short life as focal points for the human heart. The whole of it was a great drama; but moments of it reach heights of the dramatic that men will never allow themselves to forget. There was the breath-

less moment when a woman stood before Him, silent and ashamed, after her accusers had all gone away; we can still hear His merciful judgment: "Neither do I condemn thee; go in peace and sin no more." There was another moment of silence, when the guests of the Pharisee stared in consternation at the woman who threw herself at the feet of Christ: "Much is forgiven her for she hath loved much. Go in peace; thy faith hath made thee whole." Hanging on the cross, He reached up from the depths of an agony only to be relieved by death, to snatch a repentant soul from hell.

When Rubens introduced Magdalen into his magnificent "Descent from the Cross," the picture was taken out of his hands; for any artist who has allowed the Magdalen to walk across his canvas has had to make her the most arresting figure on it. Men have held fast to such memories of Christ; for this was God at work on the mistakes common to all men, doing what no man could do, destroying them. Men have more than memories of Christ to cling to. His life did not end on Calvary; rather, we might say that His life started there, to be continued by His own institution in the sacramental structure of the Church, never more strikingly than in the sacrament of Penance. There, day after day, hour after hour, century after century, in all corners of the world, those same dramatic moments are reenacted; men rise from the dead to the life of God.

It might be hard to understand how men could shrink from such miracles of mercy if we did not have personal experience of the difficulty of confession; having had it, we can appreciate the courage of the silent adulteress waiting judgment. It is not that men are necessarily afraid of having their mistakes known; after all, the secrecy of the confessional is so well assured as to be taken for granted. There is, of course, the difficulty of being honest with one's self, of deliberately recalling and regretting sins committed. And there is the even greater difficulty of mustering the courage to fight back against the possible sins of the future; of admitting defeat, perhaps again and

again, and still, somehow, finding the courage to go on fighting. This sacrament is hard. It is a terrible blow to vanity; a severe test of courage; a challenge to a great heart. Vanity never recovers, and it shouldn't; but self-respect and courage are both causes and effects of a good confession.

It is hard, yes; but is it too high a price to pay for release from death? For escape from darkness? For the restoration of the ruined work of a lifetime? For divine friendship and its eternal reward? No, the mystery is still on the side of sin and man's preference to remain in it. Christ's exit from the tomb on the first Easter threw open the gates of hope to the world; but His conquest of death will not be completed until the last absolution is given to the last sinner, until the last man in love with Christ escapes from the grasp of death. How much more complete it could have been, only a survey of the regions of hell will ever reveal.

CHAPTER XVII
(OUTLINE)
THE SICK AND THEIR PHYSICIAN
(Suppl Q. 29-40)

1. The lonely hour:
 - (a) Contrast of birth and death.
 - (b) Bitter exile—a man alone
 - (c) The family and a death-bed:
 - (1) Human family
 - (2) Divine family
2. Double union of birth and death.
 - (a) First birth and first death.
 - (b) Last birth and last death
3. Last preparation for eternal birth—Extreme Unction:
 - (a) The sacrament
 - (1) Its essence.
 - (2) Its necessity
 - (b) Effects of the sacrament:
 - (1) Primary effect
 - (2) Secondary effects
 - (3) Its beauty and fittingness.
 - (c) Its subjects
 - (1) In general
 - (2) In particular
4. The minister of Extreme Unction
5. Divine physicians.
 - (a) Consecration of the priesthood
 - (1) The sacrament of Holy Orders.
 - (2) Its institution and essence
 - (3) Its minister.
 - (b) The dignity of the priesthood:
 - (1) Effects of the sacrament.
 - (2) Ambassador of God
 - (3) Ambassador of men
 - (c) Subjects of the sacrament.
 - (1) Its limitation in general.
 - (2) Qualifications of the subjects
 - (3) Impediments to the sacrament.

Conclusion:

1. The welcome of Christ and His Church:
 - (a) The fact
 - (b) Contrast of fact with modern world.
2. World without Christ—a priestless world:
 - (a) The fact and its consequences.
 - (b) Reason for the fact.
3. A lonely world.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SICK AND THEIR PHYSICIAN

(Suppl. Q. 29-40)

ONCE upon a time, not so very long ago, the birth of a child was considered a private, or at most, a family affair. Today, a man's birth is one of the most public acts of his life. The business office of the hospital has been notified weeks beforehand. On the carefully calculated date, the hospital staff is ready, the operating room prepared. In the course of the actual birth, the delivery room is crowded with nurses, doctors, anesthetists, while relatives throng the corridors. Somewhere in the crowd, of course, there is a motner.

All this is not merely because the mother needs help and, as anyone can see, the infant is completely helpless. It is reasonable that all the knowledge, technique, and experience of society be put at the service of mother and child. The particularly interesting thing about this help is its superior tone. We are not only willing to help; we are eager, even anxious to help as a man with a voice is to accept the slightest hint of an invitation to sing. He knows he can sing and we know we can help. The whole motion here is towards life; we join in heartily as we might chime in with a lusty group who are singing, cheering, surging towards a happy gathering place. We can help. We are alive, with all of life's experience behind us. We are equipped for living and for fortifying these feeble beginnings of life; we gather around protectively lest a sudden gust extinguish the tiny spark of life.

On the contrary, death is becoming more and more a family affair; some day it may even become a strictly private matter. It is true, that in older days hundreds of people gathered for

a wake; the significant thing is that friends and neighbors came in long before death itself had knocked at the door. One monastic survival of this can be seen in the death of a Dominican. He dies surrounded by all of his community, passing out of the world with the notes of their victory hymn, the *Salve Regina*, echoing in his ears. Nor, incidentally, is there anything lacking in the wake which follows. The days to which such practices belonged held to the notion that others could be of some help to a man who was dying; and that death was in the nature of a great victory. As materialism seeps through society, and with it a conviction of helplessness, death becomes a private affair, to be hushed up and hustled out of one's attention.

In death, the motion of nature is not toward life but away from it. We may like to stop it, but we know very well that we cannot. We may stave it off for a while or we may drug a man so that he has not his wits about him at the instant of death. But in the moment of actual death, as contrasted with the moment of actual birth, there is simply nothing we can do but what might be done by the bitterest enemy of the dying man: what was done equally by Roman soldiers and the mother of Christ—merely sit and watch a man die.

At that moment, a man stands utterly alone. Society and his family have been of incalculable assistance to the fullness of his life from the first instant until this time; but now he is as completely cut off from their help as if they did not exist. They must stand by, as did the mother of the Maccabees, helpless to do more than offer the crumb of wisdom that can be carried on the backs of feeble words. At this moment, a man is an exile, condemned to a bitter loneliness with no hope of reprieve, no chance to return again to the ranks of men. What is more, this exile comes at the most difficult moment of his life, the moment when a man needs help most, for the success or failure of all of his life depends upon these last moments.

Somehow, the thing seems monstrous. We have contempt for

a business man who deserts his associates just at the moment of financial crisis. We despise a husband who abandons his wife just as her time for childbirth approaches. We are in horror at the betrayal of Christ by Judas. It is that note of disloyalty, of betrayal that makes our helplessness the more bitter.

Perhaps it seems this way to the dying man. But, really, this abandonment is not our fault. We are as helpless to come to his assistance as we would be to rescue a child if we were bound hand and foot. In fact, we are shackled hand and foot by nature itself. Although it is not beyond our sight, this emergency is beyond our reach, we may evidence our desire to do what can be done by the anxious solicitude we spread as a comforting cover over the wasted frame of the dying man, but it is a cold comfort. "There is still the general practice of a scattered family rushing to the deathbed of a loved one by every means of quick transportation; and when they arrive, what? They can do no more than give themselves what little comfort is to be had by sharing the last moments of the dying man.

It must be well remembered that our shackles are those of nature. They do not imprison the supernatural any more than steel bars keep out sunlight or a locked door blocks a guardian angel. This dying man may be a member of a supernatural family, a member of the Mystical Body of Christ. If he is, then there is another family physician present who does more than shake his head in a sympathy which expresses his impotence.

The priest is both the physician and the agent of that supernatural family. With him come the innumerable offspring of the family, not only the living from all parts of the globe unhindered by time and space, not only the hierarchy of ecclesiastical nobles, but all the dead who will never die, and the whole hosts of the angels. The small room is packed with the family, making the room of birth seem empty and barren by comparison; and everyone there can do something and does it. This is something this family can understand, this motion from

life to life, from nature to supernature, and they are as eager to help that motion along as we are eager to contribute to the first motion of natural life.

There must be constant amusement in the angelic ranks at the befuddlement of men as the paradoxes rain upon us, holding our puzzled interest until the complexities are made plain at the end of life. At the first birth of man from his mother's womb, we scurry about, hurried by our anxiety and eagerness, stressing the beginning of life; the world of the supernatural enters in with quiet efficiency to emphasize that what dies here is more important than what lives. The Church, continuing the life of Christ in the sacraments, is there at birth, giving an assistance that goes far beyond help to bodily life; but the assistance is towards destruction, towards death, to the obliteration of sin.

At the death of a man, the Church is also present, again quietly efficient, busy, not in staving off death, but in ushering in life, eternal life. Again the help given is far beyond that to the body. It is help to ends unseen by nature, for at this time nature must leave a man most alone; while supernature gives him most company. This last paradox is effected by the final gesture of a loving mother who has watched over a man from birth through growth, nourishment, mistakes, adulthood, and domestic life. That gesture is called the sacrament of Extreme Unction, literally, a last anointing. It is a term that calls up the first miracle-working expedition of the apostles when, with all the wonders they were working, they still stopped to anoint the sick with oil; there is about it the flavor of the story of the good Samaritan who did not pass by, and the touch of Christ on the fevered brow of Peter's mother-in-law.

Extreme Unction is another of those divinely instituted sluice-gates which man has only to throw open to have his soul flooded by the living waters of divine life. Like all the sacraments, it was instituted by Christ, though the institution is not recorded in the sketchily written account of the things done by Christ; rather it comes to us by way of tradition and its use is

noted by St. James in his epistle. Like all the sacraments, it was instituted in a shape that enables man to take it to his bosom, to introduce it to the family of his acts, sure it will be at home ; for it, too, is a sensible sign charged with the spiritual. It is a sign made up of matter and of a form that makes the meaning clear beyond all doubt ; above all, it is an effective sign producing what it signifies. Like all the sacraments, man can understand its use, learn quickly and easily how to manipulate it, though he will never grasp its mode of operation nor fully understand the marvelousness of its effects.

The olive oil, which is the matter of this sacrament, is not mixed with balsam as it was in Confirmation ; for this sacrament is solely for the inner precincts of a man's soul, it is not meant to permeate the world, to drive a man out among men, to move him to share his fullness with others or to defend that fullness. The oil itself is a statement of the purposes of the sacrament ; of its soothing, penetrating, healing, unspectacular help against the fever and sickness of sin. Since the matter of the sacrament was not consecrated by Christ's use of it, it needs the consecration of the bishop, who possesses the fullness of the priesthood of Christ. As for the form, well, it is in complete harmony with the quiet, gentle helpfulness characteristic of this sacrament. Rather than a bluff command, it is a quiet prayer eminently fitted to the sickroom or the deathbed ; it slips in as unostentatiously efficient as a nun, to give comfort to one who is almost beyond comfort.

The dying man is at the end of his resources. This prayer, which is the form of the sacrament, is a supporting arm raising him from the pillow that he might accept the divine draught. He is slipping out of the arms of his mother, the Church, and in that prayer there are all the good wishes and pent-up love that is too deep to find more lengthy expression. The stumbling limitation of words is, by its very inadequacy, the most authentic expression of the profundity of emotion behind the last fare-loving mercy, pardon you whatever by sight, hearing, smell,

taste, word, touch or step, you have done amiss," anointing each of the members of the body as he says the appropriate words.

It is a simple ceremony, a matter of a few moments. It is not unlike a Pullman porter's personal pride in his passengers' appearance as he fusses about, brushing shoes, coats, hats, straightening things so that everyone will be in perfect order when the train pulls in. Its simplicity suggests the little, insignificant touches that love prompts when it wants its loved one to look his best; like a mother's last moment poking, pulling, arranging of a child's clothes before entering the old homestead with its eagle-eyed inspection. Obviously, this sacrament has none of the desperate necessity we find in Baptism or Penance. It is not a resurrection or a surgical operation, but a moment of refreshment. After all, we can get home without a Pullman porter; a child can visit the old folks with its hair a little awry, its clothes a little wrinkled. The sacrament of Extreme Unction is not absolutely necessary for salvation.

As a matter of fact, the simile of a mother and her last-minute arrangement of a child's clothing is a quite accurate picture of the primary effects of the sacrament of Extreme Unction. It is not primarily ordered to reconciliation of a rebel with God nor to the resurrection of a man from the dead; it is to remove the slightest smudge from the face of a man's soul, to assure his mother, the Church, that the garments of his soul are spotless, that his robes hang just right, most becomingly. Mother Church is preparing to introduce her child to the ancestral mansion, the home of her forefathers, and she insists, lovingly, on her child looking its best.

The primary purpose of the sacrament, in other words, is not to forgive sin but to increase the beauty and vigor of the soul through an increase of habitual grace and the remission of the punishment due to sin. In a sense, this effect is common to all the sacraments of the living. The very special effect of this sacrament, its sacramental grace, is to strengthen the soul for the last momentous breaths of life, to destroy venial sin and

the vestiges of sin, and, where such contributes to the spiritual welfare of the patient, even to give strength to his body.

Few Catholic families have not had a death-bed visit from the priest. To practically all Catholics, then, the ordinary procedure is quite familiar: the priest first hears the confession and gives absolution, then administers Holy Communion; finally, he gives Extreme Unction. This is not merely an arbitrary procedure; Extreme Unction is a sacrament of the living, meant for men in the state of grace, and it is the very last tidying up of the soul before its appearance in eternity.

It happens, now and then, that a sacrament of the living enters the house of the dead by mistake. Confirmation and Holy Communion in this situation, coming upon mortal sin unexpectedly, are a little at loss. Certainly, they are not equipped to deal with this situation any more than a man in evening clothes is ready to handle the gangster who, to his complete astonishment, answered his ring at a friend's door. Both Holy Communion and Confirmation destroy this sin they have met, but accidentally, in a totally unpredicted fashion, as unusual as the slaughter of thousands of enemies with the jawbone of an ass, or the choking of a man with a baby's rattle. Neither of these two was made for this kind of brawl; but they do well enough when forced into it. On the contrary, Extreme Unction is not caught unawares. Coming upon mortal sin in the soul of a dying man, it gets in its destructive blows, not accidentally or indirectly, but with the efficiency of a detective who carries his gun even when off duty. Extreme Unction has hidden powers designed precisely for this; its purpose, you see, is to prepare a man to meet his God, to groom the soul of a man for entry into the kingdom of heaven however much grooming be necessary.

In the light of all this, it is astonishing that so much abuse was heaped on this sacrament by the sixteenth century reformers and their successors. It almost seems as though their pride had blinded them to both the beauty of God and the capacity of the human soul for beauty. If the angels are not pure in

the face of God's absolute perfection, man's last preparation obviously should be as complete and perfect as divine power itself can make it. If man is made to the image of God, adopted into the divine family, and shares the life and beauty of divinity, surely his last moments are precious for the fullest possible burnishing of the family likeness which is the passport to heaven.

What a time in the life of a man to ignore the help that was so necessary for every other step in his life! There is a kind of indecency about it; as though a captain were to desert soldiers who had fought behind him, not always so brilliantly, but constantly and loyally, or as though a mother were to abandon a child in its loneliest, most helpless moment. This is hardly the way of men worthy of the name; it is certainly not the way of God.

As the advertisements warn us on all sides, we might pick up a germ in the course of our ordinary day's work; so far, the common sense of men has kept them from encasing themselves in rubber or cellophane to escape contamination. A man might die while eating his breakfast; but that is no reason for every man demanding Extreme Unction every morning as a dyspeptic calls for his glass of hot water. This sacrament is for those who are about to enter the kingdom of heaven through the ordinary portals of sickness and death; it is for the sick, for those in danger of death from sickness or from that natural infirmity which is old age. It is not for a soldier going into battle in full possession of his strength; nor for the criminal stepping into the electric chair; not even for the mother on her way to the delivery room.

Since it exists for a last minute beautification of the soul, this sacrament has no place in souls who need no such last minute attention; souls, for example, like Our Lady's, infants', the insane who have never been capable of sin. Briefly, it is for the spiritually and physically sick. It is the work of a physician; it is those who are sick who need the physician, and they need him as often, at least, as the sickness takes a fatal turn.

Consequently, Extreme Unction can be, and is, repeated again and again, not in the same danger of death, but when a notable improvement gives hope of recovery, and then the patient suffers a relapse. It is extremely important to remember that the effects of the sacrament endure as long as the danger for which it was given; by it, we are dressed for divine company, there is no danger of our becoming dishevelled while we wait for the door to open.

The anointing of Extreme Unction is made in the form of a cross: first on the forehead, and this suffices in case of necessity; then on each of the senses by which the enemies of the soul's beauty might have made an entrance or through which the soul might have passed to keep a rendezvous with sin. Every corner is carefully swept, dusted, polished, that there might not be the slightest disorder in the house of our soul when we throw open its doors for divine inspection. It makes no difference that this particular dying man can no longer smell, or taste, or touch; indeed, it makes no difference if he never had this or that particular sense, the anointing is nevertheless made on the organ of that sense, or as near to it as possible. For even men blind from birth can commit sins of sight; the soul can use these paths to the world, even though they be barred to the entrance of the world into the soul.

It was pointed out, earlier in this chapter, that Extreme Unction is not as indispensably necessary as Baptism. As a consequence, it has not the same universal material nor the same universal minister; only olive oil which has been blessed by the bishop can be used in this sacrament, and it can be administered only by the ordinary minister of all the sacraments, the priest.

It is time to inquire more closely into the making of these divine physicians. We have been talking, off and on, for most of this volume about the priesthood, for the subject matter of this book has been the life of Christ and its continuation in the sacramental life of the Church. It is impossible to talk about either without covering a great deal of the activity of the

priesthood ; priests, after all, are other Christs existing to administer the sacraments and offer sacrifice.

There is more immediate reason now for this special treatment of the priesthood, for we have finished with the five sacraments which minister to the individual life of a son of the Church, the personal sacraments. It is now a question of the social sacraments, those by which the community is cared for : first, the spiritual care and rule of the community through the sacrament of Holy Orders ; then, its perpetuation by the sacrament of Matrimony. We might say that this sacrament of Holy Orders completes the image of God in the supernatural world of men's souls. He appears not only as He is in Himself through the participation of His life by grace, but also as the Agent, the Mover, the Cause of goodness in others. That is the distinctive mark of Holy Orders ; it is primarily and principally a conferring of the power to fulfill the offices of another Christ, to give to others the sacrifice and sacraments by which they live.

This sacrament is a sensible sign of sanctification ; by it the priest is sanctified to divine service, consecrated to the work of Christ. As do all the sacraments, it produces what it signifies. It was instituted by Christ, partly at the Last Supper, when He said : "Do this in commemoration of me" ; and partly after the resurrection, when He said : "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." The sacramental life of a man moves to this sacrament as to a sweeping climax, from his first right to receive the sacraments by Baptism, through Confirmation's strengthening, the Eucharist's nourishing, and Penance's correction to this active power to bring to others the wonders he has himself received. Like all the sacramental signs, this is a perfect sign. Its matter's signification is clarified, brought to the perfection of signification, by the words of the form. In a general way, because there is much discussion about it, it can be said that the proximate matter of the sacrament is the giving of the instruments of the priesthood and the imposition of the hands of the bishop ; the form is made up of the words of the bishop as he does these things.

Ordination is a solemn, impressive ceremony; it proceeds slowly, with the masterly precision of the erection of a medieval cathedral. For this a master craftsman is necessary. Short of papal delegation, only a bishop and always a bishop can confer this sacrament; he has the fullness of the priesthood, he is the successor of the apostles, to him it belongs to share that fullness as to God it belongs to share His divine fullness in creating the world. Slowly, stone by stone, the edifice of the priesthood goes up; there is plenty of time for the workers to give up the work and leave, but also plenty of time for them to concentrate on each detail all the strength, grace, and solidity demanded of an eternal structure.

Surely, this is the longest, the most solemn, and the most impressive of all the sacramental ceremonies; itself an indication of its importance to both people and Church. At the same time, the ceremony is a compressed story of the long, slow, beautiful, patient preparation of the preceding years. The thirty quiet years of Nazareth were much more than a symbol, they were an example, even a precept for other Christs. The priest's work is not work for a child but for a man, and for more than a man; he is not building for a day or a year, but forever. Each stone is carefully selected, put in place with laborious exactitude. This community is enduring, and the sacraments that serve it are not passing gestures; what Christ will not abandon, being with it all days even unto the consummation of the world, neither must men abandon.

Holy Orders, as a sacrament of the living, floods the soul with yet more sanctifying grace. It deepens the participation of divine life in him who is to bring that life to others, so that in the priest even so personal a thing as sanctifying grace has an apostolic flavor. For, bringing the priest closer to God, it enables him to lead those he serves to the same and even greater intimacy, giving him more life, it enables him to bring forth a sturdier spiritual progeny.

The special grace of Holy Orders comes to the priest as a million dollar legacy to a pauper, he hardly knows what to do

with it. No wonder he is overwhelmed by it; it is a mass of gilt-edged credit that would astonish even the angels. It is a title to all the actual graces a man needs to carry on the work of Christ Himself: to heal the sick, raise the dead, preach the gospel to the poor, cleanse the lepers, make the blind see, and the lame walk; even to go through the agony of Gethsemane and, with somewhat fearful willingness, to lay down his life for a friend. For this, a man needs so much help that only an infinitely rich God could advance him the credit.

With sanctifying and sacramental grace, there also comes the character of the priesthood. It is a mark on the soul of a man not to be eradicated by a decree of any state, by any force of arms, indeed, even by the perversity of the will of the priest himself. He is a priest forever; even in heaven, even in hell. By it, his life is stamped with a purpose, he is a divine emissary, commissioned with the same commission as the Son of God Himself: to bring to men the things of God, to scatter these gifts with a royal hand, munificently, unstintingly, as though the treasury were inexhaustible. Freely he has received; freely must he give.

What things of God? What does he give so freely? What is it that men need so desperately? A few years ago, these questions might have been asked with a cynical smile as men looked at their bursting barns, humming factories, and peaceful lands, refusing to look beneath the surface to the souls of men. Today it is more than evident that men need truth: the truth of life, an intimate knowledge of the life of God and a deep knowledge of the meaning of the life of man; the science of living, the secret of successful living, the key to the significance of the universe. Man needs the truth that will free him from the chains of the universe and allow him to wander in the court-yards of God. This is the truth the priest brings.

But truth alone would be as barren a gift as a road map given to a man without a car. Hell is full of men who knew better. Besides truth, man needs help, divine help, constant, penetrating help. It is not easy for a man to live a man's life;

how then can he be expected to live God's life among his fellows? Yet, this is the more abundant life that Christ came to give to men. It is the one life which a man must live to escape the awful crash of eternal failure. Help? Indeed, man does need help. Clearly, it is not a light load of gifts that the priest carries; nor does the load ever lighten, the gifts grow less, the importunity of giving ever diminish.

He is a divine plenipotentiary who need not give a reckoning of what he has dispensed but rather of what he has failed to dispense; for it is not generosity but niggardliness which will merit him a contemptuous dismissal. He will not be asked if he had enough rest, plenty of nourishing food, if he enjoyed good health and pleasant recreation; no one cares whether he has these things or not, least of all God. As if to show His contempt for just such things, He visited their opposites upon His favorites again and again: Thomas could not finish the work given him to do, even with his genius and giant strength; Dominic's life is a round of night-long vigils, extreme mortification, and day-long labors showing little results; there was the incredible endurance of the Curé of Ars, practically unsupported by substantial food or rest, and so on and on down the ages. After all, the Master of them all had not so much as time to eat nor whereon to lay His head, He was born in a cave and died naked on a cross; His own question was: "Shall the servant be greater than the Master?"

There is another side of the picture, a distinctly human side which is yet thoroughly divine. To an outsider, a priest seems to be terribly alone. To Catholics, it is comfortingly clear that he is never alone. From the moment that indelible stamp is put on his soul marking him as one of those gathered around the table of the Mass, he is no longer merely a private person. Indeed, he is a whole spiritual community. His acts are no longer private but common, community things; he is the spiritual leader acting in the name of all and for all. What is originally true of the successor of Peter—where Peter goes, there goes the Church—is true in a real sense of the priest.

Just as his prayers in the Mass, in Penance, in Baptism, and all the rest have their efficacy not from him but from God, so they have the people, not himself, for their object. He is the ambassador of men as well as the ambassador of God; in his step can be heard the rumble of millions of feet in perfect unison with him. Where he goes, the whole Mystical Body of Christ goes along with him: into a narrow confessional box, into the quietly final atmosphere of a sick room, to an altar set up in a desert bristling with armies, to the deck of a ship buckling under a hail of bombs. His hand raised in blessing does not merely reach to the walls of his church, but to the walls of the world, and beyond.

He is an ambassador of men, a plenipotentiary of the human family. What does he bring to God? Well, the gifts of men never exceed that first gift of swaddling clothes; but often enough, men can be found to give all they have. The priest's arms are piled high, as he approaches the divine throne, with sacrifice, prayer, penance, high courage, generous, unconditional love; miserable mistakes with their redeeming tag of determination to start the fight all over again. All these are freely given him by men, freely put into his hands; freely is he to give. There will be no account demanded of what he has thrown at the feet of God; but rather, of what he has failed to bring to the Master.

Christ Himself died young; and he insisted that His followers at least stay young, drink so deeply of the fountain of youth as to become little children. To the divine mind, it must have been clear that only the very young and very foolish could ever undertake to live His life; for of course, it is an impossible task. It simply cannot be done except by God; only on that basis can even the romantic daring of youthful love approach it in answer to the beckoning finger of God. With the assurance of that divine call, the young man, on his part, brings sufficient science, sufficient health, the right intention, and sufficient virtue; with these, the youth sets off, almost whistling on the long, long road.

There has been some wonder, in the world outside the Church, that Catholic women have not resented their exclusion from Holy Orders. Some of the modern champions of masculine femininity have even been moved to pity. Why is it that men have all the positions of power in the Church? Why is it that only men can be priests and do the work of priests? Why should men be in all the positions of preference? The question could have been asked much more nobly, and fairly, if it were: why should men be put in the positions of danger?

At any rate, the facts are not a proof of God's greater love for men, or of men's superiority over women in getting things done. It is not a bit of divine anti-feminism. It is simply a question of order. Someone must be at the head of any enterprise engaged in by more than one human being, just as among the powers of a man's soul, one must be in supreme command. Obviously, that position of command had to be given either to a woman or a man, there was no other choice; the ordination of God fell upon the man. Man and woman both have their part to do when they are set apart for the work of God, the priest and the consecrated virgin. Why aren't priests teaching kindergarten, disciplinarians in girls' colleges, or caring for the sick in hospitals? To pursue the questions, why did a man hang on the cross while a woman stood underneath, which was the easier part? Why did Mary, who was obviously superior, mother the infant Church instead of preaching the Gospel and working miracles as Peter and John did? After all, she had not fallen asleep in the Garden, or denied Him to escape the criticism of men. In actual fact, the Catholic woman needs no pity; probably no one is more grateful than she that it is a priest, not a priestess, that she must approach in the crises of her life.

It needs no argument, in view of what we have seen of the priesthood, to prove that this is not a sacrament for children. Nor can it be given to the half-witted, or to infidels. Its proper subject is a baptized man of normal intelligence. The laws of

today demand that he have completed his twenty-fourth year, have sufficient knowledge for his office, and some title to the support of that office—or else the complete contempt of any support which is the official “title of poverty” on which religious priests are ordained.

The list of possible impediments to the sacrament of Holy Orders is so long, forbidding, and complex that one might wonder how anyone ever does get ordained. However, the candidate for the priesthood need have no worry about any one of these being overlooked when he presents himself. Little of this is left to chance, for the obligation weighs heavy on those who advance a man to the priesthood; lest there be any doubt, the obligation is finally placed squarely on the bishop who administers the sacrament. For this chapter, it will be sufficient to take advantage of Thomas’ gifts for compression and analysis.

He divides these impediments into two classes: those that might impede a man’s performance of the duties of a priest, such as blindness or deafness; and those which detract from what Thomas calls the transparent beauty of the personality of the priesthood. Thomas, you see, besides being a highly speculative thinker, had a keen eye for the practical. The priest is to stand before both God and the people. For the first, eminent sanctity, or at least a state of grace, might be enough. But this is not enough if the priest is to serve the people; what impedes his service of them, destroys his usefulness to them. If he stands before them, not in divine dignity, but rather as a clown, an ogre, or a sloven his very presence gives the people reason for mirth, horror, or disgust, impeding the very things he exists to promote in the people.

It is for them he exists. He must be prepared to go to them in all circumstances, as Christ did. Above all, he must be one to whom all men will come as they did to Christ. The arms of Christ were stretched wide indeed, as wide as the world, as wide as all the conditions in which men of the world can be

found; the arms of His Church are no less wide in their embrace. There were no castaways from Christ, only fugitives from the Hound of Heaven. In fact, Christ's attachment to the castaways of the world was an outstanding characteristic of His life. It was to them that He gave the most hearty welcome: the ugly, as ugly as men eaten with leprosy or possessed by demons; the poor; the lonely; the sinners; the sick; the dying—all found their way to the feet of Christ and were welcomed there. This welcome was not by a mere gesture of pity, for these people rarely welcome pity's slightly superior air; rather, it was by divine help and divine love.

Among men, there are many grounds of welcome: beauty, power, position, wealth, health, strength, sociability, and so on. None of these was the grounds for Christ's welcome to His castaways. Rather they were welcomed on the grounds of their humanity; because they were men, and so capable of joining the family of Christ and becoming heirs of heaven. There is a sharp contrast in this to the world of our time. Our tendency is to insist on the annihilation either of the sinner or the fact of sin; the poor and sick should be hidden away; the lonely abandoned; the dying avoided in a shuddering escape from the thought of the bitter exile of those last moments. It is not that man is less human in his sin, poverty, sickness, loneliness, or death; rather, the difficulty is that we are not interested in man's humanity.

If the original rejection of Christ by men had actually been effective, if His tomb had remained sealed, all of this welcome to men as men would have been over with. The same would be true if the continuation of the life of Christ should be broken, if the rejection of the Church and her priesthood by men should ever be efficacious. In the purely human order, the rejection of the officers of an army and the officials of a state turns men from a community into a horde; that is no less true in the spiritual order. Such a rejection would be a kind of vivisection of the Mystical Body of Christ; it would be a wholesale destruc-

tion, at one and the same time, of the teachers, the doctors, the judges, and the diplomatic corps of the spiritual community that flows from the life of Christ. It would, indeed, be literally shooting the supernatural Santa Claus precisely at Christmas time.

The fact is that the world rejected Christ and crucified Him. In the last three hundred years, we have seen a gradually extending rejection of priests and the Church. What is the reason for this modern enmity? We are taking a superficial view of it if we think this enmity is explicable on the grounds of the human failings, or even the crimes, of priests. Christ had none of these failings, no one could convince Him of sin; yet He, too, was rejected. These things are merely the occasion, as was the conviction of Christ out of His own mouth by the high priest. Where the occasions are real, the guilty priests will indeed have questions to answer when they return to their Master. But the real reason for the death of Christ was the work of Christ; that is always the real reason for the rejection of priests. Truth is hated by liars; help is detested by the proud; the spiritual is mocked by the material; mastery by license; divine life by animality; light by darkness.

Every age faces the same paradox. Christ did all things well. He came to give life more abundantly, He died for the remission of sin. He came bearing the divine gifts of truth and help. And men shouted: "Crucify Him." Why? Because it is hard to be a man; much harder to be a Christian man. It is easier to snuff out the reminders of man's possibilities and obligations, to let the easy process of disintegration go its corrupting way.

Lying on his deathbed, a man faces his bitterest, most lonely, most helpless moments—if there be no other Christ there. Against him are hurled the assaults of Satan making the most of his last chance; the memories of sin and of discouraging failure are there; and the terror of the unknown which no human hand or agency can help. The world without Christ is

a dying world ; literally alone, lonely, helpless, facing those same enemies, the ghastly unknown, and nothing that nature offers can be of any help. Even the sincere friends of the world who do not know Christ can only sit and watch its agony ; for this is the place for the divine physician, and for him alone.

CHAPTER XVIII

(OUTLINE)

THE CONSECRATION OF THE HOME

(Suppl Q 41-68)

- 1 The foundation of the home—a contract
 - (a) Justice, a guarantee and a promise.
 - (b) The solidity of the foundation
 - (c) Its relation to others
 - (1) Within the home
 - (2) Outside the home
- 2 Matrimony and nature
 - (a) Its nature
 - (b) Its origins
- 3 The consecration of the home.
 - (a) The sacrament of matrimony.
 - (1) Its existence
 - (2) Its essence matter and form.
 - (3) Its minister.
 - (4) Its subject
 - (b) The goods of matrimony.
 - (1) Relative to its act
 - a Progeny
 - b Fidelity
 - (2) Relative to its essence sacramental signification.
 - (c) Its properties unity and indissolubility
 - (d) Its obligations
- 4 The modern Cana
 - (a) Preparation espousals and banns
 - (b) Form of celebration
- 5 Enemies and the defense of the consecration of the home: impediments and validation

Conclusion

- 1 Desecration of the home:
 - (a) Of its unity
 - (b) Of its indissolubility.
2. The humanity of home.
- 3 The holiness of home

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CONSECRATION OF THE HOME

(Suppl., Q. 41-68)

IN AN older generation, it was the custom in Ireland for all marriage arrangements to be made by the parents. The boy and girl might know one another casually, or they might never have seen one another until the very wedding day; but everything had been settled by their respective parents. To us, this seems strange, even incredible; like surrounding a kiss with the economic assurances of a bank account. Yet, it had its roots far back in the Christian tradition; it was not an uncommon practice through the Christian ages and received no little publicity in the marriages of royalty in the Middle Ages.

Before condemning this custom out of hand, it might be well to examine our own conscience. Certainly, there are some current methods of arranging marriage that are bitterly cruel, for all the pleasant smiles they wear as they dole out misery. Leaving aside, for the moment, such things as "gin marriages," and those fantastic stunt marriages in airplanes, sideshows, carnivals, on the stages of theatres, and so on, there is yet the decidedly common custom of setting about laying the foundations of a home in the thick fog of passion. As soon as the first breezes of reason hit the fog, those within the home can appreciate the absurdity of the location chosen; though it was apparent from the beginning to observers who knew the territory.

Another not uncommon method might be called the marriage created by parental disapproval. Mother or father, especially mother, has never given a thought to the selection of a partner for her child, having fondly cherished the illusion that her child was "just a baby" and would remain so until it tot-

tered into the grave. In actual fact, the child reaches maturity and makes a tentative selection of its own. Immediately, there is an outburst of parental wrath which is part envy, part selfishness, part outraged pride, with, perhaps, a little love mixed in. The violence of the storm crushes the romance, the suitor is banished forever, and another candidate is hurriedly rushed on the scene; it may even be that a series of such banishments eventually makes marriage an impossibility, thus completing the perversion of a child forced back into its mother's womb, its life absorbed by its parents.

All these modern methods are, obviously, quite different from the older Christian arrangement by the parents. The older method was pursued slowly, deliberately, with painstaking investigations on both sides; it was considered a normal part of parental duty in assuring the welfare of a child for all of a lifetime. It was the usual thing in the days of St Thomas; yet, Thomas points out that father or mother cannot force the consent of a child to marriage, since marriage is a perpetual, though lovely, slavery. However, to us of the twentieth century, this mode of procedure is cold, a thing of hard, solid reason; as indeed it is. It is distasteful to us, not so much because it does not take love into consideration—for neither did it exclude love—but precisely because of its coldly rational procedure. It seems to strip all the mystery, the glamor, the appeal from this newborn domestic life.

But why must this most important act of man be dissociated from reason? In all other human fields, from sports to statesmanship, we label acts dissociated from reason as insane; for they have all the essential ingredients of lunacy. As a matter of fact, it is that rational consideration that is the principal defense and recommendation of the older method; its condemnation lies in its abuse, in the flagrant violation of justice to be found where parents, under the guise of love, violated the rights of children by forcing their consent. Where parental love was worthy of its name, fully respecting the rights of others, the mother and father were building for a long time and insisted on

building well; they were mapping out a journey of a lifetime and they prudently looked over the length of the road.

After all, a home established by marriage is built on the solid rock of a contract. Before a single brick can be laid, the concrete of justice must be well set; for it is only on the basis of justice, a solid objective thing, that homes can be built. This is the minimum, no substitute can be found for it; from the beginning this has been the fundamental material and time has not changed either the nature of man or the nature of matrimony. Yet, to modern ears, justice has a clammy, fearsome sound; it calls up pictures of grim judges, heavily armed police, secret agents, and electric chairs. This man and woman are not robbing a bank, starting a civil war, or setting out for a jail; they are only getting married. This is a matter of love, not of justice. It is, indeed, a matter of love; precisely because of that, it is at least a matter of justice. For justice is not an exclusion of love but its safeguard and solemn promise.

This man and woman are entering a union which they themselves, their future children, and society insist shall be permanent; yet permanency is hardly guaranteed by the dispositions of man or woman, changing as they are from hour to hour and day to day. It is not to be left to the mercy of a passing inclination, a fickle fortune, the blindness of passion; it must rest on objective, tangible, unmistakable rights, a basis established by the deliberate will of man and so one that is easily and accurately judged by other men. That basis is capable of defense, for it is solid enough to have a fortress built upon it; it is a solemn contract.

What, then, of love? This man and woman are entering a common life, a common home, to work to a common end; not the life, home, and end of the husband, not the life, home, and end of the wife, but rather, the life, home, and end of this married couple. These two are no longer two, but one. They are made one by a justice that is so intimate as to destroy the proper object of justice and metamorphose itself into a kind of love immediately. There can be no strict justice within a

family because there is no "other" to be dealt with; all are part of one another, they are treated by other members of the family as one treats oneself, lovingly. There is much more than loyalty in a very small brother's rush to aid his beleaguered older brother with any weapon at hand, sticks, stones, or even his own puny fists. It is a spontaneous declaration of the profound truth that an attack on any member of a family is an attack on all of the family, for this domestic union is so close that "otherness," to a great extent, ceases to exist.

Such a union of man and woman must be preceded or followed by love if the contract is observed. Christ Himself made justice the minimum of love when He said. "If you love me, keep my commandments," for the commandments are the minimum of love for God and are all commands of justice. Indeed, justice, of its very nature, includes a regard for others in demanding respect for their rights; to have less than this and yet speak of love is bitter mockery. Once the contract is sealed, every other gesture in marriage is a declaration of love, of union, of surrender, and consecration. In each of the parties to this contract, there is the spark of divinity that makes a man or a woman a worthy object even of divine love, justice is a strong light for weak eyes which have such difficulties finding goodness to love. By that strong light, and the constant intimacy established by the contract of marriage, love is practically guaranteed. If love does precede marriage, as we practically demand today, then justice guarantees its permanence and its growth. Love is not killed by justice but by injustice and selfishness; justice's demand for intimacy, and its constant opportunities for sacrifice are immediate helps to the full, flourishing growth of love. A love which cannot develop under such circumstances, which complains of being stifled by the demands of justice, is not love at all.

The point cannot be pressed too much today that justice is at the bottom of family life. Regard for others, not for self, is the basis on which a family life is built; and on that basis alone.

The regard for others goes far beyond the walls of a home. The open house at Cana, the wedding festivals of our own day, are really symbols telling us that this is not merely a private affair. It is someone else's business, in fact, everyone else's business; it is a public affair and a matter of public interest.

It is fairly evident that society has some interest in marriage. At least, there must be some reason for the space devoted to marriages in gossip columns, society pages, and rotogravure sections; and divorce gets no less attention. Clearly the fact that someone is about to be married, that a marriage has just been destroyed, is considered news by every editor in the land. Society is interested, with an interest not unlike that of brothers, sisters, and parents. The whole community is interested in marriage, for by it a new part of itself has come into being. This is a new unit of the state, another stone bolstering its foundation; of course everyone living in the house of the state is interested. Indeed, the weakness or strength of that stone is the weakness or strength of the whole building.

When marriage becomes a strictly private affair, a fatal disease has set in. When there is in marriage no regard for the state and when the state has none for marriage, then both the family and the state are disintegrating; for domestic life is a feeble flicker without the protection of the state, and the state is non-existent without its family units. A state that tolerates, or positively encourages, a weakening or perversion of marriage is signing its own death warrant; there will be no lack of executioners to carry out the sentence.

From the point of view of that much bigger family of Christ, the supernatural view, there is an even greater and more widespread interest in these nuptials. From this ground will spring plants which will never die; here will come into existence the infants of eternity. We cannot quite picture a celestial charivari, but certainly there is something of an equivalent interest, a boisterous well-wishing, and a demand for an appreciation of this heavenly interest in this family affair. The

supernatural mother insists on being there, the Head of the family, and as many others as can squeeze in; and, when it is a matter of saints and angels, not very much space is required.

Even theologians, long misjudged as heartlessly rational, have taken this sacrament to their hearts. They have given it the kind of scrutiny that makes love the severest, though the kindest, of judges, a close, searching, penetrating glance. The very name has been rolled about on the tongue of theologians as a child might savor a last, precious bit of candy. They have seen in the Latin name, *conjugium*, from which we take our adjective "conjugal," a statement of the essence of matrimony; that is, a binding together as with enduring bonds, a declaration of that joyous surrender which is also a conquest. From now on, both parties to the contract carry a common yoke that is light and sweet by its very heaviness and bitterness in crucial times. The word "espousal" shows this union as a solemn thing sealed by deliberate will, a holy promise thus emphasizing, in a one-word description, the efficient cause of this union. While "nuptials," describing the actual accomplishment of the promise, draws a picture of grace and delicacy, a bridal veil thrown over the common life of these two, half-hiding the beauty that from now on has found a little world of its own into which it retires and which it illumines.

What we have come to consider the most commonplace term for this union, the word "matrimony," is really one of its most beautiful names. If its roots be *matris munera*, it emphasizes the offices and duties of a mother; she is, after all, the bearer and chief educator of the child, and these are the primary ends of marriage. What is more fitting a confession of her great part in this supreme human act than to name it after her by calling it matrimony? The word may be derived from *matrem muniens*, thereby insisting on woman's part and man's protection. She is to be a mother, with the man offering full protection to her and her child. The word may come from *matrem monens*, thereby stressing the assurance to this mother that she has arrived at a secure haven, the anchor of her life can now

be let down; here is her permanent protector whom she must not leave whatever the attractions offered by another. In all its possible derivations, it is noteworthy that the word stresses motherhood.

It is not at all strange that we should try desperately to crowd the beauty of this thing into one word; men have persistently made just such attempts, as though, somehow, we could keep that beauty very handy, even slide it into our pockets, if we could squeeze it into so small a thing as one word. Of course, such attempts always fail, for words are too fragile and small to carry the heavy cargo of the mind and the heart. Because this is particularly true of one solitary word, we try to define marriage in many words. First of all, it is a union, a conjunction of the lives of a man and woman who are free to marry, a union ordered to a common marital life.

It is this last element, common marital life, whose penetration opens up the fuller signification of marriage. We say something of it clumsily when, in legal language, we speak of a community of bed and board to indicate something of the width to which the doors of our hearts are thrown open. But we say much more, and say it more accurately, when we insist it is a union of the soul through justice, love, and a striving to a common end. With that much said, there seems little room left for quibbling over a division of temporal goods; for this would be like deeding over a house and insisting on retaining ownership of the number over its door. Even this detailed statement will not give us a clear notion of matrimony unless we keep in mind its essential character of a contract. It is not primarily something in the physical but in the rational order. Actual marital intercourse is not of the essence of matrimony, for, after all, Mary was truly married to Joseph; the very essence of this thing consists precisely in that act of deliberate will by which each party surrenders rights in view of the ends of marriage.

In the language of the theologians, the essence of marriage, in the process of its accomplishment (*in fieri*), consists in the

mutual consent. The completed essence (*in facto esse*) is the solemn marriage bond that results from that deliberate consent. The material object of the consent is, of course, the persons of the contracting parties; the consent is a formal surrender of rights over their own bodies, always with relation to the end of marriage. But the formal object of the contract, what sets marriage off from any other contract, is precisely the common life, the unity to which these people dedicate their persons. This is the essence, not only of Christian marriage, but of any and every marriage from the beginning of time.

For marriage, you know, has had a long history. It was instituted in the garden of Eden and would have flourished had men never sinned at all. It has gone on without interruption ever since. Apparently, there is no depression to be feared in this matter in the near future. It is definitely and completely tied up with the nature of men, and men can be depended on to marry. Not that marriage is natural to an adult as teething is to an infant. It is not even natural in the sense of something to which our nature causally exposes us, as measles or chicken pox; nor in the sense of the ability to walk or talk, a thing that merely needs a little time and practise. While marriage has its roots in nature, namely, in the incompleteness of man or woman alone, in the limitations of our physical life and the consequent need of perpetuating society, still it is not something that happens to a man or woman; they must bring it on themselves.

Nature demands it for the good of the child and the mutual helpfulness of man and woman, but it is accomplished through our free will. Man is moved to this end, not physically but morally; it is a matter of precept, not a surge of the unconscious, a drive of appetites, an activity of reflexes. As a matter of fact, the precept is not universal in the sense of falling on each individual of the race; rather it is a command to the race as a whole. Not every man has to marry; a man does not have to marry the first woman he meets, nor the fifth, nor the fiftieth.

Yet someone has to marry, and has to marry this man or this woman.

Post-revolutionary France was greatly worried about this precept, so much so, in fact, that it was decided the religious Orders had to be suppressed. The members of these Orders were not doing their duty by the race, being constrained by their vow of chastity; and they should be made to do it. Strangely enough, there has been much more reason for the worry of the race since that suppression than ever before it. As a matter of fact, there is never need for worry that there will not be enough men and women free to marry, indeed, even eager to marry; there will be plenty to care adequately for the human race if the marriage contract be lived up to and justice be observed.

Earlier heretics had worried, not that men would not marry, but that they would. To them, marriage and its acts were evil and sins. This was the slimy heresy of the Manichaens, pitted with hypocrisy, which turned in alleged disgust from the material world as the product of a principle of evil. It is no wonder that the men of the West tramped upon this thing; it is no wonder that Dominicans are particularly proud that Dominic had such a part in its extermination. For the truth of the matter is that the world is a mirror of the beauty of God; marriage is not something to be sustained, tolerated, or grudgingly consented to with a sense of unworthiness; it is a matter of divine command. Once marriage is entered into, it is a matter of justice besides being the highest physical expression of man's highest acts; it is not sinful but virtuous, not degrading but ennobling, not unworthy of man but rather the prerogative of man alone.

Marriage existed before sin came into the world; it exists after sin, not as a product of evil, but as a remedy against and a means to holiness. It has been furthered by every civil law worthy of the name as a means of widening the circle of friendships, tying family to family, offering mutual help to

citizens and a solid foundation to the state. By Christ Himself, it was given the sublime task of representing before the world His own mystic union to the Church.

There is nothing evil in the essence of this contract; nothing evil in the smallest detail of its execution. This is true of matrimony from the very nature of marriage, with all the sanction of nature itself; it is true of all marriages, wherever and whenever contracted throughout the history of the world. It came directly from the hands of God with the nature of man; from the beginning it had something of the divine about it. When God sent His only Son that men might have life more abundantly, it was inevitable that greater fullness, holiness, greater union would be given to this climax of that heroic thing which is human love. But only God could have thought of making it a sacrament; a source of divine as well as of human life. It is of faith that God did this very thing. This is the last of the sensible signs instituted by Christ to signify and cause sanctifying grace, to signify and produce a participation in the life of God within the very essence of the soul of a man and his wife.

It is significant that this increase in divine life should come to each only through the united action of both, that is, through the establishment of the contract. It is not surprising that with this participation of divine life for each should come the special effect of the sacrament for both, the sacramental grace destined for the perfection of the common life to which they have committed all their days.

The common effect of all the sacraments is astonishing enough, God knows, for it is the life of God. The special effects of the Eucharist, positive acts of love with an infallible increase in divine friendship and a title to glory, have a fair share of the marvellous; the special effects of Extreme Unction, last minute preparation for immediate entry into heaven, staggers our imagination. But the special effects, the sacramental grace, of Matrimony are so thoroughly human yet so divinely generous that they both tear at our hearts and are too much for our petty minds. With this sacrament, a man and his wife

receive title to all the graces necessary for the long years of married life. That means the graces necessary to meet the difficulties, disappointments, disillusion, sicknesses, triumphs and successes of married life; all the petty, mean things that can spring from human contact, and all the grand, magnanimous splendors that can be awakened in a human heart; all the sickeningly immanent dangers that threaten love and life—and all this not for a day, not for a month, not for a year. This is not just a possibility; it is an infallible title to all the help necessary for all the length of a lifetime.

This sacramental grace of the sacrament of Matrimony is the answer to the moderns' ignoble caution in marriage. Man's capacity for sacramental marriage is a God-given faculty for a God-given life; God does not give a faculty without the help necessary for its use. If a man looks only to all the unforeseeable difficulties of the common life of the home, the responsibilities of the children, the limited courage and strength of man or woman, he has reason enough for fear; but he has seen only a small part of the picture when he has omitted the constant and infallible help of God which is an integral part of the sacrament of Matrimony.

In a sense, marriage was consecrated from the very beginning, for marriage was a holy thing from nature itself. When Christ and his disciples arrive at Cana, marriage received a special consecration. The Master, whose three years of public life were so crowded, did not take time out to come to the nuptials of Cana because He needed a little diversion, by way of giving a nod of approval, or the silence of approbation. He actively entered into the celebration; and the activity of divine love is never barren. The effect here was consecration and holiness.

This sacrament is the last of the channels of grace, the second of the social sacraments. In common with all the sacraments, it has the essential sacramental notes: it was instituted by Christ; it confers and signifies grace; it is made up essentially of matter and form; it is a sensible sign, and a perfect sign

because it is a divine sign. There must, then, be something material about it, something perfected by the unmistakable meaning of the form.

The remote matter about which this sacrament revolves is the very persons of the contracting parties; the proximate matter is the signs or words by which each surrenders the rights over his own body, always in order to the end of marriage. The form is the mutual acceptance of these surrendered rights, an acceptance that must be exteriorly manifested. In other words, the sacrament of Matrimony was instituted by Christ in the form of a contract, as Penance was instituted in the form of a judgment. As the essence of Penance is in the essence of the judgment, so the essence of Matrimony is in the essence of the contract. The sacrament does not change the natural essence of matrimony as a contract, rather it preserves and supernaturalizes it. Natural matrimony is a contract; supernatural Matrimony, the sacrament, is not only a contract but also a sacrament.

It is the one sacrament that a lay Catholic gives to himself. The priest assists at and blesses the marriage; he does not administer the sacrament. For the minister of any sacrament is the official instrumental cause of the sensible sign, and here the sensible sign is the contract which is produced by the contracting parties themselves. Even in the administration of the sacrament, that joint action which is characteristic of married life is emphasized; it is not the woman, not the man, but the man and the woman who are the ministers of the sacrament of Matrimony.

To receive the sacrament validly, a person must be baptized and be free to marry, that is, he must have the spiritual power which Baptism gives and must not be laboring under an impediment that makes the marriage contract impossible. This is a sacrament of the living; so it also presupposes sanctifying grace and freedom from all the impediments that, while not invalidating the sacrament, would still make it illicit. The Catholic couple, arranging a marriage, always think in terms

of confession, Mass, and Holy Communion, for this is beauty's fullness in the very beginning of married life. Never will they get closer to each other than by both being united to the one body of Christ; never will their love reach higher levels than were reached on Calvary which is here being re-enacted; while from the very beginning, their love is raised to heights totally above the fondest hopes of nature.

It is hard to imagine a gloomier start to marriage than one made in mortal sin. A life of love is begun with a denial of divine love in the heart; a life of justice with injustice rankling in the soul; a life of union and sacrifice by rebellion and selfishness. It means that this married couple are starting married life entirely on their own, for this is a sacrament of the living, in mortal sin, they receive none of the helps for which Christ instituted the sacrament. However, God is kind; through His great kindness, this mistake is not utterly irremediable; when, later, the barrier of mortal sin is removed, all the graces of the sacrament hurry to do their part in bringing this common life to its fullest bloom. Though the Catholic in this state deserves it well, God will not leave him to work out the sublimities and difficulties of this common life by his own feeble strength. He has received the sacrament, though unworthily; he has cast aside the inestimable marriage gift of God. But God is a friend Who easily forgets insults; He is quick to return the gift which is so sorely needed.

Probably the stories of fumbling bridegrooms, who are so flushed, nervous, and confused that they forget the ring and kiss the priest by mistake, are probably very much exaggerated. Nevertheless there is something in the tradition that lets the bride off with a blush and puts all the awkwardness on the groom. Perhaps the difference lies in their perspectives. At this moment, the groom can hardly see beyond his bride and undoubtedly is somewhat lost in the romantic fog of the present. While the bride is more far-sighted, her eyes fixed on the vision of far things, leaving her clear-eyed and relatively calm in the face of this momentous present. These far things

offer a splendid vision. Augustine and the theologians since his time have put them down in prosaic language that could not escape the faint scent of beauty by calling them the goods, or the compensations, of matrimony. The goods of matrimony more than make up for all the hard things inseparable from common marital life. They are curtly summarized, perhaps because we hate to trust sacred things to words, in three bare headings: the good of the child, the good of faith, and the good of the sacrament; but these words are no more than a shadow of the things that all of a lifetime will hardly reveal in their fullness.

It is to be noticed that children come under the head of compensation, not of burdens. The child is the proximate end of the marriage. There are, of course, other ends, such as mutual love, protection against temptation, and mutual help; but this is the immediate purpose. At this time, it is the woman who looks forward most to a child as the final expression of love, an expression to be greeted much more joyously than the first distinct words of a baby after months of inarticulate gurgling. For the child is a perfect expression of love; here is a union that is an embodiment of the mother and father; a surrender, for here is a master of them both; a consecration, for here is one that lifts them both to heroic heights of sacrifice.

It is as though what had been so intangibly real before was to become incarnate, incarnate love. These three, father, mother, and child, are rightly spoken of as a human trinity; the child is a human holy spirit, the living love of those from whom it proceeds. A realization of this makes plain the danger involved in planning a temporary exclusion of the birth of children at the very beginning of marriage, even though this be done by legitimate means; it is like keeping an infant from talking because we enjoy its gurgling. Baby talk is a precious thing, but to insist on its preservation indefinitely is an injustice to the child; so also is the insistence that our love be robbed of its mature perfection.

Let this love remain baby love and it becomes as helpless as

an abandoned infant. Limit its expression to husband and wife, and its chance for growth, fullness is definitely cut down; its acts of love, of sacrifice, of consecration, and of surrender are automatically limited, thus cutting off the normal source of strength for love, while the couple's love is left open to the ruthless attacks of time, of hard reality, of pettiness, and all the elements of division inseparable from human communion. This couple has fallen badly behind in an armament race for the defense of love; there is much more possibility that their love can be bluffed from its legitimate possessions by the dictators of sense appetite. This love, which has been kept deliberately in an infantile state, is not merely a backward child; it is a perpetual infant, dribbling and gurgling after forty years in a high chair.

Of course love suffers from being kept perpetually in an infant's walking machine; it is never able to take its own full, free stride. But it suffers nothing like the damage done to it by birth prevention, by the perversion of love. For this not only limits and cripples love, tying it in a narrow infantile sphere, it destroys love's foundation of justice by a consecration to injustice. It fixes the eyes of both parties on themselves, sets them against each other in a perpetual duel of self-protection; whereas love, to exist at all, must be a consecration to another. This sort of thing is an offense to physical nature, particularly to the physical nature of woman, and it meets with a deep, irreconcilable protest, in spite of the woman herself, a protest that eventually expresses itself in physical revulsion and positive hate.

The second good, or compensation, of marriage, takes in much more than the fidelity that justice demands and without which love cannot endure. It includes that minimum; but it goes beyond it to a deep mutual confidence and trust, mellowing through the years, tying husband and wife closer and closer yet so unobtrusively that it is usually taken for granted. Perhaps only those who have lost it, only those who have come to the point of being unable to trust their partner any longer,

fully realize how profoundly this absolute trust has permeated every corner of married life. Without it, every gesture becomes an occasion for doubt, for unpleasant worrying, and, ultimately, for disgust. This good of fidelity includes the act of marriage and so the fulfillment of the immediate obligations of marriage. In itself it is a denial of most of the sins that are open to married couples precisely as married. Indeed, both these goods, of the child and of faith, pertain to the act of marriage and may be called justice in action within the home. With them, the success of marriage is guaranteed, for justice is guaranteed; without them? Let us see.

We have seen what the loss of the good of the child means for a marriage. The loss of faith makes the whole of married life an unbearable suspicion when it is not a positive lie. Sins against marital faith, then, are flatly sins of injustice; they are violations of the rights of others as contemptible as sneak-thievery and as tragic as murder. They are a betrayal of love, refusing even that minimum which love demands for life; and they are a stark revelation of the petty boundaries of a traitor's soul in his incapacity to make the effort to see beyond himself.

The only maturity these sins of faith hold out to marriage is a further growth in a lie; while for the accomplice of these sins, there is the doubtful joy of being wrapped in the luxury of a lie by a liar who is advertising the fact that he is lying by his very sins. This is not something to joke about, to smile off as one of the little misfortunes of married life, to connive at, agree to, or encourage. This is evidence of decadence in the most sacred precinct of human life; it is to be detested for the putrescently odious thing it is.

The final compensation of matrimony, the good of the sacrament, goes beyond the act of marriage to its very essence. By it is meant the noble signification of Christ's union with the Church, the tremendous assistance of sacramental grace, and that indissoluble bond which is of the very essence of the consummated marriage. Nature itself demands stability in marriage, for there is always the child, with its nourishment and

education to consider; but it is only from the consecration of Christ that marriage takes on that complete unity and indissolubility which gives ultimate perfection to human love. These two persons are now one, as Christ and His Church are one; their union is as indissoluble as that mystic union of Christ and the Church. It is only as indissoluble that matrimony can have this sacramental signification; it is only as indissoluble that it can be a worthy climax of love, for love that introduces the element of time and looks to an end has ceased to be love by ceasing to be complete surrender.

The obligations of matrimony are clear enough from the goods of matrimony, for an attack on these goods is a violation of matrimony's obligations. There are, then, just three roads down which the enemies of the home may make their drive to its disruption and destruction: against the child, during pregnancy, at birth or after birth; against mutual justice, by denying love's minimum, notably in the performance or refusal of matrimony's act; against the indissoluble bond of union. To protect these roads, the barriers of matrimony's obligations have been thrown up.

It cannot be stressed too often that marriage is not a private affair. Throughout the feast at Cana, the doors were thrown open, the humble house was thronged with guests, and, finally, the divine guest Himself arrived. A parallel of that invitation to the world and to God to the marriage celebration is had to-day in our espousals, or engagement, the publication of the banns of marriage, and the formal celebration under the protection of the Church. By these, the marriage becomes the business of everyone, not to the discomfiture of the bridal pair but to the protection of both of them.

The banns or espousals may be dispensed with for good reason; though, really, that dispensation is a misfortune for it frees the parties from a searching scrutiny of their past by the community memory. If there is nothing to hide, there is nothing to fear in these banns; but if there is something to hide, if one of the parties is really incapable of marriage, then there

is something to fear, but not by the innocent party. Indeed, the innocent party is protected from going through a mockery of marriage that would make a ruin of life. The form of the marriage ceremony, demanding the presence of the pastor and two witnesses, is dispensed with only in the extreme case of the physical impossibility of their presence. This is a protection of the bond of marriage itself, the bond that is a representation of the tie between Christ and His Church. Under other circumstances, the contract might easily be denied to the detriment of the other party, society, and the children; a denial will not carry much weight, however, if it runs head on into the irrefragable testimony of the priest and two witnesses.

It is, of course, understandable that the young couple, eager to be off on their family life, should be impatient of everything that delays their entry into their own home. Their impatience should be considerably tempered if they realize that all the delays insisted upon by the Church are for the protection of this solemn union of marriage. All the questions the priest asks, all the investigations he makes into the couple's freedom to marry, are no more than an insistence that this marriage be a true marriage. In the last chapter, we saw something of the tremendous protection thrown around the sacrament of Holy Orders: the qualifications of the candidate, the investigations demanded, the freedom from impediments insisted on. Holy Orders is a social sacrament and society is interested in, even dependent on its perfection. Matrimony is also a social sacrament and society is interested in, dependent on, its perfection.

The barrier of impediments from which the parties must be free is only an expression of society's interest in the perfection of this sacrament. It is quite impossible, in this chapter, to go into these impediments in any detail. There are five impediments that make the marriage illicit, though it remains valid; there are no fewer than fifteen that completely invalidate the sacrament, making the ceremony an empty fiction, a farce that has absolutely no uniting effect on the parties and gives them absolutely no marital rights.

If, in spite of all these defenses, actual damage is done to the marriage itself, the Church makes every effort to remedy this injury in the interests of the sacredness of matrimony. The Church proceeds against the possible or actual injury to matrimony by dispelling the impediments wherever this is possible. Perhaps it is by way of removal of the defects that prevent or interfere with the marriage; perhaps it is by way of dispensation to the things that threaten the perfection of marriage. When the marriage has been actually ruined, or rather, when the defect has resulted in there being no marriage at all, even that hopeless situation is attacked by the process of revalidation; a tremendous effort, almost a straining of the mercy of God, which goes so far as to make this marriage valid, not from this time on, but from its very beginning. In a sense, it is a recalling of the past to repair it.

For marriage is indeed a sacred thing. It is the consecration of the home, in contrast to the desecration of the home which is the work of the enemies of Matrimony. The essential consecration of marriage as a contract is in the complete unity it accomplishes; as a sacrament, the consecration of marriage is in the complete indissolubility of that marriage bond. The desecrating forces of the home necessarily attack this double consecration. They contradict the very language of marriage: insisting on selfishness in place of the regard for others which is fundamental to justice and love; they demand conquest rather than surrender; and place individualism where unity should be reigning. Obviously, there can be no unity or harmony under such conditions; which is to say, there can be no common marital life. In opposition to the indissolubility of marriage will be those who take their love cautiously, making sure of an escape from inconvenience; to them, satisfaction is much more important than justice, while love is a word to play with.

It is understandable, but not excusable, that men and women should try to enjoy the delights of Matrimony and escape its responsibilities and hardships. Marriage is not an easy thing. It is not to be lightly entered, for it is something

from which there must be no escape. It is really a kind of perpetual slavery, but the eager slavery whose fetters are the beautiful bonds of justice and love. It is something that is not to be thrown open easily to every casual passer-by; it is holy ground even when it is sunk in a cave with only a star for a lamp.

There is some desecration of the home in every age, for every age has its men and women who disregard justice and know nothing of love. Our own times have seen this desecration on a terrifyingly large scale; indeed, it has been more than a desecration, it has been a combined philosophical and social attack on the very humanity of the home. We have been taught to speak in the same breath of the union of man and woman and the mating of animals; we have been directed to look to animal psychology for the whole story of man, even in his own home. Inevitably, then, we have offered the supreme insult to a man and his wife; pleasantly, of course, with a learned air, and with the best of intentions.

In actual fact, this animalism, this biological extremism, is barred from the home by the essential notions that go into the making of a home: by justice, love, social significance, and the symbolism of the union of God and His Church. Animals are not capable of justice; they are incapable of beneficent love; they cannot have that minimum regard for others that is the barest essential of a common life. Above all, they are incapable of participating in the life of God. The union of matrimony and the mating of animals are not to be mentioned together under penalty of desecrating the home. To proceed to an evaluation of marriage on this animal basis is to destroy completely what nature herself has contributed to the sacredness of the home.

Of course, such a procedure misses the whole significance of human love, all of its heroism, its nobility, its high courage. Home is a holy place because it is a place of unselfish regard for others, of dedication, of surrender—all of which are far above anything in the purely sensible order. Above all, home

is a holy place because God Himself has entered there. He has made it a means of a deeper, fuller participation of His own life; over it, He looks protectively every instant of its long endurance by the constant help of His grace. It is the place to which God looks today, as He once looked to Bethlehem, for the birth of another son, for the beginning of that feeble life which is yet eternal, for the first appearance of that citizen of earth who is destined for eternal citizenship in heaven.

CHAPTER XIX
(OUTLINE)
THE END OF LIFE
(Suppl, Q 69-91)

1. Judgment and the end of life.
 - (a) The possibility of judgment
 - (b) The time of judgment
 - (c) The character of judgment
 - (1) A thing of triumph.
 - (2) A thing of gratitude.
 - (3) A thing of terror
2. The basis of terror of judgment:
 - (a) Of human judgment
 - (b) Of divine judgment.
 - (c) Terror and truth
3. The particular judgment.
 - (a) The fact and manner of judgment.
 - (b) The place of judgment.
 - (c) Its consequences—the places of souls.
 - (1) Fittingness and variety
 - (2) Exists from them
 - (3) Help of separated souls
 - a From them
 - b For them—Purgatory
 1. Its existence and nature.
 - 2 The pains of purgatory.
 - 3 The help of suffrages
4. The general resurrection
 - (a) Fact and predisposition of the world.
 - (b) Its universality and cause
 - (c) Its time and manner
 - (d) Its consequences
 - (1) Condition of risen bodies integrity, identity, quality.
 - (2) Properties of glorified bodies impassibility, subtlety, agility, clarity
 - (3) Properties of bodies of the damned
5. The general judgment.
 - (a) Fact and manner.
 - (b) Its purposes
 - (c) Its time and place.

Conclusion:

1. The freedom of truth.
 - (a) From injustice
 - (b) From the consequences of injustice.
 - (c) From judgment
- 2 The repository of the truth of human life.
- 3 Freedom of the flesh and freedom of the spirit.

CHAPTER XIX

THE END OF LIFE

(Suppl., Q. 69-91)

THE climate of Washington, in itself, is a harmless thing. Natives will insist that it is ideal; it has variety, beauty, mildness, with just enough rigor to satisfy a virile man's appetite for an occasional bout with the forces of nature. Strangers, normally, are not to be quoted publicly on the climate. The mind of man, you see, is very stubborn; often enough, even an obvious fact will not stop the human mind short of a denial, though they crash against it as solidly as against a brick wall. But there is one obvious fact that no man denies. There is absolutely no argument about the fact of death. A man may speculate as to the time of his death; but no one wonders whether or not he will die.

The argument really begins on the other side of death. What are the consequences of it? The answer to that question determines the character of a man's whole life; and there is great variety in the answers. To some, death is merely corruption and oblivion; to others it is an absorption into something superior. In either case, there is a complete destruction of and an end to the individual. A third answer maintains that death leads to a kind of half-life where the soul drags on its lonely existence without the body; and here again the person has ceased to exist at death. Still another answer has death as an entry into a superior, full, divine life of both body and soul, a life of the whole person. The difference between the two is the difference between the end of a blind alley and the long stretches of an arterial highway. Obviously, the steps of men, in each case, have a totally different ring: in the first, they will

be the tired, dragging steps of the hopeless; in the other, the eager or fearful steps of one who has control of his life and must answer for it personally. We know that life is not a walk down a blind alley; so we know that death means a settling of the accounts of our stewardship over the rich humanity that was put into our hands for so many years.

There is no other time for judgment but at the end of life; for the game is not over until the last man is out, but then, definitely, it is done with. A judgment on the good thief, passed the day before he died, would have been premature and wrong; it was not until the halter had squeezed the last breath out of Judas that the success or failure of his life could be determined, a determination obviously beyond the power of men. Christ was one of the very few who could approach death saying, as He bowed His head, that His work was finished. To most men, only death brings a finish to work. Logically, then, it is appointed to every man once to die, and after death, the judgment.

This final casting up of accounts will have startlingly different effects on different individuals, as, indeed, its contemplation has now; some men flourish on it, others are nauseated at the very thought of it, some run to it eagerly, while others must be dragged to the judgment seat. For Dominic and Thomas, who threw away their lives in literal imitation of the extravagance of Christ, judgment is a triumph; they were fools of the world revealed by judgment to be the wise men of eternity. The king who sat on his throne lost it, while the three who came from the East, gained much greater kingdoms in paying homage to a King in a cave.

It is not hard to see that men and women who stood helpless as ruthless power robbed, defamed, beat, spit upon, and killed them, will greet judgment with sighs of gratitude; what is theirs is at last given back to them, and much more. After the judgment, Lazarus, to whom the crumbs from the rich man's table seemed such a delicacy, need bother no more about crumbs. This is one of the secrets of the patient suffer-

ing of Christians as contrasted with the bitter, hating, hopeless suffering of those who have no recourse against injustice; something like the difference between the submission of an only child to the pranks of a school bully, and that of the boy who, all unknown to the bully, has five older brothers.

There is little difficulty in understanding the triumph and gratitude that may be found in judgment; there is no difficulty at all in grasping the terror of it, the terror of the wise men of the world who have laughed at the fools of Christ, of the strong men of the world who scorned weakness and trampled on it. They have good grounds for terror; but, then, so have we, even though not on the same grounds. One of the privileges of his citizenship that an ordinary citizen is not eager to exercise is that of standing before a judge or being subjected to a verdict of his peers. He has a real terror of a court of law; nor is that terror based on his criminal record, in fact, the more innocent he is, the more likely he is to be terrified. His terror is of human, not divine judgment; and there is a considerable difference between the two.

This man's fear may have somewhat the same basis that prompts us to hang curtains on windows, put locks on doors, and find secret places for diaries. We do not like to throw the doors of our lives open to public inspection. Not that we are hiding criminal activities, we may be concealing very sacred things; but we know the unsympathetic attitude of strangers and the details of our private lives are not to be mocked. Then, too, this man knows the limitations of human judgment. He has at least heard of its blindness, its capacity for error, its inevitable incompleteness, its bias and venom when hostility lies at the bottom of it. He is taking a chance submitting to it; for even when he wins, he loses, for the veil is torn aside from his life for an instant for all the world to stare in.

The basis of terror of divine judgment is something else again. There is no worry about bias, venom, or hostility; here we can be sure the judge has a complete grasp of all the evidence and will give an objective judgment. We can rest

assured of an eternally wise consideration of all the motives and extenuating circumstances; we can be sure of full and complete justice. That is just the difficulty; to a race of sinners, justice can well be a terrible thing. What we fear is not God but ourselves; our very terror of judgment is itself an acknowledgment of the faults on our side which we dread to face.

The difference between the terrified and the undisturbed at this judgment seat is not so much the difference between sinners and angelically innocent saints; rather, it is the difference between men who have lived in a fool's paradise by shrugging aside their sins, forgetting or ignoring them, and the men who were solidly courageous enough to face the fact of their sins in life and do something about them. Sins are unpleasant things at any time; but it is only when we refuse to face them ourselves and have to be forced to see them as they are by the action of a divine judge that they make us victims of terror. For there is nothing so terrible as a truth that cannot be faced.

It would be much better if fear of judgment were a healthy seasoning of all of a lifetime, instead of being saved up for a climax of terror at death. At any rate, every man will have to face judgment. It is of faith that this judgment will come immediately after death; there will be no agonizing period of restless waiting for a tardy judge or endless hours of uncertainty as the trial drags on. This judgment is after death, and it is immediate. That it should be so is fairly evident. It would not be fair to keep the souls of the just on a rack of anxiety, waiting for the parade of all the generations of the world to pass by before they learned what their lives and had been worth; and there is no point to encouraging a smug complacency in sinners who, for ages on end, would hold to the baseless conviction that somehow, some way, they will slip by this last test. No. A man has a right to know his destiny immediately. After death, he can do no more about it; there is no point in waiting, for the soul is ready and capable of punishment and reward.

Man is not kept waiting for centuries for his judgment; he

does not even wait an instant. This is a divine judgment accomplished with divine dispatch. In the human order, there is good sense in discussing a case from all angles, a deliberated, measured sentence, and finally, execution of that sentence. For a divine judge, no discussion or deliberation is necessary; He does not learn about the case bit by bit, His judgment is instantaneous. In reality, it is the soul that judges itself. This trial is an uncovering of truth and it is the soul that faces that truth and acknowledges it. The deeds of a lifetime are made known to it in an instant through divinely infused species—the natural mode of knowledge of a separated soul; in an instant, by the help of the divine light, the full significance of these deeds is seen; in an instant the soul knows itself, knows what it deserves and receives its deserts. The judged soul has its place and sinks or rises to it. There is dramatic truth in the picture of Satan plummeting from heaven to hell as a stone might crash from the top of a tower to bury itself in the ground at the tower's base.

We usually think of this judgment in metaphorical terms. The book of life, kept by a recording angel, is solemnly opened; there is a terrified advance to the tribunal of Christ; or Christ, the Judge, comes to the bedside of the dying man to pronounce His judgment. There is reason to this sort of thing, for we must take things apart to see them well; even though the thing to be dissected is an instant of divine judgment. The soul of the dead man does not, in fact, penetrate into heaven to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Indeed, it never gets into heaven until it is already judged; nor does the physical presence of Christ leave heaven to preside at all the death-beds of the world.

Judgment takes place in the very instant after death and in the very place of death. The soul is judged. What then? Where does it go? Thinking in such terms does not mean that we are allowing our imagination to run wild; rather, it means we are thinking along the lines of the absolutely universal doctrine of the Church. We know, of course, that spiritual sub-

stances, such as the souls of men, have no quantity and so have no need of a place in our ordinary sense of the word; they are not stored layer on layer as we pack sardines in a can or New Yorkers in a subway. After the resurrection, of course, it is a different story; for when we have a body, we must have some place to put it.

Before the resurrection, we are dealing with purely spiritual substances. They are not in place in a way that can be measured, for they are not extended surfaces to be figured out inch by inch; rather, they are in place by a contact of power, that is, by their operation or, in the case of their punishment, by their being acted upon. That is what the very nature of spiritual substances demands; by the divine ordination, more than hinted at in the Scriptures, it is fitting that these spiritual substances be assigned corporal places proportionally responding to their condition of free operation or constant punishment.

Consequently, there is a place assigned for the souls of the just which we call heaven; a place for the souls of the damned which we call hell; and an intermediate place of purgation in preparation for heaven which goes by the name of purgatory. Finally, there is that place of natural happiness, where the sun of the supernatural never penetrates, which is called limbo. These are the *states* possible to souls of men who have died; these, then, are the *places* corresponding to these states.

Our visualization of the heavenly city as heavily walled with Peter guarding the massive gates, or of Satan's kingdom with its gates thrown wide open to all comers, is more than an imaginative help to our minds. It is actually much more difficult to get into heaven than to break into a walled city; and, while entry into hell is not so difficult, it is quite another thing to get out of it. As a matter of fact, there is not much point to getting out of either place. A soul never does get out of one or the other in the sense of a prisoner escaping jail; for always and everywhere, the damned soul carries its punishment with it, as the blessed soul its happiness.

Look at the souls of the blessed. Their original contact with

the material world, through their bodies, had two purposes: to allow them to reach perfection, and to gain knowledge through sensible things. Without the body, a soul can learn nothing from an inferior world, for all its knowledge must come from above; and its time of perfectibility is all over and done with. Why should it come back? Ah yes, but New York is still New York, and a grand place to visit! After all, some of them have come back; how and why did they do it? Well, an angel can take on a physical appearance, for an angel was made to act directly as a spiritual substance, by intellect and will. But if we want a drink of coffee, mere will power is by no means enough. A soul is not made to act directly but rather through the body; for it to do otherwise, a miracle is necessary. Normally, these appearances of the dead are to be explained by the ministry of angels, though it is a difficult thing to determine whether the appearance is that of an angel or the miraculous work of a dead soul. Since, however, miracles are not to be multiplied, the supposition is that it is an angel unless there is incontrovertible evidence to the contrary.

However, it is a mistake to picture souls as existing in heaven completely isolated from the events of the world, crowding about each newcomer for family news, somewhat as expatriates in the Paris of long ago scanned the meager pages of Paris editions of American newspapers. These souls have intellects and wills; they can think, and love, and pray. In the vision of God, they see all that pertains to them of the events of this earth; indeed, they see much more than ever they could in this life, for they are seeing with the eyes of God which do not stop at the face of a man. It is with very good reason that we ask Our Lady and the saints to intercede for us, even though their time of strict merit is over at death; they are tried and true friends of God, living in an eternal intimacy with Him, and fully conversant with our condition. They can and they do help us immensely. There is nothing we can do for them in return beyond offering them the delicate compliment given to a friend in a request for his help.

There are other souls, though, who are badly in need of our help and completely at our mercy. The souls of those who died in venial sin or with punishment still due to sin remain in purgatory until they pass muster for the pure air of heaven. They possess the same equipment of intellect and will; they can, therefore, think, and love, and pray. They have not the sweeping knowledge of the beatific vision, but their state—separated from the body—is itself a demand for the infused species by which spiritual substances naturally know. The common belief in their ability to help us by their intercession is solid.

The point is that they are in a state which of itself demands rather than offers help. Their time of merit is over; the one means at their disposal for ultimately reaching heaven, which is, of course, assured to them, is by the slow process of paying every last farthing. But our time of merit is still with us; these souls must suffer, while we can satisfy for them. They are suffering a double punishment comparable to the pains of hell. They are stripped of all the illusions, the distractions, the sensations offered by the rush of the world; of the fever of passion and the darkness of ignorance. They can, then, turn to heaven with all of their being in a torment of desire that makes every instant of delay an era of agony. This is their parallel of hell's eternal "pain of loss."

Over and above that, there is the "pain of sense" which, in the common opinion of the Fathers and in the revelations of such saints as Catherine of Siena, is a greater pain than any which can be suffered in this life. The common doctrine is that this pain is caused by fire which, operating supernaturally as an instrument of divine justice, causes much more suffering than it does operating on bodies by its natural power. Still, these souls see the justice of all this punishment; they submit to it willingly, eagerly, even lovingly, for it means that the eternal vision is brought closer every instant. They are friends of God who know how, and are equipped to suffer; the guilt of their

venial sins is probably wiped out in the first instant after death, allowing them to turn to God with pure, burning love.

Obviously they need our help. That we can help them has been solemnly defined by the Council of Trent, a definition that flowed easily from the nature and doctrine of the Mass, indulgences, and the Communion of Saints. These souls can be helped by the official prayers of the Church, by the sacrifice of the Mass, by the gaining of indulgences, indeed, in a lesser way, by all the good works that merit the generous reward so eagerly given by our divine Friend.

The immediate judgment of the soul of man might have been argued on purely natural grounds. Purgatory has its reasonableness, but only divine revelation could assure us of its existence. The resurrection of the body, while certainly doing no violence to the nature of man, is so entirely supernatural that to speak of it in a pagan world is to talk a foreign language. It was quite unsuspected by the Greek and Roman philosophers. Christianity, following on Jewish tradition, introduced the notion of an eternally enduring person upon which Western civilization rests. The notion has been thrust aside in some contempt by all the philosophers who shudder at the material world as a thing of evil and who look forward with joy to the release of the soul from the prison of the body. The resurrection is one of the truths lost sight of in the process of liberalizing Protestantism. The moderns, of course, shuddering at the spiritual because it will not behave like the material and stay penned up in a laboratory, see in the truth of the resurrection only a bogey man conceived to frighten the weak-minded.

There is reason enough for the mind of man to stop short at the barrier of death; for this barrier is simply too high for reason to hurdle. The obvious fact of death, the completeness of its corruption and dissolution of the body, would seem to settle the question of further life for the body. On the other side, there are no more than vague hints from man's own nature: the incompleteness of his immortal soul separated from

the body, the insufficiency of sanctions which stop at death, the human yearning for love that will not die and happiness without the tragedy of its loss, man's inner taste for eternity.

All these, however, are only hints. The truth of the resurrection of the body is supernatural, known only by revelation from God Himself, but it is known, for God did make the revelation. It is not merely the soul of man, but man himself, all of him, that will live forever; not this or that man alone, but all men, and each possessed of his own proper body. The fact is certain. On the same authority, it is clear that it will be a general resurrection, that is, of all men at the same time, coming only after the last man has been born and has died. We rightly couple it with what has been called the end of the world, although Catholic doctrine has never coupled it with the destruction of the world but rather with the mysterious purification of the world.

There are several vague, mysterious descriptions of that final purification in Scripture; since they are prophetic, however, they are not to be thoroughly grasped before their time. To Thomas, it was a purification by fire that would consume the imperfections of the world and be followed by a changeless perfection. He thought it would be rather nice if hell were made the dumping ground for all the debris. For him, the scientific side of this was easy: it was explained by merely stopping the motion of the celestial bodies and thus bringing an end to all change, all corruption and generation. Science has moved along since his day, with the result that the scientific side of this purification is not so easily explained today. Why should the world endure? Well, on the other hand, why waste a perfectly good world? It would make a kind of Central Park for the Sunday stroll of the blessed when they feel like stretching their legs again on earth, and there is always the heavenly home to return to. How can it be done? Certainly not by any means familiar to us; but then there are a good many things in the divine instrument bag that have not been submitted to human inspection.

Whatever happens to the world, all men will rise again from the dead, good and bad, young and old. They will rise at the sound of a trumpet; not that ears long dead, turned to dust, and blown about the face of the earth will be tuned to that note. Lazarus, dead for four days, was hardly on tiptoe waiting for the voice of Christ which, nevertheless, he promptly answered. Rather, the sound of the trumpet will be an instrument of divinity, as the voice of the priest in the consecration of the Mass is a divine instrument; surely, the bread is not listening for those sacred words, impatient to be changed into the body of Christ. The model and exemplar of this last resurrection was the first resurrection, that of Christ on Easter Sunday; its cause must, of course, be divinity. The humanity of Christ, in this and the other divine works of Christ, is always the instrument of the Godhead.

Thomas has a pleasant statement of the part the angels will play in the resurrection of men. It is not to be a necessary part but rather a share thoughtfully provided by God much as a mother allows a child to pay street-car fare or to carry a package along a busy street. The angels have been working with men from the beginning; guiding, guarding, teaching, helping them. It is only fitting that they should have a part in this last climax of human life. Thomas says that they will "prepare the material for the resurrection"; though it is no doubt an exaggeration to picture them as scurrying to the ends of the earth, gathering the dust of men's bodies, assorting it, arranging it in piles, and waiting for the divine word.

Thomas follows this up with a phrase as to the time of the resurrection, a phrase notable in the beauty of its simplicity. He says it will come "when the work of the angels is finished." This is their last work for men; when that is over, both they and their wards can rest, rest forever. Thomas does not try to determine the time of the resurrection; Christ Himself had put an end to that speculation when He said that this was known only to the Father. Granted the secrecy of the time, as secret as the end of the world with which it will coincide, Thomas says

that it will probably take place suddenly—since divine power works in an instant—when the work of the angels is finished.

It will be at dawn, conforming to the model of Christ's own resurrection. It will be as though the turn of the wheel of time had just been completed. At creation, which was time's beginning, the day started off at its beginning; not at the siesta hour, not in time for a late dinner, but at dawn with the sun in the east and the moon in the west; so it will be at the resurrection. At that last moment, the world will look as it did long, long ago, when time itself was just starting; in a real sense, time will start again, for men will begin to live again, men, understand, not souls, not a new race of men but the same men, body and soul, as first inhabited the earth.

The resurrection is necessary if men are to live eternally. Yet, there is no point to it if each soul has a body different from its original one; for then not the same, but a different person lives. It is to its same, identical body that the soul has its inclination; this is the body that has merited its share in reward and punishment; this is the body that should be judged. There would be a thoroughly justified grumpiness, for example, in a wrestler who received the body of a chorus girl because of a mixed-up resurrection. It is not enough to retain the same sex and general contours of the original body; the risen body must not only be similar, it must be numerically identical or we have not the same person; it has not been a resurrection but a constitution of a new creature.

This point, reasonable as it is, has been the source of much amusement to scoffers. Perhaps that is why God, in a kind of divine contempt, while assuring us of the fact gave us no information of the manner in which it will be accomplished. Objections have been offered which were meant to be devastating but actually turn out to be amusing. There is the famous case of the cannibal. The difficulty is offered not on the grounds of the bones he picks—after all this was not a bone-eating cannibal—but from the side of the cannibal himself. When he comes to die, there will be nothing in his body that was not

taken from the meat and marrow of other human bodies; someone will have to go unresurrected, probably the cannibal. Really to make the point it is aiming at, this objection should maintain that the cannibal started his meat diet in the first days of his mother's pregnancy; a thing of extreme difficulty, even for a cannibal. If the objector is willing to accept this, he should have no difficulty accepting anything, even the resurrection of worms. The whole thing arises from a confusion of a man's body with the whole mass of material that a man possesses in the course of his whole life; as a matter of fact, some of us can do without a great deal of that right now. What is demanded for the resurrection is that *some* of the identical material go into the risen body, actual defect of material being made up by divine power. After all, if a child dies at seven and is to rise at thirty, or a man born with one ear is to be perfect in the resurrection, some material must be added; but the bodies will still be identical.

The same objection is given scientific form when it is said that the resurrection is an impossibility because, obviously, human bodies return to their chemical constituents after death, to enter into the make-up of vegetables, flowers, animals, and ultimately, no doubt, bodies of other men. The answer, however, does not change. The resurrection does not pose God the problem of spreading five pounds of flesh over a big frame; after all, the original material had its source in a divine command. God does not need a whole mass of the material; but not even God can make the same body from totally different materials.

Men, then, will be the same men, but much improved. They will be integrally perfect, that is, they will have all that pertains to the integrity of the human body. Specifically, Thomas mentions fingernails and hair, not primarily for the comfort of the bald, but because there might be some slight doubt about these superfluities. If, through accident, disease, or congenital defect, anything is missing at death, it will be supplied in the resurrection.

Thomas thinks that men will rise at the age at which their development and perfection reached their height and before they have started to deteriorate. He thought thirty would be about right. And all men and women will rise at the same age, so that a mother can really be young with her daughter, and with her grandmother for that matter; perhaps it is only then that we shall get to know our ancestors. Of course there will be mothers and grandmothers there, for not all arise in the same sex; they must, you see, be the same persons. Clearly a strangely bearded grandmother would not be the same grandmother we had known on this earth; moreover, the diversity of sex is a part of the perfection of the species.

While all will be the same age, they will not all be the same size. There is no particularly perfect size for a human being. Some will be big, some small, some tall and some short; but all with the defects of nature corrected, that is no one will be too big, too small, too tall, or too short. In a word, there will be a pleasant variety, as great a variety, in fact, as there is now; for there will be exactly the same individuals with the rough spots smoothed off. Yet, with all this physical perfection, there will be none of the operations of animal life; there is simply no point to this activity. Man remains a rational animal, but with his animality totally spiritualized; even the damned will forego all animal life.

In the just, the bodies will be examples of matter completely dominated by spirit. By nature, man is a creature of reason in whom spirit was made to command; in glory, the submission of body to soul far surpasses nature. Four instances of this domination of the soul over the body have been singled out by theologians and called the gifts of the glorified body. The body is said to be "impassable," that is, not subject to injury in any sense, even in that delicate sense of suffering in the very exercise of sense faculties. The soul will dominate the body both as its form and as its mover: in the first case, the result is the gift of "subtlety" which subjects the organic character of the body to the soul; in the second, it is the gift of "agility"

which enables the body to move with something of the speed of thought. Finally, just as the body will hinder no operation of the soul, so neither will it cloud or veil the soul's beauty; this is the gift of "clarity" which allows the splendor of the soul to shine through the body, thus making the spiritual beauty as visible as physical beauty is to us in this life.

The bodies of the damned will have none of this supernatural perfection. Since they will have all that nature demands, they will be free from all defects and deformities; but they will have no more than that except for the immortality which keeps them incorruptible, not immune to injury, but rather guaranteed an eternity of punishment. When all men have risen equipped with bodies for eternity, they are prepared for that last great drama in the history of mankind, the drama that strikes such terror to our hearts, principally because we look at it sentimentally rather than rationally; the last judgment.

To put the fundamental reason for general judgment in simple language, it would be enough to say that it takes away from men for all time any grounds for that comforting activity we call grumbling; no sinner will make his way back to hell mumbling "we were robbed." In more dignified language, the general judgment is the ultimate vindication of the justice and mercy of God. Man, after all, is more than an individual, he is a citizen, he is a member of the great family of humanity. He is judged, justly and finally, as an individual immediately after death and there will be no change in that sentence; as a citizen, he stands before the whole world on the day of general judgment that all might know the wonder of God's ways and the complete justice of the original sentence. There will be no grounds for such a gossip's wonder and speculation as "What is that one doing in hell, she seemed such a grand person?" or "Look at Johnny Smith in heaven! Wait a few centuries till they find him out."

The original sentence is final. The just, then, can suffer no unhappiness; a revelation of their sins to the world is an

emphasis on their courage and penance in getting rid of sin, not a cause for terror and shame but of wondering gratitude at the mercy of God. Today in heaven, Magdalen feels no shame at the public recitation of her crimes in the Divine Office; nor do those reciting the tale revel in an unholy exultation at uncovering the weakness of another. Rather, like Mary herself, they find these things an occasion for wondering at the goodness of God.

It is quite another thing for the damned. All excuses are made impossible; they are shown plainly in their perversity, their pettiness, their stupidity, with no reason for anything but shame in their sins. It will be, this judgment, a public vindication of Christ the Judge and of those who took Him at His word, taking up their crosses to follow Him. Such complete justice is impossible in this world, or even in the particular judgment; here, the whole person, body as well as soul, is finally rewarded or punished.

The fact of this general judgment is sure from faith. That it will not proceed eternally, with a hopelessly boring recitation of details for all the infinite number of men to be judged is evident to reason itself. At the particular judgment, it is the work of an instant for men, by a divine illumination, to know their own sins and their own judgment; in the general judgment, a like divine illumination will make plain all the virtues and sins of all other men. All minds will agree, as the intellect must always agree to the clearly evident, to the disposition of men by the justice of God.

When this judgment will take place is God's secret, made known to absolutely no man. Its place is equally mysterious. The prophetic references to the valley of Jehosaphat may or may not be allegorical; indeed, the location of the valley is itself subject to controversy. Thomas thinks it fitting that this general judgment be in the neighborhood of Mt. Olivet from which Christ ascended into heaven after the triumph of His life and death on earth; there He might descend for His eternal triumph and take all good men with Him from the same spot

on which He originally blessed the apostles and left them to the mercy of men.

In the beginning of this chapter, we spoke of the different ways of looking at death and the consequences; these did not represent a variety of views thrown open to the choice of man. There is no choice; we cannot take what pleases us, for only one of these is true. Terror of death is really the result of the fear of life; both are ultimately a fear of the truth of human responsibility, the truth of sin, and the truth of the punishment due to sin. Fear, however, does not destroy these things for they remain the central characters in the drama of life; we are not released from them by fearing them, whereas truth itself, respecting them, does give freedom beyond the ordinary dreams of men.

In comparison with this freedom, political and economic freedom, however precious, are petty things. For by the truth of death and its consequences, and the truth of judgment, man is really set free from injustice done to him and from the desire to do injustice to others. He need not despair at the thought that injustice visited upon him will not be rectified; it will. He is not on fire with revenge, for his persecutor must pay to the last farthing; and there is no hurry about demanding the payment. He is not rushed off his feet, reaching out in panic to grab what he can in the few years of his life; the rewards of life will come without his rushing after them. He is not haunted by a fear of life that loses hold even of what little life is given to every man in the attempt to dodge the responsibility of a greater life. Above all, he knows that life is not to be understood by concentrating on its beginnings to the neglect of its end.

All these truths have been obscure to some men of every age; but it is the last that seems almost to have been lost to our times. Priding ourself on our knowledge of life's processes and progress, the end of life is neglected and denied with an inevitable loss of life's meaning. The mistake cannot be made without a more fundamental one running along with it, one

that would embarrass a child; the mistake of supposing that something comes from nothing, that the world accounts for itself.

On the other hand, a man who has been freed by truth is free to know human life and, above all, to live it. Others may lay claim to a freedom of the flesh; but that freedom has always been a shame rather than a glory to men, robbing them, ultimately of manhood itself, of the right to hope, of sovereignty of their own lives. Freedom of truth does not release a man from the flesh, but from slavery to it, from cringing before appetite, and surrendering to things beneath him. It gives him freedom of the spirit which finds its immediate expression in the freedom to live life, and its ultimate climax in the glory of the risen man. By it, he can drink deeply of the cup of life, finding it always full to overflowing and his own capacity not diminished, but constantly increasing.

CHAPTER XX
(OUTLINE)
ETERNAL BEGINNINGS
(Suppl Q 92-99)

- 1 Promise of the transient:
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- 2 Some concrete promises:
 - (a) Unchristian beginnings:
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- 3 Beginnings of life:
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- 4 Beginning of death:
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 - (1) Pain of loss
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 - a Eternity and reality of hell fire.
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- 5 Limbo

Conclusion.

1. Aversions to eternal beginnings:
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- 2 The truth of the beginnings
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CHAPTER XX

ETERNAL BEGINNINGS

(Suppl., Q. 92-99)

THE one completely certain thing about any hour is that it will come to an end. The next most certain thing is that its end will mark the beginning of still another hour. If the passing moments measure agony, an hour's death-struggle is a long drawnout affair, the next hour comes too slowly and stays too long ; if it is joy that passes under the scrutiny of time, the death of an hour seems like an echo of its birth ; the next one comes much too quickly but is welcomed as a reprieve of joy. Welcomed or dreaded, every hour, in common with all passing things, comes to an end and marks a beginning.

Men are familiar enough with this truth to mark its occurrence throughout the rough sections life is ordinarily cut up into : infancy, childhood, adolescence, manhood, senescence. Indeed, they find the same truth in every day, and every moment of every day, in the smile that introduces a laugh, the tears that end a pent-up storm, the last hammer blow that completes a work, or the first kiss that begins love's consecration. For this is the mark of all things passing ; and there is little man is more familiar with than things that do not last. It would be strange, indeed, if a man, recognizing the inevitability of the end of his life, did not look to what that end begins ; for all of his experience rises up in protest against one such exception to the general rule of things that pass.

As a matter of fact, no man has been able to resist at least one quick glance ; no man has been able to resist the formulation and statement of the beginning that springs from the end of a human life. Sometimes the eyes were blinded, lest they see too much ; at others, the glance was taken through a smoke-

screen of discouragement, or through a bright fog of unfounded optimism. At no time could men get their hands on evidence that would satisfy their minds beyond the one point of the indestructibility of the soul of a man; all else has to be taken from the mouth of God, and there has always been a great reluctance on the part of many men to take their stories from anyone but other men or the devil.

At any rate, the opinions of men on the beginnings introduced by death may be roughly divided into ones framed for comfort and the one framed by truth. Some men like their beds hard, others soft; some will insist on their eggs done one way, some another; a cold shower is heroism to one man, plain common sense to another, and so on. For men's ideas of comfort run a strange gamut. Naturally then, the comfortable beginnings assigned for death are a strange lot to be crowded into one hostelry except for their common and profound aversion to facing the truth.

Perhaps the strangest comfort is offered by the promise of oblivion as the sequel to death. This end of all beginnings, because a beginning of nothingness for the individual, may be reached by the shattering blow of annihilation, or the slow, insidious, dream-like caresses of absorption that soothes the victim into complacency as pleasantly as the death-stroke dealt by bitter cold. It makes little difference whether the individual is absorbed into a future humanity, a present class, a future race, or a monstrous political ideal; the point is that for him, death begins nothing but nothingness.

Others, particularly those whose feet have dragged through a life that has never seen the sparkle of a star or the threat of a raging storm, find their strange comfort in having death introduce a life pretty much like the one they had been used to: a little vaguer perhaps, a little more befuddled, a little more pointless, but the same dull, hopeless routine. How desperately this petty comfort is desired is testified to by the prospering trade of tricksters and the steady, contemptuous cooperation of the devil in ministering it freely to people dulled enough by

monotony to find it satisfying. Still others are by no means discouraged, not even by solid facts; they are the cheery ones who banish unpleasant things by refusing to look at them. With the best intentions, they set out to flatter humanity, never realizing that their blundering compliments are really unveiled insults. For them, death is the beginning of a state where all men of all time will gather around and just be happy, like the good, sunny, little children they are at heart; they just know that no man is nearly as bad as he thinks he is or as he tries to be. Mischievous, perhaps, but really bad? Impossible; so unpleasant to think about. Besides, God couldn't punish men forever, He just couldn't; think of our sensibilities!

As God tells the story of death's sequel, there is enough in it for unlimited inspiration or downright terror; but little indeed for the relaxation implied by comfort as we make our way to it through the maze of life. For the divine account insists that life, in common with all transient things, comes to an end that is indeed a beginning, and a beginning that never ends: death marks the end of man's merit and demerit and begins either the eternal happiness of heaven which he has won by his virtues or the eternal misery of hell which he has chosen by his sins. Once the story has been given us by God, it is not difficult to see its harmony with what we know of man and of God. For our spiritual soul demands eternal life, our composite nature declares there is an end to personal merits; our acts cry out for justice, for reward or punishment; while the nature of God insists that the punishment be eternal and awful, the reward eternal and ineffable.

Every now and then, some utterly degrading evil dares to rear its head in the company of men; the revulsion is complete and the energetic attack to stamp the unspeakable thing out of existence is normally as prompt as a man's instinctive gesture to ward off a blow. Every now and then, some vagrant breeze lifts the veil for an instant from the face of heroic virtue and gives men a passing glimpse of the beauty of God; it brings a serene peace, an inspiring lift, a sense of triumph as though

men were suddenly made aware again of the ineffable things within their grasp. In each case, men are brought face to face for just an instant with the climaxes of human life and they know deep in their hearts precisely what death means for the future ; unmitigated misery of evil, or unalloyed happiness in goodness.

For some men, then, death begins the life of heaven. Much has already been said about the essential, constitutive happiness of heaven, particularly in the beginning of the second volume of this work where the question was treated at considerable length. It will be enough here to recall that the fundamental happiness of heaven consists in the possession of God, the faint shadows of Whose perfection, beauty, and goodness accounted for all that was real, all that was beautiful, all that was good in the space of our mortal days. Another way of saying the same thing, but from the side of man, would be to point out that heaven is the highest perfection of man's highest faculties constituting his complete fulfillment. The two are seen as one when we remember that we possess God through the beatific vision, that face to face, intuitive knowledge which comes from the immediate union of the essence of God with the intellect of man ; from that grasp of God flows the unceasing joy of heaven into the will of man, marking the full satisfaction of all his deepest desires and leaving him at complete peace.

That vision of God is an act that begins but never ends. Divinity is not enclosed in the finite limits of a human concept enabling man to say "I know it all." Rather the act of knowledge begun by the union of the divine essence and the human intellect is an eternally enduring moment of penetration into the depths of divine riches ; man will never be finished seeing what he will never fully comprehend, though the simplicity of the divine essence assures him of seeing it all. In the essence of God, each man also sees all that pertains to him, all to which he has any link ; and along with this knowledge, there is, of course, the knowledge he has gathered in this life and that which comes by the infusion of species directly by God.

There are several points to be noted here, though they have been brought out before. There is, for instance, the fact that heaven demands the most intense and unceasing activity of mind and will from every man ; it is not an eternal vacation in the sense of there being absolutely nothing to do. The deep and lasting peace of heaven is not a statement of eternal stagnation but of complete coordination of all man's faculties operating at their fullest ; it is a statement of absence of conflict, not of the absence of any signs of life. The complete satisfaction of man's desires in heaven is not to be confused with the satiety that strikes a man down into heavy slumber after a full dinner, or disgusts him with the thing that has satisfied his appetite ; these things are true only of the sense appetites in this life. The spiritual appetites of man, whose echoes will be so completely satisfying to man's senses, are not dulled by satisfaction but made more alert, their quiet is not that of a dozing incapacity for further activity but the quiet of a love that has found all its energies engaged in adequate expression of that love.

As every man is judged immediately after death, he is immediately rewarded or punished. Our faith teaches us that there is no long period of waiting, as though the box-office of heaven could not handle the volume of business ; man does not have to stand outside of heaven until his body is united to his soul after the resurrection and the last judgment is pronounced. Immediately after sentence has been passed on his soul separated from his body by death, the eternal reward is his. Nor is there any uneasiness in heaven before the last judgment, as though the sentence might be reversed, any more than there is desperate hope in hell that the first judgment might have been a mistake. The first sentence is final ; the last judgment will include the body of man in his reward or punishment and vindicate that sentence before the whole world.

The first judgment has to be final for there is no way in which the happiness of heaven can be lost. Certainly divinity is not going to grow feeble or ugly, slow down, wear out, or

die. On the side of man, nothing is going to catch a man's eye, tempting him to greener fields for he will be in possession of all goodness, his every desire fully satisfied, his mind will have fast hold on the supreme truth ; the mistakes prompted by ignorance, passion, unfulfilled desires are all ruled out by the very nature of happiness. That this final goal might be snatched from him by some external force is altogether out of the question : men or devils cannot do this, nor can God without going back on His divine word—that is, without ceasing to be God. Indeed, if there were not that complete assurance of the eternal duration and complete security of his happiness, it would be absurd to talk of a man's being supremely happy ; for as long as there is the slightest chink in the armor of happiness, man will insert the wedge of worry to make himself miserable.

Despite the definite inequalities that will be found in heaven, there will be no cause for rumblings of discontent. Arguing from our own experience with men, it might seem close to a miracle that there be different mansions in heaven, one greater than the other, and yet there be no envy and everyone perfectly satisfied. It is beyond question, assured by the faith, that there will be a distinct gradation of perfection in heaven, based radically on the degree of charity possessed by each man at death, and immediately on the degree of the light of glory given to each man in proportion to his charity. Each will see the same divine essence ; but each will penetrate it in proportion to the degree of that supernatural light of glory which makes the vision possible at all. The difficulty comes up only because it is forgotten that every man will see to his fullest capacity, will drink a full cup of his happiness, will have as much of eternal bliss as he can possibly have or possibly want. Under such conditions, it is difficult to call up any vaguest image of a discontented man.

What seems like an even more serious impediment to heaven's happiness is the clear vision the blessed will have of hell. How can a man be happy seeing all those others enduring

the eternal and unspeakable miseries of hell? The very prospect sounds inhuman, even brutal. Certainly it would require a considerable degree of corruption and perversion to enjoy the sufferings of others, let alone endure them, precisely as sufferings. On the other hand, pity must be reasonable or we are ashamed of its appearance, conscious that it is sentimentality of the flabbiest sort. A surgeon can deliberately inflict pain on his patients because it is a reasonable thing to do in the interests of health; while the mother who allows an abscess to eat away the life of her child because she cannot bear to submit it to the pain of the surgeon's knife is being eminently unreasonable, inhuman, and brutal. In heaven, there is nothing of the unreasonable; even pity responds to reason's control and never edges over into inhuman sentimentality. Looking at the damned from heaven, the blessed see men, and angels who bombard them with hate, who desire nothing better than that the blessed be dragged down to their misery; they see men in the tortures they have chosen, being punished for sins they still refuse to renounce, undergoing the justice of an absolutely just God because they would have it that way. Under such circumstances, pity is unreasonable; a joy that gloats over this misery is utterly inhuman and has no place in heaven; but a joy in the perfection of the justice of God is quite another thing.

The divine virtues of faith, hope, and charity find their counterpart and perfection in the vision, the attainment, and the fruition or abiding joy of heaven. If these three be taken as acts, they are an integral part of the essential happiness of heaven; but, taken in the sense of the habits from which these acts proceed, they are classed among the accidental joys of heaven and described, with a moving touch of very human simplicity, as the dowries of the soul. Since the idea of a dowry has long been extinct in America, it may not be out of place to explain that this sum of money given by the bride's parents to the groom at marriage was calculated to make smoother the difficult task of building up a common life by relieving the husband of the added financial burden of a wife and children,

at least in the beginnings of married life. At the very least, this deprived the husband of all title to grumbling at the discovery that two could not live as cheaply as one and love was not enough to support life, while it protected the wife from falling into the abjectness more or less proper to an object of charity. The dowry, of course, added nothing to her womanhood, nor did it give her any further essential capacities for wifehood or motherhood ; it was an ornament which the young bride wore proudly on her wedding day.

In heaven, the soul is the spouse of God, starting out on the fullness of a common life more startlingly different than ever was married life to a bride. There is no likelihood of a grumbling husband in this case, to be sure ; the bills would not pile up at the end of the month ; nor will there be any cringing abjectness at the threat of a diminished allowance. Nevertheless the bride in this heavenly marriage needs a principle or habit which will make the act of vision joyously connatural ; another which will make the fullness of love which is fruition an easy, almost natural thing ; still another to remove all impediments to the full and complete possession of God. Not that life with God will be hard, but that it might be wholly joyous, these three ornaments of the soul are given to the bride on her entrance into the eternal marriage of heaven.

Because this whole life of heaven is so far beyond the powers of our cleverest words, we are forced, again and again, to fall back on metaphorical language. Thus, for instance, the essential reward, revolving around the uncreated Godhead, is called the "golden crown" which is given to every man who enters heaven. Obviously, this is not something perched on the side of a man's head, but something rooted deep in his soul. The same language must be used of the accidental joys of heaven which, while not pertaining to the essence of it, make up its full integrity. The "little crowns," or aureoles, are the joys that come, not directly from the essence of God, but from the perfection of the works a man has done, for the outstanding victories he was won ; again, these are not piled one on another

over a man's head; rather, they are primarily for his soul. These "little crowns," three in number, correspond to the outstanding victories to be won in the course of a human life: the victory of the virgin, of the doctor or preacher, and of the martyr. These are outstanding victories for they represent the successful outcome of particularly difficult fights: against the flesh, against the enemies of faith, and to the point of death itself.

The special accidental "fruits" of heaven, envisioned as the full development of the seed of the word of God in men, are the joys that follow, not from the vision of God or the perfection of a man's labors, but from man's own condition, his spirituality. Theologians make a definite correlation between these fruits and the virtue of continence, for it is this virtue which is the barrier to the invasion of man's soul by unruly passion, and so the immediate means by which a man embraces the spiritual to the rejections of the carnal life.

The preceding chapter has already dealt with the sublime qualities of the glorified bodies of the saints. It is necessary here to do no more than insist on the integral humanity of the blessed after the resurrection. Then, the blessed in heaven will be men and women, composed of body and soul, with the full perfection of both body and soul, perfection not only of being but of operation. When this is said, all else is said, keeping in mind the peculiar perfections of the body outlined in the preceding chapter. Thus, for instance, there is no point in asking if there will be a renewal of friendships in heaven; of course there will, for friendship is an integral part of human life. Will men talk there, laugh, walk, hear, see, stand up and sit down? Of course. These are human beings, blessed human beings, but none the less human. This is not a distortion or denial of human life, but a divine perfection of it.

All this is but one side of the story of what death begins. Uncomfortable as the truth may be, the fact is that there is a hell as well as a heaven, that death not only begins an eternal life, it also begins an eternal death; there is not only adequate

reward, there is also adequate punishment. We have it on the authority of the infallible word of God that there is a hell and that in that hell devils and men who die in mortal sin are punished eternally. This, you understand, is not something submitted for the judgment of our individual taste ; it will not do to decide that we shall accept some of the truths of revelation—pleasant truths like grace, the Incarnation, the sacraments, and heaven—and reject one that is particularly displeasing. To reject any one is to reject them all, for it is to reject the reason for accepting any one of them, namely, the infallible veracity of the God Who has revealed them all.

With the fact of an eternal hell certain from revelation, the reasonableness of the fact is by no means obscure. By mortal sin, a man breaks off his friendship with God, giving his heart to something less than God ; with charity gone, then, man is in exile from God and charity is not to be recovered after death. Inevitably, the exile from divine life must endure eternally ; which is precisely the very essence of hell. To look at it from another point of view, by mortal sin, a man chooses a last end other than God ; dying in that sin, his will remains firm in that choice. In other words, he wants exclusion from God eternally, only by violence could he be dragged into heaven ; hell assures him of getting what he wants. From the other side of the picture, his offense was committed against an infinite Being and is, therefore, infinite no matter how quickly the act was over and done with ; it deserves an infinite punishment, a thing impossible to inflict upon a creature except from the angle of duration. Lest there be any question about this, let it be remembered that the whole reason of the necessity of the Incarnation was that only the Son of God could give the infinite satisfaction demanded for man's infinite offense.

It might also be argued that as long as a man's guilt endures, he should be punished for it ; and the guilt of a man dying in mortal sin, judged immediately after death, is not wiped out by the passage of any number of ages in hell. The angle of adequate sanction, too, is no light matter ; if hell were not to be

eternal, a man might well offend God as he pleased and laugh at Him and His punishments, sure that there would some day be an end to them and then he could look forward to an eternity of happiness. Piling up arguments, however, does not bolster the certainty of the truth and the eternity of hell; that certainty needs no support for it rests on the word of God Himself.

To understand the nature of the punishment of hell it is necessary to recall our previous analysis of sin in Volume II of this series. In every mortal sin there is a double element: a turning away from God, and a turning to some created good in place of God. The first is punished in hell by its perpetuation, by an eternal separation from God that is the direct opposite of the eternal union with God which makes up the essential happiness of the blessed in heaven; this is the essential punishment of hell, the pain of loss. Obviously, there is no variety or gradation in this punishment; everyone in hell suffers this, and equally. This is by far the sharpest, the most penetrating pain of hell; for by it, the damned are deprived of the greatest good, God Himself, and they are keenly conscious of their loss. They know then that the goal of life, the one source of order, the one climax of living, is lost to them, not for a day, a year or a century, but forever; their desperation is complete, there is not the slightest grounds for the wildest hope. This is infinite justice, bolstered by infinite power, proceeding against an infinite offense; and there is no escape.

The turning to a created good as a last end is punished in hell by what theologians have called the pain of sense. While this has occupied the center of the stage in human considerations of hell, it is actually secondary; it has been given first place only because we find it as impossible, now, to appreciate the loss of the Supreme God as we do to express the ineffable possession of it. This pain of sense is inflicted by the fire of hell. Whatever the lengths of aversion to which sentimentality has pushed modern discussion, the reality of this fire of hell is so universal and so ancient a doctrine of the theologians that

question of it would be an extreme of temerariousness. There is indeed hell-fire, and it is real fire; by it the devils and damned souls are punished until the resurrection of the bodies of men, when the punishment of the fire is extended to these risen bodies.

It is quite clear that such fire must operate supernaturally, as an instrument of divine justice and to effects entirely beyond the natural powers of fire. There can be no question of burning devils or separated souls; just how fire punishes them is by no means clear, although it was Thomas's opinion that its action was primarily one of limiting activities, hemming in the proudest creatures of the universe. After the resurrection, fire's natural effects will be produced on the bodies of the damned, without however consuming them, that is, there will be a miraculous effect here, too, analagous to that of the fire which flamed in a bush without consuming it to awake the wonder of Moses.

In the punishment of the pain of sense there is plenty of room for inequality. It is inflicted in proportion to man's conversion to created good in preference to God, and the degrees of men's absorption in the world of creatures are practically infinite. Here, then, there is a kind of hierarchy of misery corresponding to the hierarchy of happiness in heaven; these are the mansions of hell in sharp contrast to the heavenly mansions prepared by the Savior of men. There is no easing up of either the pain of loss or the pain of sense, no gradual mitigation, for there is no change in the reason for both punishments—the perverse will of the sinner; there is no escape from the eternity of these punishments through a dulling of perception, a gradual slipping into unconsciousness, or eventual oblivion. It is of faith that these punishments are eternal and without mitigation.

Artists are not to be taken literally when they picture the misery of hell by the medium of extreme ugliness and distortion. In fact, nothing of nature is changed or lost in hell. The devils have their full complement of perfect natural knowledge,

men retain all the knowledge they have stored up in this life; yet that very knowledge, in both cases, is but another source of suffering, keeping vividly in their minds both the good they have lost and the evil that has reduced them to their present misery. They have had a glimpse of the joyous glory of the blessed, the splendor of the risen Christ, and the perfection of the justice of God at the last judgment; yet, there is not an iota of consolation in any of this for one to whom it is lost forever.

Rather, it is the other way around. The wills of the damned are confirmed in adversity. While there is a full cup of remorse that never empties though it is steadily drunk, the sharpest of regrets for the punishments that must be undergone, there is no repentance for the sins committed; sin is not surrendered and God embraced; rather sin is held fast while God is cursed, the more so as the justice of His punishment is beyond cavil. Love, then, is something totally foreign to the very atmosphere of hell, while hate is of the very air the damned breathe: they hate God as the inflicter of punishments, they hate the blessed as having all that they lack, they hate each other as integral constituents of their present misery, and they thoroughly hate and despise themselves. They would willingly accept annihilation, oblivion, as an escape from their torments; but they know there is no escape, not even so bitter an escape as this. It is indeed a terrible thing to fall under the justice of the living God.

The horror of hell might well strike a spark of fear from the heart of a saint; but, while we shrink from the grim prospects of it, it is well to remember that no man slides into hell, as it were by accident. This is a place that must be deliberately entered; a man must knock at the door perseveringly demanding admittance, for no man can get into hell without the passport of his own actual mortal sin which proves he has rejected God. A fifth column in hell is a complete impossibility; there are no victims of unjust court procedure there protesting their innocence. It is quite impossible, then, for an infant who is

incapable of personal sins to get into hell; the same holds for idiots, the congenitally insane, and, in general, those who are incapable of sin. If these have not received the gift of supernatural life in the sacrament of Baptism, obviously they cannot get into heaven. Theirs is an intermediate place called Limbo; a place of natural happiness, free of the torments of hell, yet without the divine perfections of heaven.

It is not surprising that we should shrink from hell; in fact, that very aversion is one of the first and surest guarantees of avoiding the place, particularly since a man can get into it only by deliberately choosing the road and furnishing himself with the proper identification cards. What is surprising, and not at all flattering to humanity, is that men should shrink from the truth of hell, as if the place of eternal torment could be obliterated by our denial of it. It is a triumph of unreason so to deal with any truth; it is the height of unreason to give a divine truth treatment of this kind.

There is the usual scramble of reasons behind the unreason, rendering it to some extent reasonable in the sense of explicable; but dissolving none of its unreasonableness to the consequence of making it excusable. Certainly, there is a strong dash of anthropomorphism in our modern refusal to take hell seriously; this is not the way human justice would work, so it cannot be though the whole thing is advanced, not as an implement of human, but of divine justice. There is, too, that strange modern fear of going beyond the field of the sensible; hell is not sensible, we cannot experiment with it, while eternity completely escapes our present experience, so of course there can be no hell. Unquestionably, here and there, there is an element of cowardice that shrinks in terror from the responsibility of acts possible of such momentous consequences. In the case of the first two viewpoints, a man wraps himself in a fog of unreason that allows him to approach the abyss with a certain sense of security until he has actually plunged into it. But in the third, a man begins to taste his hell long before he has swung open the infernal portals; indeed, one of the most

horrible characteristics of hell is becoming a modern commonplace precisely through this fear of life. The devils and the damned would, but cannot, embrace annihilation as an escape from their punishments; living men are actually embracing the prospect of personal oblivion, not as an escape from punishment, but in preference to the risk involved in the living of human life.

It is somewhat harder to understand how the prospect of heaven can leave men uninterested, indifferent, or positively hostile. One reason may well be the materialist contentment with the world in which he moves, or rather, with that part of it which his blinded eyes can see; this world has been kind to him—for materialism is an error for the prosperous or those with a prospect of prosperity—and life seems long, with a great stretch of comforts still awaiting him. He might be willing to settle for present comforts; unfortunately for him, life does not end at death but begins there. It may be that many men have pretty well plumbed the depths of despair; they have despaired of God and despaired of men, so they steadfastly refuse to look beyond the moment when they will leave men behind even though at that moment they must face God. But the most extensive basis of our modern American disregard of heaven undoubtedly lies in the ignorance or contempt of the supernatural—a natural consequence of positivism's confinement of man to the prison of nature—and a thorough misunderstanding of the nature of Christian doctrine on both hell and heaven.

Diluted Christianity has done much to further this tragic condition. There has been a kind of heartless mercy in this dilution, the weakness of compromise, and the kindness of a lie. When fundamentals are in question, this sweetly corruptive delicacy destroys all it touches; certainly, this half-hearted Christianity is fundamentally destructive of man and his acts as well as of God and His acts, though the thing is advanced as a favor to man. Hell must be taken without appeal to sentiment, without a softening process that eliminates it; it

must be taken, as truth must always be taken, literally, straight, with its full force. And heaven must be taken without dilution, with no recourse to a symbolic fog that reduces it to the level of subjective ideals or objective myths for simple people. These two are divine truths; in face of them, man does not choose, he accepts or he is lost.

Naturally all appeal is removed from the prospect of heaven if it is looked on as a giant almshouse with no quarters for the rich and fully equipped with all facilities for the poor to gorge themselves on all the things they missed in their lives on earth. If heaven is to be a place of wholesale revenge where those who were persecuted on earth have their innings doing to others what had been done on earth, it would be a good place to keep away from if a man wanted peace and quiet. If it is a kind of eternal watering-place where the fatigued can sit in the sun eternally doing absolutely nothing, it is a place of torpor rather than of happiness. The point is that heaven is none of these things. True, it has been promised to the poor, but to the poor in spirit; to the persecuted, but to those persecuted for justice sake; it has been described as a place of eternal rest, but of rest for the soul.

In other words, heaven is not at all a simple reversal of the lives men lived on earth; rather it is a completion, a fulfillment, a maturity of what was begun on earth. The poor in spirit, the persecuted for justice sake, those who have exercised their souls in virtue to the point of weariness are not the miserable men of earth; they are the most supremely happy of all the people who walk the face of the earth, regardless of the circumstances of their external life. Heaven comes to these people, not as the answer to his dream would burst on an astonished beggar, the realization of his idyll to a lazy man, or the agony of an enemy to a man on fire with hate; it comes as manhood comes to a child.

The mansions of hell, no less than the mansions of heaven, are not makeshift shacks thrown up after the darkness of death has come down upon life. Both are built slowly, carefully,

stone by stone, through all the abundant moments that measure the length of a man's life. A man does not achieve hell by a last minute quirk of divine judgment, but when he embraces sin; a man does not win heaven when God embraces Him eternally but when he embraces God despite the alluring promises of all that is contrary to God. Heaven or hell, in other words, never comes as a shock; it is the harvest that was planted so long ago, watched, cultivated, defended and now reaped in all its fullness. It is the house at the end of the road that could lead nowhere else. In the case of heaven, it is home; and all along the road there were signs marking the path, help proffered to pilgrims, and directions to be had for the asking. Arriving there, man has come home to the God Who made him.

THE WAY OF LIFE
(III A AND SUPPLEMENT)
A COMPANION TO THE SUMMA

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