

Our Lady Saint Mary eBook

Our Lady Saint Mary

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Page 1

OF LOYALTY

O God, who causes us to rejoice in recalling the joys of the conception, the nativity, the annunciation, the visitation, the purification, and the assumption of the blessed and glorious virgin Mary; grant to us so worthily to devote ourselves to her praise and service, that we may be conscious of her presence and assistance in all our necessities and straits, and especially in the hour of death, and that after death we may be found worthy, through her and in her, to rejoice in heaven with thee. Through &c.

Sarum Missal.

The dream of the Middle Ages was of one Christian society of which the Church should be the embodiment of the spiritual, and the State of the temporal interests. As there is one humanity united to God in Incarnate God, all its interests should be capable of unification in institutions which should be based on that which is essential in humanity, and not on that which is accidental: men should be united because they are human and Christian, and not divided because of diversity of blood or color or language. The dream proved impossible of realization, and the struggle for human unity went to pieces on the rocks of the rapidly developing nationalism of the later Middle Ages.

The Reformation was the triumph of nationalism and the defeat of Catholic idealism. It resulted in a shattered Christendom in which the interests of local and homogeneous groups became supreme over the purely human interests. In state and Church alike patriotism has tended more and more to become dominant over the interests that are supralocal and universal. The last few years have seen an intensification of localism. We have seen bitter scorn heaped on the few who have labored for internationalism in thought and feeling. We have seen the attempt of labor at internationalism utterly break down under the pressure of patriotic motive. We are finding that the same concentration on immediate and local interests is an insuperable bar to the realization of an ideal of internationalism which would effectively deal with questions arising between nations and put an end to war. The Church failed to establish a spiritual internationalism; the indications are that it will be long before humanitarian idealists will be able to effect a union among nations still infected with patriotic motive, such as shall bring about a subordination of local and immediate interests to the interests of humanity as such. That the general interests are also in the end the local interests is still far from the vision of the patriot.

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What the growth of nationalities with its consequent rise of international jealousies and hostilities has effected in civil society, has been brought about in matters spiritual by the divisions of Christendom. The various bodies into which Christendom has been split up are infected with the same sort of localism as infects the state. They dwell with pride upon their own peculiarities, and treat with suspicion if not with contempt the peculiarities of other bodies. The effort to induce the members of any body of Christians to appreciate what belongs to others, or to try to construe Christianity in terms of a true Catholicity, is almost hopeless. All attempts at the restoration of the visible unity of the Church have been wrecked, and seem destined for long to be wrecked, on the rocks of local pride and local interests. The motives which in secular affairs lead a man to put, not only his body and his goods, as he ought, at the disposal of his country; but also induce him to surrender his mind to the prevailing party and shout, "My country, right or wrong," in matters ecclesiastical lead him to cry, "My Church, right or wrong." It is only by transcending this localism that we can hope for progress in Church or State—can hope to conquer the wars and fightings among our members that make peace impossible.

This infection of localism is not peculiar to any body of Christians. The Oriental Churches have been largely state-bound for centuries, and, in addition, have been mentally immobile. The Roman Church with its claims to exclusive ownership of the Christian Religion has lost the vision it once had and subordinated the Catholic interests of the Church to the local interests of the Papacy. The fragments of Protestantism are too small any longer to claim the universalism claimed by the East and West, and perforce acknowledge their partial character; but it is only to indulge in a more acute patriotism, and assertion of rights of division, and the supremacy of the local over the general. The Churches of the Anglican Rite are less bound, perhaps, than others. They are restless under the limitations of localism and are haunted by a vision of an unrealized Catholicity; but they are torn by internal divisions and find their attempts at movement in any direction thwarted by the pull of opposing parties.

One result of the mental attitude generated by the conditions indicated above is that any attempt to deal with subjects other than those which are authorized because they are customary, or tolerated because they are familiar, is liable to be greeted with cries of reproach and accusations of disloyalty. Such and such teachings we are told, without much effort at proof, are contrary to the teachings of the Anglican Church, or are not in harmony with that teaching, or are illegitimate attempts to bring in doctrines or practices which were definitely rejected by our fathers at the Reformation. Those who are implicated in such attempts are told that they are disturbers of the peace of the Church and are invited to go elsewhere.

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As one who is not guiltless of such attempts, and as one who is becoming accustomed to be charged with novelty in teaching, and disloyalty in practice to that which is undoubtedly and historically Anglican, I have been compelled to ask myself, "What is loyalty to the Anglican Church? Is there, in fact, some peculiar and limited form of Christianity to which I owe allegiance?" I had got accustomed to think of myself as a Catholic Christian whose lot was cast in a certain province of the Catholic Church which was administratively separated from other parts of that Church. This I felt—this separation—to be unfortunate; but I was not responsible for it, and would be glad to do anything that I could to end it. I had not thought that this administrative separation from other provinces of the Catholic Church meant that I was pledged to a different religion; I had not thought of there being an Anglican Religion. I have all my life, in intention and as far as I know, accepted the whole Catholic Faith of which it is said in a Creed accepted by the Anglican Church that "except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved." I do not intend to believe any other Faith than that, and I intend to believe all of that; and I have not thought of myself as other than a loyal Anglican in so doing.

But criticism has led me to go back over the whole question and ask whether there is any indication anywhere in the approved documents of the Anglican Communion of an intention at all to depart from the Faith of Christendom as it was held by the whole Catholic Church, East and West, at the time when an administrative separation from Rome was effected. Was a new faith at any time introduced? Has there at any time been any official action of the Anglican Church to limit my acceptance of the historic Faith? That many Anglican writers have denied many articles of the Catholic Faith I of course knew to be true. That some Anglican writer could be found who had denied every article of the Catholic Faith I thought quite possible. But I was not interested in the beliefs or practices of individuals. I am not at all interested in what opinions may or may not have been held by Cranmer at various stages of his career, or what opinions may be unearthed from the writings of Bale by experts in immoral literature; I am interested solely in the official utterances of the Anglican Communion.

In following out this line of investigation I have spent many weeks in the reading of many dreary documents: but fortunately documents are not important in proportion to the element of excitement they contain. I have read the documents contained in the collection of Gee and Hardy entitled "Documents Illustrative of English Church History." I have read the "Formularies of Faith Put Forth by Authority during the Reign of Henry VIII." I have read Cardwell's "Synodalia." And I have also read "Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be read in Churches at the time of Queen Elizabeth of Famous Memory." I doubt whether any other extant human being has read them.

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And the upshot of the whole matter is that in none of these documents have I found any expressed intention to depart from the Faith of the Catholic Church of the past as that Faith had been set forth by authority. No doubt in the Homilies there are things said which cannot be reconciled with the Faith of Catholic Christendom. But the Homilies are of no binding authority, and I have included them in my investigation only because I wanted their point of view. That is harmonious with the rest of the authoritative documents—the intention is to hold the Faith: unfortunately the knowledge of some of the writers was not as pure as their intention.

The point that I am concerned with is this: there is no intention anywhere shown in the authoritative documents of the Anglican Church to effect a change in religion, or to break with the religion which had been from the beginning taught and practised in England. The Reformation did not mean the introduction of a new religion, but was simply a declaration of governmental independence. I will quote somewhat at length from the documents for the purpose of showing that there is no indication of an intention to set up a new Church.

One or two quotations from pre-reformation documents will make clear the customary phraseology in England during the Middle Ages. King John's Ecclesiastical Charter of 1214 uses the terms "Church of England" and "English Church." The Magna Charta of 1215 grants that the "Church of England shall be free and have her rights intact, and her liberties uninjured." The Articuli Cleri of 1316 speak of the "English Church." The Second Statute of Provisors of 1390 uses the title "The Holy Church of England." "The English Church" is the form used in the Act "De Haeretico Comburendo" of 1401, as it is also in "the Remonstrance against the Legatine Powers of Cardinal Beaufort" of 1428[1].

[Footnote 1: Documents in Gee & Hardy.]

These quotations will suffice to show the customary way of speaking of the Church in England. If this customary way of speaking went on during and after the Reformation the inference is that there had no change taken place in the way of men's thinking about the Church; that they were unconscious of having created a new or a different Church. We know that the Protestant bodies on the Continent and the later Protestant bodies in England did change their way of thinking about the Church from that of their fathers and consequently their way of speaking of it. But the formal documents of the Church of England show no change. "The Answer of the Ordinaries" of 1532 appeals as authoritative to the "determination of Scripture and Holy Church," and to the determination of "Christ's Catholic Church." The "Conditional Restraint of Annates" of 1532 protests that the English "as well spiritual as temporal, be as obedient, devout, catholic, and humble children of God and Holy Church, as any people be within any realm christened." In the

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Act for “The Restraint of Appeals” of 1533, which is the act embodying the legal principle of the English Reformation, it is the “English Church” which acts. The statement in the “Act Forbidding Papal Dispensations and the Payment of Peter’s Pence” of 1534 is entirely explicit as to the intention of the English authorities. It declares that nothing in this Act “shall be hereafter interpreted or expounded that your grace, your nobles and subjects intend, by the same, to decline or vary from the congregation of Christ’s Church in any things concerning the very articles of the Catholic Faith of Christendom[2].”

[Footnote 2: Gee & Hardy.]

These documents date from the reign of Henry VIII. In the same reign another series of authoritative documents was put forth which contains the same teaching as to the Church. “The Institution of a Christian Man” set forth in 1536, in the article on the Church has this: “I believe assuredly—that there is and hath been from the beginning of the world, and so shall endure and continue forever, one certain number, society, communion, or company of the elect and faithful people of God.... And I believe assuredly that this congregation ... is, in very deed the city of heavenly Jerusalem ... the holy catholic church, the temple or habitation of God, the pure and undefiled espouse of Christ, the very mystical body of Christ,” “The Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man” of 1543 in treating of the faith declares that “all those things which were taught by the apostles, and have been by an whole universal consent of the church of Christ ever sith that time taught continually, ought to be received, accepted, and kept, as a perfect doctrine apostolic.” It is further taught in the same document in the eighth article, that on “The Holy Catholic Church,” that the Church is “catholic, that is to say, not limited to any one place or region of the world, but is in every place universally through the world where it pleaseth God to call people to him in the profession of Christ’s name and faith, be it in Europe, Africa, or Asia. And all these churches in divers countries severally called, although for the knowledge of the one from the other among them they have divers additions of names, and for their most necessary government, as they be distinct in places, so they have distinct ministers and divers heads in earth, governors and rulers, yet be all these holy churches but one holy church catholic, invited and called by one God the Father to enjoy the benefit of redemption wrought by our Lord and Saviour Jesu Christ, and governed by one Holy Spirit, which teacheth this foresaid one truth of God’s holy word in one faith and baptism[3].”

[Footnote 3: Formularies of Faith in the Reign of Henry VIII.]

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With the accession of Edward VI. the Protestant element in the Reformation gained increased influence. Our question is, Did it succeed in imprinting a new theory of the nature and authority of the Church on the formal and authoritative utterances of the Church in England? The first "Act of Uniformity" of 1549 contains the now familiar appeal to Scripture and to the primitive Church, and the Book set forth is called "The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, after the Use of the Church of England." The "Second Act of Uniformity," 1552, uses the same language about the Church of England and the primitive Church. Passing on to the reign of Elizabeth, in the "Injunctions" of 1559 there is set forth "a form of bidding the prayers," which begins: "Ye shall pray for Christ's Holy Catholic Church, that is for the whole congregation of Christian people dispersed throughout the whole world, and especially for the Church of England and Ireland." In the "Act of Supremacy" of the same year it is provided that an opinion shall "be ordered, or adjudged to be heresy, by the authority of the canonical Scriptures, or by the first four general Councils, or any of them, or by any other general Council wherein the same was declared heresy by the express and plain words of the said canonical Scriptures." This test of doctrine is repeated in Canon VI of the Canons of 1571. "Preachers shall ... see to it that they teach nothing in the way of a sermon ... save what is agreeable to the teaching of the Old or New Testament, and what the Catholic fathers and ancient bishops have collected from this self-same doctrine[4]."

[Footnote 4: Documents in Gee & Hardy.]

It is hardly worth while to spend much time on the Homilies. I will simply note that they continue the appeal to the primitive Church which is asserted to have been holy, godly, pure and uncorrupt; and to the "old holy fathers and most ancient learned doctors" which are quoted as authoritative against later innovations. They still speak of the Church of England as continuous with the past. I do not find that they treat the contemporary reformers as of authority or quote them as against the traditional teaching of the Church.

We will go on to one more stage, that is, to the Canons of 1604 which represent the mind of the Church of England at the time of the accession of James I. They declare that "whosoever shall hereafter affirm, That the Church of England, by law established under the King's majesty, is not a true and an apostolical church, teaching and maintaining the doctrine of the apostles; let him be excommunicated." (III) They appeal to the "Ancient fathers of the Church, led by the example of the apostles." (XXXI) In treating of the use of the sign of the Cross in baptism they assert that its use follows the "rules of Scripture and the practice of the primitive Church." And further, "This use of the sign of the Cross

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in baptism was held in the primitive Church, as well by the Greeks as the Latins, with one consent and great applause.” And replying to the argument from abuse the canon goes on: “But the abuse of a thing doth not take away the lawful use of it. Nay, so far was it from the purpose of the Church of England to forsake and reject the Churches of Italy, France, Spain, Germany, or any such like Churches, in all things that they held and practised, that, as the Apology of the Church of England confesseth, it doth with reverence retain those ceremonies, which do neither endanger the Church of God, nor offend the minds of sober men.” (XXX)

It appears clear from a study of the passages quoted and of many others of kindred nature that the Anglican Church did not start out upon its separate career with any intention of becoming a sect; it did not complain of the corruption of the existing religion and declare its purpose to show to the world what true and pure religion is. It did not put forward as the basis of its action the existing corruption of doctrine, but the corruption of administration. Its claim was a claim to manage its own local affairs, and was put into execution when the Convocation of Canterbury voted in the negative on the question submitted to it, viz., “Whether the Roman pontiff has any greater jurisdiction bestowed on him by God in Holy Scripture in this realm of England, than any other foreign bishop?”

The attitude indicated is one that has been characteristic of the Anglican Church ever since. It has always been restless in the presence of a divided Christendom; the sin of the broken unity has always haunted it. It never has taken the smug attitude of sectarianism, a placid self-satisfaction with its own perfection. It has felt the constant pull of the Catholic ideal and has been inspired by it to make effort after effort for the union of Christendom. It has never lost the sense that it was in itself not complete but a part of a greater whole. It has never seen in the existing shattered state of the Christian Church anything but the evidences of sin. Its appeal has constantly been, not to its own sufficiency for the determination of all questions, but to the Scriptures as interpreted by the undivided Church. If it has at times been prone to overstress the authority of some ideal and undefined primitive Church, it was because it thought that there and there only could the Catholic Church be found speaking in its ideal unity.

This the attitude of the Anglican Church of the past is its attitude to-day. The Lambeth Conference of 1920 gave voice to it:

“The Conference urges on every branch of the Anglican Communion that it should prepare its members for taking their part in the universal fellowship of the re-united Church, by setting before them the loyalty which they owe to the universal Church, and the charity and understanding which are required of the members of so inclusive a society.”

Commenting upon this utterance of the Lambeth Conference the three bishops who are the joint authors of “Lambeth and Reunion” say:

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The bishops at Lambeth “beg for loyalty to the universal Church. The doctrinal standards of the undivided Church must not be ignored. Nor must modern developments, consistent with the past, be ruled out merely because they are modern. Men must hold strongly what they have received; but they must forsake the policy of denying one another’s positive presentment of truth. That only must be forbidden which the universal fellowship cannot conceivably accept within any one of its groups[5].”

[Footnote 5: Lambeth and Rennion. By the bishops of Peterborough, Zanzibar and Hereford.]

The bishops just quoted add: “We rejoice indeed at this new mind of the Lambeth Conference.” Whether it is a new mind in Lambeth Conferences we need not consider; it is certainly no new mind in the Anglican Church, but is precisely its characteristic attitude of not claiming perfection or finality for itself, but of looking beyond itself to Catholic Christendom, and longing for the time when reunion of the churches which now make up its “broken unity” will enable it to speak with the same voice of authority with which it did in its primitive and undivided state.

In attempting to decide what as a priest of the Anglican Communion one may or may not teach or practice, one is bound to have regard, not to what is asserted by anyone, even by any bishop, to be “disloyal” or “unanglican,” but to the principles expressed or implied in the utterances of the Church itself. From those utterances as I have reviewed them, it appears to me that a number of general principles may be deduced for the guidance of conduct.

I. The Churches of the Anglican Communion are bound by the entire body of Catholic dogma formulated and accepted universally in the pre-Reformation Church.

The Anglican documents, to be sure, speak constantly of the “Primitive Church,” but they do not anywhere define what they mean by that; and frequently, by their appeal to the “undivided Church,” and to “general Councils,” they seem to include in their undefined term much more than is commonly understood. In any case, the Church has no special authority because it is *primitive*: its authority results not from its being primitive but from its being *Church*. The only point of the Anglican appeal would be the universal acceptance of a given doctrine. Such universal acceptance must be taken as proof of its primitiveness, that is, of its being contained, explicitly or implicitly, in the original deposit of faith. The Anglican Church was content with the summing up of this Faith in the Three Creeds, and attempted to formulate no new Creed of her own—the XXXIX Articles are not strictly a Creed: they are not articles of Faith but of Religion. But the very history of the Creeds implies that they are not final, that is, complete, but that they are a summing up of the Catholic Religion to date. There are truths which the circumstances of the Church in the Conciliar period

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had not brought into prominence which later events compelled the Church to express its mind upon. Such a truth is that of the Real Presence of our Lord in the Sacrament of the Altar. This truth had attained explicit acceptance throughout the Church before the Reformation, sufficiently witnessed by the liturgies in use. It is also embodied in the Anglican liturgy. If anyone thinks the language of the Anglican Church doubtful on this point, the principles enunciated by the Church compel interpretation in accord with the mind of the universal Church. There are other truths which are binding on us on the same basis of universal consent, but I am not seeking to apply the principle in every case but only to illustrate it.

II. There is another class of truths or doctrines widely held in Christendom, which yet cannot be classed as dogmas of the faith. Such a doctrine is that of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This doctrine has been made of faith in the Roman communion, but has not yet ecumenical acceptance, and therefore may be doubted without sin by members of the Greek or Anglican Churches. What we need to avoid, as the Lambeth Conference has reminded us, is a purely insular and provincial attitude in relation to doctrines which have not been formally set forth by Anglican authority. The Anglican Church has tried its best to impress upon us that there is no such thing as an Anglican Religion; there is but one Religion—the Religion of God's Catholic Church. What we are to seek to know is not the mind "of the Anglican reformers," or the mind "of the Caroline divines," but the mind of the Catholic Church. Wherever we shall find that mind expressed, though in terms unfamiliar to us, we are bound to treat it with respect. We are to seek to know the truth that the truth may make us free—from all pride and prejudice, as well as from heresy and blasphemy. And we shall best come at this mind in its widest meaning by the study of the writings of the saints of all ages and of all parts of the Church. It may fairly be inferred that those who have attained great perfection in the Catholic life have achieved it by the application of Catholic truth to every day living.

III. The members of the Anglican Church have the same freedom as other Catholics in the matter of theological speculation. What was done at the Reformation was not final in the sense that we are never to believe or to teach anything that is not found in Anglican formularies. The fact that a certain doctrine like that of the Invocation of Saints was omitted from the Anglican formularies is not fatal to its practice. The grounds of its omission in practice may or may not have been well judged. But the theory of it was never denied, it is indeed contained in the Creeds themselves, and change in circumstances may justify its revival in practice.

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Moreover, the theology of the Christian Church is not a body of static doctrine, but is the expression of the ceaseless meditation of the saints upon the truths revealed to us by God. To suppose that any age whatever has exhausted the meaning of the Revealed Truth would be absurd. It is inexhaustible. So long as the mind of the Church is pondering it, it brings out from it things old and new. Among ourselves it is perhaps at present more desirable that we should bring out the old things than seek to find the new. The historic circumstances of the Anglican Church have been such as to lead to the practical disuse of much that is of great spiritual value in the treasury of the Church. It is largely in the attempt to bring into use the riches that have been abandoned that some are to-day incurring the charge of disloyalty—a charge that they are not careful to answer, if they may be permitted to minister to a larger spiritual life in the Church they love.

At the same time the development of doctrine is a real mode of enrichment of the theology of the Church. The devout mind pondering divine truth will ever penetrate deeper into its meaning. Thus it was that in the course of centuries the Church arrived at a complete statement of the doctrine of our Lord's person. And what it could rightly do in the supreme case, it surely can rightly do in cases of lesser moment. We need not be afraid of this movement of thought, for the mind of the united Church may be trusted not to sanction any error. Our Lord has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church. We can trust Him to fulfil His promise. He has also promised us that the Holy Spirit shall lead us into all the truth. Can He trust us not to thwart the work of the Spirit by a provincial attitude as of those who already in the utterances of the Anglican formularies claim to possess all truth?

IV. There is one other inference to be drawn from what I conceive to be the Anglican position, and that is one that relates, not primarily to doctrine but to practice. For many years now the Anglican Churches have been greatly disturbed by varieties of practice, though it is difficult to see why varieties of practice should be in themselves disturbing. But without going into that matter, which would carry us far afield, I would simply state that the principle already laid down in regard to doctrine seems to apply here in the matter of practice: that is, the Anglican has the right to use any practice which has not been explicitly forbidden by the authorities of the local Church. The Churches of the Anglican Communion have never set forth any competent guide for the conduct of worship, and by refraining from so doing have left the matter in the hands of those who have to conduct services and provide for the spiritual needs of those over whom they have been given cure of souls. There is nothing more absurd than to assume that nothing rightly can be done in these matters except what has been directed by authority; that no services can be held but such as have formal authorization; that no ceremonies can be introduced but such as the custom of the time since the Reformation has made familiar to many.

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In such matters authority naturally and necessarily goes along with the cure of souls; the priest of the parish must perforce provide for the spiritual needs of his parish. If he finds those needs satisfied with the rendering of Morning and Evening Prayer—well and good; but those who do not find the needs of their parish so satisfied must seek to satisfy them by the providing of other spiritual means. And in seeking thus to provide for the spiritual growth of souls committed to his care, the priest, on the principles of the Anglican formularies, is justified and entitled to make use of the means in use throughout Catholic Christendom. He is quite justified in calling his people together for a prayer meeting, if in his judgment that will be for their spiritual good; or if his judgment is different, he is equally justified in inviting them to join him in saying the rosary. He may incite to greater devotion by a shortened form of Evening Prayer or by popular Vespers. I do not think that there is anything in the Christian Religion or in the formularies of the Anglican Church that forbids him to have moving pictures or special musical services. Nor is there any reason why, if it be in his judgment promotive of holiness, he should not provide for his parish such services as Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. There can be no legitimate criticism of a service on the ground of its *provenance*.

It is a common reproach against the Anglican Communion that it is “does not know its own mind.” It would be much truer to say that there are many members of it who have been at no pains to ascertain whether it have a mind or what that mind is: who have been content to confound the mind of the Church with the mind of the party to which they are attached by the accident of birth or of preference. I do not for a moment contend that the party (to use an ugly but necessary word) to which I am attached stands, in all things, in perfect alignment with the Anglican Formularies. There are circumstances in which it appears to me to be necessary to appeal from Anglican action to the mind of that larger Body, the whole Church of Christ throughout the world, to which the Anglican Church points me as its own final authority. In so doing I do not feel that I am disloyal, but that I am actually doing what authority tells me to do. These are cases in point. I do not believe that a local Church can suppress and permanently disuse sacraments of the universal Church. The Anglican Church by its suppression of the sacraments of Unction and by its almost universal disuse for centuries of the sacrament of Penance, compelled those who would be loyal to the Catholic Church to which it appealed to act on their own initiative in the revival of the use of those sacraments. I do not believe that the local Church has the right or the power to forbid or permanently disuse customs which are of universal currency in the Catholic Church. I do not believe that it has the right to neglect

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and fail to enforce the Catholic custom of fasting, and especially of fasting before communion. I do not believe that any Christian who is informed on these things has the right to neglect them on the ground that the Anglican Church has not enforced them. On the basis of its own declarations the ecumenical overrides the local; and if it be said, "What is a priest, that he should undertake to set the practice of his Church right?" the answer is that he is a man having cure of souls for whose progress in holiness he is responsible before God, and if those who claim authority in such matters will not act, he must act, though it be at the risk of his immortal soul.

These things seem to be true with the truth of self-evidence. And because they seem to be true, I have not hesitated to preach, and now to print, the sermons on the life and words of our Lady contained in this volume. I am told by many that such teaching is dangerous, but I am not told by any of any danger that is intelligible to me. That such devotions to our Lady as are here commended trench on the prerogative of God, and exalt our Lady above the place of a creature is sufficiently answered by the fact that the very act of asking the prayers of Blessed Mary is an assertion of her creaturehood—one does not ask the prayers of God. And when it is said that devotion to her takes away from devotion to her Son, one has only to ask in reply, who as a matter of fact have maintained and do maintain unflinchingly the divinity of our Lord? Certainly the denials of the divinity of our Lord are found where there is also a denial that any honor is due or may rightly be given to His Blessed Mother; and where that Mother receives the highest honor, there we never for a moment doubt that the full Godhead of Jesus will be unflinchingly and unhesitatingly maintained.

Wherefore in praise, the worthiest that I may,
Jesu! of thee, and the white Lily-flower
Which did thee bear, and is a Maid for aye,
To tell a story I will use my power;
Not that I may increase her honour's dower,
For she herself is honour, and the root
Of goodness, next her Son, our soul's best boot.

O Mother Maid! O Maid and Mother free!
O bush unburnt; burning in Moses' sight!
That down didst ravish from the Deity,
Through humbleness, the spirit that did alight
Upon thy heart, whence, through that glory's might,
Conceived was the Father's sapience,
Help me to tell it in thy reverence.

Lady! thy goodness, thy magnificance,
Thy virtue, and thy great humility,

Surpass all science and all utterance;
For sometimes, Lady, ere men pray to thee
Thou goest before in thy benignity,
The light to us vouchsafing of thy prayer,
To be our guide unto thy Son so dear.

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My knowledge is so weak, O blissful Queen!
To tell abroad thy mighty worthiness,
That I the weight of it may not sustain;
But as a child of twelve months old or less,
Even so fare I; and therefore, I thee pray,
Guide thou my song which I of thee shall say.

Chaucer. The Prioress' Tale. Version by Wordsworth.

PART ONE

CHAPTER II

THE MEANING OF WORSHIP

O Lord Jesus Christ, from whom all holy thoughts do come; who hast taught thy servants to honour thy glorious mother; mercifully grant us so to celebrate her on earth with the solemn sacrifice of praise and with due devotion, that by her intercession we may be found worthy to reign in joy in heaven. Who livest &c.

Sarum Missal.

There are thoughts and actions which so enter the daily conduct of our lives that we take them for granted and never pause to analyse them. If perchance something occurs to make us ask what these thoughts and actions truly and deeply mean we are surprised to find that we have, in fact, no adequate understanding of them. We have a feeling about them and we are quite sure that this feeling is a good and right one. We have ends that we are seeking and we are satisfied that the ends are in all ways desirable. But suddenly confronted with the question why, unexpectedly asked to explain, to justify ourselves, we find ourselves dumb. We cannot find adequate exposition for what we nevertheless know that we are justified in. It is so with much that we admire; we have never tried to justify our admiration, have never thought that it needed an explanation; and then, unexpectedly, we find ourselves challenged, we find our taste criticised, and in our efforts at self-defence we blunder and stumble and hesitate about what we still feel that we are quite right in holding fast.

It is common things that we thus take for granted; it is daily activities that we thus assume need no explanation. For us who habitually gather to the services of the Church there is no more taken-for-granted act than worship. Worship is a part of our daily experience. At certain times each day we offer to God stated and formal acts of worship. Many times a day most likely we pause and for a moment lift our thought to our blessed Lord for a brief communion with Him. It is a part of our settled experience thus to draw strength from the inexhaustible source which at all times is at our disposal.

We know how the tasks of the day are lightened and our strength to meet them renewed by these momentary invasions of the supernatural. There are also special times in each week when we meet with other members of the One Body of Christ in the offering of the unbloody Sacrifice. We know that in that act heaven and earth join, and that not only our brethren who are

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kneeling beside us are uniting with us in the offering of the Sacrifice, not only are we one with all those other members of the Body who on this same morning are kneeling at the numberless altars of Christendom, but that all those who are in Christ are with us partakers of the same Sacrifice, and that in its offering we are joined with all the holy dead, and by our partaking of Christ are brought close to one another. We therefore lovingly take their names upon our lips, and enkindle their memory in our hearts; and find that death, which we had thought of as a separation, has but broken the barriers to the deepest and most blessed communion, and that we are now, as never before, united to those whom we find in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And then comes the unexpected challenge: “what does all this mean: these repeated and diverse acts that you are accustomed to speak of and to think of as acts of worship? What, ultimately, do you mean by worship, and can there possibly be found any common feature in these so diverse acts which can justify you in regarding them as essentially one? This act which is in truth presenting yourself before the majesty of God in humble adoration, in the guise of a suppliant child depending upon the love of the Father for the supply of the daily needs; or this other act which is of such deepest mystery that we approach any attempted statement of it with awe, which is in fact the representation of the sacrifice of Calvary; and then these invocations by which we ask the loving co-operation of our fellow members of Christ that they may associate themselves with us in the work of prayer and mutual intercession—how can all these acts be brought together under a common rubric, how can they all be designated as worship? What in fact is it that you mean by worship?”

So are we challenged. So are we thrown back, and in the end thrown back most beneficially, to the analysis of our acts. Worship, we tell ourselves, is *worth*-ship; it is the attribution of worth or honor to whom these are properly due. “Honour to whom honour is due,” we hear the Apostle saying. Worship is therefore not an absolute value but a varying value, the content of any act of which will be determined by the nature of the object toward which it is directed. It is greatly like love in this respect; its nature is always the same, but its present value is determined by the object to which it is directed. We are to love the Lord our God, and we are also to love our neighbour; the nature of the love is in each case the same; and yet we are not to love our neighbour with the limitless self-surrender with which we love God. The love of God is the passionate giving of ourselves to Him with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength. The love of the neighbour is measured and restrained, having in view his good that we are seeking, the promotion of his salvation as our fellow member in the Body of Christ. In

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the same way worship will take its colour, its significance, its tone, its intensity, not from some abstract conception, but from the end it seeks. This is made plain, too, when we look at our Bibles and Prayer Books for the actual use of the word. There we find much of the worship of God: but we also find a limited use of the word. "Then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee." (S. Luke, XIV, 10.) And in the marriage service of the English Prayer Book we read: "With this ring I thee wed, and with my body I thee worship." The same limited content of the word is found in the old title of respect—"Your Worship."

But so thoroughly has the word worship become associated with our approach to God, that we still, many of us, no doubt, feel the shock of the unaccustomed when we hear the worship of the Blessed Virgin or of the saints spoken of. It does not help us much to fall back on the Latin word, *Cultus*, for we understand that the meaning is the same.

We are helped, I think, if we substitute the parallel word honour for worship in the places of its use. We meet in the Church to honour God, and we offer the Blessed Sacrifice as the act of supreme honour which is due to Him alone; but in connection with the supreme honour offered to God we also honour the saints of God by the observance of their anniversaries with special services including the Holy Sacrifice. The word honour does not sound so ill to ears unaccustomed to a certain type of Catholic expression as the word worship: but the meaning is untouched.

Let us go on then to the analysis of the notion of worship. In the writings of theologians we find an analysis of the notion of worship into three degrees. There is, first of all, that supreme degree of worship which is called *latria* and which is the worship due to God alone. If we ask what essentially it is that differentiates *latria* from all other degrees of worship or honour we find that it is the element of sacrifice that it contains. Sacrifice is the supreme act of self-surrender to another, of utter self-immolation, and it can have no other legitimate object than God Himself. The central notion of sacrifice is the surrender of self. The sacrifices of the Old Covenant were of value because they were the representatives of the nation and of the individuals who offered them; because of the self-identification of nation or individual with the thing offered, which must therefore be in some sense the offerer's, must, so to say, *contain him*: must be that in which he merges himself. So the one Sacrifice of the New Covenant gets its essential value in that it is the surrender of the Son to the will of the Father. "I am come to do Thy will, O God." Christ's sacrifice is self-sacrifice: the voluntary surrender of the whole life to the divine purpose.

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And when we actually worship God, worship Him with the worship of *latría*, our act must be of the same essential nature; it must be an act of sacrifice, of self-giving; the offering of ourselves to the will of the Father. So it is in our participation in the offering of the Blessed Sacrifice. The full meaning of our joining in that act is that we are uniting ourselves with our Lord's offering of Himself, and as members of His Body share in the sacrifice of the Body which is the supreme act of worship. And our other acts of worship lay hold on and proceed from this which is the ground of their efficacy. All our subordinate acts of worship, so to call them, have their character and vitality as Christian acts of the worship of God because of the relation of the worshipper to God as a member of the Body of His Son. They are offered through the Son and derive their potency from their association with Him and His sacrifice. They reach God through the sacrifice of the One Mediator.

Worship, then, in this complete sense, is due to God alone; and it is separated by a whole heaven from any worship, that is, honour, which can be offered to any creature, however exalted. No instructed person would for a moment imagine that the prayers which we address to the saints are in any degree such worship as is offered to God; but in as much as those who are unfamiliar with the forms of the Catholic Religion in its devotional expression may easily be led astray, it seems needful to stress this fact of the difference between simple petition and such acts and prayers as involve the highest degree of worship.

One of the chief sources of confusion in this matter is the failure to distinguish between the nature of the act of worship, which is determined by the person to whom it is directed, and the mere adjuncts of the act. But an act of *latría* is not constituted such by the fact that it is aided in its expression by such circumstances as banners, lights, incense and so on. These are quite appropriate to any act of honour, and have been customarily so used in relation to human beings. There was a certain hesitation in the Church for some time in the matter of incense which under the older Covenant had been especially appropriated to God, because in the experience of the early Church it was demanded, and necessarily refused, as an acknowledgment of the divinity of the Emperor. But with the passing of the pagan empire incense as the universal symbol of prayer came into use in all manner of services wherein intercession was a part.

Such adjuncts therefore are not foreign to those subordinate acts of worship or honour which are technically known as *dulia*. *Dulia*—this word means service—is such honour as may be rightly rendered to creatures without at all encroaching upon the majesty of God. It is *that* degree of worship that we have in mind when we speak of the worship of the saints. That *dulia* of the

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saints is expressed when we ask for the intercession of this or that saint, and is not essentially different from the asking for the prayers of any other human beings. We commonly ask for one another's prayers and feel that in doing so we are exercising our brotherhood in the Body of Christ in calling into action its mutual love and sympathy. We should be beyond measure astonished if we were told that such requests for the prayers of our brethren were encroachments upon the honour of God and the sin of idolatry! But if in this case our surprise is justified, it is difficult to see how the case is at all altered by the fact that the fellow members of the Body whose prayers we are asking happen to be *dead*, that is, as we believe and imply in our request for their intercession, have passed into a new and closer relation to our Blessed Lord. Nor, again, does the case seem to be at all altered, if the brother whose prayers we ask has been dead a long time, and has, by the common consent of Catholic Christendom, been received into the number of the saints. The ways in which the human mind works under the influence of prejudice are always interesting. There are many devout persons who feel that it is a valuable element in their religion to have the privilege of following the Kalendar of the Church and to keep the saints' days therein indicated by attendance at divine service; who yet would be horrified if it were suggested that a prayer should be offered to the saint whose day is being observed, and that the saint should be made the object of an act of worship. But what essentially *is* the keeping of a saint's day, with a celebration of the Holy Communion with special collect, epistle and gospel, but an act of worship (*dulia*) of the saint? The nature of the act would be in no way changed if in addition to our accustomed collects there were added one which plainly asked for the prayers of the saint in whose honour we are keeping the feast.

In the worship of the Church of God a place apart is assigned to the honour to be paid to the blessed Mother of our Lord. As the highest of all creatures, as highly favoured above all, as she whom God chose to be the Mother of His Son, the devout thought of generations of Christians has felt that their recognition of her relation to God in the Incarnation called for a special degree of honour rightly to express it. The thought of the faithful lingers about all that was in any degree associated with the coming of God in the flesh: so great was the deliverance thereby wrought for man that man's gratitude ever seeks new means of expression and ever finds the means inadequate to his love. Many of the expressions that are found in devotional writers associated with the cultus of the Blessed Virgin Mary are an outcome of this attitude of mind. To those who are unused to them they seem exaggerated; in the vast mass of the devotional writings of Catholic Christendom there is no difficulty

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in finding expressions which *are* exaggerated; but it is well to remember when thinking of this that the exaggeration is the exaggeration of love. The tendency of love *is* to exaggerate the forms of its expression. It is, however, we feel on reflection, an error to judge by the exaggeration rather than by the love. It is perhaps well to ask ourselves whether we are saved from exaggeration by greater sanity or by lesser love.

But exaggeration apart, this feeling of the unique position of the blessed Mother in relation to the Incarnate Son, as calling forth a special honour for her is embodied in the designation of the honour to be rendered her as *hyperdulia*—a specially devoted service. It is hardly necessary after what has been said to point out that even here in the highest honour rendered to any saint there is no passing of the infinite gulf which separates Creator from creature, any infringement upon the honour of God. No Catholic could dream that blessed Mary would be in any wise honoured by the attribution to her of what belongs to her Son. These are no doubt commonplaces, but it is better to be commonplace than to be misunderstood. The intercession that is asked of the blessed Mother is the intercession of one who by God's election is more closely associated with God than any other human being is or can be. Her power of prayer is felt to proceed from the depth of her sanctity; from, in other words, the perfection of her relation to her blessed Son Who is the only Mediator and the Saviour of us all.

Let me say in conclusion that this giving of honour to our Lord, and to all His saints as united to Him, and the celebration of their days according to the Church's year, and the asking of the help of their intercession in all the needs of our lives, is not simply a thing to be tolerated in those who are inclined to it, is not simply a privilege which we are entitled to if we care for it, but is a duty which all Christians ought to fulfil because otherwise they are failing to make real to them a very important article of the Christian Creed. The Communion of Saints, like all other articles of the Creed, needs to be put into active use, and will be when we believe it as distinguished from assent to it. When we believe that all who live unto God in the Body of His dear Son are inspired with active love one toward another, we shall ourselves feel the impulse of that love, and be compelled both to seek an outlet for it toward all other members of the Body, and also will equally feel compelled to seek our own share in the action of that love by asking for the prayers of the saints for ourselves and for all in whom we are interested. Then will we find in the "worship of the saints" one great means whereby we can worship the God of the saints by the devout recognition of the greatness of His work in them, May God be praised and glorified in all His saints.

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O Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son,
Lowly, and higher than all creatures raised,
Term by eternal council fixed upon,
Thou art she who didst ennoble man,
That even He who had created him
To be Himself His creature disdained not.
Within thy womb rekindled was the love,
By virtue of whose heat this flower thus
Is blossoming in the eternal peace.
Here thou art unto us a noon-day torch
Of charity, and among mortal men
Below, thou art a living fount of hope.
Lady, thou art so great and so prevailest,
That who seeks grace without recourse to thee,
Would have his wish fly upward without wings.
Thy loving-kindness succors not alone
Him who is seeking it, but many times
Freely anticipates the very prayer.
In thee is mercy, pity is in thee,
In thee magnificence, whatever good
Is in created being joins in thee.

Dante, Par. XXXIII, 1-21. (Trans. H. Johnson.)

PART TWO

CHAPTER I

MARY OF NAZARETH

Mary, of whom was born Jesus.

S. Matt. I. 16.

My Maker and Redeemer, Christ the Lord, O Immaculate, coming forth from thy womb, having taken my nature upon him, hath delivered Adam from the primal curse; wherefore, to thee, Immaculate, the Mother of God and Virgin in very sooth, we cry aloud unceasingly the Ave of the Angel, "Hail, O Lady, protection and shelter and salvation of our souls!"

BYZANTINE.

The silences of the Holy Scriptures have always provoked speculation as to what is left untold. The devout imagination has played about the hints we receive and woven them into stories which far outrun any true implication of the facts. Thus has much legendary matter gathered about the childhood of our Lord, containing the stories, not always very edifying according to our taste, which are set down in the Apocryphal Gospels. The same eagerness to know more than we are told has produced the developed legend of the childhood of our Lady. We can of course place no reliance on most of the statements that are there made; perhaps the most that we can lay hold of is the fact that S. Mary's father was Joachim and her mother Anna. The rest may be left to silence.

But if the facts of the external life of Mary of Nazareth cannot be hoped for, certain general truths evidently follow from God's plan for her and from her relation to our Blessed Lord. There are certain inferences from her vocation which are irresistible and which the theologians of the Church did not fail to make as they thought of her function in relation to the Incarnation. We know that the work of Redemption by which it was God's purpose to lead back a sinful world to Himself was a purpose that

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worked from the very beginning of man's fatal separation from the source of his life and happiness. The essential meaning of Holy Scripture is that it is a history of the origin of God's purpose and of His bringing it to a successful issue in the mission of our Lord. In the Scriptures we are permitted to see the unfolding of the divine purpose and the preparation of the instruments by which the purpose is to be effected. We see the divine will struggling with the human will, and in appearance baffled again and again by the selfishness and the stupidity of man. We see too that the divine will is in the long run successful in securing a point of action in humanity, in winning the allegiance of men of good will to co-operation with the purpose of God. We see spiritual ideals assimilated, and sympathy with the work of God generated, until we feel that that work has gained a firm and enduring ground in humanity from which it can act. God is able to consummate His purpose, and men begin to understand in some measure the nature of the future deliverance and to look forward to the coming of One Who should be the embodiment of the divine action and the Representative of God Himself with a completeness which no previous messenger of God had ever attained.

It we would understand the Old Testament we must find that its intimate note is preparation, just as the intimate note of the New Testament is accomplishment. God is working to a foreseen end, and is working as fast as men will consent to co-operate and become the instruments of His purpose. The purpose is not one that can be achieved by the exercise of power; it is a purpose of love and can be effected only through co-operating love. And as we watch the final unfolding of that purpose in the Incarnation of God, we more and more become conscious of the preparation of all the instruments of the purpose which are working in harmony for the revelation of the meaning of God.

Of all the instruments of this divine purpose, one figure has preeminently fascinated the devout imagination because of her unique beauty, and has been the object of profound speculation because of the intimacy of her relation to God,—Mary of Nazareth. The vocabulary of love and reverence has exhausted itself in the attempt to express our estimate of her. The literature of Mariology is immense. And no one who has at all entered into the meaning of the Incarnation, of what is involved in eternal God taking human flesh, can wonder at this. Here at the crisis of the divine redeeming action, when the crowning mystery which angels desire to look into is being accomplished, we find the figure of a village maiden of Israel as the surprising instrument of the advent of God. We wonder: and we instinctively feel, that as all the other steps and instruments in God's redemption of man had from the beginning been carefully prepared, so shall we find preparation here. We understand that as God could not come in the flesh at any time, but only when the "fulness of time" had come; so He could not come of any woman, but only of such an one as He had prepared to be the instrument of His Incarnation.

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It is involved in the very intimacy of the relation which exists between our Lord and His blessed Mother that she should be unique in the human race. We feel that we are right in saying that the Incarnation which waited for the preparation of the world socially and spiritually, must also be thought of as waiting for the coming of the woman who would so completely surrender herself to the divine will that in her obedience could be founded the antidote to the disobedience which was founded in Eve. The race waited for the coming of the new mother who should be the instrument in the abolishing of the evil of which the first mother was the instrument. And from the very beginning of the thought of the Church about blessed Mary there was no doubt that it was implied in her office in bearing the God-Man that she should be without sin—sinless in the sense of never having in any least degree consented to evil the thought of the Church has ever held her to be. It was held incredible that she who by God's election bore in the sanctuary of her womb during the months of her child-bearing Him who was Lord and Creator and was come to save the world from all the stain and penalty of sin should herself be a sinner. Without actual sin, therefore, was Mary held to be from the time that the thought of the Church was turned upon her relation to our Blessed Lord[6].

[Footnote 6: It is true that a few writers among the Fathers see in blessed Mary traces of venial sin; who think of her intervention at Cana as presumptuous &c. But such notices are not of sufficient frequency or importance to break the general tradition.]

For some time this seemed enough. It was not felt that any further thought about her sinlessness was needed. But as the uniqueness of Mary forced itself more and more upon the brooding thought of theologians and saints they were compelled to face the fact that her freedom from actual sin was not a full appreciation of her purity, was not an exhaustive treatment of her relation to our Lord. The doctrine of the nature of sin itself had been becoming clearer to the minds of Christian thinkers. All men are conceived and born in sin, it was seen. After S. Paul's teaching, the problem of *sin* was not the problem of sins but the problem of sinfulness. The matter could not be left with the statement that all men do sin; the reason of their sinning must be traced out. And it was traced out, under S. Paul's guidance, to a ground of sin in nature itself, to a defect in man as he is born into the world. He does not become a sinner when he commits his first sin: he is born a sinner. In other words, the problem of man's sinfulness is the problem of original sin.

What then do we mean by original sin? Briefly, we mean this. At his creation man was not only created innocent, but he was created in union with God, a union which conferred on him many supernatural gifts, gifts, that is, which were not a part of his nature, but were in the way of an addition to his nature. "By created nature man is endowed with moral sense, and is thus made responsible for righteousness; but he is unequal to its fulfilment. The all-righteous Creator could be trusted to complete His work. He endowed primitive man with superadded gifts of grace, especially the supernatural gift, *donum supernaturale*, of the Holy Spirit[7]."

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[Footnote 7: Hall, Dogmatic Theology, V, 263.]

Our purpose does not require us further to particularize these gifts and our time does not permit it. We are concerned with this: the effect of man's sin was, what the effect of sin always is, to separate man from God. To sin, man has to put his will in opposition to the will of God. This our first parents did; and the result of their act was the destruction of their union with God and the loss of their supernatural endowments. They lapsed into a state of nature, only it was a state in which they had forfeited what had been conferred upon them at their creation. This state of man, with only his natural endowments, is the state into which all men, the descendants of Adam, have been born. This is the state of original sin. "Original sin means in Catholic theology a state inherited from our first human parents in which we are deprived of the supernatural grace and original righteousness with which they were endowed before they sinned, and are naturally prone to sin." (Hall, Dogmatic Theology, Vol. V, p. 281.) We can state the same fact otherwise, and more simply for our present purposes, by saying that by sin was forfeited the grace of union or sanctifying grace; and when we say that a child is born in sin we mean that it is born out of union with God, or without the supernatural gift of sanctifying grace. You will note here no implication of original sin as an active poison handed on from generation to generation. It will be important to remember this presently.

When, therefore, the thought of the Church began to follow out what was involved in its belief in the actual sinlessness of blessed Mary, in its holding to the fact that her relation to God was of such a close and indeed unique character that her actual sinfulness would be incomprehensible; it was at length compelled to ask, What, in that case are we to think of original sin? If the first Eve was created in innocence and endowed with supernatural gifts, are we to think that she whom the Fathers of the Church from the earliest times have constantly called the second Eve, she whom God chose to be the Mother of His Son, should be less endowed? Is it a fact any more conceivable that the virgin Mother of God should be born in original sin than that she should be the victim of actual sin? If by the special grace of God she was kept from sin from the time that she was able to know good and evil, is it not probable that the freedom from sin goes further back than that, and is a freedom from original as well as from actual sin? What is the meaning of the Angelic Salutation, "Hail, thou that art *full of grace*," unless it refer to a superadded grace, to such *donum supernaturale* as the first Eve received? There is indeed no precedent to guide in the case: the prophet Jeremiah and S. John Baptist had been preserved from sin from the womb, but this did not involve freedom from original sin. Still the

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fact that there was no precedent was not in anywise fatal; the point of the situation was just that there was no precedent for the relation to God into which Blessed Mary had been called. It was precisely this uniqueness of vocation which was leading theological thought to the conclusion of the uniqueness of her privilege: and this uniqueness of privilege seemed to call for nothing less than an exemption from sin in any and all forms. So a belief in the Immaculate Conception grew up despite a good deal of opposition while its implications were being thought out, but was found more and more congenial to the mind of the Church. She whose wonderful title for centuries had been Mother of God could never at any moment of her existence have been separate from God. She must, so it was felt, have been united to God from the very first moment of her existence.

But what does this exemption from the common lot of men actually mean? I think that the simplest way of getting at it is to ask ourselves what it is that happens to a child at baptism. Every human child that is born into the world is born in original sin, that is, is born out of union with God, without sanctifying grace. It is then brought to the font and by baptism regenerated, born again, put in a relation to God that we describe as union, made a partaker of the divine nature. This varying description of the effect of baptism means that the soul of the child has become a partaker of sanctifying grace, the grace of union with God. Original sin, we say, is forgiven: that is, the soul is placed in the relation to God that it would have had had sin not come into existence, save that there remains a certain weakness of nature due to its sinful heredity. This that happens to children when they are baptised is what is held to have happened to Blessed Mary at her creation. Her soul instead of being restored to God by grace after her birth, was by God's special grace or favour created in union with Him, and in that union always continued. The uniqueness of S. Mary's privilege was that she never had to be restored to union with God because from the moment of her existence she had been one with Him. This would have been the common lot of all men if sin had not come into the world.

In view of much criticism of this belief it is perhaps necessary to emphasize the fact that a belief in Mary's exemption from original sin does not imply a belief that she was exempt from the need of redemption. She is a creature of God, only the highest of His creatures: and like all human beings she needed to be redeemed by the Blood of Christ. The privileges which are our Lord's Mother's, are her's through the foreseen merits of her Son—she, as all others, is redeemed by the sacrifice and death of Christ. There is in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception no shadow of encroachment on the doctrine of universal redemption in Christ; there is simply the belief that for the merits of the Son the Mother was spared any moment of separation from the Father.

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It will, of course, be said that this doctrine is but the relatively late and newly formulated doctrine of the Latin Church and is of no obligation elsewhere; that we are in no wise bound to receive it. In regard to which there are one or two things to be said. That we are not formally bound to believe a doctrine is not at all the same thing as to say that we are formally bound not to believe it. I am afraid that the latter is a not uncommon attitude. There is no obligation upon us to disbelieve the Immaculate Conception of blessed Mary; there is an obligation upon us to understand it and to appreciate its meaning and value. We must remember that a doctrine that is not embodied in our Creed may nevertheless have the authority of the Church back of it. The doctrine of the Real Presence is not stated in the Creed; yet it is and always has been the teaching of the Church everywhere in all its liturgies. Though any particular statement of the Real Presence is not binding, the fact itself is binding on all Christians, and may not be doubted.

In much the same way it will be found that theological doctrines of relatively late creedal formulation yet have behind the formulation a long history of actual acceptance in the teaching of the Church. They are theologically certain long before they are embodied in authoritative formulae. What the individual Christian has to do is to try to assimilate the meaning of theological teaching and to find a place for it in his devotional practice and experience. His best attitude is not one of doubt and scepticism, but of meditation and experiment. It is through this latter attitude that each one is helping to form the mind of the Church, and aiding its progressive appreciation of revealed truth.

I do not see how any one who has entered into the meaning of the Incarnation can feel otherwise than that the uniqueness of the event carries with it the uniqueness of the instrument. It can of course be said that truth is not a matter of feeling but of revelation. But is it not true that God reveals Himself in many ways, and that our feelings as well as our intellects are involved in our perception of the truth revealed? Do we not often feel that something must be true far in advance of our ability to prove it so? And in truths of a certain order is there not an intuitive perception, a perception growing out of a sense of fitness, of congruity, which outruns the slow advance of the intellect? Love and sympathy often far outrun intellectual process. This is not to say that feeling is all; that a sense of fitness and conformity is a sufficient basis of doctrine. There is always need of the verification of the conclusions of the affections by the intellect; and the intellect in the last resort will have to be the determining factor.

And I think it can be said without hesitation that the intellectual work of theological students has quite justified the course that the affections of Christendom have taken in their spontaneous appreciation of Mary, the Ever-Virgin Mother of Our Lord. What the heart of Christendom has discovered, the mind of Christendom has justified. But here more than in any other doctrinal development it is love that has led the way, often with an eagerness, an *elan*, with which theology has found it difficult to keep up.

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And as we to-day try to appreciate the place of Blessed Mary in the life of the Church of God must we not feel it to be our misfortune that our past has been so wrapped in clouds of controversy that we have been unable to see her meaning at all clearly? Must we not feel deep sadness at the thought that the very mention of Mary's name, so often stirs, not love and gratitude, but the spirit of suspicion and dislike? We no doubt have passed beyond such feelings, but the traces of their evil work through the centuries still persist. They persist in certain feelings of reserve and hesitation when we find that our convictions are leading us to the adoption of the attitude toward her which is the common attitude of all Catholicity, both East and West. When we feel that the time has actually come to abandon the narrowness and barrenness of devotional practice which is a part of our tradition, we nevertheless feel as though we were launching out on strange seas and that our next sight of land might be of strange regions where we should not feel at home. If such be our instinctive attitude, it is well to remember that progress, spiritual as well as other, is conquest of the (to us) new; but that the acquisition of the new does not necessarily mean the abandonment of the old. We shall in fact lose nothing of our hold on the unique work of our Lord because we recognise that His Blessed Mother's association with it implies a certain preparation on her part, a certain uniqueness of privilege. There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus; and all who come to God, come through Him. But they come also in the unity of the Body of many members and of many offices. And the office of her who in God's providence was called to be the Mother of the Incarnate is surely as unique as is her vocation. She surely is entitled to receive from us the deep affection of our hearts and the highest honour that may be given to any creature.

THE GARLAND OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARIE.

Here are five letters in this blessed name,
Which, changed, a five-fold mystery design,
The M the Myrtle, A the Almonds claim,
R Rose, I Ivy, E sweet Eglantine.

These form thy garland, when of Myrtle green
The gladdest ground to all the numbered five,
Is so implexed fine and laid in, between,
As love here studied to keep grace alive.

Thy second string is the sweet Almond bloom
Mounted high upon Selines' crest:
As it alone (and only it) had room,
To knit thy crown, and glorify the rest.

The third is from the garden culled, the Rose,
The eye of flowers, worthy for her scent,

To top the fairest lily now, that grows
With wonder on the thorny regiment.

The fourth is the humble Ivy intersert
But lowly laid, as on the earth asleep,
Preserved in her antique bed of vert,
No faiths more firm or flat, then, where't doth creep.

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But that, which sums all, is the Eglantine,
Which of the field is cleped the sweetest briar,
Inflamed with ardour to that mystic shine,
In Moses' bush unwasted in the fire.

Thus love, and hope, and burning charity,
(Divinest graces) are so intermixt
With odorous sweets and soft humility,
As if they adored the head, whereon they are fixed.

PART TWO

CHAPTER II

THE ANNUNCIATION I

And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art
highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou
among women.

S. Luke, l. 28

Oh God, whose will it was that thy Word should take flesh, at the message of the Angel,
in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, grant to us thy suppliants that, we who believe
her to be truly the Mother of God, may be assisted by her intercession with thee.
Through &c.

ROMAN.

When we attempt to reconstruct imaginatively any scene of Holy Scripture it is almost inevitable that we see it through the eyes of some great artist of the past. The Crucifixion comes to us as Duerer or Guido Reni saw it; the Presentation or the Visitation presents itself to us in terms of the imagination of Raphael; we see the Nativity as a composition of Corregio. So the Annunciation rises before us when we close our eyes and attempt to make "the composition of place" in a familiar grouping of the actors: a startled maiden who has arisen hurriedly from work or prayer, looking with wonder at the apparition of an angel who has all the eagerness of one who has come hastily upon an urgent mission. The surroundings differ, but artists of the Renaissance like to think of a sumptuous background as a worthy setting for so great an event.

We keep close to the meaning of Scripture if we set the Annunciation in a room in a cottage of a Palestinian working man. And I like to think of S. Mary at her accustomed work when Gabriel appeared, not with a rush of wings, but as a silent and hardly felt



presence standing before her whom the Lord has chosen to be the instrument of His coming. Wonder there would have been, the kind of awe-struck wonder with which the supernatural always fills men; and yet only for a moment, for how could she who was daily living so close to God fear the messenger of God? The thought of angels and divine messengers would be wholly familiar to her. They had been the frequent agents of God in many a crisis of her people's history, and appeared again and again in the story of her ancestors on whose details she had often meditated. Yet in her humility she could but think it strange that an angel should have any message to bear to her.

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It is a striking enough scene, as the artists have felt when they tried to put it before us. But no artist has ever been able to go below the surface and by any hint lead us to an appreciation of the vast implications of the moment. This moment of the Annunciation is in fact the central moment of the world's history. No moment before or since has equalled it in its unspeakable wonder, in its revelation of the meaning of God. Not the moment of the creation when all the Sons of God sang together at the vision of the unfolding purpose of God; not the morning of the Resurrection when the empty tomb told of the accomplished overthrow of death and hell. This is the moment toward which all preceding time had moved, and to which all succeeding ages will look back—the moment of the Incarnation of God.

It is well to ask ourselves at this point what the Incarnation means, because our estimate of Blessed Mary as the chosen instrument of God's grace will be influenced by our estimate of that which she was chosen to do. One feels the failure to grasp her position in the work of our redemption often displays a weak hold upon that which is the very heart of God's work—the fact of God made man. The moment of the Annunciation is the moment of the Incarnation: God in His infinite love for mankind is sending forth His Son to be born of a woman in the likeness of our flesh. God the Son, the second Person of the ever adorable Trinity, is entering the womb of this maiden, there to wrap Himself in her flesh and to pass through the common course of a human child's development till He shall reach the hour of the Nativity. When we try to grasp the reach of the divine Love, its depth, its self-forgetfulness, we must stand in the cottage in Nazareth and hear the angelic salutation. And then surely our own hearts cannot fail to respond to the revelation of the divine love; and something of our love that goes out to our hidden Lord, goes out too to the maiden-mother who so willingly became God's instrument in His work for our redemption. In imagination I see S. Gabriel kneeling before her who has become a living Tabernacle of God Most High, and repeating his "Hail, thou that art highly favoured," with the deepest reverence.

"Hail, thou that art full of grace." We linger over this Ave of S. Gabriel, and often it rises to our lips. Perhaps it is with S. Luke's narrative, almost naked in its simplicity, in our hands as we try once more to push our thought deep into the meaning of the scene, that we may understand a little better what has resulted in our experience from the Incarnation of God, and our thought turns to S. Mary whom God chose and brought so near to Himself. Perhaps it is when, with chaplet in hand, we try to imagine S. Mary's feelings at this first of the Joyful Mysteries when the meaning of her vocation comes clearly before her. Hail! thou that art full of grace, of the Living Grace, the very Presence of the divinity itself. The plummet of our thought

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fails always to reach the depth of that mystery of Mary's Child. It was indeed centuries before the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit thought out and fully stated the meaning of this Child; it was centuries before it fully grasped the meaning of Mary herself in her relation to her divine Son: and after all the centuries of Spirit-guided statement and saintly meditation it still remains that many fail to understand and to make energetic in life the fact of the Incarnation of God in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

And what was S. Mary's own attitude toward the announcement of the Angel? Her first instinctive word—the word called out by her imperfect grasp of the meaning of the message of S. Gabriel, is: How can this be seeing I know not a man? Are we to infer from these words, as many have inferred, that in her secret thoughts S. Mary had resolved always to remain a virgin, that she had so offered herself to God in the virgin state? Possibly when we remember that such was God's will for her it is not going too far to assume that she had been prompted thus to meet and offer herself to the divine will. Be that as it may there is an obvious and instantaneous assumption that the child-bearing which is predicted to her lies outside the normal and accustomed way of marriage. She clearly does not think that the archangel's words look to her approaching union with S. Joseph, even if the nominal nature of that marriage were not agreed upon. It is clear that her instantaneous feeling is that as the message is supernatural in character, so will its fulfilment be, and the wondering *how* arises to her lips.

The answer to the *how* is that what is worked in her is by the power of the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

As so often in the dealing of God with us, that which is put forward as an explanation actually deepens the mystery. It was no abatement of Mary's wonder, nor did it really put away her *how* when she was told that the Holy Ghost should come upon her and that the child should be the Son of the Highest. And yet this was the only answer to such a question that was possible. Our questions may be met in two ways: either by a detailed explanation, or by the answer that the only explanation is God—that what we are concerned with is a direct working of God outside the accustomed order of nature and therefore outside the reach of our understanding. Such acts have no doubt their laws, but they are not the laws in terms of which we are wont to think.

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The question of S. Mary was not a question which implied doubt. It is therefore the proper question with which to approach all God's works. There is a stress with which such questions may be asked which implies on our part unbelief or at least hesitation in belief. It is a not uncommon accent to hear to-day in questions as to divine mysteries. Our recitation of the creed is not rarely invaded by restlessness, shadows of doubt, which perhaps we brush aside, or perhaps let linger in our minds with the feeling that it is safer for our religion not to follow these out. I am afraid that there are not a few who still adhere to the Church who do so with the feeling that it is better for them to go on repeating words that they have become used to rather than to raise questions as to their actual truth; who feel that the faith of the Church rests on foundations which in the course of the centuries have been badly shaken, but that it is safer not to disturb them lest they incontinently fall to pieces.

In other words there is a wide-spread feeling that such stories as this of the Annunciation and of the Virgin birth of our Lord are fables. When we ask, why is there such a feeling? the only answer is that the modern man has become suspicious of the supernatural. Has there anything been found in the way of evidence, we ask, which reflects upon the truth of the story in S. Luke? No, we are told; the story stands where it always did, its evidence is what it always was. What has changed is not the story or the evidence for it but the human attitude toward that and all such stories. The modern mind does not attempt to disprove them, it just disapproves of them, and therefore declines to believe them. It sets them aside as belonging to an order of ideas with which it no longer has any sympathy.

It is no doubt true that we reach many of our conclusions, especially those which govern our practical attitude towards life, from the ground of certain hardly recognised presuppositions, rather than from the basis of thought out principles. The thought of to-day is pervaded by the denial of the supernatural. It insists that all that we know or can know is the natural world about us. It rules out the possibility of any invasions of the natural order and declines to accept such on any evidence whatsoever. All that one has time to say now of such an attitude is that it makes all religion impossible, and sets aside as untrustworthy all the deepest experiences of the human soul. If I were going to argue against this attitude (as I am not able to now) I should simply oppose to it the past experience of the race as embodied in its best religious thought. I should stress the fact that what is noblest and best in the past of humanity is wholly meaningless unless humanity's supposition of a life beyond this life, and of the existence of spiritual powers and beings to whom we are related, holds good. No nation has ever conducted its life on the basis of pure materialism, save in those last stages of its decadence which preluded its downfall.

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But without going so far as to reject the supernatural and reject the truth of the immediate intervention of God in life, there are multitudes of men and women whose whole life never moves beyond the natural order. They have no materialistic theory; if you ask them, they think that they are, in some sense not very well defined, Christians. But they have no Christian interests, no spiritual activities of any sort. For all practical purposes God and the spiritual order do not exist for them. They are not for the most part what any one would call bad people; though there seems no intelligible meaning of the word in which they can be called *good*. The best that one can say of them is that they have a certain usefulness in the present social order though they are not missed when they fall out of it. They can be replaced in the social machine much as a lost or broken part can in an engine. And just as the part of an engine which has become useless where it is, can have no possible usefulness elsewhere, so we are unable to imagine them as capable of adaptation to any other place than that which they have filled here. Perhaps that is what we mean by hell—incapacity to adapt oneself to the life of the future.

All this implies a temper of mind and soul that has rendered itself incapable of vision. For just as our ordinary vision of the beauty of this world depends not only on the existence of the world but on a certain capacity in us to see it, so that the beauty of the world does not at all exist for the man whose optic nerve is paralysed; so the meaning and beauty, nay, the very existence of the supernatural order depends for us upon a capacity in us which we may call the capacity of vision. The sceptic waves aside our stories of supernatural happenings with the brusque statement, "Nobody to-day sees angels. They only appear in an atmosphere of primitive or mediaeval superstition, not in the broad intellectual light of the twentieth century." But it may be that the fact (if it be a fact) that nobody sees angels in the twentieth century is due to some other cause than the non-existence of the angels. After all, in any century you see what you are prepared to see, what in other words, you are looking for. It is a common enough phenomenon that the man who lives in the country misses most of the beauty of it. In his search for the potato bug he misses the sunset, and disposes of the primrose on the river's brim as a common weed. It is true that in order to see we need something beside eyes, and to hear we need something beside ears. When on an occasion the Father spoke from heaven to the Son many heard the sound, and some said, "It thundered"; others got so far as to say, "An Angel spake to him."

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Let us then in the presence of narratives of supernatural happenings ask our *how* with a good deal of reverence and a good deal of modesty, not as implying a sceptical doubt on our part, but as a wish that we may be admitted deeper into the meaning of the event. Scepticism simply closes the door through which we might pass to fuller knowledge. The questioning of faith holds the door open. To those who have not closed the door upon the supernatural it is evident that it is permeated with forces and influences which are not material in their origin or their effects; that God acts upon the world now as He has ever acted upon it. If we cannot believe this I do not see that we can believe in God at all in any intelligible sense. There is to me one attitude toward the supernatural that is even more hopeless than the attitude of materialistic scepticism which says, "Miracles do not happen"; and that is the attitude which says, "Miracles happened in Bible times, but have never happened since." As the one attitude seems to imply that God made the world, but after He had made it left it to go on by itself and no more expresses any interest in it; so the other implies that after God put the Christian religion in the world He left that to go on by itself and no longer pays any attention to it. Either to me is wholly unintelligible and inconceivable.

And what is worse, is wholly out of touch with the revelation of God made in Holy Scripture. That displays God working in and through the material universe, and it displays God working in and through the spirit of man; and it in no place implies that either the material world or the human order is so perfect as to need no further divine action. Revelation implies the constant presence and action of God in nature and in the Church; it implies that both have a forward look and are not ends in themselves but are moving on toward some ultimate perfection. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth ... waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body." We look for a new heaven and a new earth; and human society looks to a perfect consummation in the fellowship of the saints in light.

Looking out on life from the spiritual point of vantage, we may hopefully ask our *how*, and there will be an answer. To blessed Mary S. Gabriel replied: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."—An answer that was full of light and of deepest mystery. The immediate question—the mode of her conception—was cleared up; it would be through the direct action of God the Holy Spirit: but the nature of the Child to be born is filled with mystery. We can imagine S. Mary in the days to come finding her child-bearing quite intelligible in comparison with the mystery that brooded over His nature.

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This is the common fact in our dealing with God. We express it when we say that we never get beyond the need of faith. We pray that one thing may be made clear, and the result of the clearing is the deepened sense of the mystery of the things beyond, just as any increase in the power of the telescope clears up certain questions which had been puzzling the astronomers only to carry their vision into vaster depths of space, opening new questions to tantalize the imagination. We find it so always. The solution of any question of our spiritual lives does not lead as perhaps we thought it would lead to there being no longer any questions to perplex us and to draw on our time and our energy; rather such solution puts us in the presence of new and, it may well be, deeper and more perplexing questions. "Are there no limits to the demands of God upon us," we sometimes despairingly ask? And the answer is, "No: there are no limits because the end of the road that we are travelling is in infinity." The limit that is set to our perfecting is the perfection of God, and if we grow through all the years of eternity we shall still have attained only a relative perfection.

So the successful passing of one test cannot be expected to relieve us from all tests in the future. It is the dream of the child that manhood will set it free; and he reaches manhood only to find that it imposes obligations which are so pressing that he reverses his dream and speaks of his childhood as the time of his true freedom. The meeting of spiritual tests is but the proving of spiritual capacity to meet other tests. To our Lady it might well seem that the acceptance of the conditions of the Incarnation was the severest test that God could assign her; that in the light of the promise she could look on to joy. But the future concealed a sword which should pierce her very heart. The promise contained no doubt wonderful things—this wonder of God's blessing that she was now experiencing in the coming of the Holy Ghost, in the very embrace of God Himself: this is but the first of the Joyful Mysteries which were God's great gifts to her. But her life was not to be a succession of Joyful Mysteries, ultimately crowned with the Mysteries of Glory. There were the Sorrowful Mysteries as well. They were as true, and shall we not say, as necessary, as valuable, a part of her spiritual training as the others. She, our Mother, was now near God, with a nearness that was possible for no other human being, and it is one of the traditional sayings of our Lord: "He that is near Me is near fire." And fire burns as well as warms and lights. She is wonderful, the Virgin of Nazareth, in this moment when she becomes Mother of God: and we share in the rapture of the moment when in the fulness of her joy she hardly notices S. Gabriel's departure: but we feel, too, a great pity for her as we think of the coming days. So we kneel to her who is our Mother, as well as Mother of God, and say our Ave, and ask her priceless intercession.

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Gabriel, that angel bright,
Brighter than the sun is light,
From heaven to earth he took his flight,
Letare.

In Nazareth, that great city,
Before a maiden he kneeled on knee,
And said, "Mary, God is with thee,
Letare."

"Hail Mary, full of grace,
God is with thee, and ever was;
He hath in thee chosen a place.
Letare."

Mary was afraid of that sight,
That came to her with so great light,
Then said the angel that was so bright,
"Letare."

"Be not aghast of least nor most,
In thee is conceived of the Holy Ghost,
To save the souls that were for-lost.
Letare."

Fifteenth Century.

PART TWO

CHAPTER III

THE ANNUNCIATION II

And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.

S. Luke I. 38

O God, who through the fruitful virginity of blessed Mary didst bestow on mankind the rewards of eternal salvation: grant, we beseech thee, that we may experience her intercession for us through whom we were made worthy to receive the author of life, even Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord.

Roman.



S. Mary's momentary hesitation had been due to the surprise that she felt at the nature of the angelic message and the difficulty that there was in relating it to her state of life. That she, a virgin, should bear a son was vastly perplexing; but the answer of S. Gabriel speedily cleared away the difficulty: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee."

Blessed Mary had no difficulty about the supernatural; she was not afflicted with the modern disease that there are no things in heaven and earth save such as are contained in our philosophy. She was not of those who "cannot believe what they do not understand," It was enough for her that a message had come from God: and no matter how little she was able to understand the mode of God's proposed action within her, she was willing to offer herself to be the instrument of the will of God. No doubt that was an habitual attitude and not one taken up on the spur of the moment. It is indeed very rarely that what seem spontaneous actions are really such; and S. Mary's first word was nearer spontaneity than the second. Her exclamation in answer to the angelic Ave was the natural expression of her surprise at so unexpected a message: its variance from all her thought about her life was the thing that struck her; and therefore her instinctive, "How can this be?"

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In this second word we have a quite different attitude. Here is revealed to us the profound and perfect humility of the Blessed Virgin. This answer comes from the experience of her whole life. It is of such utterances that we say that they are revealing. What we at any time say, does in fact reveal what we are—what we have come to be through the experience of our past life. And no doubt it is these instinctive utterances which are called out by some unexpected occurrence that reveal more of us than our weighed and guarded words. Back of every word we utter is a life we have lived. We have been spending years in preparing for that word. Perhaps when the time comes to speak it, it is not the word we thought we were going to speak, it was not the prelude to the action we thought that we were going to perform; it reveals a character other than the character that we thought we had. How often the Gospel brings that before us! We see the young Ruler come running with his brave and perfectly sincere words about inheriting eternal life; and then we see him going away when the testing of our Lord demonstrated that he only partly meant what he said. It was not S. Peter's brave words, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee," that revealed the truth about the Apostle; but the words that were called out by the accusation that he was of the company of Jesus: "Then began he to curse and swear, saying, I know not the man." We have no doubt that he knows himself better when he catches the eye of the Master turned upon him and goes and weeps bitterly. And it is true, is it not, that it is through words called out and thoughts stirred by the unexpected that we often get new insight into our real state. A sudden temptation reveals a hidden weakness, and we go away shamed and crushed, saying, "I did not suppose that I was capable of that."

But, thank God, the revelation is sometimes the other way; the testing uncovers unexpected strength. Of many a man, after some strong trial, we say, "I did not know that he had so much courage, or so much patience." The quiet unassuming exterior was the mask of an heroic will of which very likely not even the possessor suspected the true quality. The annals of martyrdom are full of these revelations of unsuspected strength. Here in the case of Blessed Mary the quality revealed is that of humility so perfect that it dreams not of revolt from the most searching trial. It reveals the character of our Mother better than pages of description can do. What we see in response to the bewildering messages brought by S. Gabriel is the instinctive movement of the soul toward God. There is utter absence of any thought of self or of how she may be affected by the purpose of God; it is enough that that purpose is made plain.

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It seems well to insist on this instinctive movement of the soul in Blessed Mary because it is one item of the evidence that the Catholic Church has to offer for its belief in her sinlessness. Any momentary rebellion, no matter how soon recovered from, or how sincerely regretted, against the will of God, would be evidence of the existence of sin. But where sin is not, where there is an unstained soul, there the knowledge of the will of God will send one running to its acceptance; there will be active acceptance and not just submission to God's will. Submission implies a certain effort to place ourselves in line with the will of God; it often seems to imply that we are accepting it because we cannot do anything else. But with Blessed Mary there is a glad going forth to meet God; the word "Behold" springs out to meet the will of God half-way. It is as though she had been holding herself ready, expectant, in the certainty of the coming of some message, and now she offers herself without the shadow of hesitation, as to a purpose which was a welcome vocation: "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." How wonderful is the humility of obedience!

And humility—we must stress this—is not a virtue of youth; it is not one of the virtues which ripen quickly, but is of slow development and delayed maturity. Modesty we should expect in a maiden, and lack of self-assertion; and perhaps obedience of a sort. But those do not constitute the virtue of humility. We are humble when we have lost self; and Mary's wondering answer reveals the fact that she is not thinking of herself at all, but only of the nature of the divine purpose. That that purpose being known she should at all resist it would seem to her a thing incredible, for all her life she had had no other motive of action. Her will had never been separated from the will of God.

This state of union which was hers by divine election and privilege, we achieve, if we achieve it at all, by virtue of great spiritual discipline. We are, to be sure, brought into union with God through the sacraments, but the union so achieved is, if one may so express it, an unstable union; it is union that we have to maintain by daily spiritual action and which suffers many a weakening through our infidelity, even if it escape the disaster of mortal sin. We sway to and fro in our struggle to attain the equilibrium of perfection which belonged to Blessed Mary by virtue of the first embrace of God which had freed her from sin. Our tragedy is that we have almost universally lost the first engagements of the Spiritual Combat before we have at all understood that there is any combat. The circumstances of life of child and youth are such that we become familiar with sin before we have the intelligence to understand the need of resisting, even if we are fortunate enough to have such an education as to awaken a sense of sin as opposition to God. There is nothing more appalling than the tragedy of life thus defiled and broken and put at a disadvantage before it even understands the ideals that should govern its course. When the vision of perfection comes and we face life as the field where we are to acquire eternal values, we face it with a poisoned imagination and a depleted strength. Our battle is not only to maintain what we have, but to win back what we have lost.

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Under such conditions there is much consolation in learning that we do not fight alone but have the constant help and sympathy of those who are endued with the strength of perfect purity. Their likeness to us in that they have lived the life of the flesh assures us of their understanding, and it assures us too of their active co-operation. We cannot understand the saints standing outside human life and from the vantage point of their achievement looking on as indolent spectators. The spectacle afforded by the Church Militant must call out the active intercession of all the saints; but especially do we look for helpful sympathy from her who is our all-pure Mother, whose very purity gives her intercession unmeasured power. She is not removed from us through her spotlessness, but by virtue of her clearer understanding of the meaning of sin and of separation from God that it brings her, she is ready to fly to the help of all sinners by her ceaseless intercession.

The difficulty of our spiritual lives rises chiefly out of the clash of wills. A disordered nature, a tainted inheritance, a corrupt environment conspire to make the life of grace tremendously difficult. It is only in a very limited sense that we can be said to be free, and there is no possibility at all of overcoming the handicap of sin, except firm and careful reliance on the grace of God. That grace, no doubt, is always at our disposal as far as we will use it. Grace moves us, but it does not compel us; and we are free always to reject the offer of God. We have only to open our eyes upon the world about us to see how rarely is the grace of God accepted in any effective way. Even in convinced Christians the attempt to live the divided life is the commonest thing possible. It sometimes seems as though the prevalent conception of the Christian life were that it is sufficient to offer God a certain limited allegiance and that the remainder of the life will be thereby ransomed and placed at our disposal to use as we will. We find the theory well worked out in the current attitude of Christians toward the observance of the Lord's Day. It appears to be held that an attendance at Mass or Matins is a sufficient recognition of the interests of religion and that the rest of the day may be regarded, not as the Lord's Day, but as man's—as a day of unlimited amusement and self-indulgence. The notion of consecration is abandoned. The only possible outcome of such theories of life is what we already experience, spiritual lawlessness and moral degradation. I suppose that it will only be through social disaster that society will come (as usual, too late) to any comprehension that the will of God is what it is because it is only by following the road that it indicates that human life can reach a successful development. God's laws are not arbitrary inflictions; they are the expression of the highest wisdom in the guidance of human life.

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Our elementary duty therefore as sane persons is to find what is the will of God in any given circumstances; there should be no action until there has been an effort to ascertain that will. It were as sensible to set about building a house without ascertaining what strength of foundation would be needful, or without knowing the sort of material we were going to use. One has heard of a house being built in which it turned out that there was a room with no doorway, or floor to which no stair led up; but we do not commend such exploits as the last word in architecture, nor would we commend a farmer who planted his crops without attention to the nature of the soil. There are certain elementary principles of common sense which we pretty uniformly hold to in every matter with the exception of religion; that seems to be held to be a separate department of human activity with laws of its own, and in which the principles which govern life elsewhere do not hold. We do not profess this theory, of course, but we commonly act upon it, while we still profess to respect the will of God. It is strange too that after having habitually neglected that will, we are greatly disappointed, not to say indignant, when after a life of disobedience and scorn of God's thought for us we do not find ourselves in possession of the fruits of righteousness. If it were not so tragic it would be amusing to hear men declaim against the justice of a God whose existence they have habitually disregarded.

But, it is often said, it is not by any means easy to find out God's will. You talk about it as though it were as easy to know God's will as it is to know the multiplication table. Well, at least it can be said that one does not get to know the multiplication table without effort! What objections as to the obscurity of the will of God will seem to mean is that it does take effort to ascertain it. I do not know of any reason for regarding that as unjust. If the will of God is what religion maintains that it is, of primary importance to our lives, we might well be glad that it is ascertainable at all, at the expense of whatever effort.

An Almighty God has implanted within every human heart the knowledge that His will exists and is important; that is, He has endowed every man with a conscience which is the certainty of the difference between right and wrong, and the conviction that we are responsible for our conduct to some power outside ourselves; that we are not at liberty to conduct life on any lines we will. Having so much certainty, it surely becomes us to set about ascertaining the nature of the power and the details of the will. The very nature of conscience, as a sense of obligation, rather than a source of information, should create a desire for a knowledge of what God's will is in detail, that is, what is the content of the notion of right and wrong.

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And while it is true that such content can only be ascertained by work, it is not true that the work is a specially difficult one. The Revelation of God's mind made through Holy Scripture and through the life of His Incarnate Son is an open book that any one can study; and to any objection that such study has led chiefly to difference of opinion and darkness rather than light, the answer is that such disaster follows for the most part only when the guidance of the Catholic Church is repudiated; when, that is, we pursue a course in this study which we should not pursue in relation to any other. If we were studying geology we should not regard it as the best course to scorn all that preceding students have done, and betake our unprepared selves to field work! But that is the "Bible and the Bible only" theory of spiritual knowledge. If we want to know the meaning of the Biblical teaching, we must make use of the helps which the experience of the Church has richly provided.

But the nature of the divine will and the particulars of our obligation are not merely, perhaps one ought to say, not chiefly, to be assimilated through our brains. The best preparation for the doing of the will of God and the progressive entering into His mind, is an obedient life. Purity of character will carry us farther on this path than cleverness of brains. Our Lord's own rule is: *He that doeth the will shall know of the doctrine*. In other words, we understand the mind of God and attain to the illumination of the conscience, through sympathetic response to the will so far as we have seen it. And each new response, in its turn, carries us to a deeper and clearer understanding of the will. That is to say, our conscience, by habitual response to God's will, so far as it knows it, is so illumined as to be able to make trustworthy judgments on new material submitted to it.

This is, of course, to be otherwise described as the working of God the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit that dwelleth in us and directs us to right judgments if we will listen. Our danger is that self-will constantly crops up and complicates the case by representing that the line suggested by the Holy Spirit is not in reality in accord with our interests. This opposition between the seeming interests suggested by self-will, which indeed often contribute to our immediate gratification, and our true interests as indicated by the monitions of the Holy Spirit, constitutes the real struggle of the life during the period of probation. The will of God in every circumstance is usually plain enough; but it is silenced by the clamour of the passions and desires demanding immediate gratification: and we are all more or less children in our insistence on the immediate and our incapacity to wait. But I must insist again that it is not knowledge that is wanting but sympathy with the course that knowledge directs. We persuade ourselves that we do not know, when the real trouble is that we know only too well. One feels that much that is put forward as inability to understand religion is at bottom merely disinclination to obey it.

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Not that there is not room for genuine perplexity. Often it happens that we are not at all certain in this or that detail of conduct. In that case it is well to consider whether it is necessary to act before we can attain certainty through study or advice. But if act we must, we can at least act with honesty, not making our will the accomplice of our passions or interests.

I do not believe that there are many cases in which we shall go wrong if we make use of all the means at our disposal. A diligent doing of the will of God does undoubtedly bring light on unknown problems and unexpected situations in which we from time to time find ourselves. If our constant attitude has been one of free and glad obedience we need not fear to go astray. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," Blessed Mary said; and such an attitude has never failed to meet the divine approval and call out the help of God. Just to put ourselves utterly at God's disposal is the clearing of all life. "Into Thy hands," is the solution of all difficulties.

I sing a maiden
That is matchless;
King of all kings
To her Son she ches.

He came all so still
To His Mother's bower,
As dew in April
That falleth on the flower.

Mother and maiden
Was never none but she;
Well might such a lady
God's Mother be.
English, Fifteenth Century.

PART TWO

CHAPTER IV

THE VISITATION I

And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth.

S. Luke I. 39, 40.

Grant, we beseech thee, O Lord God, to us thy servants, that we may evermore enjoy health of mind and body, and by the glorious intercession of blessed Mary, ever a virgin, be delivered from present sorrows and enjoy everlasting gladness. Through.

ROMAN.

Those who were faithful in Israel and were looking forward to the fulfilment of God's promises would be drawn together by close bonds of sympathy. It oftentimes proves that the bonds of a common ideal are stronger than the bonds of blood. It was to prove so many times in the history of Christianity when in accordance with our Lord's words the closest blood relation would be broken through fidelity to Him, and a man's foes be found to be those of his own household. But also it is true that the possession of common ideals becomes the basis of relations which are stronger than race or family. We may be sure that the members of that little group of which we catch glimpses now and then in the progress of the Gospel story found in their expectation of the Lord's deliverance of Israel such a bond. We feel that S. Mary and S. Joseph must have been members of this group and that they were filled with the hope of God's manifestation. Another family which shared the same hope was that of the priest Zacharias whose wife Elizabeth was the cousin of Mary of Nazareth. It is to their house in the hill country of Judah we now turn our thoughts.

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It was a part of the angelic message to S. Mary that her cousin Elizabeth had “conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.” Overwhelmed as S. Mary was by the vocation which had come to her, perplexed as to what should be her next step, she may well have seized upon the words of the angel as a hint as to her present course. She must confide in some one, and that some one, we instantly feel, must be a woman. In her own great joy she would need some one with whom to share it. In her unprecedented case she would need a counselor, and who better could afford aid than her cousin whose case was in so many respects like her own, who was already cherishing a child whose conception was due to the intervention of God? We understand therefore, why it is that without waiting for the further development of events, Mary arises, and goes “with haste” to the home of her cousin.

It is just now a house full of joy. For many years there had been happiness there, but a happiness over which a cloud rested. The affliction of barrenness was their sorrow. To the Hebrew there was no true family until the love of the father and the mother was incarnated in the child; and through many weary days Zacharias and Elizabeth had waited until hope quite failed as they found themselves beyond the possibility of bearing a child to cheer them and to hand on their name. We may be sure that they were reconciled to the will of God, for it is written of them that they were righteous, and the central feature of righteousness is the acceptance of the divine will. But though one cheerfully accepts the divine will there may still remain a consciousness of a vacancy in life; and therefore we can understand the joy that came to Zacharias when the angel appeared to him in the temple when he was exercising the priest's office and offering the incense of the daily sacrifice with the message that he should have a son. It was a joy that would be unclouded by the God-sent dumbness which was at once a punishment for his lack of immediate faith and a sign of the faithfulness of God. It was a joy that would hasten his steps homeward with the glad tidings, a joy that would fill the heart of Elizabeth when she heard the message of God. Soon the consciousness of the babe in her womb would be a growing wonder and a growing happiness. There would be a new brightness in the house where the aged mother waits through the months and the dumb father with his writing tablet at his side meditates upon the meaning of the providence of God and upon the prophecies of the angel as to his child's future. But what that future would be he could hardly expect to witness; he was too old to live to the day of his child's showing unto Israel.

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It is to this house that we see S. Mary hastening, sure of finding there a heart in which she can confide. She “entered into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elizabeth.” We are not told what the words of her salutation were, but no doubt it was the customary Jewish salutation of peace. There could have been no more appropriate salutation exchanged between these two in whose souls was abiding the peace of a perfect possession of God. The will of God to which they had been accustomed to offer themselves all their lives was being accomplished through them in unexpected ways; but it found them as ready of acceptance as they had been in any of the ordinary duties of life wherein they had been accustomed to wait upon God. We may seem sometimes to go beyond Holy Scripture in our interpretations of feelings and thoughts which we are sure must have been those of the actors in the drama of salvation unfolded to us in the Scriptures; but are we not entitled to infer from God’s actions a good deal of the nature of the instruments He uses? Are we not quite safe in the case of S. Mary in the deduction from the nature of her vocation of the spiritual perfection to attribute to her? Does not God’s use of a person imply qualities in the person used? It is on this ground that I feel that we are quite safe in inferring the spiritual attitude of S. Mary and of S. Elizabeth from the choice God made of them to be the instruments of His purpose of redemption.

But we are not inferring, we have the record with us, when we think of the joy of the mothers transcended in the joy of the children. The unborn Forerunner becomes conscious of the approach of Him of whom he is to say later: “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world”; and there is an instantaneous movement that can only be that of recognition and worship. The movement of the child is at once understood and translated by S. Elizabeth: “And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.”

In the presence of such joy and such sanctity we feel that our proper attitude is the attitude of adoring wonder that S. Elizabeth expresses. We worship our hidden Lord as the unborn prophet worships Him. We have no question to ask, nor curiosity at the mode of God’s action. We are quite content to accept His action as it is revealed to us in Scripture; a revelation of the divine presense in humanity which has been abundantly verified in all the history of the Church. That verification in experience—a verification that we ourselves can repeat—is worth infinitely more than all the argument that the centuries have seen.

“Blessed art thou among women,” S. Elizabeth cries; and in doing so she is but repeating the words of the angel of the Annunciation. This word, too, we presently hear S. Mary taking up, and under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost saying: “From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”

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And so they have. All generations, that is, that have been faithful to the Gospel teaching and have assimilated in any degree the consequences of S. Mary's nearness to God. When we speak of "Blessed" Mary we are but doing what angels and holy women have done, and it is great pity if in doing so we have to make a conscious effort, if the words do not spring spontaneously from our lips. Surely, we have not gone far toward the mastery of God's coming in the Incarnation if we have not felt the purity of the instrument through whom God enters our nature. The outward and visible sign of our understanding is found in our ability to complete the Ave as the Holy Spirit has taught the Church to complete it: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and in the hour of our death."

This reiterated attribution of blessedness to Mary our Mother calls us to pause and ask just what blessedness means. It is of course the characteristic Scripture locution for those who in some way enjoy the special favour of God. Blessedness is the state of those who have received special divine gifts of favour. A characteristic scriptural description of the blessedness of the righteous in contrast with the disaster of the unrighteous may be studied in the first Psalm. In the New Testament we naturally turn to the Sermon on the Mount where the Beatitudes give us our Lord's thought about blessedness. I think that we can describe the notion of blessedness there presented as being the state of those who have taken God at His word and chosen Him, and by that act of choice, while they have forfeited the world and the world's favour, have attained to the spiritual riches of the Kingdom of God. They are those to whom God is the Supreme Good, in whose possession they gladly count all things but loss. These are they who here in the pilgrim state have already attained to the enjoyment of God because they want nothing other or beside Him.

Supremely blessed, therefore, is Mary our Mother, who never for a moment even in thought was separate from God. From the earliest moment of her existence she could say, "My beloved is mine and I am His." We try to think out what such a fact may mean when translated into terms of spiritual energy, and it seems to mean more than anything else boundless power of intercession such as the Church has attributed to S. Mary from the earliest times. We see no other way of estimating spiritual power save as the power of prayer. It is through prayer that we approach God—for we remember that sacrifice is but the highest form of prayer. The blessedness of S. Mary, that peculiar degree of blessedness which seems signalized by the reiterated attribution of the quality to her, must for our purposes to be understood as "power with God," power of intercession. It means that our Lord has chosen her to be a special medium of approval to Him, and that through her prayers He wills to bestow upon men many of His choicest gifts.

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Naturally, her prayers, like our prayers, are mediated by the merits of her divine Son; nevertheless they have a peculiar power which is related to her peculiar blessedness in that she is the mother of Incarnate God, and by special privilege is herself without sin. Of all those to whom we are privileged to turn in the joys and tragedies of our lives for the sympathy which helps through enlightened, loving prayer, we most naturally resort to her who is all love and all sympathy, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, blessed among women forever.

Although we are told nothing of these days that S. Mary spent with her cousin Elizabeth, we do gather that she remained with her until her child was born and that she saw S. John in his mother's arms, and was a partaker in the joy of the aged parents. She was present when Zacharias, his speech restored, uttered the *Benedictus* in thanksgiving for the birth of his son. It was then, having seen her own Son's Forerunner that S. Mary went back to Nazareth filled more than ever with the sense that God's hand was in the events that were taking place, and of the approach of some crisis in her nation's history. It must have been that she talked intimately with Zacharias and Elizabeth and with them tried to imagine what was the future in which these two children were so closely concerned. When we consider the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus* not as the "Gospel Canticles" to be sung in Church but as the utterances of pious Israelites under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we feel how very vivid must have been their expectation of God's action in the immediate future, and with what intense love and interest they thought of the parts to be taken by their children in the deliverance God was preparing. How often they must have pondered the God-inspired saying: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace."

We think too of a more intimate sympathy that there would have been between these two women, drawn now so close together, not only by the blood bond, but by the bond of a common experience. What wonderful hours of communing during these three months! The peace of the hills of Judah is all about them and the peace of God is in their souls. What ecstatic joy, what ineffable love was theirs in these moments as they thought of the children who were God's precious gift to them. I fancy that there were many hours when they ceased to think of the mystery that hung over these children's destiny, and became just mothers lost in love of the coming sons.

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As we try to think out their relation to each other it presents itself to us as a relation of sympathy. Sympathy is community of feeling; it is maimed and thwarted when there is feeling only on one side. We speak of our sympathy in their affliction for others whom we do not know and who do not know us, but that is a very imperfect rendering of the perfect thing. No more than love does sympathy reach its perfection in solitude. But here in this village of Judah we know that we have the perfect thing—sympathy in its most exquisite form.

This capacity for sympathy is one of the greatest of human endowments, and, one is glad to think, not like many human endowments, rare in its manifestation. In its ordinary manifestation it is instinctive, is roused by the spectacle of need calling us to its aid. There come to our knowledge from time to time instances of what seem to us very grievous failures in sympathy, but investigation shows that ignorance is very commonly at the bottom of them. When human beings are convinced of a need they are quite ready to respond. Indeed this readiness to respond makes them the easy victims of all sorts of impostures, of baseless appeals which play upon sentiment rather than convince the understanding. And just there lies the weakness of sympathy in that it is so easily turned to sentimentality. But the sentimentalist who gushes over ills, real or imaginary, can commonly be brought to book easily enough. For one thing the sentimentalist is devoted to publicity. He loves to conduct campaigns and drives, to “get up” a demonstration or an entertainment. I do not mean that he is a hypocrite but only that he loves the lime-light. When any tragedy befalls man his impulse is to organise a dance in aid of it. It is extraordinary how many people there are who will aid a charity by dancing to whom one would feel it quite hopeless to appeal for the amount of the dance tickets. And yet they are not wholly selfish people; there does lie back of the dance a certain sympathetic impulse. We easily deceive ourselves about ourselves, and it is well to be sure that we have true sympathy and not just sentiment. It is not so difficult to find out. We can test ourselves quickly enough by examining our giving. Do we give only when we are asked? Do we yield to spectacular appeals or only to those that we have examined and found good? Do we put the spiritual interests of humanity first? Is there any appreciable amount of quiet spontaneous giving which is known to no one? Do we prefer to be anonymous? Such tests soon reveal what we are like. One who never gives spontaneously, without being asked, we may be sure is lacking in sympathy.

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But of course one does not mean that sympathy is so closely related to what we call charity as what I have just said, if left by itself, would seem to imply. That is indeed the common form assumed by sympathy which has to be called out. But the best type of sympathy is the expression of our knowledge of one another; it is based on our knowledge of human nature and our interest in human beings. Because it is based on knowledge it is not subject to be swept away by the sweet breezes of sentimentalism. To its perfect exercise it is needful to know individuals not merely to know about them. The ordinary limitations of sympathy come from this, that we do not want to take time and pains to know one another. That, for example, is where the Church falls short in its mission to constitute a real brotherhood among its members—they have no time nor inclination really to know one another, or they find the artificial walls that society has erected impassable. It is, in fact, not very easy to know one another, and it is impossible to develop the complete type of sympathy with a crowd. For one must insist that this highest type of sympathy requires, what the word actually does mean, mutual sharing in life, the participation in the lives of our fellows and their partaking in our lives.

So we understand why perfect sympathy is conditioned on spirituality. Unless we are spiritually developed and spiritually at one we cannot share in one another's lives fully. Where there are lives separated by a gulf of spiritual differences the completest sympathy is impossible. And we understand why Incarnate seems so much nearer to us than God unincarnate. It is true that "the Father Himself loveth you"; it is true that it is the love of the Blessed Trinity that is expressed in the Incarnation. The Incarnation did not create God's love and sympathy, it only reveals it. Yet it is precisely the Incarnation that enables us to lay hold on God's sympathy with a certainty and sureness of grasp that we would not otherwise have. The sight of "God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" is more to us in the way of proof than any amount of declaration can be. To be told of the sympathy of God is one thing, to see how it works is another.

Our personal need in this matter is to find the sympathy that will help us in something outside ourselves, outside the limitations of human nature. Much as we value human sympathy, precious as we find its expression, yet we do find that it has for the higher purposes of life serious limitations. It has very little power to execute what it finds needs to be done. A man may understand another's weakness and may utterly sympathise with it; he may advise and console, but in the end he finds that he cannot adequately help. The case is hopeless unless he can point the sufferer to some source outside himself on which he can draw, unless he can lead him to the sympathy of God. God can offer not only consolation, not only the spectacle of another life which has triumphed under analogous circumstances, but He can give the power to this present weak and discouraged life to triumph in the place where it is. He can "make a way of escape."

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But there is another form of sympathy which we crave and need which is just the communion of soul with soul. We are not asking anything more or other than to show ourselves. We are overwhelmed with the loneliness of life. It comes upon us in the most crowded places, this sense of separation from all about us. Oh, that I might flee away and be at rest, is our feeling. It is here that we specially need our Lord. Blessed are we if we have learned to find in Him the rest we need for our souls, if we have learned to open the door that leads always to Him; or, perhaps to knock appealingly at that door which He will never fail to open. It is then that we find the joy of the invitation "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest."

But Christ, the perfect Sympathiser, has associated others with Himself. If we can go to him, so can others; the Way is open to all. And those who go and are associated with Him are gathered into a family. Here among those who have followed the interests which are ours, and have pursued the ends that we are pursuing, and cultivated the qualities which we value, we feel sure of that sympathetic understanding of life which we seek. And especially among those members of the Body who have gone on to the end in fidelity to the ideals of the life which is hid with Christ in God shall we look for understanding and help. It is from this point of view that the Communion of Saints will mean so much to us. We value the strength of mutual support which inevitably grows out of associated life. We cannot think of the saints of God as having passed beyond us into some place of rest where they are content to forget the problems of earth: rather we are compelled to think of them as still actively sharing in those interests which are still the interests of their divine Head. Until, Jesus Himself cease to think of us who are still in the Pilgrim Way, and cease to offer Himself on our behalf, we cannot think of any who are in Him as other than intensely interested in us of the earthly Church, or as doing other than helping by prayer for us that we with them may attain our end. And especially shall we feel sure that at any moment of our lives we may turn to the Mother in confident expectancy of finding most helpful sympathy and most ready aid. Her life to-day is a life of intercession, of intercession which has all the power of perfect understanding and perfect sympathy. Let us learn to go to her; let us learn that as God is praised and honoured in His saints, as our Lord choses to work through those who are united to Him, so it is His will that great power of prayer shall be hers of whom He assumed our nature, that nature through which He still distributes the riches of His grace.

As I lay upon a night,
My thought was on a Lady bright
That men callen Mary of might,
Redemptoris Mater.

To her came Gabriel so bright
And said, "Hail, Mary, full of might,
To be called thou art adight;"
Redemptoris Mater.

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Right as the sun shineth in glass,
So Jesus in His Mother was,
And thereby wit men that she was
Redemptoris Mater.

Now is born that Babe of bliss,
And Queen of Heaven His Mother is,
And therefore think me that she is
Redemptoris Mater.

After to heaven He took His flight,
And there He sits with His Father of might,
With Him is crowned that Lady bright,
Redemptoris Mater.

English, Fifteenth Century.

PART TWO

CHAPTER V

THE VISITATION II

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

S. Luke I. 46, 47.

Forasmuch as we have no excuse, because of the multitude of our sins, we plead through thee, O Virgin Mother of God, with Him whom thou didst bear.

Lo, great is thine intercession, strong and acceptable with our Saviour.

O Stainless Mother, reject not us sinners in thine intercession with Him Whom thou didst bear.

COPTIC.

Wonderful was this day in the little town of Judah where these two women, each in her way an instrument of God in the upbuilding of His Kingdom, met and rejoiced together. There is revealed to us something of the possibilities of our religion when we try to follow the thought of these two women. They are so utterly devoted to God that God can speak to them. I think that it is well for us to dwell on this fact for a moment. We

are apt to look upon inspiration, what is described as being filled with the Holy Ghost, as somewhat of a mechanical mode of God's operation. Our mistaken view is that God takes control of the faculties of a human being and uses them for His own purposes.

But that is quite to misunderstand God's method. God uses the faculties of a man in proportion as the man yields himself to Him; and one who is living a sincere religion becomes in a degree the medium of God's self-expression. This possibility of expressing God increases as we increase in sanctity. Those who have completely yielded themselves to God in a life of sanctity become in a deep sense the representatives of God: they have, in S. Paul's phraseology, His mind. To be capable of so becoming the divine instrument it is necessary, not only to offer no opposition to God's purposes, but to make ourselves the active executants of them. Our Christian vocation is thus to be the instrument of God, to be the visible demonstrations of His power and presence. There is a true inspiration, a true speaking for God to-day, no doubt, as true as at any time in the Church's history, wherever there is sanctity. What is lacking to present day utterances of sanctity is not the action of the Holy Spirit, but authentication by the Church: that is given only under certain special circumstances and for special purposes. But there is no need to limit the inspiring action of the Holy Spirit to such utterances as for special reasons have received official recognition.

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What we need to feel is the constant action of the Holy Spirit—that He wants to speak through every man. And it helps to clear our minds if we go to our Bibles with the expectation of finding here, not exceptions to all rules which obtain in common life, but types of the divine action. The isolation of Bible history has done much to create a feeling of its unreality. What has happened only in the Bible can, we are apt to feel, safely be disregarded in daily life in the twentieth century. But if what we find there is customary modes of divine action in life, exceptional in detail rather than in principle, the attitude we shall take will be wholly different. We shall then study them with the feeling expressed in S. Paul's saying, "These things are written for our learning," and we shall expect to find in us and about us the same order of divine action, we shall learn to look on our lives as having their chief meaning in the fact that they are possible instruments of God; we shall learn to regard failure as failure to show forth God to the world.

In a way we can read our facts backward: the fact that "Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost," and the fact that Mary under the same divine impulse gave utterance to the words of the Magnificat, is a revelation of the character of these two women which would satisfy us of their sanctity had we no other evidence of it. The choice of them by God to be His instruments is evidence of the divine approval; and that approval can never be false to the facts; what God treats as holy must be holy.

So we come to holy Mary's Song with the feeling that in studying it we shall find in it a revelation of S. Mary herself. She is not an instrument on which the Holy Spirit plays, but an intelligent being through whom He acts. She, like S. Elizabeth, is filled with the Holy Spirit—she had never been in the slightest degree out of union with God—but still the Magnificat is her utterance; it represents her thought; it is the measure, if one may so put it, in modern terminology, of her degree of spiritual culture. Much that we say about S. Mary, her simplicity, her social place, and so on, seems to carry with it the implication of the ignorance and spiritual dullness that we associate with the type of poverty we are accustomed to to-day. But the poor folk whom we meet in association with our Lord are neither ignorant nor spiritually dull; and it would be a vast mistake to think of Blessed Mary as other than of great intelligence and spiritual receptivity, or as deficient in understanding of the details of her ancestral religion. We have no reason to be surprised that she should sing Magnificat, or to think that the Holy Spirit was speaking through her thoughts which were quite beyond her comprehension. Inspired she was, but inspired, no doubt, to utter thoughts that had many times filled her mind.

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Her spiritual attitude as revealed in the Magnificat is but the attitude which must have been hers habitually—the attitude that exalts God and not self. “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.” That is the starting-place of all holy souls—the adoration of God. True humility is never self-conscious because self is lost in the vision of God. S. Mary was bearing in her pure body the very Son of God. Admit, if you will, that as yet she did not understand the full reach of her vocation; but she did know that she had been chosen by God in a most signal manner to be the instrument of His purpose. That which S. Elizabeth spoke under divine impulse,—“Whence is this that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”—must have had clear meaning for her. But the wonder of all that God is accomplishing through her only brings her to God’s feet. That “He that is mighty hath done me great things,” is but the evidence of His sanctity, not of her greatness.

One never gets through wondering at the beauty of humility; and it is one of the marks of how far we are from spiritual apprehension when we find this splendid virtue unattractive. It does indeed cut across many of the instinctive impulses of our nature; it can hardly be said to have dawned on humanity as a virtue until the Incarnation of God. Therein it has revealed to us God’s attitude in His work and, by consequence, the natural attitude of all such as would associate themselves with God. It is not so much a self-denying as a self-forgetting virtue. It is ruined by the very consciousness of it. Such phrases as “practicing humility” seem self-contradictory—when one begins to practice humility it becomes something else. We do not conceive of our Lady as setting out to be humble, of thinking of what a humble person would do under such and such circumstances. She does not, as I was saying, think of herself at all, but thinks of God. The “great things” she has are His gift. That He has looked upon her low estate, and that in consequence of His visitation “all generations shall call her blessed,” is a manifestation of the divine glory and goodness, not an occasion of pride to the recipient of God’s gifts.

We who are so self-seeking, who are so greedy of praise, who are constantly wanting what we feel is our due, who hunger to be “appreciated,” who are full of proud boasting about our accomplishment, will do well to meditate upon this point of view. We acknowledge the supremacy of God with our lips, but in our acts we are quite prone to assume that we are independent actors in the universe where whatever we have is due to our own creative powers. We claim a certain lordship over life, a certain independent use of it. We resent the pressure of religious principle as setting up a sort of counter-claim to control that which it is ours to dispose of as we will. Most of our difficulties come from this godless attitude which claims independence of life. It results in a religion which is willing to pay God tribute, but is not willing to belong to God. But the humble person has nothing of his own and moreover wants nothing; he wants simply that God shall use him, that he shall be found a ready instrument in God’s hands.

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It is this readiness that we find in Blessed Mary when she answered the astonishing announcement of the angel with her, "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord." It is that quality which we find in her here when she construes God's purpose in terms which go out far beyond her individual life and sees in her experience but one item in God's dealing with humanity in His age-long work of "bringing His wanderers home." We should have far less difficulty and find our lives far more significant if we could get rid of our wretched egotism and find it possible to lose ourselves in the work of God. We should then find the work important because it is God's work and not because we are associated with it. We should also find it less easy to be discouraged because we should not understand our failure to be the failure of God. Discouragement is but one of the aspects of egotism, and not the most attractive.

We cannot rise to anything like a passion of holiness unless we have found God to be all in all. Only so can we lose ourselves in God. And I must, at whatever risk of over-dwelling, stress the fact that we can only attain this point of view by dwelling on God and not on self. Let God be the foreground of our thought. Let our souls magnify the Lord. Let us dwell upon the "great things" God has done for us. In every life there is such a wonderful manifestation of the divine goodness—only we do not take time to look for it. It is well to take the time: to write out, if need be, our spiritual history. We shall then find abundant evidence of the goodness of God. It may be that it is a goodness that is seen chiefly in offers, in opportunities to be something which we have declined or have only imperfectly realized. Be that as it may, there is no life, I am quite convinced, that has not a spiritual history which is a marvellous history of what God at least wanted to do for it. It is also a history of what He actually has done: a history of graces, of rich gifts, of deliverances. It matters not that we have been so heedless as to miss most of what God has done. The facts stand and are discoverable whenever we care to pay enough attention to them to ascertain their true meaning. When we do that, then surely we shall be compelled to do, what blessed Mary never needed to do, fall at God's feet in an act of penitence, seeing ourselves, perhaps for the first time, in the light of God's mind.

The Magnificat, if we consider it as a personal expression, is a wonderful expression of selfless devotion, where the perception of the glory and majesty of God excludes all other thoughts. It is, too, a thanksgiving for the personal gift which is her vocation to be the Mother of the Saviour. Out of her lowliness she has been exalted—how highly she herself cannot at the time have dreamed. We can see what was necessarily involved in God's choice of her, and to-day we think of her as in her perfect purity exalted in heaven far above all other creatures. Mother of God most holy we call her, and in the words of her canticle ever repeat her thanksgiving as our thanksgiving, too, for the vocation that God sent her and for the gift which through her has come to us.

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But there is a more universal aspect of the Magnificat. Essentially it is the presentation of the constant antithesis which runs through all revelation between the flesh and the spirit, between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of this world. It embodies the conception of God striving to save a world which has revolted from Him, and now at last entering upon that stage of His work which is the beginning of a triumph over all the powers of the adversary. In Mary's song the contrasted powers are still presented under the Old Testament terminology which was the natural form of her thought. The adversaries of God are the proud, the mighty, the rich; while those who are on God's side are the humble, the god-fearers, the hungry. The form of the thought and its essential meaning remain the same through the centuries, though our terminology changes somewhat. Presently in the pages of the New Testament we shall get the presentation as the contrast between the children of this world and the sons of God. We shall find the briefest expression of the latter to be the saints.

We no longer feel that rich and poor express a spiritual contrast. Nor do we, who are quite accustomed to the action of labour leaders, regard social position as being the exclusive seat of arrogancy. But we know that the spiritual values which are expressed in the varying terminology are constant; we know that the warfare between God and not-God is still the most important phenomenon in the universe. And it happens as we look out on the battlefield where the forces of good and evil contend, where before our eyes they seem to sway back and forth on the field of human life with every varying fortunes, that we not seldom feel that the battle is not obviously falling to the side of righteousness. There come moments when we are oppressed by what seems to us the lack of power in the ideals of righteousness. The appeal of the proud and of the rich is so dazzling; the splendour of the visible kingdom of the world is so intoxicating, the contagion of the crowd which follows the uplifted banner of Satan is so penetrating, that we hardly wonder to see the new generations carried away in the sweep of popular enthusiasm. Here is excitement, exhilarating enjoyment, the throb and sting of the flesh, the breathless whirl of gaiety, the physical quiet of satisfied desires. What is there to appeal on the other side? As the crowds troop past to the sound of music and dancing they for a moment raise their eyes, and above them rises a hill whereon is a Cross and on the Cross an emaciated Victim is nailed, and at the foot of the Cross a small group of discouraged folk—S. John, The blessed Mother, the other Mary—stunned by the grief born of the death of Son and Friend.

These two utterances stand in eternal contrast: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me": and, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." As yet the appeal made from an "exceeding high mountain" visibly seems to prevail against that made from "the place which is called Calvary."

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And what have we to counteract the depression which is the natural reaction from the spectacle of the world-rejection of Christ? We have the truth which is embodied in Mary's Magnificat, we have the fact of Mary's vocation to be the Mother of God. The revelation of God's meaning and purpose is a basis of optimism which no promise of Satan can overthrow. When all is said, the view from the exceeding high mountain is a view of the Kingdom of this world only; from the place called Calvary you can see the Kingdom of God as well. From this point of vantage alone the permanent values of life are visible; and to the taunt flung at us, the taunt so terrifying to the young, "You are losing life," the enigmatic reply from the Cross is that you have to lose life to gain it; that permanent and eternal values are acquired by those who have the self-restraint and the foresight not to sacrifice the substance to the shadow, nor to mistake the toys of childhood for the riches of manhood. "In the meantime life is passing and the shadows draw in and you have not attained" so they say. True: we count not ourselves to have yet attained; but we press on toward the mark of our high calling in Christ Jesus our Lord. We are not in a hurry, because the crown we are seeking is amaranthine, unfading. We are not compelled to compress our enjoyment within a given time; we do not awake each morning with the thought that we may not outlast the daylight; we are not hurried and fevered with the sense of our fragility. The kingdoms of the world and the glory of them must be seized now: Satan cannot afford to wait because his kingdom has an end. But God can afford to wait because of His Kingdom there is no end.

We are content then with *promises* and with such partial fulfilment as we find on our pilgrim-way. We are content because we see the end in the beginning. To those who in the first days of the Church objected that though the promises were wonderful and abundant the fulfilment was small; to those who said we do not yet see the perfection of the kingdom; the answer of inspiration was: True, we do not yet see the accomplishment of all of God's promises, but we do see Jesus. And there is where we stand to-day. The work that God has to do in the spiritualising of the human race is tremendous; but we actually see its beginning in Jesus, and we are content to wait with God for the perfect accomplishment.

And we must remember when we think of the work of God in terms of time, that the length of time that is required to accomplish the spiritualisation of the human race is not to be estimated in terms of the divine will but in terms of the human will. It is not divine power but human resistance which is the determining factor, for God will not compel us to obey Him, nor would compelled obedience have any spiritual value. And we can estimate something of the human resistance that has to be overcome by concentrating attention upon one unit of that resistance.

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That is, we can learn from the study of our own life what is the resistance of one human being to the triumph of the will of God; and, taking oneself as a fair sample of the race can multiply our resistance to God's will by the numbers of the race. We are perfectly certain of the will of God: God wills that all men shall come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." So far as we are thwarting that will we are playing into the hands of the power of evil. But that power is of limited existence; it draws to its end. Its death knell was struck when the noon-day darkness lifted from Calvary.

Therefore the rejoicing of blessed Mary, whose Song reads the necessary end in the beginning, is well considered; and we rejoice with her and in her. It is our privilege—and it is a vast privilege—to rejoice in blessed Mary as the instrument of God in bringing the triumph of His Kingdom one stage nearer its accomplishment. And in especial we rejoice because we see in her one more, and the most marked, illustration of the divine method. "He hath regarded the low estate of His Handmaiden." "He hath exalted them of low degree." "He hath filled the hungry." The method of God is to work to His results through those who are spiritually receptive. The less of self there is in us the more room there is for God. "The Kingdom of God is within you," that is, the starting-point of God's work in the building of the Kingdom is within the soul of man. He must master the inner man, must win the allegiance of our souls, before His work can make any progress at all. The Kingdom of God cometh not "with observation," that is, from the outside in an exhibition of power; it must of necessity come from the inside in demonstration of the Spirit. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

In blessed Mary we see the new starting-point in this last stage of the work of God. For the foreseen merits of her Son she is brought into union with God and spared the taint of sin, and becomes the second Eve, the Mother of the new race. Acting upon her pure humanity, the Holy Spirit produces that humanity which joined to the divinity in the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity becomes the Christ, the Son of the Living God. In Mary's rejoicing in this so great fact, the bringing of human redemption, we rightly share. It is with a right understanding of her Song that the Church throughout the ages has embodied it in its worship and through it constantly rejoices in God its Saviour. The actual detailed accomplishment of God's work in man's redemption is going on under our eyes. It is regrettable that human stupidity seems to prefer dwelling upon what seem God's failures, and are actually our own, rather than upon the constant triumphs of grace. But God reigns; and we can always find grounds of optimism if we can find that He is day by day reigning more perfectly in us. When we pray "Thy Kingdom Come," the field to examine for the fulfilment of our prayers is the field of our own souls.



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Our Lady took the road
To Zachary's abode;
O'er mountain, vale and lea,
Full many a league sped she
Toward Hebron's holy hill,
By God's command and will.

Full light did Mary, make
Of trouble for his sake.
God's Very Son of yore
Within her breast she bore;
And angels bright and fair,
Unseen, her fellows were.

She, ere she took her way,
An orison would say,
That God her steps might tend
Safe to their journey's end;
And there, in manner meet,
Her cousin she 'gan greet.

Elizabeth full fain
Eft bowed her head again;
She wist 'twas God's own Bride,
As, worshipful she cried:
'O Lady, Full of Grace,
Whence do I see thy face?'

O House and Home of bliss,
O earthly Paradis—
Nay, Heaven itself on ground
Wherein the Lord is found,
The Lord of Glory bright,
In goodness great and might—

Clean Maiden thou that art,
Come, visit this my heart;
And bring me chief my Good,
God's Son in Flesh and Blood;
Bless body, soul; and bide
For ever by my side.

From the Koeln Gesang-Buch. XVI Cent.

PART TWO

CHAPTER VI

S. JOSEPH

Joseph, her husband, being a just man—

S. Matt. I. 19.

O God, our refuge and our strength, look down in mercy upon thy people who cry to thee; and by the intercession of the glorious and immaculate Virgin Mary, mother of God, of St. Joseph her spouse, and of thy blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and of all saints, in mercy and goodness hear our prayers for the conversion of sinners, and for the liberty and exaltation of our holy mother the church. Through.

ROMAN.

When we read the Gospels, not simply as a record of events but as revelation of the method of God, we are constantly impressed with what we cannot otherwise describe than as the care of God for detail. There is a curious type of mind which finds it possible to think of God as Creator and Ruler of the universe, but impossible to conceive Him as interested in or concerning Himself with the minutiae of human life; who can conceive God as caring for a solar system or a planet, but not as caring for a baby. Surely it is a strange notion of God that thinks of Him as estimating values in terms of weight and measure: surely much more intelligible is the Gospel presentation of Him as concerned with spiritual values and exercising that minute care over human life which is best expressed by the word *Father*. It is very significant that as the volume of revelation unrolls, the earlier notions of God as Ruler, Governor, King, give way to the notion of Father, until in our Lord's presentation of the character of God it is His Fatherhood which stands in the forefront. What our Lord emphasises in the character of God are precisely the qualities of love and care and sympathy which the word Father connotes.

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And nowhere do we see this loving care of God which we call His Providence better set out for our study than in the detailed preparation which preceded and attended the birth of His Son into this world. There was that preparation of the Mother who was to be the source of the humanity of the Child Jesus which we have been dwelling upon; there was also the preparation for the proper guardianship of both Mother and Child during the years of Jesus' immaturity. There are certain things which are self-evident when once we turn our minds to them; and it is thus self-evident that the care of our Lord and of His Blessed Mother would require the preparation of the man to whom they should be committed. In the state of society into which our Lord was born, He and His Mother would need active guardianship of a peculiar nature. The man who should provide for our Lord's infancy must be a man, in the nature of the case, who was receptive of spiritual monitions and devoted to the will of God. It was a delicate matter to live before the world as the husband of Mary of Nazareth, and to live before God as the guardian of her virginity and as the foster-father of her divine Son. Only a very choice nature could respond to the demands thus made upon it, a nature which had been habitually responsive to the will of God and long nurtured by the richness of His grace.

We know very little of St. Joseph; but God's choice of him for the office he was to fulfil near the blessed Virgin Mary and her Son reveals the nature of the man. He is described to us as "a just man," one whose judgment would not be swayed by prejudices, but who would be open to the consideration of any case upon its merits: a man who would not view events in the light of their effect upon himself and his plans, but who can calmly consider what in given circumstances is due to others. Such men are rare at any time for their production is a matter of slow discipline.

We gather that both S. Joseph and S. Mary were of the same lineage, were descended from the same ancestor, David. We gather also that S. Joseph was much older than his betrothed wife, for he had been already married and had a family. All the notices of these brothers and sisters of the Lord imply that they were considerably older than the Child of Mary, and that they felt that they had the sort of authority over Him which commonly belongs to the elder children of a family; the sort of doubt and criticism of His course which would be the instinctive attitudes of elders toward the unprecedented course of a younger. We have, I think, a right to infer from the terms of the narrative, that S. Joseph would have been well acquainted with S. Mary and was not taking a wife who was a stranger to him. Indeed, considering the actual development of the situation, I myself feel quite certain that those are right who maintain that the proposed marriage was intended to be merely a nominal union, the ultimate design of which was the protection

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of the virginity of Mary. I find it impossible to think of that virginity as other than of deliberate purpose from the beginning, and prompted by the Spirit of God for the purposes of God for which it served. There is, to be sure, no revelation of this in Holy Scripture, but there are facts which suggest themselves to the devout meditations of saints which we feel that we may safely take on the authority of their spiritual intuitions. Such a fact is this of Mary's purposed virginity which I am content to accept on the basis of its congruity with S. Mary's life and vocation. Of the fact of her perpetual virginity there can be no dispute among Catholic Christians.

To S. Joseph thus preparing himself to be the guardian of the blessed Virgin it could only come as a tremendous shock that she should be found with a child. Our character comes out at such times of trial as when something that we had taken quite for granted fails us, and we are left breathless and bewildered in the face of what would have seemed impossible even had we thought of it. What was S. Joseph's attitude? The beauty and sanity of his character at once shows itself. Grieved and disheartened as he must have been, disappointed as he could not but be, he yet thinks at once of his betrothed, not of himself. How far could he save her?—that was his first thought. He would at least avoid publicity. "Being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, he was minded to put her away privily." It is the quality that we express by the word benevolence—the quality of mature and deliberate wisdom. We feel that such a man could be trusted under any circumstances of life.

We feel, too, that God would not leave S. Joseph in doubt as to the course he was to pursue, or as to the character of Mary herself. There could no shade of suspicion be permitted to rest upon her. Hence "while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

It is not difficult to imagine the joy of S. Joseph at this angelic message. We all know the sense of relief which comes when, after facing a most trying situation, and being forced to make up our minds to act when action either way is almost equally painful, we find that we are delivered from the necessity of acting at all, that the whole state of things has been utterly misunderstood. It was so with S. Joseph; and in his case there was the added joy which springs from the nature of the coming Child as the angel explains it to him. He who had accepted the charge of Mary was now to add to that charge the charge of her Child: and the Child is the very Saviour whom his soul and the souls of all pious Israelites had longed for. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." We cannot expect that S. Joseph would have taken in the full meaning of this message, but he would have understood that he was called to a wondrous co-operation with God in the work of the redemption of Israel.

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As we think of S. Joseph it is this co-operation which is the significant thing in his life. As we study human life in the only way in which it is much worth while to study it, in the light of revelation, it becomes clear to us that there is purpose in all human life. Often we observe a purpose that we are not able to grasp, but in the light of what we know from revelation we do not doubt of its presence. Even lives that seem obscure and insignificant we feel sure must have a divine meaning; and the pathetic thing about most human life is that it never dreams of its own significance. We are consumed with the notion that God's instruments must be great, while it is on the face of revelation that they are commonly humble and of seeming insignificance. It is the work that is important, and the instrument becomes important through its relation to the work. We all at least have the common vocation of the Christian, and it would be difficult to exaggerate the spiritual significance of that. S. Joseph seems to us at once set apart by his vocation to be the guardian of the divine Child, to protect and to nurture the years of His human immaturity. This is no doubt a unique vocation, but is it quite so far separated from ordinary Christian experience as we assume? You and I are also constituted guardians of the divine Presence. This very morning, it may be, we have received within the Tabernacle of our breast the same Presence that S. Joseph guarded—the Presence of Incarnate God. In that Presence of His humanity our Lord abode with us but a few minutes and then the Presence withdrew: but He left behind Him a real gift, the gift of an increase in sacramental grace.

Was that a light thing: Was it indeed so much less than the vocation of S. Joseph? And how have we guarded this Presence? Those few moments after the reception of our Incarnate Lord at the altar—how do we habitually spend them? Do we spend them in guarding the Presence? There is much to be learned about the meaning and the value of guarding the Eucharistic Gift. Our thanksgiving after Communion is fully as important as our preparation for receiving it. I am more and more inclined to think that much of the fruitlessness of communions which is so sad a side of the life of the Church is due to careless reception and inadequate thanksgiving. It is the adoration of our Lord within the Tabernacle of our body and thanksgiving to Him for having come to us that is the *appropriation* of the Gift of the Sacrament. He comes to us and offers Himself to us with all the benefits of His life and death; and then having offered Himself “He makes as though he would go farther,” and he does actually go, unless we are awake to our spiritual opportunity, and constrain Him, saying, “abide with us, for it is toward evening and the day is far spent.”

We think of S. Joseph then, as with a relieved and rejoicing heart he enters upon his new realised vocation as the head of the Holy Family. The marriage which he had been upon the point of abandoning he now enters that he may give S. Mary and her coming Child his full protection.

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So S. Joseph “took unto him his wife; and knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born Son.” These words have been so misunderstood as to imply that the marriage of S. Joseph and S. Mary was consummated after the birth of our Lord. Grammatically they convey no such implication; the mode of expression is perfectly simple and well known by which a fact is affirmed to exist up to a certain time without any implication as to what happens after. And the meaning of the passage which is not at all necessitated by its grammatical construction is utterly intolerable in Catholic teaching. The constant teaching of the Church is the perpetual virginity of Mary—that she was a virgin “before and in and after her child-bearing.” There was to be sure an heretic named Helvidius who taught otherwise, but he was promptly repudiated by all Catholic teachers and but served to emphasize the depth and clearness of the Catholic tradition. Upon this point there has never been any wavering in the mind of the Church, and to hold otherwise shows a lamentable lack of a Catholic perception of values and but a superficial grasp upon what is involved in the Incarnation.

The impression we get of S. Joseph is that of a man of great simplicity and gentleness of character—that childlikeness which was later praised by his foster Son. Such qualities do not produce much impression on the superficial observer, but they are of great spiritual value. They are the concomitants of a special type of open-mindedness. Open-mindedness is a quality much praised and little practiced. But the open-mindedness which is commonly praised is not the open-mindedness which is praiseworthy. What is at present meant by open-mindedness is in reality failure to have any mind at all upon a given subject. It is the attitude of doubt which never proceeds so far as to arrive at a solution. To have an open mind means to the contemporary man to hold all conclusions loosely, to consider all things open to question, to be ready to abandon what now appears to be true in favour of something which to-morrow may appear to be more true. In other words, we are invited to base life on pure scepticism.

Now no life can be so conducted. We live by a faith of some sort, whether it be a faith in God or no. The most sceptical mind has to believe something to act at all. It cannot even doubt without affirming a belief in its own intellectual processes. The open mind that never reaches any certainty to fill it is a very poor possession indeed. And it is not at all what we mean when we say of S. Joseph that he was open-minded. We mean that he was receptive of new spiritual impressions and capable of further spiritual development. There are minds, and they are not unusual among people of a certain degree of spiritual development, which we can best describe as having reached a given stage of growth and then shut up. Or, to vary the figure, they impress one as having a certain capacity, and when that has been reached, being able to contain nothing further. They come to a stop. From that point they try to maintain the position they have acquired. But that is impossible: they inevitably fall away unless they are going forward. When the power of spiritual assimilation is dead, we are spiritually in a dying condition.

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What we mean by having an open and childlike mind, then, is that one has this power of spiritual assimilation and, consequently, a power of growth. The sceptic is afflicted with spiritual indigestion; he is an invalid who is quite certain that any food that is offered him is indigestible. His soul withers away through its incapacity to believe. The open-minded saint has a healthy spiritual digestion. This does not mean that, in vulgar parlance, he can, "swallow anything"; it does mean a power of discrimination between food offered him,—that he assimilates what is wholesome and rejects the rest. The sceptic is pessimistic as to the existence of any wholesome food at all; he starves his soul for fear that he should believe something that is not true. The saint, with the test of faith, sorts the food proposed to him, and grows in grace, and consequently in the knowledge and the love of God.

Open-mindedness is sensitiveness to spiritual impressions, readiness for spiritual advance, even when such impressions cut across much that has seemed to us well settled, and such advance involves the upset of his established ways of thought. What distinguishes the evolution in the thought of the sceptic from that in the thought of the saint is that in the one case the result is destructive and in the other constructive. The sceptic is like a man who starts to build a house, and then periodically tears down what he has so far built and begins again on a new plan; the saint is like the house builder who broadens his plan in the course of construction, and who finds that within the limits of his general scheme there is room for indefinite improvement. The one never gets any building at all; the other gets a palace of which the last stages are of a more highly decorated school of architecture than he had conceived, or indeed, could conceive, when he began his work.

In S. Joseph's case nothing could be more revolutionary in appearance than the truth he was asked to accept. He was asked to believe in the virgin-motherhood of his betrothed, and in the fact that the Child soon to be born was He Who was to save Israel from his sins. He was asked to accept these incredible statements and to act upon them by taking Mary to wife as he had proposed. And he did not hesitate to accept the evidence of a dream and act in accordance with it. How could he do this? Because the required action which seemed so revolutionary of all his previous notions was, in fact, quite in accordance with his knowledge of God and of the promises of God. Though a simple man, perhaps because he was a simple man, he would know something of the teaching of the prophets. That teaching would have given him thoughts about God which would have, unconsciously, prepared him for these new acts of God. Though we cannot see before how a prophecy is to be fulfilled, after the event we can see that this is what is intended by it. We were actually being prepared by the prophecy for what was to take place. And thus, no doubt, S. Joseph's mind, being filled with the teaching of the Scriptures which he had heard read in the Synagogue every Sabbath day, would find that this new act of God on which he was asked to rely was, in fact, but a new step in the unfolding of that Providence which had for centuries been shaping the history of his nation.

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It is a quality to cultivate, this simple open-mindedness which is ready to respond to new spiritual impulses. It is precisely what prevents that deadly attitude of soul which proceeds as though religion were for us exhausted: as though we had reached the limit of expectancy. But to expect nothing is to receive nothing, because it is only expectancy that perceives what is offered. We move in a world which is thronged with spiritual impulses and energetic with spiritual powers. God is trying to lead us on to new spiritual experiences by which we may attain to a better understanding of Him. There is no assignable limit to our possible growth. But we fix a limit when we close our souls to further experiences by the practical denial that they exist. If we are childlike, we are always expecting new things of our Father; if we are open-minded we are alive to the activities of the spiritual world. We are conscious of possessing a growing religion, a religion truly evolutionary, constantly bringing to our knowledge unsuspected riches stored in the very principles whose meaning we had assumed that we had exhausted.

Perhaps one of the treasures of our religion of which we have not achieved full consciousness is God's choice of us to be the guardians of His revelation. It is our charge "to keep the faith." I suppose that this responsibility is commonly regarded as belonging to some vaguely imagined Church which hands it on from generation to generation, to us among others, but without imposing on us an obligation of any active sort. But we are the Church—members in particular of the Body of Christ. And in the dissemination of the faith the last appeal is to us, not to some outside tribunal. When the Church wishes to discover its faith and make it articulate, its place of search is in the minds and hearts of the faithful. Our responsibility is to testify to the Catholic Faith, not so much by positively asserting it as by making it active and vivid in our lives so that its presence and power can by no means be mistaken. You, for instance, in common with the rest of the faithful, are the custodians of this truth of the perpetual virginity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It may seem a small matter, but it is not. That it is not is readily seen from this fact, that when the perpetual virginity of our Blessed Mother is denied then also the Incarnation of her Son is denied or is held only in a half-hearted way. The Church stresses such facts, not only because they are facts, but because by their character they form a hedge about the truth of the Incarnation of our Lord. And we who are Catholic Christians must feel an obligation to hold fast this fact. We ought actively to show our firm adherence to it. How? Chiefly by our attitude towards Blessed Mary herself, by the devotion that we show her. If we are quite indifferent to devotion to Blessed Mary, if we show her no honour, if we likewise fail in honour to her guardian, S. Joseph, is it not to

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be expected that our grasp upon the truths which are enshrined in such devotion will be feeble, and that we shall hold them as of small moment? The whole system of Catholic thought is so nicely articulated, so consistently held together, that failure to hold even the smallest constituent indicates a faulty conception of the whole. Catholics are constantly accused of over-stressing devotion to blessed Mary and the saints and thereby encroaching upon the honour due to our Lord. The answer to the reproach is to be found in the question: Who to-day are defending to the very death the truth of our Lord's Incarnation and the truths that hang upon it? Are they those who deny the legitimacy of invocation, or those in whose religious practise it holds an important and vital place?

A PANEGYRICK ON THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

I do not tremble, when I write
A Mistress' praise, but with delight
Can dive for pearls into the flood,
Fly through every garden, wood,
Stealing the choice of flow'rs and wind,
To dress her body or her mind;
Nay the Saints and Angels are
Nor safe in Heaven, till she be fair,
And rich as they; nor will this do,
Until she be my idol too.
With this sacrilege I dispense,
No fright is in my conscience,
My hand starts not, nor do I then
Find any quakings in my pen;
Whose every drop of ink within
Dwells, as in me my parent's sin,
And praises on the paper wrot
Have but conspired to make a blot:
Why should such fears invade me now
That writes on her? to whom do bow
The souls of all the just, whose place
Is next to God's, and in his face
All creatures and delights doth see
As darling of the Trinity;
To whom the Hierarchy doth throng,
And for whom Heaven is all one song.
Joys should possess my spirit here,
But pious joys are mixed with fear:
Put off thy shoe, 'tis holy ground,



For here the flaming Bush is found,
The mystic rose, the Ivory Tower,
The morning Star and David's bower,
The rod of Moses and of Jesse,
The fountain sealed, Gideon's fleece,
A woman clothed with the Sun,
The beauteous throne of Salomon,
The garden shut, the living spring,
The Tabernacle of the King,
The Altar breathing sacred fume,
The Heaven distilling honeycomb,
The untouched lily, full of dew,
A Mother, yet a Virgin too,
Before and after she brought forth
(Our ransom of eternal worth)
Both God and man. What voice can sing
This mystery, or Cherub's wing
Lend from his golden stock a pen
To write, how Heaven came down to men?
Here fear and wonder so advance
My soul, it must obey a trance.

PART TWO

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CHAPTER VII

THE NATIVITY

She brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

S. Luke II. 7.

It is very meet to bless thee who bore the Christ, O ever Blessed and Immaculate Mother of God. More wondrous than the Cherubim and of greater glory than the Seraphim art thou who remaining Virgin didst give birth to God the Word. Verily, do we magnify thee, O Mother of God. In thee, O full of grace, all creation exults, the hierarchy of angels and the race of men. In thee sanctified temple, spiritual paradise, glory of virgins, of whom God took flesh, through whom our God Who was before the world became a Child. Of thy womb He made a throne, and its dominion is more extensive than the heavens. In thee, O full of grace, all creation exults: glory to thee.

RUSSIAN.

We see a man and a woman on the road to Bethlehem where they are going to be taxed according to the decree of Augustus. Bethlehem would be known to them as the home of their ancestors, for they were both of the lineage of David. It was a painful journey for them for Mary was near the time of her delivery. We follow them along the road and into the village, as the twilight fades, and see them seeking shelter for the night. Bethlehem is a small place and the inn is crowded with those who have come on the errand with them, and the only place where they can find refuge for the night is a stable. But they are not used to luxury, and the stable serves their purpose.

It also serves God's purpose. One understands as one reads this narrative of the Nativity what is meant by the Providential government of the world. We see how various lines of action, each free and independent, yet converge to the production of a given event. The different characters in the drama are all pursuing their own courses and yet the result is a true drama, not an unrelated series of events. Caesar's action, Joseph's lineage, our Lord's conception, all working together, bring about the fulfilment of prophecy by the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem. There is in the universe an overruling will which works to its ends by co-operating with human freedom, and not destroying it. We are not the sport of chance, not the slaves of fate, but free men; and yet through our freedom, through our blunders and rebellions and sins as well as through our obedience, the work of God is moving to its conclusion. Man did all that he could to defeat the ends of God and to thwart God's purpose of redemption. Yet on a certain night in Bethlehem of Judea the light of God overcame the human darkness, and

the voices of God's angels pierced the human tumult, and Jesus Christ was born. "God of the substance of his Father begotten before all worlds, man of the substance of his mother, born in the world; perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting."

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The manifestation came to certain shepherds watching their flocks in the fields about Bethlehem; simple men, quite unable to take in the meaning of what they see and hear. One cannot help thinking of what it would have meant in the way of an intellectual revolution if to some Greek or Roman philosopher, speculating on the destiny of humanity, the truth could have come that the future of the world was not in the court of Augustus, that it was not dependent on the Roman armies or Greek learning, but that it was bound up in the career and teaching of a Baby that night born in a stable in an obscure village in Judea. As we imagine such a case we see in the concrete the meaning of the revolution set in motion by this single event; and we are led to adore the ways of God in that He has chosen for the final approach to man for the purpose of redemption, this way of simplicity and humbleness. Man would not have thought of this as the best path for God to follow in this purpose of rescue, but we can be wise after the event and see that this Child born in poverty and obscurity would have fewer entanglements to break through, fewer obstacles to overcome.

But these thoughts are far away from the night in Bethlehem. In the stable there where a Baby is lying in Mary's arms and Joseph stands looking on, there is no speculation about the world-consequences of the event. There is rather the splendour of love: the love of the mother in the new found mystery of this her Child; the love of God who has given her the Child. And all is a part of the great mystery of love, of the love wherewith God loves the world. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Here is the Son, lying in Mary's arms, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and Mary looks into His face as any human mother looks into the face of her child. But through the eyes that smile up into Mary's face, God is looking out on a world of sorrow and pain and sin that He has come to redeem, and for which, in redeeming it, to die. Presently, the shepherds come in and complete the group, the representatives of universal humanity at the birth of their King, We have the whole world-problem in small, but here there is no consciousness of it. No echo of world-politics or of movements of thought break in here. But we know that here is the beginning of that which will set at naught world-politics and revolutionise movements of thought, that here is the centre about which humanity will move in the coming time. Here is that which is fundamental and abiding because here is the one invincible power of the universe—love. All else will fail: prophecies, systems of philosophy, religions, political and social structures; each in the time of its flourishing, proclaiming itself the last word of human wisdom,—these in bewildering succession have arisen and passed away. But love has survived them all. Love never faileth; through the slow succession of the centuries it is winning the world to God.

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It were well if we could learn to look on the happenings of this world as the miracles of divine love. We think of the power, the justice, the judgment of God as visible in this world's history; but these are but the instruments of love, and all that He does has its foundation in love and receives its impulse from love. This Nativity is the divine love coming into the world on its last adventure, determined to win man, all other means failing, by the extremity of sacrifice. The final word about this Child will be that having loved his own He loved them unto the uttermost, he loved them without stinting, with the uttermost capacity of love. Understanding this meaning of the love of God, we are prepared for the further fact that God uses all sorts of instruments as the instruments of His love. He shares Himself. He pours Himself into human life. He takes men into partnership in the work of redemption. Whenever a soul is mastered by love, it becomes a tool in God's hands. The progress of the Church—of God's Kingdom—might be described as the accumulation of these tools wherewith God works—souls who are so devoted to Him as to be the medium of bringing His power, the power of love, to bear on the souls of their brethren.

To be the highest, the most perfect, of all the instruments of redemption God chose Mary of Nazareth to be the Mother of His Son. She is the most complete human embodiment of God's love. She, in her perfect purity, can transmit that love as power with the least loss of energy in the process of transmission. When we think of the saints as the means of God's action, we think of blessed Mary as the highest of the saints and the means most perfectly adapted to God's ends. Here at Bethlehem she holds God in her arms and looks into the human face that He has taken for this present work and all her being is absorbed in love. Oblivious, we think her, of her mean surroundings, of the animals that share with her their stable, of the shepherds who come in and look on in wonder, of S. Joseph standing by in sympathy. Love is all. Love is a passion consuming her being—what can the attendant circumstances matter? And to-day, after all these centuries: to-day the Child is the Ascended and Enthroned Redeemer, His risen and glorified humanity, transmitting something of the divine glory, seated at the right hand of the Majesty of God. And Mary, the Mother? Can we have any other thought than that she who on the first Christmas morning looks into the face of her Baby, still, to-day, looks up into the face of her divine Son, and the look is the same look of love? And can we think of the look that comes back to her from eyes that are human, taken from her body, though they be in very truth the eyes of God—can we think, I say, of the eyes of her Child and her God bringing anything else than the message of love? Can we think that when in answer to our invocation she presents our prayers in union with her own, that love will fail?

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But let us come back to earth—to Bethlehem—on that first Christmas eve and listen to the songs of the angels as they sing over the star-lit fields. How near heaven seems! How real is God! How joyful is this season of peace to men of good will! The message is of peace, but that peace will need to have its nature explained in the coming years if men's hearts are not to fail them and their faith wither away. It is not a general peace to the world that is being proclaimed. Later on our Lord will say: "My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." It is such a gift as can be enjoyed only by men of good will; converted men, that is to say, men whose will is close set with the will of God. For how should there be peace in any world on any other terms? How can there be peace for those who are in rebellion against God? Our Lord can promise peace, and can fulfil His promise because He is bringing a new potency into human life. He is a new way of approach to God, a new way into the Holiest of all. Through His humanity God is united to man, and through it man, any man, can be united to God. And one of the results of that union is this gift of peace, and the fact that it arises from the union explains its new character, why our Lord calls it His peace.

This peace is the Christmas gift of the divine child to us. This is the method of God's work, from the inside out; from the spiritual fact to its external result. We do not begin by finding peace with this world: "in the world ye shall have tribulation." And most of the failure to attain peace, and much of men's loss of faith is due to repudiation of the divine method. We live in a disordered and pain-stricken world where human life is uniformly a life of trial and struggle, and our easy yielding to temptation is an attempt at some sort of an adjustment with the world such as we think will produce peace and quiet. We constantly demand of religion that it should effect this for us. So far as one can see much of the revolt against religion to-day has its ground in the failure of religion to meet the demands made upon it for a better world. Men look out on a world seething with unrest and filled with injustice, and they turn upon the Church and ask, "Why have you not changed all this? Are you not, in fact, neglecting your duty in not changing it? Or if you are not neglecting your duty, you must at least confess to your impotence. Your self-confessed business is to make a better world."

True; but only on the conditions which love imposes. Religion does not propose to improve the world by a more skilful application of the principles of worldliness. It does not propose to turn stones into bread at the demand of any devils whatsoever. It does not say, "If you will support me and give me a certain superficial honour, I will bless your efforts and increase the success of your undertakings." Religion proposes to improve the world on the condition

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that the principles of religion shall be accepted as the working principles of life; on condition, that is, that love shall be made the ground of human association. Religion can make a better world, it can make the kingdoms of God and of His Christ; but it can only do so on the condition that it is whole-heartedly accepted and thoroughly applied. The proof that it can do this is in the fact that it can and does make better individuals. Wherever men and women have lived by the principles of the Gospel they have brought forth the fruits of the Gospel. It has done this, not under some specially favourable circumstances, but it has done it under all circumstances of life and in all nations of men. What has been done in unnumbered individual cases, can be done in whole communities when the communities want it done. It is quite pointless in times of great social distress to ask passionately, "why does not God make a better world?" The only question which is at all to the point is, "why has God not made *me* better?" The problem of God's dealing with the world is, in essence, the problem of God's dealing with me. If He has not reformed me, if I do not, in my self-examination, find that I am responding to the ideals of God, as far as I know them, there is small point in declamations about the state of society. Society that is godless, is just a mass of godless individuals; and I can understand why God does not reform the world perfectly well from the study of my own case. What in me prevents the full control of God is the same that prevents that control over the whole of society: and I know that that is not lack of knowledge, but lack of love. Men ignore the primary obligation of life: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God ... and thy neighbour as thyself." As long as they ignore that, there can be no reformed world, no world reflecting the divine purpose, no society,—whatever may be its widely multiplied legislation,—securing to men conditions of life which are sane and satisfactory.

Therefore the Child who is born of Mary in Bethlehem while the angels are singing their carols over the fields where the shepherds watch, the Child Who brings peace to men of good will, still, after nearly two thousand years, finds His gift ignored and His longing to lift men to God unsatisfied. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not"—and the conditions are not vitally changed to-day. When we think of a world of fifteen hundred million human beings, the number of those who profess and call themselves Christians is comparatively small; the number of actually practicing Christians, of men and women who do live by the Gospel, without reserve and without compromise, is vastly smaller. The resistance of the principles of the Gospel is to-day intense; the demand for compromise is insistent. We are asked to throw over a system which has obviously failed, and to accept as the equivalent and to permit to pass under the same name a system which is fundamentally different; a system whose end is man and not God, whose means are natural and not supernatural, which seek to produce an adjustment with this world that means comfort, rather than an adjustment with the spiritual world which means sanctity.

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The ideal achievement of peace is here in Bethlehem where the mother holds the Holy Child to her breast, while her spirit is utterly in union with Him Who is both man and God. There is never any break in the pure peace of S. Mary because there is never any moment when her will is separated from the will of God, when her union with Him fails. This peace of perfect union has, through the merits of her Son, been hers always; she has never known the wrench of the will that separates itself from God. She has always been poor; she has been perplexed with life; she has suffered and will suffer intensely, suffer most where she loves most; but peace she has never lost, because her will has never wavered in its allegiance. What visibly she is doing in these moments of her great joy, holding God to her breast in a passion of love, she in fact is doing always—always is she one with God.

That undisturbed peace of a never broken union is never possible for us. We have known what it is to reject the will of God and go our own way and indulge the appetites of our nature in violation of our recognised standards of life. If we are to come to peace it must be along the rough road of repentance. And it is wholly just that it should be so; that we should win back to God at the expense of shame and suffering; that we should retrace the road that we have travelled, with weary feet and bleeding heart. This after all does not much matter: what does matter immensely is that there is a road back to God and that we find it. What matters is that we discover that repentance and reformation are the only road to peace. We are offered many other roads alleged to lead to the same place; but not even a child should be deceived by the modern substitutes for repentance, by the shallow teaching whereby it is attempted to persuade men of the innocence of sin. They are never worth discussing, these modern substitutes for repentance. Men accept them, not because they are rational or convincing, but because they offer a justification for going the way that they have already made up their minds to go. But it is plain that whatever else they do they do not afford a basis for peace. They are no rock foundation for eternity. Other foundation for peace can no man lay or has laid than the acceptance of the salvation offered in Jesus Christ. He is our peace; and when we discover that, He makes peace in us by the application to our souls of the Blood of His Cross. This is the peace He came to bring. This the peace that the angels announced as they sang over Bethlehem. This is the peace which is ceaselessly proclaimed from the altars of the Christian Church, the peace of God which passeth understanding, the peace which is offered to all men of good will.

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How shall we attain it? By being men of good will, plainly. But what constitutes good will in a man? That which I have already discussed, perhaps abundantly, simplicity and childlike obedience of character. S. Joseph, the guardian of Mary and her Child here in Bethlehem, is the best example we can have of a man of good will, a man who under the most difficult circumstances responded with perfect readiness and complete obedience to the heavenly message that came to him. This is to be his course through the few years that he will live, to give himself to the will of God in the care of Jesus. We are men of good will if we do whatsoever our Lord says to us, if we are seeking first of all the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, if our estimate of values corresponds to our Lord's.

There is our trouble—that old trouble of feebly trying to live the life of the Kingdom when what we actually want is the offer of this world. There is, there can be, no peace in a divided life. There is a certain spiritual sloth which has the exterior look of peace, as a corpse looks peaceful, but it has no relation to the peace which God gives. It is in fact the wages of sin, wages easily earned and long enjoyed. But so long as we are spiritually alive, so long we cannot enjoy whole-heartedly even the most fascinating of sins because there is lurking in the background the sense of the transitoriness of our sin and of the imminence of death and judgment. There is the skeleton in every man's closet until he finally makes choice on one side or the other. For we are not ignorant of the spiritual obligations of life. We always know more than we have achieved. When we talk about our ignorance and perplexity, we are not meaning ignorance and perplexity about the obligation to live in a certain way, and to perform certain duties, on this particular day: rather we are making this alleged ignorance of the future an excuse for not taking action in the present, action which we know to be obligatory.

And peace is so wonderful a gift! To feel oneself in harmony with God, to know that one is carefully seeking His will and making it one's first and highest duty to perform it. To have found the peace of the forgiven soul as the result of absolution, at the expense of much shame and repugnance, it may be, but with what marvellous compensations when we go away with a sense of restored purity and the friendship of God—life looks so different when we look at it through purified eyes! The old life has held us so tightly, the old sins have clung so close; and then there was a day when we gave up self and turned to God and the Gift of God in Jesus Christ; and then we saw how miserable and vile and naked we had been all through the time of our boasted freedom; and we came as children to Mary's Child and offered ourselves to Him for cleansing. We kneel and offer to Him our wills and ask that they may be made good, and kept good in union with His most holy

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will. Then we find how true this word is: "In Me ye shall have peace: in the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." It is true, is it not? not only as we commonly interpret, that the disciples of Christ shall have tribulation in this world; but that much that we, giving ourselves to the world, counted joy, was in reality tribulation, and we are glad to be rid of it.

A babe is born to bliss us bring.
I heard a maid lulley and sing.
She said: "Dear Son, leave Thy weeping:
Thy, Father is the King of bliss."
Now sing we with Angelis:
Gloria in excelsis.

"Lulley," she said and sung also,
"My own dear Son, why are Thou wo?
Have I not done as I should do?
Now sing we with Angelis:
Gloria in excelsis.

"Nay, dear mother, for thee weep I nought,
But for the woe that shall be wrought
To Me ere I mankind have bought.
Was never sorrow like it i-wis."
Now sing we with Angelis:
Gloria in excelsis.

"Peace, dear Son! Thou grievest me sore:
Thou art my child, I have no more.
Should I see men mine own Son slay?
Alas, my dear Son, what means all this?"
Now sing we with Angelis:
Gloria in excelsis.

"My hands, Mother, that ye now see,
Shall be nailed to a tree;
My feet also fast shall be,
Men shall weep that shall see this."
Now sing we with Angelis:
Gloria in excelsis.

"Ah, dear Son, hard is my happe
To see my child that lay in my lap,—



His hands, His feet that I did wrappe,—
Be so nailed; they never did amisse.”
Now sing we with Angelis:
Gloria in excelsis.

“Ah, dear Mother, yet shall a spear
My heart asunder all but tear:
No wonder if I care-ful were
And wept full sore to think on this.”
Now sing we with Angelis:
Gloria in excelsis.

PART TWO

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAGI

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king,
Behold, there came Magi from the East to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born
king of the Jews?

S. Matt. II, i.

Hail to thee, Mary, the fair dove, which hath borne for us God the Word. We give thee
salutation with the Angel Gabriel, saying, Hail, thou that art full of grace; the Lord is with
thee.

Hail to thee, O Virgin, the very and true Queen; hail, glory of our race. Thou hast borne
for us Emmanuel.

We pray thee, remember us, O thou our faithful advocate with our Lord Jesus Christ,
that He may forgive us our sins.

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COPTIC.

Out of the East, over the desert, we see coming to Bethlehem the train of the star-led Magi. The devout imagination of the Church, dwelling upon the *significance* rather than the bare historical statements of the Gospel, have seen them as the representatives of the whole Gentile world. We often think of the treatment of the sacred story by the teachers and preachers of the Church as embroidering the original narratives with legendary material. We can look at it in that way; and by so doing, I think, miss the meaning of the facts. What we call ecclesiastical legend will often turn out on examination to be but the unfolding of the meaning of an event in terms of the creative imagination. The object is to present vividly what the event actually means when the meaning is of such widely reaching significance as far to overpass the simple facts. It is thus, I take it, that we must understand the story of the Magi as it takes shape in pious story. That the Magi were kings, and that they were three in number, emphasises the felt importance of their coming to the cradle of our Lord. Actually, they were understood to represent the Gentile world offering its allegiance to our blessed Lord, and therefore they would naturally represent the three branches of the Gentile world as it was understood at the time. The importance of their mission was reflected in the presentation of them as kings—no less persons were required to fill the dignity of the part. There was, too, a whole mass of prophecy to be reckoned with and interpreted in its relation to the event, the most obvious of which was that of Isaiah: “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”

The Church story is essentially true, is but a dramatic rendering of the Gospel story. We may however content ourselves with the more simple rendering. We can hardly think of the stable as the setting of the reception of the Eastern Sages. Just when they came we cannot tell; but we seem compelled to put the Epiphany where the Church puts it in her year, somewhere between the Nativity and the Presentation, and the scene of it will still be, the Gospel implies, Bethlehem. “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, Behold, there came Magi from the East to Jerusalem.” And at the direction of Herod, and guided by the Star they came to Bethlehem and offered their gifts and their worship. “They saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”

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We try to get before us what would have been the mind of S. Mary through all these happenings which attended the birth of her Child. What is written of her here is no doubt characteristic: "Mary kept all these and pondered them in her heart." Wonder at the ways of God had been hers for so many months now—wonder, with devout meditation upon their meaning. Where there is no resistance to God's will but only the desire to know it more fully there is always the gradual assimilation of the truth. S. Mary moves in a realm of mystery from the moment of the Annunciation to the very end of her life. It is so difficult to understand what is the meaning of God in this unspeakable gift of a Son conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and in the constant accompaniment of pain and disaster and disappointment which is the unfolding experience of her life in relation to Him. But we feel in her no speculation, no rebellion, no insistence on knowing more; but we feel that there must have been a growing appreciation of the work of God, unhesitating acceptance of His will. Just to keep things in one's heart is so often the best way of arriving at an understanding of them; is the best way, at least, of arriving at the conviction that what we in fact need to understand is not so much what God does as that it is God Who does it. Our true aim in life is to understand God, and through that understanding we shall sufficiently understand life. Failure in human life is commonly due to an attempt to understand life without any attempt to understand it in relation to God. It is like an attempt to understand a work of art without an attempt to understand the artist, to estimate in terms of mechanical effort, rather than in terms of mind. A work of art means what the artist means when he creates it: life means what God means in His creation and government of it, and it is hopeless to expect to understand it without reference to the mind of God.

Therefore Mary's way is the right way—the way of acceptance and meditation. So she sought to follow the mind of God. We are told little of her, but we are told quite enough to understand this. We know well her method, that she kept things in her heart. And we have one splendid example of the result of the method in the Magnificat. There the results of her communion with God break forth in that Canticle which ever since has been one of the priceless treasures of the Church. The Gospels never tell us very much; but if we will follow Mary's method they tell us enough to let us see the very hand of God in the working out of our salvation; they give us sample events from which we easily infer God's meaning elsewhere.

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And we may be sure that the months that followed the Annunciation would have been months of ever-deepening spiritual communion, resulting in a rapidly advancing spiritual maturity. One necessary result would have been to prepare the blessed Mother to receive new manifestations of God's Providence, and to fit them into the whole body of her experience. She would not at any time be lost in helpless surprise before a new development of the purpose of God. Surprised as she must have been when the Eastern Sages came to kneel before the Child she carried at her breast, and hail Him as born King of the Jews, she would have set to work to fit this new experience into what her acquired knowledge of the divine meaning had become. And one can have no doubt that these visitors from afar would have told her enough of the grounds of their action to illumine for her the prophecies concerning her Son.

The special incidents that the Gospel select for record leave us always conscious that they *are* a selection and therefore must have special significance. That we are told that the Magi offered certain gifts, rather than told the words of homage wherewith they presented them turns our attention to the nature of the gifts as presumably having a significance in themselves rather than because of any actual value. In the gifts of these Gentiles come from afar to kneel before Him Whom they recognise as King of the Jews, we are compelled to see a certain attitude of humanity toward Him Who is revealed to be not only the King of the Jews, but Lord of Heaven and earth; they give what humanity needs must always give—the gold of a perfect oblation, the incense of perpetual intercession, the myrrh of a humble self-abandonment.

These which are offered as the ideal tribute of humanity by the star-led Magi are found in their highest human perfection exemplified in the Mother of the Child to Whom the tribute is made. Perfect are they in our Lord; and she who is nearest Him in nature is nearest Him in the perfection of nature. We turn from God's ideal as set out in our blessed Lord to see it reflected as in a glass in the life of her whose perfection is the perfect rendering of His grace. Mary is so perfect because, by God's election, she is "full of grace."

We, alas! limp after the ideal at a long distance. One pictures the life of sanctity under the familiar symbol of the race course, where many start in the race, and many, one by one, fall out by the wayside. Those who go on the race's end, go on because of certain qualities of endurance that we discover in them. In those who run the spiritual race for the amaranthine crown these qualities of endurance are not natural, but supernatural: they come not of birth but of rebirth. They are qualities which we draw from God. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." The hand that sets the race confers the gifts that enable one to win it. "So run that ye may obtain."

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And perhaps the chiefest of all those gifts is that which makes us, the children of God, capable of the adoration of our Father. Worship is no other than the utter giving of ourselves, giving as Christ gave, "Who being originally in the form of God, thought it not a thing to be grasped at to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men"; giving as the blessed Virgin gave when she gave, as she must have thought and have been willing to give, her whole reputation among men in response to the call of God; giving complete, in which there is no withholding. That is worship, sacrifice, the pure gold of self-oblation.

But it is possible to think of the power of worship from another point of view. God never takes but He gives. What He appears to take He gives back with His blessing, and we find the restored gift multiplied manifold. So in the very act of our worship God confers on us power.

For it is true, is it not, that in the very act of worship we experience, not exhaustion but exhilaration. In the very act of giving ourselves to God, God gives Himself to us, and in overflowing abundance. That is what we find to be true in our highest act of worship, the blessed Eucharist. Here God and man meet in a perfect communion. Here we offer ourselves in sacrifice—ourselves, our souls and bodies—in union with the sacrifice of our Lord; and here our Lord, Who is the sacrifice itself, not only offers Himself, but also He imparts Himself to those who are united with Him. And out of this sacrifice, thus issuing in an act of union, there flows the perpetual renewing of the vitality of the spiritual life. We are sustained from day to day by this sacrificial feeding; our strength which is continually being drawn upon by the demands of life, by the temptations we have to resist, by the exertion that is called for in all spiritual exercise, is renewed by our participation in the Body and Blood of our Lord. I am sure that all those who are accustomed to frequent communion feel the drain upon their strength when at any time they are deprived of their great privilege. I am also sure that many who feel that their spiritual life is but languid, or those other many who seem only dimly to feel that there are spiritual problems to be met, and spiritual strength needed for the meeting of them, would find themselves immensely helped, would find their minds illumined and their strength sustained in more frequent participation in the sacrificial worship and feasting of the Church. The attitude of vast numbers of those who are regarded as quite sincere Christians is wholly incomprehensible. The life of God is day by day poured out at the altars of the Church, and they go their way in seeming unconsciousness of its presence, of its appeal, of its virtue, or of their own sore need of it. The Magi come from a far distance on a hazardous journey into an unknown country that they may offer the gold of their adoration to an infant King; and the Christian feebly considers whether he is not too tired to get up of a morning and go a short distance to receive the Body and Blood of the Redeemer of his soul!

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The Magi came also bringing the incense of their intercession. Their privilege was that they were admitted to the very Presence Chamber of the great King. That the Infant in Mary's arms did not show any sign of kingship, the humble room where they were received bore no resemblance to the presence chamber of such kings as they were accustomed to wait upon, was to them of no consequence. They were endowed with the gift of faith, and believed the supernatural guiding rather than the outward seeming. The faith that had followed the star from so great a distance was not likely to be quenched by the antithesis of what must have been their imagination of the reality, of all the pictures that had been filling their minds as they pushed on across the desert. It was no more incredible that the King Whom they were seeking should be found in humble guise in a peasant's cottage than that they should have been guided to Him by a heavenly star. The gift of God to them was that they should be permitted to enter the presence of the King.

This right of admission to the divine Presence is the precious gift of God to us. Since the heavens received the ascending Lord the Kingdom of heaven has been open to all believers. Prayer is a very simple and common thing in our experience; and yet when we try to think out its implications we are overwhelmed with the wonder of it. It implies a God Who waits upon our pleasure: it reveals to us a Father Who is ever ready to listen to the voice of His children. No broken hearted sinner, overwhelmed with the conviction of his vileness, cries out in the agony of his repentance but God is ready to hear. "He is more ready to hear than we to pray." No man pours out his thanksgivings for the abundant blessings he discovers in his life but the heart of God is glad in his gladness. No child kneels at night to repeat his simple prayer but God bends over him and blesses him. The wonder of it is summed up in our Lord's words: "The Father Himself loveth you," which are as an open door into the inner sanctuary, an invitation to enter to those who are hesitating on the threshold of the Holy of Holies.

And there is no danger of tiring God: we come ceaselessly, endlessly. The cries of earth go up to Him, pitiful, ignorant, foolish cries; but they find God ready to hear and answer, fortunately not according to our ignorance but according to His great mercy. We think of the clouds of prayer in all ages, from all nations, in all tongues, and the very vastness of them gives us an index of the divine love.

And it is not simply for ourselves that we pray, nor do we pray by ourselves; it is of God's love that in the work of prayer we are associated with one another. There is nothing further from the divine plan of life than our present individualism. Our temptation is to be egotistic and self-centred; to want to approach God alone with our private needs and wishes. We incline to travel the spiritual way by ourselves; we want no company; we want no one between our souls and God. But that precisely is not the divine method. We come to God through Christ; we come in association with the members of the Body. Our standing as Christians before Him is dependent upon our corporate relation to one another in His Son.

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Important issues are involved. We attain through this associated life of the Christian the power of mutual intercession. We find that it is our privilege to share our prayers with others, and to be interested in one another's lives. We have common interests and we work them out in common. Therefore when we try to put before us an ideal picture of the power of prayer, it will not be the solitary individual offering his personal supplications to the Father, but it will be the community of the faithful assembled for the offering of the divine Sacrifice. It is the praying Body that best satisfies our ideal of prayer, where we are conscious of helping one another in the work of intercession. We remember, too, when we think of prayer as prayer of the Body of Christ, that it is not just the visible congregation that is participating in it, but that all the Body share in the intercessions, wherever they may individually be. Our thoughts go up from the little assembly in the humble church and lose themselves in the splendour of the heavenly intercession where we are associated with prophets and apostles and martyrs, and with Mary the Mother of God.

There was a third gift that the Magi brought to Him Whom they hailed King, a gift that is more perplexing as a gift to royalty than the other two. That gold and incense should be offered a King is clearly His royal right; but what has he to do with the bitterness of myrrh? But to this King myrrh is a peculiarly appropriate gift, for it is the symbol of complete self-abandonment. He who came to do not His own will but the will of Him that sent Him; Who laid aside the robes of His glory, issuing from the uncreated light that He might clothe Himself with the humility of the flesh, is properly honoured with the gift of myrrh.

And as it was the symbol of His humility, so is it the symbol of our humanity in relation to Him. It suggests to us that uttermost of Christian virtues, the virtue of entire abandonment to the will of God. This is a most difficult virtue to acquire. We cling to self. We are devoted to our own wills. We rely on our own judgment and wisdom. We are impatient of all that gets in the way of our self-determination. We have in these last days made a veritable religion out of devotion to self, a cult of the ego.

But he who will enter into the sanctuary of the divine life, he who will seek union with God, he who will be one with the Father in the Son, must abandon self. He must lose his life in order to save it. He must let go the world to cling to the Lord of life. This will of the man which is so insistent, so persistent, so assertive, so tenacious, must be laid aside and the Will of Another adopted in its place. Often this is bitter. Very true of us it is that when we were young we girded ourselves and walked whither we would; but it must be in the end, if we make life a spiritual success, that when we are old another shall gird us and carry us whither we would not.

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The secret of life is found when the bitterness of myrrh is turned to sweetness in the discovery that the outcome of the sacrificial life is not that it be narrowed but enlarged; and that for the life which we have entrusted to Him God will do more than we ask or think. When our will becomes one with the will of God we are surprised to find that we have ceased to think of what we once called our sacrifices, because life in Christ reveals itself to us as of infinite joy and richness, so that we forget the things that are behind and gladly press on.

Queen of heaven, blessed may thou be
For Godes Son born He was of thee,
For to make us free.

Gloria Tibi, Domine. Jesu, Godes Son, born He was
In a crib with hay and grass,
And died for us upon the cross.

Gloria Tibi, Dominie. To our Lady make we our moan,
That she may pray to her dear Son,
That we may to His bliss come.

Gloria Tibi, Dominie.

Sixteenth Century.

PART TWO

CHAPTER IX

THE PRESENTATION

And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.

S. Luke II. 22.

O come let us worship the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the
Holy Ghost,—we the Christian nations, for He is our true God.

And we hope in Holy Mary, that God will have mercy upon us through her prayers.

Hail to thee, Mary, the fair dove, who hath borne for us God the Word.

COPTIC

The reading of a story in the Gospels is often like looking through a window down some long arcade; there is in the foreground the group of actors in whom we are presently interested, and beyond them is the whole background of contemporary life to which they belong, of which they are a part. If we have time to think out the meaning of this surrounding life we gain added insight into the meaning of our principal characters. It is so now as we watch this group of humble peasant folk coming up to the temple to fulfil the demands of the law of Moses. In the precincts of the temple they are merged in a larger group whose interests are clearly identical with their own, and whom we easily see to be the local representatives of a party—the name, no doubt, suggests an organisation which they had not—scattered throughout Judea. Their interest was the redemption of Israel. They were the true heirs of the prophets, and among them the prophecies which concerned the Lord's Christ were the subject of constant study and meditation. Amid the movements and intrigues of political and religious parties, they abode quietly in the temple, as Simeon and Anna, or in their homes, as Zacharias and Elizabeth, *waiting*. Their power was the silent power of sanctity, the power that flows from lives steeped in meditation and prayer. They constitute that remnant which is the depository of the hopes of Israel and the saving salt which prevents the utter putrefaction of the body of the nation.

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We cannot for a moment doubt that Mary and Joseph were of this remnant, and that they were in complete sympathy with those whom they found here in the temple when the Child Jesus was brought in “to do for him after the custom of the law.” The actual ceremony of the purification was soon over, the demands of the law satisfied. Neither Jesus nor Mary had any inner need of these observances; their value in their case was that by submission to them they associated themselves closely with their brethren, our Lord thus continuing that divine self-emptying which he had begun at the Incarnation. We are impressed with the completeness of this stooping of God when we see the offering that Mary brings, “A pair of turtle doves,” the offering of the very poor. Our Lord has accepted life on its lowest economic terms in order that nothing in His mission shall flow from adventitious aids. He must owe all in the accomplishment of His work to the Father Who gave it Him to do. It will be the essence of the temptation that He must soon undergo that He shall consent to call to His aid earthly and material supports and base His hopes of success on something other than God.

Accidentally, there is this further demonstration contained in the poverty of the Holy Family, that, namely, the completest spiritual privilege, the fullest spiritual development, is independent of “possessions.” It is no doubt true that “great possessions” do not of necessity create a bar in all cases to spiritual accomplishment; but to many of us it is a consolation to know that the completest sanctity humanity has known has been wrought out in utter poverty of life. We shall have occasion to speak more of this later; we now only note the fact that those whom we meet in the pages of the New Testament as waiting hopefully for the redemption of Israel are waiting in poverty and hard work.

What we find in S. Mary as she passes through the ceremony of her purification from a child-bearing which had in no circumstance of it anything impure, is the spirit of sacrifice which submission to the law implies. She has caught the spirit of her Son, the spirit of selfless offering to the will of God. It is the central accomplishment of the life of sanctity. The life of sanctity must be wrought out from the centre, from our contact with God. No one becomes holy by works, whatever may be the nature of the works. Works, the external life, are the expression of what we are, they are the externalization of our character. If they be not the expression of a life hid with Christ in God they can have no spiritual value, whatever may be their social value. The kind of works which “are done to be seen of men” “have their reward,” that is, the sort of reward they seek, human approval; they have no value in the realm of the spirit.

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But the life that is lived as sacrifice, as a thing perfectly offered to God, is a life growing up in God day by day. It is our Lord's life, summed up from this point of view in the "I come to do thy will, O God." Its most perfect reflection is caught by blessed Mary with her acceptance of God's will: "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord." But it is the life expression of all sanctity; for the saint is such chiefly by virtue of his sacrificial attitude. It is the completest account of the life of sanctity that it "leaves all" to follow a divine call. It is the response of the Apostles who, as James and John, leave their father Zebedee and the boats and the nets and the hired servants, to follow Jesus. It is the answer of Matthew who rises from the receipt of custom at the Master's word. It is the answer of all saints in all times. Sanctity means the abandonment of all for Christ: it means the embracing of the poverty of Jesus and Mary.

Is sanctity then, or the possibility of it, shut within the narrow limits of a poor life? Well, even if it were, the limits would not be so very narrow. By far the greater part of the human race at any time has been poor, as poor as the Holy Family. Unfortunately, Christianity is forgetting its vocation of poverty and becoming a matter of well-to-do-ness. But we need not forget that the poor are the majority. However, the fact is not that economical poverty is automatically productive of spirituality, but that accepted and offered poverty is the road to the heart of God. It is not denied that the rich man may consecrate and offer his goods to God and make them instruments of God's service; but in the process he runs great risk of deceiving himself and of attempting to deceive God—the risk of quietly substituting for the spirit of sacrifice the spirit of commercial bargaining, and attempting to buy the favour of God, and of ransoming his great possessions by a well-calculated tribute. It is not so much our possessions as the way we hold them that is in question; it is a question whether the inner motive of our life is the will to sacrifice or the will to be rich. "They that desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition,"

These dangers S. Paul noted as the besetting dangers of riches are counteracted by the possession of the spirit of sacrifice which holds all things at the disposal of God, and views life as opportunity for the service of God. And in so estimating life, we must remember that money is not the only thing that human beings possess. As I pointed out the vast majority of the human race have no money: it by no means follows that they have no capacity or field for the exercise of the spirit of sacrifice. There is, for instance, an abundant opportunity for the exercise of that spirit in the glad acceptance of the narrow lot that may be ours. Probably many, indeed most, poor are only economically poor;

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they fall under S. Paul's criticism in that "they desire to be rich," and are therefore devoid of the spirit of sacrifice that would transform their actual poverty into a spiritual value. But all the powers and energies of life do in fact constitute life's capital. A poor boy has great possessions in the gifts of nature that God has granted him. He may use this capital as he will. He may be governed by "the desire to be rich," or by the desire to consecrate himself to the will and service of God—and the working out of life will be accordingly. He may become very rich economically, or he may devote his life to the service of his fellows as physician, teacher, missionary, or in numberless other paths. Once more, the meaning of life is in its voluntary direction, and whatever may be his economic state, he may, if he will, be "rich toward God."

If what we are seeking is to follow the Gospel-life, if we are seeking to express toward man the spirit of the Master, we find abundant field for the exercise of this spirit of sacrifice in our daily relations with others. S. Paul's rule of life: "Look not every man to his own things, but every man also to the things of others," is the practical rule of the sacrificed will. It seeks to fulfil the service of the Master by taking the spirit of the Master—His helpfulness, His consideration, His sympathy—with one into the detail of the day's work. It is one of the peculiarities of human nature that it finds it quite possible to work itself up to an occasional accomplishment, especially in a spectacular setting, of spiritual works, which it finds itself quite impotent to do under the commonplace routine of life. The race experience is accurately enough summed up in the cynical proverb: "No man is a hero to his valet." It expresses the fact that in ordinary circumstances, and under commonplace temptations, we do not succeed in holding life to the accomplishment which is ours when we are, as it were, on dress parade. In other words, we respond to the opinions we desire to create in others; and the spirit of sanctity is a response not to public opinion, but to the mind and thought of God. When we seek the mind of Christ, and seek to reproduce that mind in our own lives, seek to be possessed by it, then we shall gladly render back to God all life's riches which we have received from Him, and acknowledge in the true spirit of poverty that "all things come of Thee, O Lord, and of Thine own have we given Thee."

The world has got into a very ill way of thinking of God as *force*. Force seems in the popular mind to be the synonym of *power*. The only power that we understand is the power that *compels*, that secures the execution of its will by physical or moral constraint. With this conception of power in mind men are continually asking: "Why does not God do this or that? If he be God and wills goodness, why does He not execute goodness, use power to accomplish it?"

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It ought to be unnecessary to point out that such a conception of power is quite foreign to the Christian conception of God. Goodness that is compulsory is not goodness. Human legislation, in its enforcement of law, looks not to the production of goodness but to the production of order, a quite different thing. But God's heart is set upon the sanctification of His children and is satisfied with nothing less than that. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." But sanctification cannot be compelled. The divine method is, that "when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Through this method we "were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." The result is not that we are compelled to obey, but that "the love of Christ constraineth us." The account of the apostolic authority is not that it is a commission to rule the universal Church, but "now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

The study of this divine method should put us on the right track in the attempt to estimate the nature of sanctity and the results we may expect from it. We shall expect nothing of spiritual value from force. We shall be quite prepared to turn away from the governing parties in Jerusalem as from those who have repudiated the divine method and are therefore useless for the divine ends. We shall turn rather to those who gather about the temple and there, in a life of prayer and meditation, wait for the redemption. It is to these, who are the real temple of the Lord, that the Lord "shall come suddenly," that the manifestation of God will be made. And their hearts will overflow with joy as they behold the fulfilment of the promises of God.

The power of God is the power of love; and it is that love, and that love alone, that has won the victories of God. It is a very slow method, men say. No doubt. But it is the only method that has any success. The method of force seems effective; but its triumphs are illusory. Force cannot make men love, it can only make them hate. The world is being won to God by the love of God manifested in Christ Jesus our Lord. And it is as well to remember, when we are tempted to complain of the slowness of the process, that the slowness is ours, not God's. The process is slow because men will not consent to become the instruments of God's love for the world, will not transmit the crucified love of God's Son to their fellows. They continually, in their impatience, revert to force of some sort, for the attainment of spiritual ends. They become the tools of all sorts of secular ambitions which promise support in return for their co-operation. And the result may be read by any one not blinded by prejudice

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in the futility and incompetence of modern religions of all sorts. It is seen perhaps most of all in the pride of opinion which keeps the Christian world in a fragmentary condition, and which approaches the undoing of the sin of a divided Christendom with the preliminary announcement that no separated body must be required to admit that it has been in the wrong. Human disregard of the divine method of love and humility can hardly go farther; and the only practical result that can be expected to follow is such as followed from the negotiations of Herod and Pontius Pilate—a new Crucifixion of the Ever-sacrificed Christ.

We have risen to the divine method when we have learned to rely for spiritual results upon God alone. Then is revealed to us the power of sanctity. We turn over the pages of the lives of the saints, of those who have been great in the Kingdom of God, and we are struck by the growing influence of these men and women. They are simple men and women whose life's energy is concentrated on some special work; they are confessors or directors; they work among the very poor; they lead lives of retirement in Religious Houses; they are preachers of the Gospel; they are missionaries. The one thing that they appear to have in common is utter consecration to the work in hand. And we see, it may be with some wonder, that as they become more and more absorbed in their special work, they become more and more centres of influence. Without at all willing it they draw people about them, become centres of influences, arouse interest, become widely known. In short, they are, without willing it, centres of energy. Of what energy? Obviously, of the energy of love: the love of God manifested in them draws men to God. The man at whose disposal is unlimited force compels men to do his will; but he draws no one to him except the hypocrite and the sycophant who expect to gain something by their servility. The saint draws men, not to himself, but to God; for obviously it is not his power but God's power that is being manifested through him.

Unless we are very unfortunate we all know people whose attractiveness is the attractiveness of simple goodness. They are not learned nor influential nor witty nor clever, but we like to be with them. When we are asked why, we can only explain it by the attractiveness of their Christlikeness. What we gain from intercourse with them is spiritual insight and power. Their influence might be described as sacramental: they are means our Blessed Lord uses to impart Himself. They are so filled with the mind of Christ that they easily show Him to the world; and withal, quite unconsciously. For great love is possible only where there is great humility.

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And this power of sanctity which is the outcome of union with God is a permanent acquisition to the Kingdom of God. God's Kingdom is ultimately a Kingdom of saints. The sphere of God's self-manifestation in human life increases ever as the saints increase; and the power of sanctity necessarily remains while the saint remains, that is, forever. The saint remains a permanent organ of the Body of Christ, a perdurable instrument of the divine love. To speak humanly, the more saints there are, the more the love of God can manifest itself; the wider its influence on humanity. And the greater the Saint, that is, the nearer the Saint approaches the perfection of God, to which he is called—Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect—the more influential he must be; that is the more perfectly he will show the divine likeness and transmit the divine influence. When we think of the power of the saints as intercessors that is what actually we are thinking of,—the perfection of their understanding of the mind of Christ.

But to return to this world and to the gathering in the temple on the day of the Purification. These are they in whom the hope of Israel rests. Israel is not a failure because it has brought forth these. God's work through the centuries has not come to naught because in these there is the possibility of a new beginning. The consummate flower of Israel's life is the Blessed Mother through whom God becomes man; and these who meet her in the temple are the representatives of those hidden ones in Israel who will be the field wherein the seed of the Word can be sown and where it will bring forth fruit an hundredfold. Jesus, this Child, is God made man; and these around Him to-day, Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna, are those who will receive His love and will show its power in the universe forever.

And so it will remain always; the good ground wherein the seed may be sown and bring forth unto eternal life is the spiritual nature of man, made ready by humility and love,—“In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.” In the quietness that waits for God to act, the confidence that knows that He will act when the time comes. It is well if our aspiration is to be of the number of those who live lives hid with Christ in God; who are seeking nothing but that the love of God may be shed abroad in their hearts; who are “constrained” by nothing but the love of Jesus. It is true that this simplicity of motive and aim will bring it about that our lives will be hidden lives, lives of which the world will take no note. We may be quite sure that none of the rulers of Israel thought much about old Simeon who passed his time praying in the temple. And if we want to be known of rulers it is doubtless a mistake to take the road that Simeon followed. But the reward of that way was that he saw “the Lord's Christ,” that it was permitted him to take in his arms Incarnate God, and then, in his rapture, to sing *Nunc Dimittis*.

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We cannot travel two roads at once. When the Holy Family goes out from the temple it can go, if it will, to the palace of Herod, or it can go back to Bethlehem. It cannot go both ways and we know the way that it took. And we in our self-examination to-night can see two roads stretching out before us. We can go the way of the world, the way that seeks (whether it finds or no) popularity and prominence, or we can join the Holy Family and in company with Jesus and Mary and Joseph go back to the quietness and hiddenness of the House of Bread where the saints dwell. With them, sheltered by the Sacrifice of Jesus and the prayers of Mary and Joseph we can wait for the Redemption in the full manifestation of the life of God in us, and for the time when the love of God shall be fully “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given us.”

O Sion, ope thy temple-gates;
See, Christ, the Priest and Victim, waits—
Let lifeless shadows flee:
No more to heaven shall vainly rise
The ancient rites—a sacrifice
All pure and perfect, see.

Behold, the Maiden knowing well
The hidden Godhead that doth dwell
In him her infant Son:
And with her Infant, see her bring
The doves, the humble offering
For Christ, the Holy One.

Here, all who for his coming sighed
Behold him, and are satisfied—
Their faith the prize hath won:
While Mary, in her breast conceals
The holy joys her Lord reveals,
And ponders them alone.

Come, let us tune our hearts to sing
The glory of our God and King,
The blessed One and Three:
Be everlasting praise and love
To him who reigns in heaven above,
Through all eternity.

PART TWO

CHAPTER X

EGYPT

The angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt.

S. Matt. II, 13.

Deliver us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, from all evils past, present, and to come: and at the intercession for us of Blessed Mary who brought forth God and our Lord, Jesus Christ; and of the holy apostles Peter, and Paul, and Andrew; and of blessed Ambrose Thy confessor, and bishop, together with all Thy saints, favorably give peace in our days, that, assisted by the help of Thy mercy, we may ever be both delivered from sin, and safe from all turmoil. Fulfil this, by Him, with Whom Thou livest blessed, and reignest God, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.

AMBROSIAN.

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Those who live in intimate union with God, the peace of whose lives is untroubled by the constant irruption of sin, are peculiarly sensitive to that mode of the divine action that we call supernatural. I suppose that it is not that God wishes to reveal Himself to souls only at crises of their experience or under exceptional conditions, but that only souls of an exceptional spiritual sensitivity are capable of this sort of approach. Communications of the divine will through dream or vision or inner voice are the accompaniment of sanctity; one may almost say that they are the normal means in the case of advanced sanctity. Most of us are too much immersed in the world, are too much the slaves of material things, to be open to this still, small voice of revelation. Our eyes are dimmed by the garish light of the world, and our ears dulled by its clamour, so that our powers of spiritual perception are of the slightest. This is quite intelligible; and we ought not to fall into the mistake of assuming that our undeveloped spirituality is normal, and that what does not happen to us is inconceivable as having happened at all. If we want to know the truth about spiritual phenomena we shall put ourselves to school to those whose spiritual natures have attained the highest development and in whose experience spiritual phenomena are of almost daily happening.

To the man "whose talk is of oxen," whose whole life is absorbed in the study of material things, a purely spiritual manifestation comes as a surprise. His instinctive impulse is to deny its reality as a thing obviously impertinent to his understanding of life. But one whose life is based on spiritual postulates, who is, however feebly, attempting to shape life in accordance with spiritual principles, though he may never have attained anything that can be interpreted as a distinct revelation from God by vision or voice or otherwise, yet must he by the very basic assumptions of his life be ready to regard such manifestations of God as intelligible, and indeed to be expected. So far from regarding divine interventions in life as impossible, we shall regard the Christian life which has no experience of them as abnormal, as not having realised its inheritance. The degree and kind of such intervention in life will vary; but it is the fact of the intervention that is important: the mode in a special case will be determined by the needs of that case. As we think along these lines we reach the conclusion that what we call the supernatural is not the unnatural or the abnormal, but is a higher mode of the natural.

We are not surprised therefore to find that those whose spiritual development was such as to make it possible for God to choose them to fulfil special offices in relation to the Incarnation; who could be chosen to be, in the one case, the Mother of God-incarnate, and in the other, to be the guardian of the divine Child and His Blessed Mother, have the divine will in regard to the details of the trust committed to

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them, imparted to them in vision and in dream. So far from such vision and dream suggesting to us “a mythical element” in the Gospel narratives, they rather confirm our faith in that they harmonize with our instinctive conclusions as to what would be natural under the circumstances. We are prepared to be told that at this crisis in the Holy Child’s life “the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.”

Thus early in our Lord’s life is the element of tragedy introduced. The Incarnation of God stirs the diabolic powers, the rulers of “this darkness” to excited activity. The companion picture of the Nativity, of the Holy Child lying in Mary’s arms, of the wondering shepherds, of the Magi from a far country,—the shadow of all this idyllic beauty is the massacre of the Innocents, the wailing of Rachel for her children. It is, as it were, the opening of a new stage in the world-old conflict where the powers of evil appear to have the advantage and can show the bodies of murdered infants as the trophies of their victory.

But are we to think of the death of a child as a disaster? Has any actual victory redounded to the Prince of Power of the Air? One understands of course the grief and sense of loss that attends the death of any child, the breaking of the dreams which had gathered about its future. What the father and the mother dreamed over the cradle and planned for the future does not come to pass—all that is true. But in a consideration of the broader interests involved, does not the death of a baby have a meaning far deeper than a disappointment of hopes and dreams? It is true, is it not? that the coming of the child brought enrichment into the life of its parents? There was a new love born for this one child which is not the common property of all the children of the family, but is the peculiar possession of this child and its parents. Life—the life of the parents—is better and nobler by virtue of this love. They understand this, because when they stand by the side of the child’s coffin they never feel that it had been better that this child had not come into existence. And more than that: as they commit this fragile body to the grave they know that there is no real sense in which they can say that they have lost this child. Rather, the child is a perpetual treasure, for the moment contemplated through tears, but presently to be thought of with unclouded joy. It is so wonderful a thing to think of this pure soul caught back to God; to think of it growing to spiritual maturity in God’s very presence; to think of it following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Yes: to think of it also as our child still, with our love in its heart, knowing that it has a

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father and a mother on earth, and, that, just because of its early death, it can be to them, what otherwise they would have been to it—the guard and helper of their Jives. In God's presence are the souls of children as perpetual intercessors for those whom they have left on earth; and they may well rejoice before God in that what appeared the tragedy of their death was in fact a recall from the field of battle before the testing of their life was made. We wept as over an irreparable loss,

While into nothingness crept back a host
Of shadows unexplored, of sins unsinned.

The artists have imagined the souls of those who first died for Jesus attending Him on the way to Egypt as a celestial guard. In any case we are certain that the angels who watched about Him so closely all His life were with the Holy Family as they set out upon the way of exile. It would have been a wearisome march but that Jesus was there. His presence lightened all the toils of the desert way. Egypt, their place of refuge, would not have seemed to them what it seems to us, a land of wonder, of marvellous creations of human skill and intelligence, but a place of banishment from all that was dear, from the ties of home and religion. The religion which lay wrapped in the Holy Child was to break down barriers and hindrances to the worship of God; but the time was not yet. For them still the Holy Land, Jerusalem, the Temple, were the place of God's manifestation, and all else the dwelling place of idols. They must have shuddered in abhorrence at those strange forms of gods which rose about them on every hand. We cannot ourselves fail to draw the contrast between the statues which filled the Egyptian sanctuaries and before which all Egypt, rich and poor, mighty and humble, prostrated themselves, and this Child sleeping on Mary's breast. The imagination of the Christian community later caught this contrast and embodied it in the legend that when Jesus crossed the border of Egypt, all the idols of the land of Egypt fell down.

We cannot follow the thought of the Blessed Mother through these strange scenes and the experiences of these days. No doubt in the Jewish communities already flourishing in Egypt there would be welcome and the means of livelihood. But there would be perplexing questions to one whose habit it was to keep all things which concerned her strange Child hidden in her heart, the subject of constant meditation. Why, after the divine action which had been so constant from His conception to His birth, and in the circumstances which attended His birth, this reversal, this defeat and flight? Why after Bethlehem, Egypt? Why after Gabriel, Herod?

It brings us back again to the primary fact that the Incarnation is essentially a stage in a battle, and that the nature of God's battles is such that He constantly appears to lose them. He "goes forth as a giant to run His course"; but the eyes of man cannot see the giant—they see only a Babe laid in a manger. We are tricked by our notion of what is powerful.

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"They all were looking for a king
To slay their foes and lift them high;
Thou cam'st, a little baby thing
That made a woman cry."

The battle presents itself to us as a demand that we choose, that we take sides. The demand of Christ is that we associate ourselves with Him, or that we define our position as on the other side. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God" is a saying that is true when reversed: The friendship of God is enmity with the world. An open disclosure of the friendship of God sets all the powers of the world against us. This may be uncomfortable; but there does not appear to be any way of avoiding the opposition.

Our Lord, in His Incarnation, not only stripped Himself of His glory, took the servant form, and in doing so deliberately deprived Himself of certain means which would have been vastly influential in dealing with men, but He also declined, in assuming human nature, to assume it under conditions which would have conferred upon Him any adventitious advantage in the prosecution of His work. He would display to men neither divine nor human glory: He would have no aid from power or position, from wealth or learning. He undertook His work in the strength of a pure humanity united with God. He declined all else. And He found that almost the first event of His life was to be driven into exile.

And they who are associated with Him necessarily share His fortunes. Unless they will abandon the Child, Mary and Joseph must set out on the desert way. They had no doubt much to learn; but what is important is not the size or amount of what we learn, but the learning of it. When we are called, as they were, to leave all for Christ, it often turns out as hard, oftentimes harder, to leave property as riches; and the reason is that what we ultimately are leaving is neither poverty nor riches, but self: and self to us is always a "great possession."

Therein, I suppose, lies the solution of the problem of the relation of property and Christianity in the common life. Idleness is sin; every one is bound to some useful labour, no matter what his material resources may be. And if we work for our living, if our labour is to be such as will support us, then there at once arises the problem of possessions. Useful, steady labour will ordinarily produce more than "food and raiment." Under present social arrangements accumulated property is handed on to heirs. A man naturally wants to make some provision for his family. Or he finds himself in possession of considerable wealth and the impulse is to spend in luxuries of one sort or another,—modern invention has put endless means of ministering to physical or aesthetic comfort within his reach. He can have a motor car, a country house, an expensive library; he can have beautiful works of art. And then he is confronted with the picture of the Holy Family which can never have lived much beyond the poverty line. He realises the nature of our Lord's life of poverty and ministry. And though the plain man may not feel that he can go very far in imitating this life, he does feel that there is a

splendour of achievement in those who take our Lord at His word and sell all to follow Him.

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But the literal abandonment of life to the ideal of poverty is clearly not what our Lord contemplated for the universal practice of His followers. He nowhere indicates that all gainful labour is to be abandoned, or that having gained enough for food and raiment we are to idle thereafter, or even give ourselves to some ungainful work. The Kingdom of heaven does not appear to be society organised on the lines of socialism or otherwise. Our Lord contemplated life going on as it is, only governed by a new set of motives. It has as the result of the acceptance of the Gospel a new Orientation; and as a result of that it will view "possessions" in a new way. The acceptance of the Gospel means the self surrendered utterly to the will of God, and all that self possesses held at the disposal of that will. We may expect that God's will for us will be manifested in the events of life and its opportunities, and we shall hold ourselves alert and ready to embrace that will. It may be that the call will come to sell all, and we need to beware lest the thoroughness of the demand terrify us into the repudiation of our Lord's service; lest the thought of the sacrificed possessions send us away sorrowing. Ordinarily the call is less searching than that; or perhaps the mercy of God spares us from demands that would be beyond our strength. In any case, the truly consecrated self will regard luxury as a dangerous thing, replete with entanglements of all kinds, that it were well to avoid at the expense of any sacrifice. One does well to hold "possessions" in a very loose grip, lest the hold be reversed, and we become their servants rather than they ours. And it is well to emphasise again that the mere size of possessions is of small importance. There is a not very rational tendency to think of this as being a matter of millions, for the man of moderate income to think that there is no problem for him. The problem is as pressing for him as for any man. His minimum of comfort may be as tightly grasped as the other man's maximum. The only solution of the problem will be found in the converted self. Those who have really given themselves to God hold all things at His disposal. They are not thinking how they can indulge self but how they can glorify God.

Egypt to many will stand for another sort of abandonment which much perplexes the immature Christian: that is, the sort of isolation in which the new Christian is quite likely to find himself when first he attempts to put Christian principles into practice. We imagine one brought up in the ordinary mixed circles of society, where there are unbelievers and lax Christians mingled together, and where there are no principles firmly enough held to interfere with any sort of enjoyment of life which offers. Such an one—a young woman, let us suppose—in the Providence of God becomes converted to our Lord, and comes to see that the lax and indifferent Christian life she had been leading was a mere mockery of Christian living.

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Speedily does she find when she attempts to put into action the principles of living which she now understands to be the meaning of the Gospel that a breach of sympathy has been opened between her and her accustomed companions; that many things which she was accustomed to do in their society and which made for their common fund of amusement are no longer possible to her. The careless talk, the shameless dress, the gambling, the drinking, the Sunday amusements—such things as these she has thrown over; and she finds that with them she has thrown over the basis of intimacy with her usual companions. It is not that they are antagonistic but simply that their points of contact have ceased to exist. Her own inhibitions exclude her automatically from most of the activities of her social circle. She finds herself much alone. Her friends are sorry for her and think her foolish and try to win her back, but it is clear to her that she can only go back by going back from Christ.

This is the common case of the young whether boy or girl to-day, and the practical question is, Can they endure the isolation? It is easy to say: Let them make Christian friends; but that is not always practical, especially in the present state of the Church when there is no cohesion among its members, no true sense of constituting a Brotherhood, of being members of the same Body. We have to admit that the attempt to hold a high standard usually ends in failure, at least the practical failure of a weak compromise. But there are characters that are strong enough to face the isolation and to readjust life on the basis of the new principles and to mould it in accord with the new ideals. The period of this readjustment is one of severe testing of one's grasp on principles and one's strength of purpose. But the battle once fought out we attain a new kind of freedom and expansion of life. We look back with some amusement at the old life and the things that fascinated us in the days of our spiritual unconsciousness much as we look back at the games that amused us in our childish hours. The desert of Egypt that we entered with trepidation and fearful hearts turns out not to be so dreadful as we imagined, and indeed the flowers spring up under our feet as we resolutely tread the desert way.

These trials must be the daily experience of those who attempt to put their religion into practice, and these perplexities must assail them so long as the Christian community continues to show its present social incompetence; so long, that is, as we attempt to make the basis of our social action something other than the principles of the spiritual life. A Christian society, one would naturally think, would spring out of the possession of Christian ideals; and doubtless it would if these ideals were really dominant in life, and not a sort of ornament applied to it. Any social circle contains men and women of various degrees of intellectual development and of varying degrees

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of experience of life; what holds them together is the pursuit of common objects, the objects that we sum up as amusement. Now the Christians in a community certainly have a common object, the cultivation of the spiritual life through the supernatural means offered by the Church of God. One would think that this object would have a more constraining power than the attractions of motoring or golf; but in fact we know that this is not so save in individual cases. There is not, that is to say, anywhere visible a Christian community which is wrought into a unity by the solidifying forces of its professed ideals. Those very people whose paths converge week by week until they meet at this altar, as they leave the altar, follow diverging paths and live in isolation for the rest of their time.

One of the constant problems of the Church is that of the loss of those who have for a time been associated with it—of those who have for a time seemed to recognise their duty to God, and their privileges as members of His Son. They drift away into the world. We pray and meditate and worry over this and try to invent some machinery which will overcome it. But it cannot be overcome by machinery, especially by the sort of machinery which consists in transferring the amusements that people find in the world bodily into the Church itself. It cannot and will not be overcome until a Christian society has been created which is bound together by the interests of the Kingdom of God, and in which those interests are so predominant as to throw into the shade and practically annihilate other interests. And especially must such spiritual interests be strong enough to break down all social barriers so that the cultured and refined can find a common ground with the uneducated and socially untrained in the spiritual privileges that they share in common. When the banker can talk with his chauffeur of their common experience in prayer, and the banker's wife and her cook can confer on their mutual difficulties in making a meditation, then we shall have got within sight of a Christian society; but at present, while these have no spiritual contact, it is not within sight. The primitive Christian community in Jerusalem made the attempt at having all things in common. Their mistake seems to have been that they, like other and more modern people, by "all things" understood money. You cannot build any society which is worth the name on money, a Church least of all. It is unimportant whether a man is rich or poor; what is important is his spiritual accomplishment: and it is common spiritual aims and accomplishments which should make up the "all things" which possessed in common will form the basis of an enduring unity. But not until accomplishment becomes the supreme interest of life can we expect to get out of the impasse in which we at present find ourselves; in which, that is, the person can be converted to Christianity and enter into union with God in Christ and become a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, and wake to find himself isolated from his old circle by his profession of new principles; but not, by his new principles, truly united to his fellow citizens in the Kingdom of God! One is tempted to write, What a comedy; but before one can do so, realises that it is in fact a tragedy!

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Mother of God—oh, rare prerogative;
Oh, glorious title—what more special grace
Could unto thee thy dear Son, dread God, give
To show how far thou dost all creatures pass?
That mighty power within the narrow fold
Did of thy ne'er polluted womb remain,
Whom, whiles he doth th' all-ruling Sceptre hold,
Not earth, nor yet the heavens can contain;
Thou in the springtide of thy age brought'st forth
Him who before all matter, time and place,
Begotten of th' Eternal Father was.
Oh, be thou then, while we admire thy worth
A means unto that Son not to proceed
In rigour with us for each sinful deed.

John Brekeley, Priest (Vere Lawrence Anderton, S.J.) 1575-1643

PART TWO

CHAPTER XI

NAZARETH

And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was
subject unto them.

S. Luke II, 51.

The Holy Church acknowledges and confesses the pure Virgin Mary as Mother of God through whom has been given unto us the bread of immortality and the wine of consolation. Give blessings then in spiritual song.

ARMENIAN.

After the rapid succession of fascinating pictures which are etched for us in the opening chapters of the Gospel there follows a space of about twelve years of which we are told nothing. The fables which fill the pages of the Apocryphal Gospels serve chiefly to emphasise the difference between an inspired and an uninspired narrative. The human imagination trying to develop the situation suggested by the Gospel and to fill in the unwritten chapters of our Lord's life betrays its incompetence to create a story of God Incarnate which shall have the slightest convincing power. These Apocryphal stories are immensely valuable to us as, by contrast, creating confidence in the story of Jesus as told by the Evangelists, but for nothing more.

We are left to use our own imagination in filling in these years of silence in our Lord's training; and we shall best use it, not by trying to imagine what may have occurred, but by trying to understand what is necessarily involved in the facts as we know them. We know that the home in Nazareth whither Mary and Joseph brought Jesus after the death of Herod permitted them to return from Egypt was the simple home of a carpenter. It would appear to have been shared by the children of Joseph, and our Lady would have been the house-mother, busy with many cares. We know, too, that under this commonplace exterior of a poor household there was a life of the spirit of far reaching significance. Mary was ceaselessly pondering many things—the significance of all those happenings which, as the years flowed on without any further supernatural intervention, must at times have seemed as though they were quite purposeless. Of course this could not have been a settled feeling, for the insight of her pure soul would have held her to the certainty that such actions of God as she had experienced would some day reveal the meaning which as yet lay hidden.

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In the meantime other things did not matter much, seeing she had Jesus, the object of endless love. Every mother dreams over the baby she cares for and looks out into the future with trembling hope; so S. Mary's thoughts would go out following the hints of prophecy and angelic utterances, unable to understand how the light and shadow which were mingled there could find fulfilment in her Child. But like any other mother the thought would come back to her present possession, the satisfaction of her heart that she had in Jesus. With the growth of Jesus there would come the unfolding of the answering love, which was but another mode in which the love of God she had experienced all her life was manifesting itself. Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and we are able to enter a little into the over-flowing love of Mary as she watched the advance, this unfolding from day to day. The wonder that was hers in guiding this mind and will, in teaching our Lord His first prayers, in telling Him the story of the people of whom He had assumed our nature! There was here no self-will, no resistance to guidance, no perversity to wound a mother's heart. In the training of an ordinary child there are from time to time hints of characteristics or tendencies which may develop later into spiritual or moral disaster. There are growls of the sleeping beast which make us tremble for the future: there are hours of agony when we think of the inevitable temptations which must be met, and suggestions of weakness which colour our imagination of the meeting of them with the lurid light of defeat. But as Mary watched the unfolding character of Jesus she saw nothing there that carried with it the least suggestion of evil growth in the future, no outcropping of hereditary sin or disordered appetite. A constantly unfolding intelligence, and growing interest in the things that most interested her, an eagerness to hear and to know of the will and love of the eternal Father, these are her joy. That would have been the centre—would it not?—of the unfolding consciousness of Jesus: the knowledge of the Father.

Training by love, so we might describe the life in the Home at Nazareth. And we must not forget the grave ageing figure who is the head of the household. *The Holy Family*—that was the perfect unity that their love created. There is a wonderful picture of these three by Sassaferato which catches, as no other Holy Family that I know of does, the meaning of their association. S. Mary whom the artistic imagination is so apt, after the Nativity, to transform into a stately matron, here still retains the note of virginity which in fact she never lost. It is the maiden-mother who stands by the side of the grave, elderly S. Joseph, the ideal workman, who is also the ideal guardian of his maiden-wife. And Jesus binds these two together and with them makes a unity, interpreting to us the perfection of family life.

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Family life is a tremendous test, it brings out the best and the worst of those who are associated in it. The ordinary restraints of social intercourse are of less force in the intimacy of family life: there is less need felt to watch conduct, or to mask what we know are our disagreeable traits. It is quite easy for character to deteriorate in the freedom of such intercourse. It is pretty sure to do so unless there is the constant pressure of principle in the other direction. The great safeguard is the sort of love that is based on mutual respect,—respect both for ourselves and for others. We talk a good deal as though love were always alike; as though the fact that a man and a woman love each other were always the same sort of fact. It does not require much knowledge of human nature or much reflection to convince us that that is not the case. Love is not a purely physical fact; and outside its physical implications there are many factors which may enter, whose existence constitute the *differentia* from case to case. It is upon these varying elements that the happiness of the family life depends. One of the most important is that character on either side shall be such as to inspire respect. Many a marriage goes to pieces on this rock; it is found that the person who exercised a certain kind of fascination shows in the intimacy of married life a character and qualities which are repulsive; a shallowness which inspires contempt, an egotism which is intolerable, a laxity in the treatment of obligations which destroys any sense of the stability of life. A marriage which does not grow into a relation of mutual honour and respect must always be in a state of unstable equilibrium, constantly subject to storms of passion, to suspicion and distrust.

And therefore such a marriage will afford no safe basis on which to build a family life. But without a stable family life a stable social and religious life is impossible. It is therefore no surprise to those who believe that the powers of evil are active in the world to find that the family is the very centre of their attack at the present time. The crass egotism lying back of so much modern teaching is nowhere more clearly visible than in the assertion of the right of self-determination so blatantly made in popular writings. By self-determination is ultimately meant the right of the individual to seek his own happiness in his own way, and to make pleasure the rule of his life. “The right to happiness” is claimed in utter disregard of the fact that the claim often involves the unhappiness of others. “The supremacy of love,” meaning the supremacy of animalism, is the excuse for undermining the very foundations of family life. No obligation, it appears, can have a binding force longer than the parties to it find gratification in it. Personal inclination and gratification is held sufficient ground for action whose consequences are far from being personal, which, in fact, affect the sane and healthy state of society as a whole.

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The decline of a civilisation has always shown itself more markedly in the decline of the family life than elsewhere. The family, not the individual, is the basis of the social state, and no amount of theorising can make the fact different. Whatever assails the integrity of the family assails the life of the state, and no single family can be destroyed without society as a whole feeling the effect. "What," it is asked, "is to be done? If two people find that they have blundered, are they to go on indefinitely suffering from the result of their blunder? If an immature boy or girl in a moment of passion make a mistake as to their suitability to live together, are they to be compelled to do so at the expense of constant unhappiness?"

It would seem obvious to say that justice requires that those who make blunders should take the consequences of them; that those who create a situation involving suffering should do the suffering themselves and not attempt to pass it on to others. It is not as though the consequences of the act can be avoided; they cannot. What happens is that the incidence of them is shifted. It is a part of the brutal egotism of divorce that it is quite willing to shift the incidence of the suffering that it has created on to the lives of wholly innocent people; in many cases upon children, in all cases upon society at large. For it is necessary to emphasize the fact that society is a closely compact body: so interwoven is life with life that if one member suffer the other members suffer with it. Breaches of moral order are not individual matters but social. This truth is implied in society's constantly asserted right to regulate family relations in the general interest even after it has ceased to think of such relations as having any spiritual significance. We need to-day a more vivid sense of the *community* lest we shall see all sense of a common life engulfed in the rising tide of individual anarchism. We need the assertion in energetic form of the right of the community as supreme over the right of the individual. We must deny the right of the individual to pursue his own way and his own pleasure at the expense of the rights of others. And to his insolent question, "Why should I suffer in an intolerable situation?" we must plainly answer: "Because you are responsible for the situation, and it is intolerable that you should be permitted to throw off the results of your wickedness or your stupidity upon other and innocent people."

And it is quite clear that should society assert its pre-eminent right in unmistakable form and make it evident that it does not propose to tolerate the results of the egotistic nonsense of self-determination and the right of every one to live his own life, the evils of divorce and of shattered families would presently shrink to relatively small proportions. The present facility of divorce encourages thoughtless and unsuitable marriages in the first place; and in the second place,

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encourages the resort to divorce in circumstances of family disturbance which would speedily right themselves in the present as they have done in the past if those concerned knew that their happiness and comfort for years compelled an adjustment of life. When as at present any one who loses his temper can rush off to a court and get a marriage dissolved for some quite trivial reason, there is small encouragement to practice self-control. If a man and woman know that the consequences of conduct must be faced by them, and cannot be avoided by thrusting them upon others, they will no doubt in the course of time learn to exercise a little self-control.

The family is the foundation of the state because, among other things, it is the natural training place of citizens: no public training in schools and camps can for a moment safely be looked to as a substitute or an equivalent of wholesome family influence. If the family does not make good citizens we cannot have good citizens. The family too is at the basis of organised religious life; if the family does not make good Christians we shall not have good Christians. The Sunday School and the Church societies are poor substitutes for the religious influence of the family, as the school and the camp are for its social interests.

One is inclined to stress the obvious failure of the family to fulfil its allotted functions in the teaching of religion as the root difficulty that the Christian religion has to encounter and the most comprehensive cause of its relative failure in modern life. The responsibility for the religious and moral training of children rests squarely upon those who have assumed the responsibility of bringing them into the world, and it cannot be rightly pushed off on to some one else. To the protest of parents that they are incompetent to conduct such training, the only possible reply is a blunt, "Whose fault is that?" If you have been so careless of the fundamental responsibilities of life, you are incompetent to assume a relation which of necessity carries such responsibility with it. It is no light matter to have committed to you the care of an immortal soul whose eternal future may quite well be conditioned on the way in which you fulfil your trust. It would be well as a preliminary to marriage to take a little of the time ordinarily given to its frivolous accompaniments and seriously meditate upon the words of our Lord which seem wholly appropriate to the circumstance: "Whoso shall cause to stumble one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea." It is the careless and incompetent training of children which in fact "causes them to stumble" when the presence of word and example would have held them straight. It has been (to speak personally) the greatest trial of my priesthood that out of the thousands of children I have dealt with, in only rare cases have I had the entire support of the family; and I have always considered that I was fortunate when I met with no interference and was given an indifferent tolerance. It is heart-breaking to see years of careful work brought to naught (so far as the human eye can see: the divine eye can see deeper) by the brutal materialism of a father and the silly worldliness of a mother.

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The interplay of lives in a family should be consciously directed by those who control them to the cultivation, to the bringing out of the best that is in them. Education means the drawing out of the innate powers of the personality and the training of them for the highest purposes. It is the deliberate direction of personal powers to the highest ends, the discipline of them for the performance of those ends. The life of a child should be shaped with reference to its final destiny from the moment of its birth. It should be surrounded with an atmosphere of prayer and charity which would be the natural atmosphere in which it would expand as it grows, and in terms of which it would learn to express itself as soon as it reaches sufficient maturity to express itself at all. It should become familiar with spiritual language and modes of action, and meet nothing that is inharmonious with these. But we know that the education of the Christian child is commonly the opposite of all this. It learns little that is spiritual. When it comes to learn religion it is obviously a matter of small importance in the family life; if there is any expression of it at all, it is one that is crowded into corners and constantly swamped by other interests which are obviously felt to be of more importance. Too often the spiritual state of the family may be summed up in the words of the small boy who condensed his observation of life into the axiom: "Men and dogs do not go to Church." In such an atmosphere the child finds religion and morals reduced to a system of repression. God becomes a man with a club constantly saying, Don't! He grows to think that he is a fairly virtuous person so long as he skilfully avoids the system of taboos wherewith he feels that life is surrounded, and fulfils the one positive family law of a religious nature, that he shall go to Sunday School until he is judged sufficiently mature to join the vast company of men and dogs.

Nothing very much can come of negatives. Religion calls for positive expression; and it is not enough that the child shall find positive expression once a week in the church; he must find it every day in the week in the intimacy of the family. He must find that the principles of life which are inculcated in the church are practiced by his father and his mother, his brother and his sister, or he will not take them seriously. If he is conscious of virtue and religious practice as repression, a sort of tyranny practiced on a child by his elders, his notion of the liberty of adult life will quite naturally be freedom to break away from what is now forced upon him into the life of self-determination and indifference to things spiritual that characterises the adult circle with which he is familiar.

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But consider, by contrast, those rare families where the opposite of all this is true; where there is the peace of a recollected life of which the foundations are laid in constant devotion to our Lord. There you will find the nearest possible reproduction of the life of the Holy Family in Nazareth. Because the life of the family is a life of prayer, there will you find Jesus in the midst of it. There you will find Mary and Joseph associated with its life of intercession. In such a family the expression of a religious thought will never be felt as a discord. The talk may quite naturally at any moment turn on spiritual things. There are families in which one feels that one must make a careful preparation for the introduction of a spiritual allusion: one does it with a sense of danger, much as one might sail through a channel strewn with mines. There are other families in which one has no hesitation in speaking of prayer, of sacraments, of spiritual actions, as things with which all are familiar in practice, and are as natural as food and drink. In this atmosphere it produces no smile to say, "I am going to slip into the Church and make my meditation"; or, "I shall be a little late to-night as I am making my confession on my way home." Religion in such a circle has not incurred contempt through familiarity: it still remains a great adventure, the very greatest of all indeed; but it is an adventure in the open, full of joy and gladness.

The Holy Family was a family that worked hard. It is no doubt true that our Lord learned his foster-father's trade, so that those who knew him later on, or heard His preaching, asked, "Is not this the carpenter?" But the Holy Family was a radiant centre of joy and peace because Jesus was in the midst of it. Where Jesus dwells there is the effect of his indwelling in the spiritual gladness that results. Mary was never too busy for her religious duties nor Joseph too tired with his week's work to get up on the Sabbath for whatever services in honour of God the Synagogue offered. They were perhaps conscious as the Child "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" of a spiritual influence that flowed from Him, and sweetened and lightened the life of the home. They were not conscious that in His Person God was in the midst of them; but that is what we can (if we will) be conscious of. We are heirs of the Incarnation, and God is in the midst of us; and especially does Jesus wish to dwell, as He dwelt in Nazareth, in the midst of the family. He wishes to make every household a Holy Family. He is in the midst of it in uninterrupted communion with the soul of the baptised child; and the father and mother, understanding that their highest duty and greatest privilege is to watch and foster the spiritual unfolding of the child's life in such wise that Jesus may never depart from union with it, become as Joseph and Mary in their ministry to it. There is nothing more heavenly than such a charge; there is nothing more beautiful than such a family life.

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There is often a pause in God's work between times of great activity—a time of retreat, as it seems, which is a rest from what has preceded and a preparation for what is to come. Such a pause were these years at Nazareth in the life of Blessed Mary. The time from the Annunciation to the return from Egypt was a time of deep emotion, of spirit-shaking events. Later on there were the trials of the years of the ministry, culminating in Calvary. But these years while Jesus was growing to manhood in the quietness of the home were years of unspeakable privilege and peace. The daily association with the perfect Child, the privilege of watching and guarding and ministering to Him, these days of deepening spiritual union with Him, although much that was happening to the mother was happening unconsciously,—were strengthening her grasp on ultimate reality, so that she issued with perfect strength to meet the supreme tragedy of her life. How wonderful God must have seemed to her in those thirty years of peace! To all of us God is thus wonderful in quiet hours; and the quiet hours are much the more numerous in most of our lives. But have we all learned to use these hours so that we may be ready to meet the hours of testing which shall surely come? No matter how quiet the valley of our life, some day the pleasant path will lift, and we must climb the hilltop where rises the Cross. It will not be intolerable, if the quiet years have been spent in Nazareth with Jesus and Mary and Joseph.

Most holy, and pure Virgin, Blessed Mayd,
Sweet Tree of Life, King David's Strength and Tower,
The House of Gold, the Gate of Heaven's power,
The Morning-Star whose light our fall hath stay'd.

Great Queen of Queens, most mild, most meek, most wise,
Most venerable, Cause of all our joy,
Whose cheerful look our sadness doth destroy,
And art the spotlesse Mirror to man's eyes.

The Seat of Sapience, the most lovely Mother,
And most to be admired of thy sexe,
Who mad'st us happy all, in thy reflexe,
By bringing forth God's Onely Son, no other.

Thou Throne of Glory, beauteous as the moone,
The rosie morning, or the rising sun,
Who like a giant hastes his course to run,
Till he hath reached his two-fold point of noone.

How are thy gifts and graces blazed abro'd,
Through all the lines of this circumference,
T'imprint in all purged hearts this Virgin sence
Of being Daughter, Mother, Spouse of God?



Ben Jonson, 1573-1637.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XII

THE TEMPLE

And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Know ye not that I must be in my Father's house?

S. Luke II, 49.

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We give thanks unto thee, O Lord, who lovest mankind, Thou benefactor of our souls and bodies, for that Thou hast this day vouchsafed to feed us with Thy Heavenly Mysteries; guide our path aright, establish us all in Thy fear, guard our lives, make sure our steps through the prayers and supplications of the glorious Mother of God and Ever Virgin Mary and of all Thy saints.

RUSSIAN.

The time was come when by the law of His people the Boy Jesus must assume the duties of an adult in the exercise of His religion. Therefore His parents took Him with them to Jerusalem that He might participate in the celebration of the Passover. It would be a wonderful moment in the life of any intelligent Hebrew boy when for the first time he came in contact with the places and scenes which were so familiar to him in the story of his nation's past; and we can imagine what would have been the special interest of the Child Jesus who would have been so thoroughly taught in the Old Testament Scriptures, and who would have felt an added interest in the places He was now seeing because of their association with His great ancestor, David. Still His chief interest was in the religion of His people, and it was the temple where the sacrificial worship of God was centred that would have for Him the greatest attraction. This was His "Father's House," and here He Himself felt utterly at home. We are not surprised to be told that He lingered in these courts.

"And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother knew it not." They had perfect confidence in Jesus; and yet it seems strange that they should have assumed that He was somewhere about and would appear at the proper time. When the night drew on and the camp was set up there was no Child to be found. Then we imagine the distress, the trouble of heart, with which Mary and Joseph hurry back to Jerusalem and spend the ensuing days in seeking through its streets. We share something of our Lord's surprise when we learn that the temple was the last place that they thought of in their search. Did they think that Jesus would be caught by the life of the Passover crowds that filled the streets of Jerusalem? Did they think that it would be a child's curiosity which would hold him fascinated with the glittering toys of the bazaars? Did they think that He had mistaken the caravan and been carried off in some other direction and was lost to them forever? We only know that it was not till three days had passed that they thought of the temple and there found Him. "And when they saw Him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto Him, Son, why has thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Know ye not that I must be in my Father's house?"

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S. Mary and S. Joseph were proceeding on certain assumptions as to what Jesus would do which turned out to be untenable. It is one of the dangers of our religion—our personal religion—that we are apt to assume too much which in the testing turns out to be unfounded. We reach a certain stage of religious attainment, and then we assume that all is going well with us. When one asks a child how he is getting on he invariably answers: “I am all right.” And the adult often has the same childish confidence in an untested and unverified state of soul. We are “all right”; which practically means that we do not care to be bothered with looking into our spiritual state at all. We have been going on for years now following the rules that we laid down when we first realised that the being a Christian was a more or less serious matter. Nothing has happened in these years to break the placidity of our routine. There has never been any relapse into grievous sin; we have never felt any real temptation to abandon the practice of our religion. We run along as easily and smoothly as a car on well-laid rails. We are “all right.”

But in fact we are all wrong. We have lapsed into a state of which the ideal is purely static: an ideal of spiritual comfort as the goal of our spiritual experience here on earth. We have acquired what appears to be a state of equilibrium into which we wish nothing to intrude that would endanger the balance. We are, no doubt, quite unconsciously, excluding from life every emotion, every ambition, as well as every temptation, which appears to involve spiritual disturbance. But we need to be disturbed.

For the spiritual life is dynamic and not static; its ideal is motion and not rest. Rest is the quality of dead things, and particularly of dead souls. The weariness of the way, which is so obvious a phenomenon in the Christian life, is the infallible sign of lukewarmness. What we need therefore is to break with the assumption that we know all that it is necessary to know, and that we have done or are doing all that it is necessary to do. It is indeed the mark of an ineffective religion that the notion of necessity is adopted as its stimulus, rather than the notion of aspiration. The question, “Must I do this?” is a revelation of spiritual poverty and ineptitude. “I press on,” is the motto of a living religion.

Personal religion, therefore, needs constantly to be submitted to new tests, lest it lapse into an attitude of finality. Fortunately for us, God does not leave the matter wholly in our hands, but Himself, through His Providence, applies a wide variety of tests to us. It is often a bitter and disturbing experience to have our comfortable routine broken up and to find that we have quite miserably failed under very simple temptations. And the sort of failure I am thinking of is not so much the failure of sin as the failure of ideal. It is the case of those who think that they have satisfactorily worked

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out the problems of the spiritual life, and have reached a satisfactory adjustment of duty and practice, and then find that if the adjustment changes their practice falls off. The outer circumstances of life change and the change is followed by a readjustment of the inner life on a distinctly lower plane. It is revealed to us that the outer circumstances were controlling the spiritual practice, and not the practice dominating the circumstances. The ruling ideal was that of comfort, and under the new circumstances the spiritual ideal is lowered until it fits in with a new possibility of comfort in the altered circumstances. It is well to examine ourselves on these matters and to find what is the actual ruling motive in our religious practice.

We may have assumed that we have Jesus, when all the assumption meant was that we thought that He was somewhere about. After all, it will not aid us very much if He is "in the company," if we go on our day's journey without Him. It is a poor assumption to build life upon, that Jesus exists, or that He is in the Church, or that He is the Saviour. It is nothing to us unless He is *our* Saviour, unless He is personally present in us and with us. And it is not wise or safe to let this be a matter of assumption, even though the assumption rest on a perfectly valid experience in the past; we cannot live on history, not even on our own history. That Jesus is with us must be verified day by day, and we ought to go no day's journey without the certainty of His presence. We can best do that, when the circumstances of life permit, by a daily communion. There at the altar we meet Jesus and know that He is with us. When the circumstances of life do not permit, (and often they do, when we lazily think they do not) there are other modes of arriving at spiritual certainty.

It is quite easy to lose Jesus. He does not force His companionship upon us, but rather when we meet Him. "He makes as though he would go farther." He offers Himself to us; He never compels us to receive Him as a guest. And when we have in fact received Him, and asked Him to abide with us, He does not stay any longer than we want Him. We have to constrain Him. In other words, we lose Jesus, we lose the vitality of our spiritual life (though we may retain the routine practice of our religion), if we are not from day to day making it the most vital issue of our lives. That does not necessarily mean that we are spending more time on it than on anything else, but that we are putting it first in the order of importance in our lives and are sacrificing, if occasion arise, other things to it, rather than it to them. That a man loves his wife and child does not necessarily mean that he actually spends more time on them than he does on his business, but it does mean that they are more important in his life than his business, and if need arise it will be the business that is sacrificed to them and not they to the business. Spirituality is much less a matter of time than of energy. A wise director can guide a man to sanctity who will probably consecrate his Sunday, and give the director one half hour on week days to dispose of.

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To lose Jesus does not require the commission of great sin, as we count sin. The quite easiest way to lose Him is to forget Him and go about our business as though He did not exist. That is a frequent happening. For vast numbers Jesus does not exist except for an hour or so on Sunday. They give Him the formal homage of attendance at church on Sunday morning and then they go out and forget Him, not only for the rest of the week but for the rest of the day. The religion which thus reduces itself to a minimum of attendance at Mass on Sunday morning is surely not a religion from which much can be expected in the way of spiritual accomplishment. If it be true that there is a minimum of religious requirement which will ensure that we “go to heaven,” then that sort of religion may be useful; but I do not know that anywhere such a minimum *is* required. The statement that I find is “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” The outstanding characteristic of love is surely not niggardliness, but passionate self-giving. All things are forgiven, not to those who are careful to keep within the limits required, but to those who “love much.”

The study of many cases, the experience of over thirty years in the confessional, convinces me that the chief cause of spiritual failure among Christians is not the irresistible impact of temptation but the lack of spiritual vision. The average man or woman is not consciously going anywhere; but they are just keeping a rule which is the arbitrary exactment of God. It might just as well be some other rule. That is, in their minds, the practice of the spiritual life has no immediate ends; it is not productive of spiritual expansion; it is not a ladder set up on earth to reach heaven on which they are climbing ever nearer God, and on the way are catching ever broader visions of spiritual reality as they ascend. The knowledge and the love of God are to them phrases, not practical goals, invitations to paths of spiritual adventure. Hence, having no immediate ends to accomplish, they find the whole spiritual routine dull and unattractive and naturally tend to reduce it to a minimum. It is not at all surprising that in the end they drop religion altogether, as why should one keep on travelling a road that leads nowhere? How can one love and serve a Jesus whom one has lost?

The problem of personal religion is the problem of finding Jesus, of bringing life into a right relation to Him. The plain path is to follow the example of His parents who sought Him “sorrowing.” Sorrow for having lost Jesus is the true repentance. Repentance which springs from fear of consequences, or from disgust with our own incompetence and stupidity when we realise that we have made a spiritual failure of life, is an imperfect thing. True repentance has its origin in love and is therefore directed toward a person. It is the conviction that we have violated

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the love of our Father, our Saviour, our Sanctifier. Sorrow springing from love is sorrow “after a godly sort.” It is easy for us to drift into ways of carelessness and indifference which seem not to involve sin, to be no more than a decline from some preceding standard of practice which we conclude to have been unnecessarily strict; but the result is an increasing disregard of spiritual values, a growing obscuration of the divine presence in life. Then the day comes when some quite marked and positive spiritual failure, a failure of which we cannot imagine ourselves to have been guilty, when we were living in constant communion with our Lord, arouses us to the fact that for months our spiritual vitality has been declining and that we have ended in losing Jesus. It is a tremendous shock to find how fast and how far we have been travelling when we thought that we were only slightly relaxing an unnecessarily strict routine: that when we thought that we were but acting “in a common sense way,” we were in reality effecting a compromise with the world. Well is it then if the surprise of our disaster shocks us back to the recovery of what we have lost, if it send us into the streets of the city, sorrowing and seeking for Jesus.

Mere spiritual laziness is at the bottom of much failure in religion. There is no success anywhere in life save through the constant pressure of the will driving a reluctant and protesting set of nerves and muscles to their daily tasks. The day labourer comes home from his work with his muscular strength exhausted, but he has to go back to the same monotonous task on the morrow: his family has to be fed and clothed and he cannot permit himself to say, “I am tired and will stay away from work to-day.” The business or professional man comes back from his office with a wearied brain that makes any thought an effort, but he must take up the routine to-morrow; the pressure of competitive business does not permit him to work when and as much as he chooses. But the Christian who is engaged in the most important work that is carried on in this world, the work of preparing an immortal soul for an unending future, is constantly under the temptation “to take a day off”—to let down the standard of accomplishment till it ceases to interfere with the business or the pleasure of life; is constantly too tired or too busy to do this or that. In short, religion is apt to be treated in a manner that would ensure the bankruptcy of any material occupation in life. Why then should it not ensure spiritual bankruptcy?

Surely, to retain Jesus with us, to live in the intimacy of God, is the most pressingly important of our duties; it is worth any sort of expenditure of energy to accomplish it. And it cannot be accomplished without expenditure of energy. The view of religion which conceives it as a facile assent to certain propositions, the occasional and formal participation in certain actions, the more or less strict observance of certain rules

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of conduct, is so far from the fact that it is not worth discussing. Religion is the realised friendship of God; it is a personal relation of the deepest and purest sort; and, like all personal relations, is kept alive by the mutual activities of those concerned. The action of one party will not suffice to keep the relation in healthy state. The love of God itself will not suffice to maintain a being in holiness and carry him on to happiness who is himself quite indifferent to the entire spiritual transaction—whose attitude is that of one willing to be saved if he be not asked to take much trouble about it. That lackadaisical attitude can never produce any result in the spiritual order; it can only ensure the spiritual decline and death of one who has not thought it worth while to make an effort to live.

Jesus can be found; but the finding depends upon the method of the seeking. There are many men who claim, and quite honestly, to be in pursuit of truth: to find the truth is the end of all their efforts. Yet they do not succeed in finding it. Why is this? I think that the principal reason is that they are constituting themselves the judges of the truth; they first of all lay down certain rules which God must obey if He wishes them to believe in Him! They insist on having, before they will believe, a kind of evidence that is impossible of attainment. They assert that this or that is impossible, and the other thing incredible. They partially ascertain the laws that govern the material universe, and they deny to the Maker of the universe the power to act otherwise than in accord with so much of the order of nature as they have discovered! They deny to God the sort of personal action in this world that they themselves constantly exercise.

The method is not a method that can be hopeful of success. And it is worth noting that it is not a method that these same men followed in their investigations of the natural world. They have not accumulated information about natural law by first laying down rules as to how natural law must act, and refusing to listen to any evidence which does not fall in with these rules: rather, they have set themselves to observe how nature does act, and then deduced rules from their observation. Why not pursue the same method in religion? Why not in an humble spirit observe how God does act? Why start by saying, "Miracles do not happen?" Why reject as incredible the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection? Why not get a bigger notion of God than that of a mechanic running a machine, and think of Him as a Person dealing with persons? The relation of persons cannot be mechanical or predetermined; they are and must be free and spontaneous: they have their origin, not in the pressure of invariable law but in the impulse of love.

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Nor is the search for Jesus that is inspired by mere curiosity likely to be a success. There are many people who are curious about religion, and they want to know why we believe thus and so; and particularly why we act as we do. Why do you keep this day? What do you mean by this ceremony? Do you think that it is wrong to do this or that? Such people wander about observing; but their observation we understand is the observation of an idler who does not expect to be influenced by what he observes, but only to be amused. These are they who run after the latest thing in heresy, the newest thing in thought. What is observable about them is that they never seriously contemplate doing anything themselves. They are like those multitudes who followed our Lord about for awhile but were dispersed by the test of hard sayings.

But Jesus can be found. He is found of all those who seek Him humbly and sincerely, putting away self and desiring simply to be led: who do not challenge Him with Pilate's scornful, "What is truth?" but rather say, "Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief." He is easily found of those who know where to look for Him. There is no mystery about that, —He will certainly be in His Father's House. The surprise of Joseph and Mary that He had thus dealt with them is answered by Jesus' surprise that they did not certainly know where He would be: "Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's House?"

In the House of God, the Church of God, is the ready approach to Jesus. It is in the last degree foolish to waive aside the Church in which are stored the treasures of more than nineteen centuries of Christian experience as though it did and could have nothing to say in the matter. A seeker after information as to the meaning of the constitution of the United States would be considered a madman if he impatiently turned from those of whom he made enquiry when they suggested the decrees of the Supreme Court as the proper place to seek information. Surely, from any point of view, the Church will know more about Jesus than any one else: if in all the centuries it has not discovered the meaning of Him Whom it ceaselessly worships there is small likelihood that that meaning will be discovered by an unbeliever studying an ancient book! If the Church cannot lead us to Jesus, and if it cannot interpret to us His will, there is small likelihood that any one else will be able to do so. And if during all these centuries His will has been unknown it can hardly be of much importance to discover it now. If His Church has failed, then His Mission is discredited.

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For us who have accepted His revelation as made to the Church and by it unfailingly preserved, who have learned to find Him there where He has promised to be until the end of time, there is another sense in which we think of His words as words of encouragement and consolation. There are hours in life which press hard upon us; there are other hours when the sense of God's love and goodness fills us with thankfulness and joy. In such hours we crave the intimacy of personal communion: we want to tell our grief or our joy. And then we take our way to the temple, and know that we shall find Him there in His Incarnate Presence in His Father's House. We go in and kneel before the Tabernacle and know that Jesus is here. Here in the silence He waits for us. Here in the long hours He watches; here is the ever-open door leading to the Father where any man at any time may enter. He who humbled Himself to the hidden life of Nazareth now humbles Himself to the hidden life of the Tabernacle: and we who believe His Word, have no need to envy Joseph and Mary the intimacy of their life with Jesus, because here for us, if we will, is a greater intimacy—the intimacy of those of whom it can be said: They evermore dwell in Him and He in them.

Lady of Heaven, Regent of the Earth,
Empress of all the infernal marshes fell,
Receive me, thy poor Christian, 'spite my, dearth,
In the fair midst of thine elect to dwell:
Albeit my lack of grace I know full well;
For that thy grace, my Lady and my Queen,
Aboundeth more than all my misdemeanor,
Withouten which no soul of all that sigh
May merit heaven. 'Tis sooth I say, for e'en
In this belief I will to live and die.

Say to thy Son, I am his—that by his birth
And death my sins be all redeemable—
As Mary of Egypt's dole he changed to mirth,
And eke Theophilus', to whom befell
Quittance of thee, albeit (so men tell)
To the foul fiend he had contracted been.
Assoilzie me, that I may have no teen,
Maid, that without breach of virginity
Didst bear our Lord that in the Host is seen:
In this belief I will to live and die.

A poor old wife I am, and little worth:
Nothing I know, nor letter aye could spell:
Where in the church to worship I fare forth,
I see heaven limned with harps and lutes, and hell
Where damned folk seethe in fire unquenchable:
One doth me fear, the other joy serene;



Grant I may have the joy, O Virgin clean,
To whom all sinners lift their hands on high,
Made whole in faith through thee, their go-between:
In this belief I will to live and die.

ENVOY

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Thou didst conceive, Princess most bright of sheen,
Jesus the Lord, that hath no end nor mean,
Almighty that, departing heaven's demesne
To succour us, put on our frailty,
Offering to death his sweet of youth and green:
Such as he is, our Lord he is, I ween:
In this belief I will to live and die.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XIII

CANA I

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee;
and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus was called,
and his disciples, to the marriage.

S. John II, 1.

Grant, O Lord, we beseech thee, that we thy servants may enjoy constant health of body and mind, and by the glorious intercession of blessed Mary, ever a virgin, be delivered from all temporal afflictions, and come to those joys that are eternal. Through. Having received, O Lord, what is to advance our salvation; grant we may always be protected by the patronage of blessed Mary, ever a virgin, in whose honor we have offered this sacrifice to thy majesty. Through.

Old Catholic.

"There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there." To S. John Blessed Mary is ever the "mother of Jesus." He never calls her by her name in any mention of her. Jesus who loved him and whom he loved and loves always with consuming passion, held the foreground of his consciousness; all other persons are known through their relation to Him. As he is writing his Gospel-story toward the end of his life, the Blessed Virgin has long been gone to join her Son in the place of perfect love. We cannot conceive of her living long on earth after His Ascension. Her "conversation" would in a special way be "in heaven." Whatever the time she remained here awaiting the will of God for her, we may be sure that the days she spent under the protection of S. John were wonderful days for him, wherein their communing would have been the continual lifting of their hearts and souls to Him, Child and Friend, who is also God enthroned at the Right Hand of the Father. It is not unlikely that the marvellous spiritual maturity of which we are conscious in the writings of S. John was aided in its unfolding by the intimacy of his relations with S. Mary. But always she

remained to him what she was because of what Jesus was; she remained to the end “the mother of Jesus.”

Here at the marriage of Cana the way in which she is mentioned suggests that she was staying in the house where the marriage was celebrated: she was simply there; Jesus and the disciples were called, invited, to the wedding. Some relationship, it has been suggested, between S. Mary and the bride or groom led to her presence in the house. That however is mere conjecture. The marriage in any

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case was a wonderful one, for both Jesus and Mary were there. It was therefore the ideal of all weddings which seem to lack the true note of the new matrimony which springs from the Incarnation if they take place without such guests. As in imagination we follow Mary as she goes quietly about the house, which like her own was a home of the poor, helping in the arrangements of the wedding, one cannot help recalling many weddings with which one has had something to do, and in the arrangements of which we cannot think of Mary as having any part. They were the arrangements of the weddings of Christians, and the weddings took place in a Christian church; but neither is Mary there nor Jesus called. We are unable to think of Mary as present amid the tumult of worldiness and frivolity, the endless chatter over dress and decoration, which so commonly precedes the celebration of a sacrament which is the symbol of "the mystical union that there is betwixt Christ and His Church." That deep piety which puts God and God's will before all else would strike a jarring note here, where the dominant note is still the pagan note of the decking of the slave for her new master. It is perhaps not without significance of the direction of the movement of the modern mind that the protests of the emancipated woman are against the Christian, not the pagan elements in matrimony: she tends to regard marriage as a state of temporary luxury rather than the perfect union of two souls in Christ. Clearly in marriages which are regarded as purely temporary engagements, dependent on the will of the parties for their continuance, there is no place for the mother of Jesus. The purity that emanates from her will be a silent but keenly felt criticism on the whole conception underlying a vast number of modern marriages. Even as I write I read that in a certain great city in the United States the number of divorces granted was one fourth of the number of the marriages celebrated.

Clearly at marriages which are surrounded with this atmosphere of paganism, be they celebrated where they may, there is no place for the Blessed Mother; and neither is Jesus called. His priest, unfortunately, is often called, and dares celebrate a sacrament which in the circumstances he can hardly help feeling is a sacrilege. There are many cases in which what purports to be Christian marriage is between those who are not Christians, or of whom only one is a Christian in any complete sense. One hears frequently of the sacrament of matrimony being celebrated when only one of the parties is baptised. It is of course possible for any priest to act on the authority conferred upon him by the state and in his capacity as a state official perform marriages between those whom the state authorises to be married: but why do it under the character of a priest? or why throw about the ceremony the suggestions of a sacrament?

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If Jesus is really to be called to a marriage, it means that the preparations for the marriage will be largely spiritual. The parties to the marriage will approach the marriage through other sacraments. They will both be members of the Church of God by baptism; and they will be, or look forward to becoming, communicants. They will prepare for the sacrament of matrimony by receiving the sacrament of penance, and receiving the communion. What better preparation for starting a new life, for setting out to create a new family in the Kingdom of God, a family in which the ideals of the life at Nazareth are to be the ruling ideals, than that cleansing of soul that fits them for the beginning of a new life? A priest has great joy when he knows that those who are kneeling before him to receive the nuptial blessing are souls pure in God's sight, dwellings ready and adorned for the coming of Christ.

For it is the normal and fitting crown of the ceremonies of marriage that Jesus be there, that the Holy Mass be celebrated and that those who have just been indissolubly united may as their first act partake of the Bread of Heaven which giveth life to the world. I myself would rather not be asked to celebrate a wedding unless it is to be approached with the purity of Mary, and sealed by the partaking of Jesus. It is so great and wonderful a thing, this sacrament of matrimony. Here are two human beings setting out to fulfil the vocation of man to build up the Kingdom of God, to set up a new hearth where the love of God may be manifest and where children may be trained in the knowledge and love of God; where the life of Christ may find contact with human life and through it manifest God to the world—how wonderful and beautiful and holy all that is! And then to remember what commonly takes place is to be overcome with a sense of what must be the pain of God's heart.

We go back to look into the home where Mary seems to be directing the arrangements of the wedding feast. It was a poor home and not much could be provided; the wine, so essential to the feast, failed. What was to be done? To whom would Mary look? She could have no money to buy wine. One feels that after Joseph's death she had come more and more to look to Jesus for help of all sorts. The deepening of their mutual love, the completeness of their understanding, would make this the natural thing. S. Mary feels that if there is any help in these embarrassing circumstances, any way of sparing the feelings of the bridegroom, Jesus will know it and help. There is no doubt in her mind; but the certainty that He can help. So she turns to Him with her "they have no wine." The words as we read them contain at once an appeal and a suggestion: an appeal for help, advice, guidance, with the hint that Jesus can effectually help if He will. It is not as some have rather crudely thought a suggestion that He perform a miracle, but the appeal of one who has learned to have unlimited trust in Him.

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The reply of our Lord cannot fail to shock the English reader; and the very nature of the shock ought to indicate that there is something wrong with the translation. The words sound brusque and ill-mannered; and our Lord was never that nor could be, least of all to His blessed Mother. The dictionaries all tell us that the word translated woman is quite as well translated lady, in the sense of mistress or house mother. There is really a shade of meaning that we have no word for. Perhaps we best understand what it is that is missed if we recall the fact that when our Lord addressed S. Mary from the Cross He used the same word: "Woman, behold thy son." In such circumstances we understand that the word on our Lord's lips is a word of infinite tenderness. I do not believe that we could do better than to translate it mother. We might paraphrase our Lord's saying thus: "Mother, we are both concerned with the trouble of these friends; but do not be anxious; I will act when the time comes." His words are perfectly simple and courteous, though they do, no doubt, suggest that her anxiety is unnecessary and that He will act in due time. If we are to understand that our Lady was suggesting that He perform a miracle, then He certainly yielded to her intercession.

Indeed, this short aside in the rejoicing of the marriage celebration is suggestive of wide reaches of thought. It suggests, which concerns us most here, something of the mode of prayer. Prayer is not a force exercised upon God, it is an aspiration that He answers or not as He sees fit, according as He sees our needs to be: and if He answers, He answers in His own way and at His own time—when His hour is come. The intercession of the saints, and of the highest saint of all, the holy Mother, must thus be conceived as aspiration not as force. We hardly need to remind ourselves that Blessed Mary though the highest of creatures is still a creature and infinitely removed from the uncreated God. When we think of her prayers or the prayers of the saints as having "influence" or "power" with God, we must remember the limitations of human language. It is quite possible through inaccurate use of language to create the impression that we believe the prayers of the saints to be prevailing with God because of some peculiar spiritual energy that belongs to them, or, still worse, because we regard them as a sort of court favourites who have special influence and can get things done that ordinary people cannot. We need only to state the supposition to see that we do not mean it. When we think what we mean by the influence of the prayers of the saints, of their prevailingness with God, we know that we mean that the superior value of the prayers of the saints is due to the superior nature of their spiritual insight, to their better understanding of the mind and purpose of God. Blessed Mary is our most powerful intercessor because by her perfect sanctity she understands God better than any one else. No educated Christian

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believes that she can persuade God to change His mind or alter His judgment, or that she or any saint would for a moment want to do so. Nor do we who cry for aid in the end want any other aid than aid to see God's will and power to do it: we have no wish or hope to impose our will on God. Prayer is aspiration, the seeking for understanding, the submitting our desires to the love of God; and the prayer of the saints helps us because they are our brothers and sisters, of the same household, and join with us in the offering of ourselves to God that we may know and do His holy will. And we can see here in this incident at Cana the whole mode of prayer. There is the just implied suggestion of the need, the hint of her own thought about the matter, in the way in which S. Mary presents the case to Jesus. There is the divine method which approves the end sought but reserves the time and method of fulfilling it to the "hour" which the divine wisdom approves. There is the ideal Christian attitude which accepts the divine will perfectly, and says to the servants: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

"They have no wine": S. Mary's word expresses the present weakness of humanity, Man is born in sin, that is, out of union with God. That hoary statement of dogmatic theology seems to stir the wrath of the modern mind more than any other dogma of the Christian Faith, except it be the dogma of eternal punishment. It is rather an amusing phenomenon that those who have no visible basis for pride are likely to be the most consumed with it. The pride of Diogenes was visible through the holes in his carpet; the pride of liberalism is visible in its irritability whenever the subject of sin, especially original sin, is mentioned. Yet the very complacency of liberalism about the perfection of man, is but another evidence (if we needed another) of his inherent sinfulness, his weakness in the face of moral ideals. If we confess our sins we are on the way to forgiveness; but if we say that we have no sin the truth is not in us.

This boasting of capacity to be pure and strong without God, theologically the Pelagian heresy, is sufficiently answered by a cursory view of what humanity has done and does do. Even where the Christian religion has been accepted the accomplishment is hardly ground for boasting. The plain fact is (and you may account for it how you like, it remains in any case a fact) that human beings are terribly weak in the face of moral and spiritual ideals. They are not sufficiently drawn by them to overcome the tendency of their nature toward a quite opposite set of ideals. We do run easily and spontaneously after ideals which the calm and enlightened judgment of the race, whether Christian or non-Christian, has continuously disapproved. We know that Buddha and Mahomet and Confucius would repudiate Paris and Berlin and New York and London with the same certainty if not with the same energy as Christ. We live in a time when a decisive public opinion gets its way; and therefore we are quite safe in saying that the misery and sin which go unchecked in the very centres of modern civilisation exist and continue because there is no decided public opinion against them.

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All attempts at reform which are merely attempts to reform machinery are futile, they can produce only passing and superficial results. There is only one medicine for the disease of the world, and that medicine is the Blood of Christ. Ultimately, one believes, that will be applied; but evidently it will not be applied in any broad way as a social treatment till all the quack remedies have demonstrated their uselessness. The last two centuries have been the flowering time of quacks. The mere history of their theories fills volumes. Our own time shows no decline in productiveness, nor decline in hopefulness in the efficacy of the last remedy to bid for support. But the time of disillusionment must some time come.

When that time comes all men will lift their eyes, as individual men have always lifted them, up to the hills whence cometh their help. Except they had kept their eyes so resolutely fastened on the earth at their feet they would have seen, what has always been visible to those who lift up their eyes, a crucified Figure on the one supreme hill of earth,—the hill called Calvary. There “one Figure stands, with outstretched hands” saying, with inextinguishable optimism, the indestructible optimism of God, “and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.”

What in the end will prevail with them, what will make them turn to the Tree which is for the healing of the nations, is the perception that in it is the remedy for the weakness that they have either sought to heal by other means, or have resolutely denied to exist at all. There are men whose wills are so strong that even in the grip of some serious disease they will long go on about their business asserting that there is nothing the matter with them and overcoming bodily pain and weakness by sheer will power; but the end comes finally with a collapse that is perhaps beyond remedy. We live in a society which has the same characteristics, but it may be that it will see its state and turn to healing. For God cannot heal except with our co-operation. Christ pleads from the Cross, but he can do no more. He will not submit to our tests; He will not come down that we may believe in Him. We must come to Him, laying aside all our pride and self-will, and kneel by the Cross to ask His help.

We know, do we not? that that is the law for the individual; that we found the meaning of Christ, and what He can do in life, when we laid aside pride and self-will and humbly asked help and pardon. It may be that we resisted a long while, struggling against the pull of the divine magnet; but if we have attained to spiritual peace it is because the Cross won, because we found ourselves kneeling at the feet of Jesus. Perhaps we have not got there yet, but are only on the way. Perhaps our religion as yet is a formality and not a devotion. Perhaps our pride still struggles against the Catholic practice of religion. Then why not give way now, to-night? Let Mary take you and lead you to Jesus. She will bring you to him with her half-suggestion, half-prayer: “He has no wine.” He has got to the end of his strength, and he has found the weariness of self, he is ready for healing. O my divine Son, is not this your opportunity, your “hour”?

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Jesus loves to have us bring one another to Him. It is so obviously the response to His Spirit, that carrying out of His teaching, so to love the brother that we may bring him to the healing of the Cross. To care for the spiritual needs of the brother is a real ministry: it is an extension of Christ in us that clothes us with the power to aid other souls in work or prayer. What a beautiful picture of this work there is in the Gospel of St. John. "And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus." And this work of presenting souls to Jesus which is so clearly one of our chief privileges, how should not that be also the privilege of all the saints, and especially of the Holy Mother? Blessed Mary, we may be sure, delights in leading souls who so hesitatingly come to her, to the presence of her Son,—just presenting them in their need and with her prayer, which is all the plea that is needed to attract the love and mercy of Jesus. "Why not," ask certain people who have not thought out the meaning of Catholic dogma, "why not go at once to our Lord; why go in this roundabout way?" Why not? Because of our human qualities. Because we need company and sympathy. For the same reason precisely that makes us ask one another's prayers here. "The Father Himself loveth you." Why in this roundabout way ask me to pray? You do not come to me because you lack faith in God or in God's love; you come to me because you feel, if only implicitly, that in the Body of Christ association in love and sympathy and work is a high privilege, and that it is God's will that we should work together and "bear one another's burdens." And the frontiers of the Kingdom of God are not the frontiers of the Church Militant, and its citizens are not only the citizens of the Church here below, but—we believe in the Communion of saints.

The hour of God strikes for any soul when that soul yields to prevenient grace and places itself utterly at the disposal of God, confiding wholly in His divine wisdom. When our Lord had answered His Blessed Mother she turned away satisfied. She did not have to concern herself any further; it was now in Jesus' hands to provide as He would. It remained but to see that His will should be carried out when He made it known.

Submission is a difficult attitude to acquire; but it is such a happy attitude when once one has acquired it. The critics of it wholly mistake it and confound it with fatalism. It is not fatalism, or passive acquiescence in another's will—a will that we have no part in forming and cannot reject. Submission is the acceptance of God's will as the expression of the highest wisdom for us. It is not true that we have no part in forming it; it is at any time an expression of God's will

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for us which is determined by the way in which we hitherto have corresponded to that will. Submission means that we have put ourselves in a position of active co-operation with that will, that we have made it ours: because it is the expression of a divine wisdom and love we make it wholly ours. And we have found in the acceptance of it not bondage but liberty. It is wonderful how our preconceived notion of God and religion vanishes before the first gleams of experience. To the unregenerate the service of God is utter bondage; to the regenerate it is perfect freedom. And the difference seems to be accounted for by the reversal of ideals, by a new direction of affections. "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou hast set my heart at liberty,"

A true conversion is, perhaps, signified, more than in any other way, by the liberty of the heart,—by this change in the object of our love. That has been the constant exhortation to us, to love that which is worthy of love. "Set your affection on things above." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." And we, loving the world and the things that are in the world, listen impatiently. But there is no possibility of a sincere conversion without a change of love. "A change of heart" conversion is often called, and so inevitably it is. And as we go through our self-examination one of the most profitable questions we can ask is, "What do I love?" That will commonly tell the whole story of the life, for "where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also."

Richard Rolle said: "Truly he who is stirred with busy love, and is continually with Jesu in thought, full soon perceives his own faults, the which correcting, henceforward he is ware of them; and so he brings righteousness busily to birth, until he is led to God and may sit with heavenly citizens in everlasting seats. Therefore he stands clear in conscience and is steadfast in all good ways the which is never noyed with worldly heaviness nor gladdened with vainglory."

CANA I

O Glorious Lady, throned in light,
Sublime above the starry height,
Whose arms thine own creator pressed,
A Suckling at thy sacred breast.
Through the dear Blossom of thy womb,
Thou changest hapless Eva's doom;
Through thee to contrite souls is given
An opening to their home in heaven.
Thou art the great King's Portal bright,
The shining Gate of living light;
Come then, ye ransomed nations, sing
The Life Divine 'twas hers to bring.
Mother of Love and Mercy mild,



Mother of graces undefiled.
Drive back the foe, and to thy Son
Lead thou our souls when life is done.
All glory be to thee, O Lord,
A Virgin's Son, by all adored,
With Sire and Spirit, Three in One,
While everlasting ages run.

PART TWO

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CHAPTER XIV

CANA II

And when the wine failed, the mother of Jesus saith unto him,
They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I
to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

S. John II, 3, 4.

We, the faithful, bless thee, O Virgin Mother of God, and
glorify thee as is thy due, the city unshaken, the wall
unbroken, the unbreakable defence and refuge of our souls.

BYZANTINE.

“Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.” These words have often been called the Gospel according to S. Mary. They certainly sum up her whole attitude in life. “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word,” she had said in reply to the message S. Gabriel brought her: and that is the meaning of her whole life-story, that she is at all times ready to accept the will of God, to give herself to the fulfilment of the divine purpose. There is no more perfect attitude, for it is the attitude of her divine Son whose meat it was to do the will of the Father and to finish His work, whose whole life’s attitude was compressed into the words of His self-oblation in Gethsemane, “Not my will, but thine be done.”

And this is the virtue that Jesus Christ inculcates upon us. “When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven ... thy will be done.” There is no true religion possible without that attitude. And therefore one is deeply concerned about the immediate future inasmuch as the spirit of obedience, the spirit of Jesus, the spirit of Mary, is so rare. As one looks into the social development of the Christian era, one feels that the life and example of S. Mary has been of immense influence in the development of the ideal of womanhood. The rise of woman from a wholly subordinate and inferior condition to a condition of complete equality with man has owed more to S. Mary than to any other factor. I am not concerned with political equality; that under our present conditions of social development women should have that equality if they want it seems to me just, but I am by no means satisfied that in the long run it will prove a boon either to them or to society at large. But I am at present thinking of their spiritual equality, which after all is the basis of their other claims; and this comes to them through the Gospel, and was shown to the mind of the Church largely through S. Mary. In the earliest records of the Church woman stands on the same level of privilege as man, and the same sort of spiritual accomplishment is expected of her.

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There are many members of the Body of Christ and there is a certain spiritual equality among them; but “all members have not the same office.” In the Holy Spirit’s distribution of functions within the Body there is a difference. Some functions, by the allotment of God, women are not called to exercise: these are sacramental and ruling functions. Others, as prophecy (the daughters of S. Philip), and ministry (the deaconess), are given them. For centuries she recognised this allotment and gave her best energies to her appointed works. She showed herself a true daughter of Mary in her loyal acceptance of the divine will and her zeal in its accomplishment. And what was the result? The Calendar of Saints, filled with the names of women, is the answer. There are no more wonderful works of God than the women whose names are commemorated at the altars of the Church and whose intercession is constantly asked throughout Catholic Christendom. There can be no thought of narrowness of opportunity or limitations in life as we study that wonderful series of women who have illumined the history of the Church from the day of S. Gabriel’s message to this very moment when there are many many women who are faithfully following their vocation and doing God’s will, and who will one day be our intercessors about the throne of God and of the Lamb, as they are our intercessors in the Church on earth to-day. Why any woman should complain of lack of opportunity and of the narrowness of the Church—the Church that has nourished S. Mary and S. Monica, S. Catherine of Genoa and S. Theresa; the foundresses of so many and so varied Religious Orders, so many who have devoted their lives to teaching, nursing, conducting works of charity, I am at a loss to understand. To-day we are witnessing all over the world a revolt of women against the Church; we hear not infrequent threats of what is to be done to the Church by those revolted members. I am afraid that woman is on the edge of another tragedy. She is once more looking fascinated at the fruit which “is good for food, and pleasant to the eyes and to be desired to make one wise,” and listening to a voice that whispers: “Thou shalt be as God.”

The question which is becoming more urgent everywhere is, What are the women of the future to be,—the daughters of Eve, or the daughters of Mary? It is not a question for declamation, but a question that calls for immediate action: and the action must be the action of women. If women clamour for work in the Church of God, here it is, and here it is abundantly; and to accomplish it there is no need that they “seek the priesthood also.” The work in the Church of God is in the first place a work that God has given mothers to do; it is the primary duty of a mother to bring up her children, and especially her daughters, in fear of the Lord. That she can always succeed I do not for a moment claim; there are many adverse factors in the situation that she has to deal with. But she is inexcusable if she does not give her effort to the work as the most important work of her life. She is utterly inexcusable and must answer to God for the result if she turn her children over to the care of maids and teachers while she occupies herself with society or any exterior work.

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In the second place the work of the Church of God is a work that ought to appeal to all women and a work that any woman can help in. All women can help the spiritual progress of the Church by meditating upon the life of Blessed Mary and fashioning their lives upon her example. We are all tremendously affected by example, and that is especially true of young girls. Their supreme terror seems to be that they should be caught doing or saying something different from what all other girls say or do or wear. Their opinions are as imitative as their clothes. Hence the need of the pressure of a strong Christian example, which would result most readily in the union of Christian women in a single ideal. Our present difficulty is that so many of our women who are devout members of the Church in their private capacity, so far succumb to the group-mind in their social relations that they are possessed by the same terror as the young girl in the face of the possibility of being different. Therefore are they careful to hide their real feeling for religion and their devotion to spiritual things under the mask of worldly conformity which evacuates their example of much of the power that it might have. I am quite convinced that fear of the world is about as strong an impulse toward evil as love of the world.

We need that women should clear their ideals and realise their public responsibility for the presentation of them. We need terribly at this moment insistence on the purity and simplicity of the Holy Mother of God. One is stunned at the abandonment of the ideal of reserve and modesty that the last few years have seen. Women seem to take it quite gaily: men, one notes, take it much more seriously. I have been consulted by more than one father during the past year as to the possibility of sending a boy to a school where he would be kept out of the society of half-naked girls. Have mothers no longer any sense of the value of purity? Or have they simply abandoned all responsibility that normally goes with being a mother? One recognises how helpless a man is under the circumstances, that his intervention in such matters simply casts him for the part of family tyrant; but why should a mother abandon her duty simply because her daughter says: "You don't understand. Girls are not as they were when you were young. All the girls do this. No other mother takes the line that you do. You are not modern."

One knows, of course, that the whole matter of decline in manners and morals is but a part of the world-wide revolt against the morality of Jesus Christ that we are witnessing everywhere. Social and religious teachers, students of history and social movements have seen the approach of this revolt for a long time, have been watching its rise and growth. When they have pointed out the end of the path that we have been travelling, they have been disposed of by calling them pessimists. These "pessimists" pointed out long ago that the denial of the obligation

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to believe would be followed by an abandonment of all moral standards. They pointed out to the devotees of "liberal religion" that they are in reality the leaders of a moral revolt, that if it does not make any difference what you believe it will soon come to make no difference what you do. It is a rather silly performance to blow up the dam which holds back the mass of water of an irrigation system and imagine that no more water will flow out than you want to flow out. When the Protestant revolt blew up the restraining dams of the Catholic Religion they had no right to expect that only so much denial of Catholic truth as it suited them to dispense with would be the result. Through the broken dams the whole religion of Christ has been flowing out and it is mere empty pretence to claim that all that is of any value is left. It is impossible to maintain anything of the sort now that all the moral content of the Christian system is openly thrown overboard by vast numbers of the population of the world, in every country that claims to be civilised. It is useless to say that there has always been evil in the world and that the maintenance of the Catholic religion has never anywhere abolished sin. That is true, but it is not to the present point. The social situation is one where there are definite religious and moral ideals strongly maintained and universally recognised, though there are many men and women who violate them; it is quite another situation when the ideals themselves are repudiated and set aside as superstitions. That is our case to-day. The Christian theory is confronted with a theory of naturalism in morals, and those who follow that theory do not do so with a feeling that they are violating accepted ideals, but with the assumption that they are missionaries setting forth a new faith. Those who have revolted from the Kingdom of God have now set up another kingdom and proclaimed openly, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." The revolt which began with a breach in the dogmatic system of the Church and denial of the authority of the Catholic Church in favour of the right of private judgment, has ended, as it could not help but end, in open abandonment of the life-ideal of the Gospels. We now have the application of the right of private judgment in the theory that one's morals are one's own concern. Such things have happened before. "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every one did what was right in his own eyes." The social state depicted in the Book of Judges reflects this revolt. The result of the same repudiation of authority is seen in modern society where what is right in one's own eyes is the whole Law and Gospel. Are we to remain quiescent, or are we to make the attempt to generate moral force?

But how can Christendom generate any more moral force? The teaching of the Gospel which it proclaims is perfectly plain. True, but is the adherence of the Church to its statements perfectly plain? Is there no falling away, no compromise, there?

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When one speaks thus of the Church one is conscious of a confusion of thought in the use of the word. The teaching of the formal documents of the Church is not here in question; what we necessarily mean is the effect that the existing membership of the Church is having upon contemporary life. What we have especially in mind is the attitude of the clergy and the action of the congregation in the way of moral force. What sort of a front is the church presenting to the world, what sort of moral influence is it exercising?

It seems to me perfectly evident that all along the line the conventions of contemporary society have been accepted in the place of the life-ideals of the Gospel of Jesus. We have accepted plain departures from or compromises with Christian teaching as the recognised law of action. This is due largely to the natural sloth of the human being and his disinclination to struggle for superior standards. He feels safe and comfortable if he can succeed in losing himself in a crowd: thus he escapes both trouble and criticism. A violation of law may become so common that there is no public spirit to oppose it. The same thing may happen in morals,—violations of the Christian standard, if sufficiently widespread, command almost universal acquiescence. What is actually uncovered in the process is the fact that the plain man has no morals of his own, but imitates the prevailing morality; and if fashion sets against some particular ruling of the Christian Religion he feels quite secure in following the fashion. The *vox dei* in Holy Scripture and in Holy Church affect him not at all if he be conscious that he is on the side of the *vox populi*.

It is easy to illustrate this. The non-Catholic Christian world has the Bible, and boasts of its adherence to it as the sole guide of life; but in the matter of divorced persons it utterly disregards its teachings. By this acceptance of an unchristian attitude it has vastly weakened the fight for purity in the family relation which the Catholic Church, at least in the West, has always waged. It deliberately divides the Christian forces of the community and to a large extent thereby nullifies their action. The divisions of Christendom are terrible from every point of view; but there are certain questions on which a united mind might well be presented, and in relation to which an united mind would go far to control the attitude of society. An united Christian sentiment against divorce would go far to reduce the evil.

On the other hand the progress of the movement to abolish the evils growing out of the use of alcohol has had its strength in the Protestant bodies. On the whole (there were no doubt individual exceptions) the Churches of the Catholic tradition have been lukewarm in the matter. It is quite evident that the reform could never have been carried through if left to them, and especially if left to the bishops and clergy of the Roman and Anglican Communions. It is a plain case of failure to support a vast moral reform because of the pressure of opinion in the social circles in which they move, combined with a purely individualistic attitude toward a grave social question.

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Another instance is ready at hand in the practical abandonment of the religious observance of Sunday. To Christians Sunday is the Lord's day, and is to be observed as such. It is not true that an hour in the morning is the Lord's day, and is to be given to worship, and that the rest of the day is given to us to do what we will with. But in our own Communion do we get any strong protest in favour of the sanctity of the day? Or are not the clergy compromising in the hope that if they surrender the greater part of the day to the world they will be able to save an hour or two for God? But is anything actually saved by this sort of compromise? Do we not know that the encroachments of worldliness that have narrowed down Sunday observance to an hour a day will ultimately demand that hour, that is, will deny any obligation other than the obligation of inclination? Are we not bound to stand by the Lord's day? Are we to be made lax by silly talk about puritanism? Those who talk about the "Puritan Sunday" would do well to read a little of the Medieval legislation of the Church. Are we to keep silent in the pulpit because wealthy and influential members of the congregation want to play golf and tennis on Sunday afternoons, or children want to play ball or go to the movies? Are we to be taken in by talk of hard work during the week and consequent need of rest? It is no doubt well that a man should arrange his work with a view to an adequate amount of rest; but it is also well that he should rest in his own time and not in God's. The Lord's day is not a day of rest. It ought to be, and is intended to be, a very strenuous day indeed.

One could easily spend hours in pointing out where and how the Gospel standard of life has been abandoned or compromised, and the life of the Christian in consequence conformed to the world. The result would only strengthen the position that has been already sufficiently indicated that a wholly different standard of living has been quietly substituted throughout the Western world for the standard that is contained in Holy Scripture. Now we are either bound to be Christians or we are not; and we are not Christians solely by virtue of certain beliefs more or less loosely held. Our Lord's word is: "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." And the Gospel view of life is a perfectly plain one, and is as far removed from the common life of Christians to-day as it possibly can be. The Gospel conception of the Christian life is contained first of all in our Lord's life. That is the perfect human life; and the New Testament optimism is well illustrated by its conviction that that life in its essential features can, with the grace of God, be imitated by man. And by those who have approached it in this spirit of optimism it has been found imitable. Innumerable men and women have lived the Christian life in the past and are living it in the present. To-day the possibility of living the Christian life,

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of bringing life approximately to the standard of the Gospel, is declared to be an impracticable piece of optimism, and our Lord's teaching hopelessly out of touch with reality. When people talk of the difficulty of living the Christ-life under modern conditions, the plain answer is that there is in fact only one difficulty in the matter, and that is the difficulty of wanting to do it. It is a confession of utter spiritual incompetence to say that we cannot follow the Gospel standards under modern conditions because of the isolation in which we at once find ourselves if we attempt it. If the attempt to be a Christian isolates us, it tells a pretty plain tale about our chosen companionship. It is asserting that it is hard for us to be Christians because we are devoted to the society of those who are not Christians, of those who ignore it and habitually insult the teachings of our Saviour. That is surely an extraordinary confession for a Christian to make! Can we imagine a Christian of the first period of the Church excusing himself for offering incense to the divinity of Augustus on the ground that if he did not do so certain court festivities would be closed to him, and that his friends would think him odd!

"Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you," "The friendship of this world is enmity with God." We have to choose. It is not that we may choose. It is not that it is possible to have a little of both. As Christians it is quite impossible in any real sense to have the friendship of the world, though many Christians think that they can. What really is open to us is the enmity of the world if we are sincere and strict in our profession, and the contempt of the world if we are not. You have not to read very deep in contemporary literature to learn what the world thinks about the Christian who ignores or compromises his standards. The world knows perfectly well what constitutes a Christian life, and it shows a well merited scorn of those who, not having the courage openly to abandon it, yet show by their lives that they do not value it. We may not show the same sort of contempt for the "weak brother" as S. Paul calls him, but we ought to make it plain that we have no sort of approval of the brother who pleads weakness as an excuse for laxity.

There is one law of life and only one; and that is summed up in our Lady's direction to the servants at Cana in Galilee: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." There is no ground for pleading that our Lord's will is an obscure will, or that circumstances have so changed that much that He set forth in word and example has no application to-day in the America of the twentieth century. Perhaps if any one feels that there is some truth in the last statement, he would do well to examine the case and to find out just what and how much of the Gospel teaching is obsolete, and how much has contemporary application, and to ask himself whether he is constantly putting in action that part which

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he thinks still holds good. It will, I think, on examination be found that none of our Lord's teaching is obsolete, though in some cases changed circumstances may have changed its mode of application. Certainly there is nothing obsolete in His teaching in the matter of purity. The virtues that He dwells upon—humility, meekness and the rest—are universal qualities on which time and social change have no effect.

What Christian conduct needs on our part is interest. We have to make clear to ourselves that a certain kind of life is like the life of God, and therefore is the medium for understanding God, and ultimately for enjoying God. The Christian life is not an arbitrary thing; it is the highest expression of humanity. Any other life is a distortion of the human ideal. People talk as though they thought that by the arbitrary will of God they were obliged to be good—a thing wholly contrary to our nature and to our present interests. But goodness is the natural unfolding of our nature as God made it: we find our true expression in the likeness of God. Perfection is what nature aspires to. Religion is not a curb on nature; religion is a help to enable nature to express itself. Nature reaches its perfect expression when by the grace of God it becomes godlike.

And the words of Christ are our guide to the perfect expression of our best. Therefore the earnest Christian is willing to give time to the careful study of them, and of the whole ideal of life that is contained in them. He is not concerned with what they will cut him off from; he is concerned with that to which they will admit him. He is concerned to find the meaning of Christ's teaching. This that S. Paul says is fundamental is his rule of life: "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Of one that is so fayr and bright
Velut maris stella,
Brighter than the day is light,
Parens et puella;
I crie to thee, thou see to me,
Levedy, preye thi Sone for me,
Tam pia,
That I mote come to thee
Maria.

Al this world was for-lore
Eva peccatrice,
Tyl our Lord was y-bore
De te genetrice.
With Ave it went away
Thuster nyth and comz the day
Salutis;



The welle springeth ut of the,
Virtutis.

Levedy, flour of alle thing,
Rosa sine spina,
Thu here Jhesu, hevene king,
Gratia divina;
Of alle thu ber'st the pris,
Levedy, quene of paradys
Electa:
Mayde milde, moder es
Effecta.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XV

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WHO IS MY MOTHER?

Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother,

S. Matt. XII, 50.

Grant, we beseech thee, almighty God, that we may keep with an immaculate heart the sacrament which we have received in honour of the blessed virgin mother Mary; so that we who celebrate her feast now, may be found worthy when we have left this life to pass into her company. Through &c.

SARUM MISSAL.

Our Blessed Lord had begun his ministry of preaching. The mark of the early days of that preaching was success. Crowds came about Him wherever He taught. The fact that there were frequent miracles of healing no doubt added to the popularity that He achieved. It was largely the popularity of a new and strange movement, of a preaching cutting across the normal roads of instruction to which the Jewish people were accustomed. There was a fascination about its form, its picturesque way of conveying its meaning, its use of the parable drawn from the everyday circumstances of life. There was nothing of hesitation in the words of the new Preacher, but the ring of a dogmatic certainty. "He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes." He pushed aside the rulings of the traditional teaching with His, "Ye have heard it said ... but I say." "Verily, verily, I say unto you." And yet there are people who tell us that there was nothing dogmatic about our Lord and His teaching! One would infer from much that is written upon the subject of our Lord's teaching that He was a very mild giver of good advice but evidently the Scribes and Pharisees did not think so. They saw in Him a man who was setting himself to undermine their whole authority.

This popularity was at a high point when an interesting event happened of which we have an account in the first of the Gospels. "His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him." One gathers from the whole tone of the narrative that they were anxious about Him, that they looked with doubt upon this career of popular teacher that He was launched upon and felt that He was going too far. He needed advice and restraint, perhaps; it may be that there were already reports of possible interference by the national authorities. The fact that His "brethren" were present suggests the well meant interference of the older members of the family, who must always have thought Jesus rather strange. That they had induced His mother to come with them makes us think that they were counting on the influence naturally hers, an influence which must always have been apparent in their family relations. So we reconstruct the incident.

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No doubt S. Mary herself was anxious. She must always have been anxious as to what would be the next step in the development of her mysterious Child. And while there was one side of her relation to Jesus which would always have run out into mystery, the mystery of the as yet unrevealed will of God; on the other side she was no doubt a very real normal human mother, with all a mother's anxiety and need of constant intervention in the life of her Child. I do not suppose that S. Mary, any more than any other mother, ever understood that her Son had grown up and could be trusted to conduct the ordinary affairs of the day without her help. She was no doubt as much concerned as any mother with the fact that His feet might be wet, or that He might not have had any lunch, or that he might have got run over by a passing chariot, or have been taken mysteriously ill. It was, we may think, this mother-attitude which brought her along with the brethren to give some advice as to how to carry on the preaching mission and avoid getting into trouble with the religious authorities. "One said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother, and my sister, and my brother."

Our Lord had a way of turning the passing incidents of the moment to account in His preaching, making them the texts of moral and spiritual teaching. One gathers that more than one of the parables and parabolic sayings was suggested by something that was before the eyes of His hearers. He was quick to seize any spoken word, any question, any exclamation, and to turn it to immediate account. It was so now. The report that His mother and His brethren were seeking Him, He made the occasion of a statement of vast import. When we try to think it out, it was not in the least, as it has been perversely understood, an impatient rebuff of an untimely interference, an indication that He did not care for their intervention in a work that they did not understand. There is really nothing of all that, but a seizing of a passing incident as the medium of an universal truth. It is the skill of one who knows that the human attention is caught by a matter, however trifling, which is vividly present. The scene is sharply defined for us: our Lord interrupted in His talk; the report of the mother and the brethren seeking Him; the obvious interest of the people as to how He will take their intervention; and then the rapid seizing of this interest to make His declaration: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother, and my sister, and my brother."

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And what are we to understand Him to mean? Surely He is declaring that through the revelation of God that He is, there is a new stage in God's work for man being entered upon, and that this new stage will be characterised by the emergence of a new set of relations, relations so important that they throw into the background the ordinary relations of life. He is proclaiming to them the advent of the Kingdom of God; and in that Kingdom, the service of God will be put first, before all human relations. It will not be antagonistic to human relations; indeed, it will hallow them and raise them to a higher level; but in case they, as not infrequently they will, decline to adjust themselves to the work of the Kingdom, or set themselves in opposition to it, then will they be brushed aside, no matter what they be. If we can consecrate our human relations and bring them into God, then will they be ours still with a vast enrichment and a rare spiritual beauty; but if they remain selfish, insist on absorbing all attention and energy, then they must be broken. The love of father and mother and children is an holy thing wherever we find it, but it is capable of becoming a selfish and perverse thing, insistent upon its own ends and declining wider responsibilities. In that case it must be regarded from the standpoint of a higher good: if it stand in the path of the Kingdom it must be swept aside. So our Lord declared in one of the most searching of His utterances; one of the utterances which we feel could come only from the lips of God: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be those of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

That is the teaching of the incident before us. Our Lord's primary mission is to declare the will of God, and to make known the mind of the Father to all who will heed. Their acceptance of this will of the Father will bring them into a new relation to Him more important than, and transcending, all relations of flesh and blood. But—and this is important to mark—it does not exclude relations of flesh and blood; but it demands that they shall be put on a new basis and be assimilated to the higher relation. In our Lord's case they were in fact so assimilated. The blessed Mother and the brethren did not resist God's will when they came to understand it. They were, we know, glad of the higher relation, the new privilege. There is no ground at all for the suggestion of any breach between them. They are of the inner circle always in the Kingdom of the regenerate.

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This fundamental truth of Christ's teaching, that through Him a new and closer relation to the Father becomes possible, and that the Kingdom is its embodiment, is one of the truths which have received constant lip-service, but have never been really assimilated in the working life of the Church. That the Church is the Body of Christ and we His members, and that by virtue of this membership in Him we are also members one of another; that we are, at our entrance into the Kingdom, made, as the Catechism puts it, members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of Heaven are truths of most marvellous reach and of splendid social implications. But can we say that they have very wide or real acknowledgment?

In face of a divided Christendom it seems almost farcical to talk of a Christian Brotherhood. The baptismal membership of the Church of God has fallen into group organisations whose mutual antagonism is of the bitterest kind. The so-called "religious press" is perhaps the saddest picture of modern Christian life. One could name a half dozen journals off hand, organs of this or that group, every one a sufficient refutation of the claim of the Christian Religion to be a Brotherhood of the Redeemed. There is no possible excuse for the tone of such publications.

No doubt it is an inevitable result of the state of a divided Christendom that there should be disputes and controversies. We shall never reach any expression of the Brotherhood that is the Church by saying, Peace, Peace, where there is no Peace. The unity we look to must be reached through painful sacrifice and through conflict; and we know that the wisdom that is from above is "first pure, and then peaceable," But it is quite possible while holding with all firmness to the truth, to hold it in the fear and love of God.

So long as Christendom is thus divided into hostile camps the ideal of brotherhood is impossible of realisation. I do not want however to discuss this matter from the point of view of Church unity. I want to point out that within the groups themselves there is small vision of the meaning of the oneness of Christ. For brotherhood is the expression of a spiritual reality. It looked for a moment in the early days of the Church as though the ideal would be realised. The description of the Church was that "all that believed were together, and had all things in common: and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." That was, no doubt, a passing phase of the life of the Church in Jerusalem, but we have evidence that elsewhere all distinctions based upon social considerations were for the moment swept away. There is "neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Our glimpses of the congregations of the early Church are of men and women of all classes held together by the bond of a common membership in

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Christ, so strongly felt as to enable them to forget all worldly distinctions. Their sense of redemption was strong. They thrilled with the joy of deliverance from the old life "after the flesh." They knew that they were regenerate, new creations, and that this was the distinction of the brother who knelt beside them at their communions. It mattered not at all what he was in the world, whether he were Greek or Barbarian, whether he were patrician or freedman, whether he were of the slaves of Rome or of Caesar's household. The man who knelt to receive his communion might be a great nobleman, the priest who communicated him might be a slave: that did not matter; the significant thing was that they were both one in Jesus Christ.

That did not last. I suppose that it could not be expected to last in an unconverted or half converted world. It could only last on condition of the fairly complete isolation of the Christian group from the rest of society, pending the conversion of society as a whole. But it proved impossible to secure the isolation. The only real isolation was in monastic groups which naturally could contain only such men and women as God called to a special sort of life: the whole of society could not be so organised. As the Church grew and took in the various social constituents included in the Empire, it took them in differentiated as they were. There seems to have been no real effort to break down race distinctions or class distinctions. There were no doubt protests, but the protests were as ineffective then as now. "You cannot change human nature," men say; but that in fact is precisely what Christianity claims to do. Unless it can change human nature it is a failure.

The ideal of Christianity is not the abolition of inequality (only a certain sort of social theorists are insane enough to expect that). All men are born unequal in a variety of ways, physical, intellectual, moral; and under any form of society that so far has been invented they are born in social classes which remain very hard realities in spite of our theories. What Christianity aims at accomplishing is to transcend these inequalities, natural and artificial, by raising men to a state of spiritual equality, a state which ensures true and full enjoyment of all the privileges of the child of God. In this state there is open to all the gift of sanctifying grace which is the possession of God now, and in the future will unfold into the capacity of the complete participation of the life of heaven. This belongs to, is within the grasp of, any child, any ignorant peasant, any toiler, as much as it is within the grasp of bishop or priest or Religious. And this much—and how much it is!—the Church has succeeded in accomplishing. It may be slow in offering the riches of the Gospel to the unconverted world, but where it has presented the Gospel, it presents it to all men as a Gospel of salvation and sanctification. When tempted to discouragement let us remember that whatever the shortcoming of the Church, it is yet true that every man, woman and child in these United States of America can through its instrumentality, become a saint whenever he desires. But, naturally, to become a saint, effort is necessary.

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Where the Church has failed is not in the offer of salvation and sanctity, but in removing some of the obvious obstacles to its attainment by many to whom it appeals, to whom its divine mission is. It has not succeeded in convincing us that we are members one of another, that is, it has not succeeded in persuading us to act upon what we profess in any broad way. The Church is not a fellowship in any comprehensive sense. The divisions which run through secular society and divide group from group run through it also. The parish which should be the exemplification of the Christian brotherhood in action is not so. Too often a parish is known as the parish of a certain social group. There are parishes to which people go to get "into society." Very likely they do not succeed, but that is the sort of impression that the parish membership has made upon them. Then there are parishes to which people "in society" would not be transferred. There are churches in which no poor person would set foot, not that they would be unwelcome, but that they would feel out of place. So long as such things are true, our practice of brotherhood has not much to commend of it.

And when we go about setting things right I am not sure that we do not mostly make them worse. I do not believe that it is the business of the Church to set about the abolition of inequalities and the getting rid of the distinctions between man and man. Apart from the waste of time due to attempting the impossible, what would be gained? Pending the arrival of the social millenium we need to do something; and that something, it seems to me a mistake to assume must be social. "We must bring people together": but what is gained by bringing people together when they do not want to be together, and will not actually get together when you force them into proximity. There is nothing more expressive of the failure of well-meant activity than a church gathering where people at once group themselves along the familiar lines and decline to mix, notwithstanding the utmost endeavours of clergy and zealous ladies to bring them together. The thing is an object lesson of wrong method.

Is there a right method? There must be, though no one seems to have found it yet. There is in any case a right point of departure in our common membership in Jesus Christ. Suppose we drop the supposition that we make, I presume because we think it pious, that if they are both Christians a dock labourer ought to be quite at home at a millionaire's dinner party, or a scrub-woman in a box at the Metropolitan opera house. Suppose we drop the attempt to force people together on lines which will be impossible till after the social revolution has buried us all in a common grave, and fasten attention on the one fact that, from our present point of view, counts, the fact that we are Christians. Suppose one learns to meet all men and all women simply on the basis of their religion; when that forms the bond

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that unites us when we come together, we have at once common grounds of interest in the life and activities of the Body of Christ. Suppose the millionaire going down town in his motor sees his clerk walking and stops and picks him up, and instead of talking constrainedly about the weather or about business, he begins naturally to talk to him about spiritual matters. Why could they not talk about the Mission that has just been held, or the Quiet Day that is in prospect? One great trouble, is it not? is that we fight shy of talking to our fellow-Christians of the interests that we really have in common and try to put intercourse on some other ground where we have little or nothing in common. The things that should, and probably do, vitally interest us, we decline to talk about at all. We are so stiff and formal and restrained in all matter of personal religious experience that we are unable to express the fact of Christian Brotherhood. The fact that you smile at the presentment of the case, that you cannot even imagine yourself talking about your spiritual experience with your clerk or your employer, shows how far you are from a truly Christian conception of Brotherhood.

Our Lord's words that we are making our subject indicate the paramount importance that He laid upon the acceptance of God's will as the ultimate rule of life. "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is my mother, and my sister, and my brother." "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." That is the common ground on which we are all invited to stand, the ground of a common loyalty to God, of intense zeal for the cause of God. Our Lord gave His whole life to that cause. As His disciples watched Him on an occasion, they remembered that it was written: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Zeal is not a very popular quality because it is always disturbing the equanimity and self-complacency of lukewarm people. And then, we dislike to be thought fanatics. But I fancy that there will always be a touch of the fanatic about any very zealous Christian, and it is not worth while to suppress our zeal for fear of the world's judgment upon it. What we have to avoid is the misdirection of zeal. There is, no doubt, a zeal which is "not according to knowledge." We need to be sure, in other words, that our zeal is a zeal for God, and not a zeal for party or person or cause. It is no doubt quite easy to imagine that we are seeking to do God's will when we are merely seeking to impose on our own will. Self-seeking is quite destructive of the friendship and service of God. The Kingdom whose interests we are attempting to forward may turn out to be a Kingdom in which we expect to sit on the right hand or the left of the throne because of the brilliance of the service rendered.

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Life is simplified very much when the will of God thus becomes its guiding principle, and all other relations of life are subordinated to our relation to our heavenly Father. Then have we brought life to that complete simplicity which is near akin to peace. When we have learned in deciding any line of action not to think what our neighbours and friends will feel, or what the world will think, but only what God will think, we have little difficulty in making up our minds. Suppose that a boy has to make up his mind whether he will study for the priesthood, the vital thing on which to concentrate his thought and prayer is whether God is calling him to that life, and if he is convinced that he is being called the whole question should be settled. In fact in most cases it is far from being settled because this simplicity has not been attained. There is a whole social circle to be dealt with, who urge the hardness of the life, the scant reward, the greater advantages of a business career, and so on; all of which have absolutely nothing to do with the question to be decided. It is so all through life. In most questions of life's decisions, no doubt, there is no sense of any vocation at all, of a determining will of God; but is not that because we assume that God has no will in such matters, and leaves us free to follow our own devices? Such an assumption is hardly justified in the case of One to Whom the fall of a sparrow is a matter of interest. It is our weakness, or the sign of our spiritual incompetence, that we have unconsciously removed the greater part of life from the jurisdiction of the divine will. We do not habitually think of God as interested in the facts of daily experience; we do not take Him with us into offices and factories. Perhaps we think that they are hardly fit places for God, and I have no doubt that He has many things to suffer there. But He is there, and will suffer, until we recognise His right there, and insist upon His there being supreme.

Let us go back for a moment to Our Lady standing outside the place where Jesus was preaching, perplexed and worried at the course He was taking. I suppose that it is always easier to surrender ourselves unreservedly into God's hands than it is to so surrender some one we love. I suppose that S. Mary so trusted in God that she never thought with anxiety of what His providence was preparing for her; but she would not quite take that attitude about her Son; or rather, while she did intellectually, no doubt, take that attitude, her feelings never went the whole distance that her mind went. But surrender to the will of God means complete surrender of ourself and ours. It means absolute confidence in God, it means lying quiet in his arms, as the child lies still in the arms of his mother. It means that we trust God.

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Rose-Mary, Sum of virtue virginal,
Fresh Flower on whom the dew of heaven downfell;
O Gem, conjoined in joy angelical,
In whom rejoiced the Saviour was to dwell:
Of refuge Ark, of mercy Spring and Well,
Of Ladies first, as is of letters A,
Empress of heaven, of paradise and hell—
Mother of Christ, O Mary, hail, always.

O Star, that blindest Phoebus' beams so bright,
With course above the empyrean crystalline;
Above the sphere of Saturn's highest height,
Surmounting all the angelic orders nine;
O Lamp, that shin'st before the throne divine,
Where sounds hosanna in cherubic lay,
With drum and organ, harp and cymbeline—
Mother, of Christ, O Mary, hail, always,

O Cloister chaste of pure virginity,
That Christ hath closed 'gainst crime for evermo';
Triumphant Temple of the Trinity,
That didst the eternal Tartarus o'erthrow;
Princess of peace, imperial Palm, I trow,
From thee our Samson sprang invict in fray;
Who, with one buffet, Belial hath laid low—
Mother of Christ, O Mary, hail, always,

Thy blessed sides the mighty Champion bore,
Who hath, with many a bleeding wound in fight,
Victoriously o'erthrown the dragon hoar
That ready was his flock to slay and smite;
Nor all the gates of hell him succour might,
Since he that robber's rampart brake away,
While all the demons trembled at the sight—
Mother of Christ, O Mary, hail, always,

O Maiden meek, chief Mediatrix for man,
And Mother mild, full of humility,
Pray to thy Son, with wounds that sanguine ran,
Whereby for all our trespass slain was he.
And since he bled his blood upon a tree,
'Gainst Lucifer, our foe, to be our stay,
That we in heaven may sing upon our knee—
Mother of Christ, O Mary, hail, always,



Hail, Pearl made pure; hail, Port of paradise;
Hail, Ruby, redolent of rays to us;
Hail, Crystal clear, Empress and Queen, hail thrice;
Mother of God, hail, Maid exalted thus;
O Gratia plena, tecum Dominus;
With Gabriel that we may sing and say,
Benedicta tu in mulieribus—
Mother of Christ, O Mary, hail, alway.

William Dunbar,

XV-XVI. Cents.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XVI

HOLY WEEK I

Then all the disciples forsook him and fled.

S. Matt. XXVI, 56.

Through the intercession of the Holy Mother of God, accept, O Lord, our prayers and save us.

May the Holy Mother of God and all the saints be our intercessors with the Heavenly Father, that He may deign to be merciful to us, and in pity save His creatures. Lord God all-powerful! save us and have mercy upon us.

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Through the intercession of the Holy Mother of God, the Immaculate Mother of Thine only Son, and through the prayers of all the saints, receive, O Lord, our supplications; hear us, O Lord, and have mercy upon us; pardon us, bear with us, and blot out our sins, and make us worthy to glorify Thee, together with Thy Son and the Holy Ghost, now and ever, world without end. Amen.

Armenian.

We try to see our Lord's passion through the eyes of His Blessed Mother. We feel that all through Holy Week she must have been in direct touch with the experiences of our Lord. Her outlook would have been that of the Apostolic circle the record of which we get in the Gospels. Our Lord's ministry had showed a period of popularity during which it must have seemed to those closest to Him that they were moving rapidly to success; and then, after the day at Caesarea Phillipi, when His Messianic claims had been acknowledged, they would have been filled with enthusiasm for the mission the meaning of which was now defined. Then came a period of disappointment. Our Lord declined to become a popular leader, and by the nature of His preaching, the demands that He made upon those who were inclined to support Him lost popularity till it was a question to be considered whether the very Apostles would not desert Him. Then came the flash of renewed enthusiasm which is evidenced by the Palm Sunday entry, bringing, no doubt, renewed hopes to those nearest our Lord who seem to have been utterly unable to accept the view of His failure and death that He kept before them. But the hope vanished as quickly as it was roused. In less than a week the rejoicing group of Sunday followed Him from the Upper Chamber to the shades of Gethsemane. The betrayal, the trial, the end, come quickly on.

This to S. Mary was the piercing of the sword through the very heart. These were the days when the meaning of close association with Incarnate God, with God Who was pursuing a mission of rescue, came out. The mission of the Son for the Redemption of man meant submitting to the extremity of insult and torture, and it meant that those who were closest associated with Him should be caught into the circle of His pain. As our Lord was displaying the best of which humanity is capable, so was He calling out the worst of which it is capable. These last days of the life of Jesus show where man can be led when he surrenders himself to the dominion of the Power of Evil and becomes the servant of sin. The triumph of demoniac malice through its instruments, the Roman governor, the Jewish authorities, of necessity swept over all who were related to our Lord. The storm scattered the Apostolic group and left the Christ to face His trial alone. Yet not alone: He himself tells us the truth. "Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." It was what the Prophet had foreseen: "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered."

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We do not know where S. Mary was during these days, but we are sure that she was as near our Lord as it was possible for her to be. We know that her own thought would be of the possibility of ministering to Him. We know that she would not have fled with the Apostles in their momentary panic. She was at the Cross, and she was at the grave, and she would have been as near Him in the agony and the trial as it was possible for her to be. And she too was in agony. Every pang of our Lord found echo in her. Every blow that fell upon His bleeding back, she too felt. Every insult that the soldiers inflicted, hurt her. Our Lord in the consciousness of His mission is constantly sustained by the thought that His Passion and Death is an offering to the will of the Father,—an offering even for these miserable men who are brutally treating a man whom they know to be innocent. Her sorrow is the utter desolation of seeing the One Whom she loves above all else suffer, while she can bear Him no alleviation in His suffering, cannot so much as wipe the blood from off His wounded brow, cannot even touch His hand, and look her love into His eyes. She follows from place to place while our Lord is being hustled from Caiaphas to Pilate and from Pilate to Herod and back again; from time to time hearing from some one who has succeeded in getting nearer, how the trial is going on, what the accusation is, how Jesus is bearing Himself, what answers He has made, what the authorities have said. Once and again, it may be, catching a distant glimpse of Him as He is led about by the guards, seeing Him always more worn and weary, always nearer the point of collapse. Herself, too, nearer collapse; yet going on still with that strength that love gives to mothers, determined at the cost of any suffering to be near Him, as near as she can be, till the very end. So we see her on that day in the streets of Jerusalem, and think of the distance travelled since the morning when Gabriel said to her, wondering: “Hail thou that art highly favoured.... Blessed art thou among women.”

We, too, follow. We have so often followed, with the Gospel in our hands, and wondered at the method of God. We have tried hour after hour to penetrate the meaning of the Passion, to find what personal message it brings, to discover what light it throws on our own lives. We have gone out into Gethsemane and placed ourselves with the three chosen Apostles while our Lord went on to pray by Himself; and we have discovered in ourselves the same weariness, the same tendency to sleep, in the presence of what we tell ourselves is the most important of all interests. We call up the scene under the olives, and find that we wander and are inattentive and idle when we most want to be attentive and alert. We place ourselves in the group that surrounds our Lord when the soldiers, led by Judas, come, and ask ourselves shall I too run away? And our memory flashes the answer: You have run away again and again: you have in the face, not of grave dangers, but of insignificant trifles—how insignificant they look now—for fear of criticism, for fear of being thought odd, for fear of the opinion of worldly companions, for fear of being pitied or laughed at, over and over again you have run away. The things that seemed important when they were present seem pitifully insignificant in the retrospect.

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We follow out of the garden to the meeting-place of the Sanhedrin, to the Judgment seat of Pilate, to the palace of Herod. Any impulse to criticise S. Peter is speedily suppressed: we have denied so often under such trifling provocation. S. Peter was frightened from participation in the act of our Lord's sacrifice through mortal fear of his life. We have stayed away from the offering of the Holy Sacrifice, how often! from mere sloth, from disinclination to effort, from the fact that our participation would prevent us from joining in some act of worldly amusement. S. Peter, following to the high Priest's palace to see the end, looks heroic beside our frivolity. We follow through the details of the trial, we go to Herod's palace and see the brutal treatment of our Lord, and we remember of these men that their conduct was founded in ignorance. We do not for a moment believe that they would have spit upon our Lord and buffeted Him, and crowned Him with a crown of thorns, if they had believed that He was God. But we believe that He is God. Our desertion of Him when we sin, our contempt of His expressed ideals when we compromise with the world, our departure from His example when we excuse ourselves on the ground of very minor inconveniences from keeping some holy day or fasting day, are not founded in ignorance at all. They can hardly be said to be founded in weakness, so slight is the temptation that we do not resist. As we meditate on the Passion, as we keep Good Friday, very pitiful all our idleness and subterfuges appear to us. But we so easily shake off the effect! We emerge from our meditation almost convinced that the stinging sense of the truth of our conduct which we are experiencing is the equivalent of having reformed it. We go out with a glow of virtue and by night realise that we have sinned again!

It is no doubt well that we should not be permanently depressed about our spiritual state, but only because we have taken all the pains we can to heal the wounds of sin. There is no need that any one should abide in a state of sin because there has been in the Precious Blood a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and by washing therein, though our souls were as scarlet, they shall become white as snow. We have the right to a certain optimism about ourselves if it be founded on actual spiritual activity which ceaselessly tries to reproduce the Christ-experience in us, even the experience of the Passion by the voluntary self-discipline to which we subject ourselves. A brilliant writer has spoken of those whose view of their lives is drawn from "that fountain of all optimism—sloth." That is a true saying: our optimism is often no more than an idle refusal to face facts; a quaint and good-natured assumption that nothing very much matters and that everything will be all right in the end!

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This easy going optimism is commonly as far as possible from representing any spiritual fact. If we are seeking any serious and fruitful relation to the Passion of our Lord, we must seek it along the Way of the Cross. To follow His example means to follow His experience, to treat life as He treated it. The content of our lives is quite different, but the treatment of the given fact must be essentially the same. We need the same repulse of temptation, the same quiet disregard of the appeals of the world, whether it offer the alleviation of difficulty or the bestowal of pleasure as the reward of our allegiance. And we, sinners in so manifold ways, need what our Lord did not need, repulsion from our sins as the necessary preliminary to forgiveness.

My experience makes me feel very strongly that we are apt to be deficient in the first step in repentance—contrition. As we follow the Way of Sorrows we know that our Lord is suffering *for us*; and we feel that the starting point of our repentance must lie in our success in making that a personal matter. In our self examination, in our approach to the sacrament of penance, we are compelled to ask ourselves, Am I in fact sorry for my sins? It surely is not enough that we fear the results of sin, or that we are ashamed at our failure. This really is not repentance but a sort of pride. There must, I feel, be sorrow after a godly sort. That is, true contrition, true sorrow for sin, is the sort of sorrow which is born of the Vision of God; it has its origin in love. I have found in our Lord love giving itself to me, and I must find in myself love giving itself to Him. To my forgiveness it is not enough that God loves me. I know that He loves me and will love me to the end, whether I repent or not; but the possibility of forgiveness lies in my love of Him, whether it takes such hold on me as actually to stimulate me to forsake sin. I shall never really forsake sin through shame or fear; one gets used to those emotions after a little and disregards them. But one does not get used to love; it grows to be an increasing force in life, and so masters us as to draw us away from sin.

Contrition then will be the offspring of love. It will be born when we follow Christ Jesus out on the Sorrowful Way and understand that He is going out for us. Then we want to get as near Him as possible: we want to take His Hand and go by His side. We want to stand by Him in His trial and share His condemnation. We want constantly to tell Him how sorry we are that we have brought Him here. We shall not be content that He feel all the pain. We are convinced that we ought to share in the pain as we share in the results of the Passion. When we have achieved this point of view we shall feel that our approach to Him to ask His forgiveness needs, it may be, much more care than we have hitherto bestowed upon it. We have thought of penance as forgiveness; now we begin to see how much the attitude which precedes our entrance to the confessional counts, and that we must value the gift of God enough to have made sure that we are ready to receive it. We kneel down, therefore, and look at our crucifix, and say: "This hast Thou done for me," and make our act of love in which we join ourselves to the Cross of Jesus. We tell ourselves that love is the beginning and end of our relation to Him.

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It is to be urged that every Christian should be utterly familiar with the life of our Lord, and should spend time regularly in meditation upon His life, and especially upon His Passion. Love is the constant counteractive of familiarity; and it is kept fresh in our souls by the contemplation of what our Lord has actually done for us. A general recalling of what He has done has not the same stimulating force as the vivid placing before us of the actual details of His work. To most of us visible aids to the realisation of our Lord's action for us are most helpful. A crucifix on the wall of one's room before which one can say one's prayers, and before which also we stop for a moment time and again in the course of the day, just to say a few words, to make an act of love, of contrition, or of union, keeps the thought of the Passion fresh. We gain in freshness and variety of prayer by the use of such devotions as the litany of the Passion or the Way of the Cross. A set of cards of the Stations help us to say them in our homes. It is much to be desired that we accustom ourselves to devotional helps of all sorts. We are quite too much inclined to think that there is something of spiritual superiority in the attempt to conduct our devotional life without any of the helps which centuries of Christian experience have provided. It is the same sort of feeling that makes other Christians assume that there is a superiority in spiritual attainment evidenced by their dispensing with "forms," especially with printed prayers. It is just as well to remember that we did not originate the Christian Religion, but inherited it; and that the practices of devotion that have been found helpful by generations of saints, and after full trial have retained the approval of the greater part of Christendom, can hardly be treated as valueless, much less as superstitious. The fact that saints have found them valuable and one has not, may possibly not be a criticism of the saints.

The meditation upon the Way of the Cross, the vision of Jesus scourged, spitted upon, crowned with thorns, may well give us some searchings of heart in regard to our own easy-going, luxurious life. Nothing seems to disturb the modern person so much as the suggestion that the chief business of the Christian Religion is not to look after their comfort. They hold, it would appear, to the pre-Christian notion that prosperity is an obvious mark of God's favour, and that by the accumulation of wealth they are giving indisputable evidence of piety. It is well to recall that there is no such dangerous path as that of continual success. I do not in the least mean to imply that success is sinful or indicates the existence of sin, but I do mean to insist very strongly that the successful man needs to be a very spiritually watchful man. He is quite apt to think that he may take all sorts of liberties with the laws of God. There are, no doubt, evident dangers to the unsuccessful man, but the Holy Scriptures

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have not thought it worth while to spend much time in denouncing him. It has a good deal to say of the danger, not so much of wealth, as of prosperity in general: "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and prosperous ease were in her." When we find ourselves in a satisfied and comfortable home life, so comfortable that we find it difficult to get up to a week-day Mass, and disinclined to go out to a service after dinner, we need watching.

And the best watchman is oneself; and the best method of self-examination is by the Cross. Is there any sense in which we can be said to be following our Lord on the Sorrowful Way? Have we taken up the Cross to go after Him, or are we assuming that we can just as well drift along with the crowd of those who only look on? We all need from time to time to consider the Catholic teaching as to mortification and self-discipline. I am quite aware that to insist on this is not the way of popularity, but nevertheless I learned a long time ago that about the only way that a priest can take if he wishes to be saved is the way of unpopularity. And therefore I am going to insist that the practice of rigorous self-discipline is essential to any healthy Christian life. We cannot dispense ourselves from this, for the mere fact that we are dispensing ourselves is the proof that we need that upon which we are turning our back. Briefly, what I mean is that the assumption of the Cross by a Christian means that he is taking into his life, voluntarily, personal acts of self-sacrifice which he offers to our Lord as the evidence and the means of his own Cross-bearing.

The unruliness of our nature can only be kept in order by continual acts of self-discipline. We, no doubt, recognise the need of the discipline of the passions, but our theory, so far as we can be said to have one, would seem to be that the discipline of the passions means resistance to special temptations as they arise. We may no doubt sin through the passions, and therefore we need a minimum of watchfulness to meet temptations which come our way. I submit that such a way of conducting life is quite sufficient to account for the vast amount of failure we witness or, perhaps, experience. When from time to time the country gets alarmed about its health, when it is threatened with some epidemic such as influenza, the papers are full of medical advice the sum of which is you cannot dodge all the disease germs that are in the air, but you can by a vigorous course of exercise and by careful diet, keep yourself in a state of such physical soundness that the chances are altogether favourable for your withstanding the assaults of disease. No doubt the vast majority of people prefer not to follow this advice. A considerable number of them resort to various magic cults, such as letting sudden drafts of cold air in upon the inoffensive bystander with a view to exorcising the germs. But it remains that the medical advice is sound: it amounts to saying, "Keep yourself in the best physical condition possible and you will run the minimum chance of being ill."

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The Catholic treatment of life and its recommendation of discipline and mortification has precisely the same basis as the physical advice—an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. We are exposed to temptation constantly, and we need to recognise the fact and prepare ourselves to meet it; and the best preparation is the preparation of self-discipline for the purpose of keeping rebellious nature under control. Good farming does not consist in pulling up weeds; it consists in the choice and preparation of the ground in which the seed is to be sown; it looks primarily to the growth of the seed and not to the elimination of the weeds. Our nature is a field in which the Word of God is sown; its preparation and care is what we need to focus attention on, not the weeds.

Self-discipline is the preparation of nature, the discipline of the powers of the spiritual life with a view to what they have to do. And one of the important phases of our preparation is to teach our passions obedience, to subject them to the control of the enlightened will. If they are accustomed to obey they are not very likely to get out of hand in some time of crisis. If they are broken in to the dominion of spiritual motive, they will instinctively seek that motive whenever they are incited to act. Hence the immense spiritual value of the habitual denial to ourselves of indulgence in various innocent kinds of activity. I do not at all mean that we are never to have innocent indulgences: I do mean that the declining of them occasionally for the purpose of self-discipline is a most wholesome practice. How frequently it is desirable must be determined by the individual circumstances. It is utterly disastrous to permit a child to have everything it wants because there is sufficient money to spend, to permit it to run to soda fountains or go to the picture houses as it desires. Any sane person recognises that; but does the same person recognise the same principle as applying in his own life? Does he feel the value of going without something for a day or two, or staying from places of amusement for a time, or of abandoning for a while this or that luxury?

The principle is of course the ascetic principle of self-mastery. It is best brought before us by the familiar practice of fasting, which is very mildly recommended to us in its lowest terms in the table in the Book of Common Prayer. Naturally, its value is not the value of going without this or that, but the value of self-mastery. The very fact that our appetites rebel at the notion shows their undisciplined character. The child at the table begins to ask, not for a sensible meal founded on sound reasons of hygiene, but for various things that are an immediate temptation to the appetite. The adult is not markedly different save that he preserves a certain order in indulgence. The principle of fasting is that he should from time to time cut across the inclination of appetite, and either go without a meal altogether, or select such food as will maintain health without delighting appetite. So man gains the mastery over the animal side of his nature and shows himself the child of God.

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The actual practice of the ascetic life really carries us much farther than these surface matters of a physical nature that have been cited. It applies in particular to the disposition of time and the ruling of daily actions. The introduction of a definite order into the day actually seems to increase the time at one's disposal. I know, I can hear you saying: "If you were the head of a family, and had children to look after, you would not talk that way. You would know something of the practical difficulties of life." But indeed I am quite familiar with the situation. And if I were so situated I am certain that I should feel all the more need of order. Families are disorderly because we let them be; because we do not face the initial trouble of making them orderly. A school or a factory would be still more disorderly than a family if it were permitted to be. Any piece of human mechanism will get out of order if you will let it. That is precisely the reason for the insistence on the ascetic principle—this tendency of life to get out of order; that is the meaning of all that I have been saying, of the whole Catholic insistence on discipline. Time can be controlled; and, notwithstanding American experience, children can be controlled; and control means the rescuing of the life from disorder and sin, and the lifting it to a level of order and sanity and possible sanctity.

We cannot hope to meet successfully the common temptations of life except we be prepared to meet them, except there be in our life an element of foresight. An undisciplined and untried strength is an unknown quantity. The man who expects to meet temptation when it occurs without any preparation is in fact preparing for failure. I do not believe that there is any other so great a source of spiritual weakness and disaster as the going out to meet life without preceding discipline, thus subjecting the powers of our nature to trials for which we have not fitted them. Self-control, self-discipline, ascetic practice, are indispensable to a successful Christian life.

O STAR of starres, with thy streames clear,
Star of the Sea, to shipman Light or Guide,
O lusty Living, most pleasant t'appear,
Whose brighte beames the cloudes may not hide:
O Way of Life to them that go or ride,
Haven from tempest, surest up t'arrive,
O me have mercy for thy Joyes five.

* * * * *

O goodly Gladded, when that Gabriel
With joy thee gret that may not be numb'red,
Or half the bliss who coulde write or tell,
When th' Holy Ghost to thee was obumbred,
Wherethrough the fiendes were utterly encombred?
O wemless Maid, embellished in his birth,
That man and angel thereof hadden mirth.

John Lydgate of Bury, XV Cent. From Chaucerian and Other Poems, edited by W. W. Skeat, 1894.

PART TWO



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CHAPTER XVII

HOLY WEEK II

And after they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.

S. Matt. XXVII, 31.

Forgive, O Lord, we beseech thee, the sins of thy people: that we, who are not able to do anything of ourselves, that can be pleasing to thee, may be assisted in the way of salvation by the prayers of the Mother of thy Son. Who. Having partaken of thy heavenly table, we humbly beseech thy clemency, O Lord, our God, that we who honour the Assumption of the Mother of God, may, by her intercession, be delivered from all evils. Through.

OLD CATHOLIC.

The way of the Cross is indeed a Sorrowful Way. We have meditated upon it so often that we are familiar with all the details of our Lord's action as He follows it from the Judgment Seat of Pilate to the Place of a Skull. I wonder if we enough pause to look with our Lord at the crowds that line the way, or at those who follow Him out of the city. It is not a mere matter of curiosity that we should do so, or an exercise of the devout imagination; the reason why we should examine carefully the faces of those men who attend our Lord on the way to His death is that somewhere in that crowd we shall see our own faces: it is a mirror of sinful humanity that we look into there. All the seven deadly sins are there incarnate.

It is extremely important that we should get this sort of personal reaction from the Passion because we are so prone to be satisfied with generalities, to confess that we are miserable sinners, and let it go at that! But to stop there is to stop short of any possibility of improvement, because we can only hope to improve when we understand our lives in detail, when we face them as concrete examples of certain sins.

There was pride there. It was expressed by both Roman and Jewish officialism which looked with scorn on this obscure fanatic who claimed to be a king! Pilate had satisfied himself of His harmlessness by a very cursory examination. This Galilean Prophet with His handful of followers, peasants and women, who had deserted Him at the first sign of danger, was hardly worth troubling about. The only ground for any action at all was the fear that the Jewish leaders might be disagreeable. Those Jewish leaders took a rather more serious view of the situation because they knew that through the purity of His teaching and His obvious power to perform miracles, a power but just now once more strikingly demonstrated in the raising of Lazarus, He had a powerful hold on the people. They, these Jewish leaders, declined a serious examination of the claims of such a man

in their pride of place and knowledge of the Scriptures. They were concerned to sweep Him aside as a possible leader in a popular outbreak, not as one whose claim to the Messiahship needed a moment's examination.

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This intellectual pride is one of the very greatest sins to which humanity is tempted. It goes very deep in its destructive force because it is a sin, preeminently, of the spiritual nature, of that in us which is akin to God, His very image. It is, you will remember, the sin on which our Lord centres His chief denunciation. And common as it has always been, it has never been so common as it is to-day. Pilate and the chief priests are duplicated in every community in the thousands who reject Christianity without any adequate examination as incredible in view of what they actually hold, or as inconvenient in view of what they desire to practice. We have only to read very superficially in the current literature of the day, we have only to examine the teaching in colleges, to be completely convinced of the vast extent of the revolt against the Christian Religion. This revolt is for the most part a revolt without adequate examination. It assumes that the Christian Religion is contrary to science, or to something else that is established as true. It looks at Christianity superficially through the eyes of those who reject it and are ignorant of it. The fact is that Christianity cannot be understood in any complete sense of the word by those who do not practice it. Its "evidence" is no doubt of great force; of sufficient force to lead men to experiment; but the actual comprehension of Christ as the Saviour of man is an experience. The operation of the Holy Spirit in life is necessarily proved, and only completely proved, by the action of the Spirit Himself.

Another demonstration of the same pride is seen in the refusal, without adequate examination, to accept the Catholic Religion, and the picking and choosing among articles of belief and sacraments and practices as to what we will use or observe. Men do not like this or that, and they therefore decline it. The whole attitude is one of self-will and pride. Whatsoever comes to us with a great weight of Christian experience back of it certainly deserves careful consideration; it demands of us that we treat it as other than a matter of taste. Pride is the commonest of sins and the most dangerous for it attacks the very heart of the spiritual life. It runs, to be sure, through a broad range of experience and not all manifestations of pride are mortal sin; but all manifestations of it are subtle and insidious and capable of expansion to an indefinite degree. For there is no difference in nature between the spiritual attitude of the person who says, "I do not see any sense in that and will not do it," when the matter in question may be the Church's rule of fasting, and that of the man who before Pilate's Judgment Seat cried out, "We have no king but Caesar."

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It was in fact because they found their own power and place threatened that the Jewish authorities were so determined on our Lord's death. Their sin from this point of view was the sin of covetousness. This sin reaches its highest point when it is greed for power over other men's lives and destinies, when it is ready to sacrifice the lives of others in order to gain or maintain its ends. In this broad sense it is the most socially destructive of sins. The wars of the world for these many years have been wars for commercial supremacy. The world is being continually exploited by commercial enterprises which will stop at nothing to gain their ends. Some day a history of the last two hundred years will be written which will tell the story of the commercial expansion of the world we call civilised, and it will be the most horrible book that has ever been written. It will contain the story of the Spanish colonisation of America. It will contain the history of the slave trade. It will contain the history of the Belgian Congo, and of the rubber industry in South America. It will contain the history of the American Indian and of the opium trade of India—and of many like things.

But while we shudder at the world-torturing ways of the pursuit of wealth, of the world-wide seeking of money and power, we need not forget that the sin of covetousness is as common as any sin can be. It is so common and so subtle that it is almost impossible to know how far one is a victim of it. It is deliberately taught to us as children under the guise of thrift, which if it be a virtue is certainly one that the saints have overlooked. We are constantly called on to strike a balance between what are the proper needs of life and what is an improper concentration of attention upon ourselves. Waste of money, like waste of any other energy, is a sin; but it is a very nice question as to what is waste. I think it a pretty safe rule to give expenditure the benefit of the doubt when it is for others, and to deny it when it is for self.

However, I imagine that those who are conscientiously trying to conduct their lives as the children of God will have little difficulty in this matter. The real trouble is not in the matter of expenditure but in the matter of gain. The ethics of business are very far from being the ethics of the Gospel, and we are often frankly told by those engaged in business that it cannot be successfully conducted on the basis of the ethics of the Gospel. That it is not so conducted is sufficiently obvious from a cursory scanning of the advertising columns of any newspaper or magazine. The ideal of the business world is success. Naturally, one cannot carry on an unsuccessful business, but need it be success by all means and to all extents? Are there no limits to the methods by which business is to be pushed, except legal limits? If there is no room for Christian ethics in the business world there can be but one end; competitive business

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will lead the civilisation that it controls to inevitable disaster. Our Lord said: "Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth." And He went on to speak a parable which has come to be known as the Parable of the Rich Fool. The "practical man" may be as angered as he likes by this teaching, but in his soul he knows that our Lord was right. When such things are pointed out from the pulpit the "practical man" says: "What would become of the Church were it not for the rich and the successful?" I think that the answer is that in that case the Church would no more represent the rich and would have a fair chance of once more representing Jesus Christ.

It may seem at the first sight that of the mortal sins lust was not represented here upon the Sorrowful Way; but that, I think is but a superficial analysis of the nature of lust, thinking only of some manifestations of it. There is however one sin that has its roots deep in lust which psychologists tell us is one of its commonest manifestations, and that is cruelty. Lust is not always, but commonly, cruel; and the desire to inflict pain on others is a very common form of its expression. There are sights we have seen or incidents we have read of, it may be a boy torturing an animal or another child, it may be a shouting mass of men about a prize-ring, it may be soldiers sacking a town,—when the action seems so senseless that we are at a loss to account for it; but the account of it lies in the mystery of our sensual nature, in the ultimate animal that we are. The savage joy that is being expressed by the participants in such scenes is ultimately a sensual joy. These men who delighted in the torture of our Lord were sensualists; and there are few of us who if we will watch our selves closely will not find traces of the animal showing itself from time to time. Of this crowd about the Cross relatively few could have known anything about the case of our Lord; but they were fascinated by the spectacle of a man's torture. If the executions of criminals were public to-day there would undoubtedly be huge crowds to gaze upon them.

It is one of the lessons we learn from the study of sin that what we had thought was the essence of the sin was in fact but one of the manifestations of it, and that we have to carry our study far before we arrive at the ideal, Know thyself. It is always dangerous to assume that we know when we have not been at the pains to look at a subject on all sides. Our sensual nature needs a very careful discipline, and the mere freedom from certain forms of the sin of lust is not the equivalent of that purity which is the medium of the Vision of God.

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It is the sin of gluttony which is the least obvious in the Way of the Cross. There are no doubt plenty of gluttons there, but that is not what we are trying to find; we are trying to see how each sin contributed to this final act in the drama of our Lord's life, how each sin contributed to put men in opposition to our Lord. It is not the actual sin of gluttony that we shall find in operation here but certain inevitable effects of it, What is the effect of gluttony on the soul of man? Absorption in the pursuit of the pleasures that spring from material things; the indulgence of the appetite, and the natural result of such indulgence which is to render the soul insensitive to the spiritual. The man whose motto is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," puts himself out of touch with the spiritual realities of life. He is materialistic, whatever may be his philosophy. He wants immediate results from life. When he is confronted with our Lord, when he is told that our Lord makes demands upon life for self-restraint and self-discipline, that He demands that the appetites be curbed rather than indulged, he declines allegiance. One can have no doubt that in our Lord's time as to-day indifference to His teaching and failure even to take in what the Gospel means or how it can be a possible rule of life is largely due to the dull spiritual state, outcome of the indulgence of the appetite for meat and drink. Men whose brains are clogged by over eating, and whose faculties are in a deadened state through the use of alcohol, cannot well understand the Gospel of God.

There is abundant evidence of anger all along the Way of the Cross. The constant thwarting of the purpose of the Jewish authorities by our Lord, His unsparing criticism of them before the people, had stirred them to fury. If our Lord had seemed to them to threaten their "place and nation" we can understand that they would show toward Him intense hostility. Their attitude toward the people whose religious interests they were supposed to have in charge was one of utter contempt: "This people which knoweth not the Law is cursed." Our Lord's attitude was the opposite of all this. It was not, to be sure, as to-day it is represented to be an appeal to the people. He was not bidding for popular support, but he showed unbounded sympathy with the people; He cast His teaching in a form that would appeal to them and draw them to him. He made a popular appeal in that He showed Himself understanding of the popular mind and without social prejudice of any sort. This setting aside of the arrogant authorities of Israel roused them to implacable wrath. They felt that our Lord was setting Himself to undermine their authority, and as they felt that their authority was "of God" their indignation translated itself into terms of zeal for God.

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This anger that manages to wear a cloak of virtue is peculiarly dangerous to the soul. When we are just ordinarily mad over some offence committed against us it is no doubt a sin; but it is not a sin of the same malignity as when we feel that we can go any lengths because we are not angry on our own behalf, then our anger almost becomes an act of religion in our eyes. We have become the defenders of a cause. No doubt there is such a thing as "righteous indignation," but it is not a virtue that we are compelled to practice, and we would do well to leave it alone as much as possible lest our indignation exceed our righteousness, and we indentify our personal interests with the cause of God.

The worst feature of tempermental flare-ups is the testimony they bear to our lack of discipline. When we excuse ourselves or others on the ground that action is "tempermental" we are in fact no more than restating the fact that there is sore need of discipline; and there is no more ground for excusing one variety of temperament for its lack of discipline than an other. In fact, the more inclined a temperament is to certain sins, the more necessity there is for the appropriate sort of training. People without self-control, who are constantly losing their temper, are public nuisances and ought to be suppressed. There is the worst kind of arrogance in the assumption that I do not have to control myself and can speak and act as I like. No one, whatever his position, has the right to ignore the feelings of others; and the more the position is one of authority, exempting him from a certain kind of criticism, the more is he bound to criticise himself and examine himself as to this particular sin.

There are sins under this caption which do not contain much malice but are disturbing to life, and they are especially disturbing to one's spiritual life. There are peevish, complaining people, who do not seem to mean much harm, but keep themselves in a state of dissatisfaction which renders their spiritual growth impossible. They grow old without any of the grace and beauty of character which should mark a Christian old age. One knows old people who have been in intimate contact with the Church and the sacraments for many years but do not show any signs of having reached our Lord through them. They are dissatisfied and complaining and critical and generally disagreeable so that the task of those who take care of them is rendered very disheartening. What is the trouble? Has there never been any true spiritual discipline, but only a certain superficial conformity to a spiritual rule? When old age comes the will is weakened and the sense of self-respect undermined, with the result that what the person has all along been in reality, now comes to the surface and is, perhaps for the first time, visible to every one.

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Envy is closely related to pride on the one hand and to covetousness on the other. It begins in the perception of another's superiority, and carries its victim through the feeling of hurt pride at the contrast with himself to desire for that which is not his own. The envious person covets the qualities of possessions of another, while vividly denying that they are in fact superior to his own, except, it may be, in certain apparent and not very valuable aspects. The contrast between the superior and the inferior has one of two results: either the inferior is stirred to admiration, or he is stirred to a greater or less degree of envy.

It was thus that contact with our Lord *revealed* the reality of men. It was a very true judgment to associate with him. His apostles were simple men who never thought of putting themselves in comparison with Him: the more they knew Him the more wonderful He seemed to them. We feel all through the Gospel story what an overwhelming impression His personality made upon men. There is no criticism raised on His character from any point of view. His enemies fell back on the accusation of blasphemy growing out of His claims, an accusation that would be true, if the claims were not true. What we really discover in those who oppose Him is envy, envy of the influence He exercises over others, envy stirred by His obvious superiority to themselves.

Envy is one of the sins of which we are least conscious. When people affirm that they envy others this or that: their leisure, their beauty, or what not, they clearly do not envy them at all, but are mildly covetous of the things that they see others possess. Where envy does show its presence and where we do not recognise its nature, is in that horrible inclination to depreciate others which is visible in certain characters. They seem never to hear another mentioned but they try to think of something which limits the praise bestowed upon him, or altogether counteracts it. It seems to be an instinctive hostility to superiority as involving an implied criticism of one's own inferiority. It is that curious love of the worst that lies at the root of gossip.

And what about the last of the deadly sins, the sin of sloth? One is almost tempted to say that it is at once the least obvious and the most destructive of all the deadly sins. That would no doubt be somewhat of an exaggeration, but it would not be very far off the truth. It is spiritual sloth that prevents us from considering as we should the spiritual problems that are presented to us, and therefore prevents us from gaining their promise. It is the quality in humanity that blocks the consideration of the new on the ground that we already know and can gain nothing by further exertion. The Jewish religious leaders declined the intellectual and spiritual effort of considering our Lord's claims; they just set them aside unconsidered. And is not that just what we are constantly doing, and what constitutes the most pressing danger of the spiritual life? We will not consider the future as the field of constantly new opportunity and therefore new stages of growth. We do not want to make the effort that is implied in that attitude.

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Our sloth binds us hand and foot and delivers us to the enemy. There are no doubt some who cry out: "But I am not at all slothful; I am busy from morning to night; of whatever else I may be guilty, it is not of sloth!" My friend, busy people are quite often the most slothful people that there are. They are busy dodging their rightful duties and the opportunities that God offers them, all day long. Have you never discovered that when you had something that you ought to do and do not want to do, that the easiest method by which you can still your conscience is to make yourself terribly busy about something else, and then to tell yourself that the reason why you have not done what you know that you ought to have done is that really you have not had time? Do you not know that being busy is one of the most effective screens that you can put between your conscience and your obligation? Do you not know that tens of thousands of men and women to-day are putting the screens of good works, of social service of some sort, between their souls and the worship of God and the practice of the sacraments? Beware lest while you wear yourself out with activity your besetting sin be found to be sloth!

And shall we find there on the Way of Sorrow the virtues that are the opposite of the Seven Sins? Perhaps, if we had time to look, or had sufficient knowledge of the crowd that lines the way. There are certain women over there wailing and lamenting; perhaps they could help us. In any case we know that there is one woman who has succeeded in keeping near whose love of Jesus is so intense that it will enable her to overcome all obstacles and be near Him to the very last. Jesus as He staggers along the way and falls at length under the intolerable weight of the Cross is the embodiment of all virtues and of all spiritual accomplishment, and his blessed Mother through His grace has been kept pure from all sin. She will show the perfection of purely human accomplishment. She is the best that humanity in union with the Incarnate Son has brought forth. We have seen—we have caught glimpses of her life through what the Scriptures tell us of her—how completely she has responded to grace in all the actions of her life. Not much do the Scriptures say, but what they do say is like the opening of windows through which we catch passing aspects of her life which we feel are perfectly characteristic and revealing.

And we have seen there, or we may see, may we not? the virtues which are the work of the Holy Spirit enabling us to overcome the deadly sins. We have seen the humility with which, without thought of self, she answered God's call to be the Mother of His Son. We have seen the liberality with which she places her whole life at God's disposal, withholding nothing from the divine service. Purity undefiled had been God's gift to her from the first moment of her existence. Hers too was that meekness which willingly accepted all that the appointment of God brought her, showing in her acceptance no withholding of the will, no trace of self-assertion. Hers was the great virtue of temperance, the power of self-restraint and self-discipline, which suppressed all movements of nature that would be contrary to God's will. There too was the love of the brother and of the neighbour which is the contrary of envy; and there was the eagerness in fulfilling the will of God which is the opposite of sloth.

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We have then two spotless examples,—how shall we not be stirred to follow them! There is Jesus manifesting the qualities of His sinless life, of the life of God's election, of humanity as God wills it to be, and as it ultimately will be when it gives itself to His will; and Mary in whom we see the work of God's grace perfectly accomplished by virtue of her perfect response to the love of her Sen. We look at these two lives and we see what is possible for us. We do not say, we cannot say, these things are too wonderful and great for me. We can only say, through the grace of God which is given me, "I can do all things." It is not my inevitable destiny that I should abide a sinner. I have the choice of being a sinner or a saint.

MARY: Ever I cried full piteously:
"Lordings, what have ye i-brought?
It is my Son I love so much:
For God's sake bury Him nought."
They would not stop though that I swooned,
Till that He in the grave were brought.
Rich clothes they around him wound:
And ever mercy I them besought.

* * * * *

They said there was no better way
But take and bury him full snel.
They looked on my cousin John
For sorrow both a-down we fell—

* * * * *

By Him we fell that was My Child.
His sweet mouth well full oft I kissed.
John saw I was in point to spill,
That nigh mine heart did come to break.
He held his sorrow in his heart still
And mildly then to me did speak:
"Mary, if it be thy will
Go we hence; the Maudeleyn eke."
He led me to a chamber then
Where my Son was used to be,—
John and the Maudeleyn also;
For nothing would they from me flee.
I looked about me everywhere:
I could nowhere my Sone see.
We sat us down in sorrow and woe
And 'gan to weep all three.

From St. Bernard's Lamentation on Christ's Passion. Engl. version,
probably 13th Cent, by Richard Maydestone.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CRUCIFIXION

And they crucified him.

S. Matt. XXVII, 35.

In as much as we have no confidence because of our many sins, do thou, O Virgin Mother of God, beseech him who was born of thee; for a Mother's supplication availeth much to gain the benignity of the Master. Despise not the prayers of sinners, O all-august, for merciful and mighty to save is he, who vouchsafed to suffer for us.

BYZANTINE.

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We have followed the Way of Sorrows to the very end and now stand on Calvary watching by the Cross, waiting for the death of the Son of God. The mystery of iniquity is consummated here where man in open rebellion against his God crucifies the Incarnate Son. Here is fulfilled the saying: "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." All that man can do to prove his own degradation he has done. In the person of Pilate he has condemned to death a man whom he knows to be innocent. The representative of human justice has denied justice for the sake of his own personal ends. In the person of Herod he has permitted the insult and abuse of One of whom he knows no ill, and has displayed toward Him wanton and brutal cruelty. In the person of the Jewish authorities he has rejected the Messenger of the God whom he recognises as his God, and will not listen to the voice of prophecy because he finds his personal ends countered by the fulfilment of the promises of the religion whose subject he professes to be. In the person of the disciples he shows himself too cowardly and self-regarding to stand by his innocent Master and to throw in his lot with Him. In the person of the people he shows himself cruel, hardened, indifferent to suffering and to justice, ready to be made the tool of unscrupulous politicians, unstable and ignorant. As we look on, we succeed in retaining any shred of respect for humanity only through the contemplation of the exceptions—of S. John and the little group of women who are faithful to the end: above all in the sight of blessed Mary standing by the Cross of her Son.

It is the will of God that our Lord should follow the human lot to the very depth of its possible sufferings. There are no doubt many sufferings of humanity that our Lord does not share, they are those which spring out of personal sin. He in Whom was no sin could not suffer those things which spring from one's own wrong doing. That is one broad distinction between the burdens of the crosses on Calvary, a distinction which the penitent thief caught easily when he said to his reviling fellow-criminal, "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." And in as much as a great part of what we suffer is plainly just, the pain we bear is intensified by the knowledge that what we are is the outcome of what we have been. But our Lord, while He does not suffer as the result of His own sin, does suffer as the result of sin in that He wills to bear the result of men's sin by putting Himself at their mercy. He bears the burden of sin to the uttermost, looking down from the Cross at the faces of these men whose salvation He is making possible if in the days to come they will associate themselves with Him. One wonders how many of those who saw Him crucified came, before they died, to accept Him as the Saviour and their God. There must have been many wonderful first Communion in the early Church when those who had rejected Jesus in His humility came to receive Him glorified.

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But as we look at this scene of the dying we feel that the powers of evil are working their uttermost, they are driving their slaves to incredible sins. One feels the tremendous power that evil is as one looks at these human beings who are body and soul wholly under its dominion. The Power of Darkness appears utterly in control of the world of humanity; but we know that this moment in which its triumph seems most complete is in fact the moment in which its defeat is at hand. The victory that is being won is the victory of the Vanquished: and the moment when the victory of evil seems assured by the dying of Jesus, is in fact the moment when the chains of the slaves of sin are broken, and men who will to be free are henceforth free indeed. From that moment a new freedom is within the reach of men, the freedom which comes to them through their participation in the redemption wrought for them by God. Presently S. John will announce the great message of freedom to the Church, a message that he will tell in his own wonderful simplicity, a simplicity which almost deceives us as to its unfathomable depth of love and mystery: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.... We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not: but He that was begotten of God keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

This is what the dying of Jesus achieved for us, that we should be free as men had never been free, and that we should be strong as men had never been strong.

On their crosses the thieves agonise in the realisation of the sin that has brought them there; but our Lord, Who is free from sin, looks out on the scene before Him in a wonderful detachment from His personal suffering. Being without sin our Lord is without egotism, and never treats life from that purely personal standpoint that we are constantly tempted to adopt. Our own needs, our own interests, occupy the foreground and determine the judgment; and we are rarely able to see in dealing with the concrete case that our own interests are ultimately identical with the interests of the whole Body. The lesson that if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, that we are partners in joy and sorrow alike, is almost impossible of assimilation by the radical individualists that we are. Our theories break down before the test of actuality. But our Lord was not an individualist. He, in His relations with men, is the Head of the Body; and He admits no division of interests between His members. He therefore can think of the needs of others while He Himself is undergoing the last torture of death. He can impartially judge the separate cases of His members; He can attend to the spiritual welfare of a needy soul; He can think of His own death as an act of sacrifice willed by God, and not as a matter concerning Himself alone; and in doing these things He teaches us a much-needed lesson of the handling of life.

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No lesson is to-day more needed because we are more and more being influenced to treat life as a private matter. I have spoken of this before and need not elaborate it now; but I do want to insist, at whatever risk of repetition, that a Christian must, if his religion mean anything at all, look on the interests of the Body, not as a separate group of interests to which he is privileged or obligated to contribute such help as seems to him from time to time appropriate, but as in fact his own primary interests because his true significance in the world is gained through his membership in the Body. His life is hid with Christ in God and his conversation is in heaven. The life that he now lives in the flesh he lives by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him. To assert separate interests is to break the essential relation of his life. He is nothing apart from the Body but a dry and withered branch fit for the burning. No doubt our egotism rebels against this view of life, but it is certain that it is the view of the Christian Religion. If we would realise the ideals of the Religion we must act as those who are in constant relations with the other members of the Body and whose life gets its significance through those relations.

There is no more outstanding lesson of our Lord's life than this. It is true from whichever angle you look at it. If you think of our Lord as a divine Person it is at once evident how much of His meaning is included in His relations to the other Persons of the Blessed Trinity. He claims no independent will; it is the will of the Father that He has come to do. He claims no original work: it is the work that the Father has given Him to do that He is straightened until He accomplish. He has no individual possession, but all things that the Father has are His. Considered as God, our Lord is One Person in the one divine nature, no Unitarian interpretation of Him is possible. On the other hand, if you look at Him as Incarnate, as having identified Himself with humanity, He is in that respect made one with His brethren. He has made their interests His, and as their new Head is opening for them the gate of the future. He is inviting them into union with Himself, that in the status of His "brethren" and "friends" they may be also the true children of the heavenly Father. There is no hint anywhere that these things may be accomplished apart from Him, in individual isolation: indeed, if they could be so accomplished the Incarnation would be meaningless. He is the Way and no one cometh to the Father but by Him. He is the Truth, and no one knows the Father but he to whom the Son reveals Him. He is the Life, and no one spiritually lives except through His self-impartation. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life. He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." In this outlook from the Cross which we recognise in our Blessed Lord when, forgetting His own sufferings in His appreciation of the needs of

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others, we see Him still fulfilling His ministry of mercy and of sympathy, we are certain that His eyes would rest upon one group which could not fail to pierce His heart with its pathos and tragedy. Our Lord's love is not a general, impersonal love of humanity; it is always love of a person. He no doubt felt a special love for this thief who appealed to Him from the cross by His side. In the whole course of His life our Lord had shown His oneness with us in that He loved special people in a special way. He loved Lazarus and his sisters, He loved S. John. Above all others He loved His Blessed Mother. And now looking down from the Cross He sees that the disciple whom He loved was succeeded in leading His mother into the very shadow of the Cross. How S. Mary had made her way there we do not know: only love knows how it triumphs over its obstacles and comes forth victorious. There is Blessed Mary, looking up into the face so scarred and bleeding, and there is the Son, looking down through the blinding blood into the face of the mother. This is the supreme human tragedy of Calvary. We can only stand and watch the exchange of love.

And then comes the word—the word, by the way, which when it was spoken years ago in Cana of Galilee, men have interpreted as a harsh and rebuking word, with how much truth this scene tells—then comes the word: “Woman, behold thy son.” In His love He gives her that which He had so much loved, the friendship of S. John. He brings together those who had so supremely loved Him in an association which would support them both in the trial of their loss. “Woman, behold thy son; behold thy mother.” Bitter as was their sorrow in this hour, we know that they were marvellously comforted by this power of love which is able to transcend suffering and death. We know, because we know how utterly our Lord is one with us, that it was much to Him to look on the face that bent over Him in the Manger in Bethlehem. We know, because we know the perfect woman that was Mary, that there was deep joy as well as deep agony in being able to stand there at the last beneath the Cross.

Do you think that we are going too far when we see in S. Mary not simply the mother of our Lord, but when we also see in her a certain representative character? Does she not represent us in one way and S. John represent us in another, in this supreme exchange of love? Do we not feel that in S. John we have been recommended to the love and care of Mary who is our mother? Do we not feel that in S. John the mother has been committed to our love and care? Surely, because we are members of her Son we have a special relation to S. Mary, and a special claim upon her, if it be permitted to express it in that way. It is no empty form of words when we call her mother, no exaltation of sentimentalism. The title represents a very real relation of love. It brings home to us that the love of Mary is as near infinite as the love of a creature can be, and that like the love of her Son

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it is an unselfish love. She is necessarily interested in all the members of the Body, and their cares and joys and sorrows she is glad to make her own. She is very close to us in her love and sympathy; she is very ready to help us with her prayers. We never go to her for succour but she hears us. "Behold thy son," her divine Son said to her on the Cross in His agony, and all who are members of that Son are her sons too. Her place in heaven above all creatures, most highly favoured as she is, is a place to which our prayers penetrate, and never penetrate unheard. For that other Son, through whose merits she is what she is, whose Face she ever beholds as the Face alike of her Redeemer and her Child, is ever ready to hear her intercessions for us because they come to Him with the power and the insight that perfect purity and perfect sympathy alone can give. So for us there is intense personal consolation in this word: "Behold thy mother."

But there is another side to this committal. It is mutual: "Behold thy son." If we can see ourselves in S. John, committed to the Blessed Mother, we can also see ourselves in S. John to whom the blessed mother is committed. "Behold thy mother." There is a sense in which the blessed mother is committed to us; to-day she is our care. We see the fulfillment of this trust in the love and reverence wherewith Christendom from the beginning has surrounded S. Mary. It has accepted the charge with a passionate devotion. The growth of devotion to her is recorded in the vast literature of Mariology which comes to us from all parts and all eras of the Catholic Church. The details of the expression of this devotion have been wrought out through the centuries with loving care, and the result is that wherever there is a Catholic conception of religion, either in East or West, there is a grateful response to our Lord's trust of His Blessed mother to His Church in the person of S. John.

We feel, do we not? that it is one of the great privileges of our spiritual life that we have found a personal part in this trust, that it is permitted us to preserve and hand on this reverence for Blessed Mary, and in so doing to gain personal contact with her as a spiritual power in the Kingdom of God. It means much to us that we can have the love and sympathy which are blended with her intercession, that we can associate our prayers with hers in the time of our need. Much as we value the sympathy and prayers of our friends here, we cannot but feel that in Mary we have a friend whose helpfulness is stimulated by a great love and directed by deep spiritual insight into the reality of our needs. We turn therefore to her with the certainty of her co-operation.

Our Lord on the Cross had now fulfilled His mission in the care of individual persons, had prayed for His tormentors, had forgiven the penitent thief, and had commended those who were the special objects of His love to one another, and could now turn His thoughts away from earth to the love of the Father. His last words are intimate words to Him. They express the agony that tears His soul as the Face of the Father is for a moment hidden, and the peace of an accomplished work as He surrenders Himself into

the hands of the Father that sent Him. He who had been our example all His life, showing us how to meet life, is our example in death, showing us how to meet death.

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But just wherein does the dying of Christ become an example for us? This final surrender to the Father of a will that had never been separate from the Father,—what can we derive from all that? There are many lines of approach and application. I can only touch on one or two:—

“I have glorified Thee on the earth,” our Lord said in the last wonderful prayer, “I have finished the work that Thou gavest me to do.” And here on the Cross He repeats, “It is finished.” When we think of this we are impressed with the steadiness with which our Lord pursued His purpose, with the way He concentrated His whole life upon His work. He declined to be drawn aside by anything irrelevant to it. People came to Him with all sorts of requests, from the request that He will settle a disputed inheritance to the request that He will become their king; and He puts them all aside as having no pertinence to His mission. It is interesting to go through the Gospel and note just what are the details of this winnowing process; mark what our Lord accepts as relevant to His mission and what not. He is never too occupied or tired to attend to what belongs to His work. An ill old woman or idiot child is important to Him and He attends to them; but He declines the sort of work that will involve Him and His mission in controversy and politics. He is not a reformer of society but a reformer of men. He knows that only by the reformation of men can society be reformed.

There is no doubt much to be learned from the study of our Lord’s method of the limits of the social and political activity of His Church. It has constantly fallen a victim to the temptation to undertake the reform of the world by some other means than the conversion of it. It has shown itself quite willing to be made “a judge and divider.” It has not always declined the invitation it has received to assume the purple. “Your business is to reform this miserable world which so sadly and so obviously needs you,” men say to it; “You are not living up to your principles and you are neglecting your duty by not supporting this great movement for the betterment of the race,” others say. Still others urge, “You are losing great masses of men through your inexplicable failure to adopt their cause.” And the Church in the whole course of its history has constantly yielded to this temptation, and has not seen until too late that in so doing it was making itself the tool or the cat’s-paw of one interest or another whose sole interest in religion was the possibility of exploiting the influence of the Church. In the stupid hope of forwarding its spiritual interests the Church has entangled itself with the responsibilities of temporal power; it has made itself the backer of “the divine right of kings”; and it has found itself bound hand and foot in the character of a national or state Church; and with a curious incapacity to learn anything from experience is now enthusiastically cheering for democracy! Poor Church, whose leaders are so constantly misleaders.

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It is all due to the hoary temptation to try to get to one's end by some sort of a short cut: "All these things will I give you if you will fall down and worship me." Our Lord knew that Satan could not really give Him the ends He was seeking; but His followers are constantly confident that he can, and are therefore his constant and ready tools for this or that party or interest. They sell themselves to monarchy or democracy, to capital or labour, with the same guileless innocence of what is happening to them, with the same simple-minded incapacity to learn anything from the lessons of the past. There are no short cuts to spiritual ends, and those ends can never be accomplished by secular means. The interests of the Kingdom of God can never be forwarded by alliance with the powers of this world; the interests of particular persons or parties in the Church may be—but that is quite another thing.

The lesson is one that is not without application to the individual life. There again the tendency to mind something other than one's own business is almost ineradicable. We have before us the work of building our spiritual house, of finishing the work that the Father has given us to do, of carrying to a successful conclusion the work of our sanctification. In view of the experience of nearly two thousand years of Christianity and of our own personal experience, that would seem a sufficiently difficult and obligatory work to occupy the undivided energies of a life-time. But we are accustomed to treat this primary business of life quite as though it were a parergon, a thing to play with in our unoccupied hours, the fad of a collector rather than the supreme interest of an immortal being. That spiritual results are no oftener achieved than they are can occasion no surprise when one understands the sort of spirit wherewith they are approached. If the average man adopted toward his business the attitude he adopts toward his religion he would be bankrupt within a week,—and he knows it. You know that the attention you are paying to religion and the sort of energy and sacrifice you are putting into it are insufficient to secure any sort of a result worth having. Spiritually speaking, your life is an example of misdirected and dissipated energy. There is no spiritual result because there is no continuous and energetic effort in a spiritual direction. You are not like a master-builder planning and erecting a house. You are like a child playing with a box of blocks who begins to build a house with them and, when it is half built, is attracted by something else and runs after that—not even waiting to put the blocks back into the box!

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Life, no doubt, this modern city life into which we are plunged, is terribly distracting. Concentration upon a single aim is hard to attain. So we plead in our excuse, but the excuse is a false one and we know it. We know it because we know many people who have achieved the sort of concentration and simplicity of aim that we complain of as so difficult. They to be sure have other ends than those we claim to be ours, but that would not seem to be important. By far the greater part of the male population of this city is intensely concentrated in money making. I do not believe that I have overheard during the last year two men talking in a car or on the street who were not talking about money. There is a good enough example of the possibility of concentrating on a single end under the conditions of our life. There are other people, you know some of them, whose lives are devoted in the most thorough manner to the pursuit of pleasure. They find no difficulty in such concentration, and they afford an even better example of what we are discussing than the money-makers. The money-maker says, "I have to live and my family has to live, and we cannot live unless I devote myself to business. It is all very well to talk about spiritual interests, but those are the plain common sense facts. A man who spends all his time on religion will find it pretty difficult to live in New York." Very well, that seems unanswerable. But go back to the men and women whose sole interest is amusement—how do they live? In some way they seem to have so succeeded in subordinating business to pleasure that they get what they want, and they somehow escape starvation!

There, I fancy, is the explanation—they get what they want. In a broad way we all get what we want. We accomplish in some degree at least the ends which we make the supreme ends of life. We are back therefore where we started: What are our supreme ends? Are they in fact spiritual? Have we mastered the technique of the Christian life sufficiently to be single-eyed and pure-hearted in our pursuit of life's ends? Are we devoted to the aim of manifesting the glory of God and finishing the work that He has given us to do?

This, once more, was the secret of our Lord's life, and it is the secret of all those who have at all succeeded in imitating Him. They have followed Him with singleness of purpose. They have felt life to be before all else a vocation to manifest the will of God and to finish a given work. That was the attitude of our Blessed Mother; she began on that note: "Behold the hand-maid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." It was the Gospel that she preached: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Her whole life was a response—the response of love to love.

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That no doubt, goes to the heart of the spiritual problem. If we are to accomplish anything at all in the way of spiritual development, if we are to conduct life in simplicity toward spiritual ends, it will only be when the source of life's energy is found in love. He who does not love has no compelling motive toward God and no abiding principle to control life. If we conceive the Christian life as a task that is forced upon us, and which in some way we are bound to fulfil, we may be sure that the way in which we shall fulfil it will be weak and halting. We may be as conscientious as you please, but we shall not be able to concentrate on a work which is merely a work of duty and not the embodiment of a great love. Our primary activity should be devout meditation and study of our Lord's life, with prayer for guidance and help, till something of the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, till we feel our hearts burn within us and our spirits glow and we become able to offer ourselves, soul and body, a living sacrifice unto Him.

MARY: I cried: "Maudeleyn, help now!
My Son hath loved full well thee;
Pray Him that I may die,
That I not forgotten be!
Seest thou, Maudeleyn, now
My Son is hanged on a tree,
Yet alive am I and thou,—
And thou, thou prayest not for me!"

MAUDELEYN said: "I know no red,
Care hath smitten my heart sore.
I stand, I see my Lord nigh dead;
And thy weeping grieveth me more.
Come with me; I will thee lead
Into the Temple here before
For thou hast now i-wept full yore."

MARY: "I ask thee, Maudeleyn, where is that place,—
In plain or valley or in hill?
Where I may hide in any case
That no sorrow come me till.
For He that all my joy was,
Now death with Him will do its will;
For me no better solace is
Than just to weep, to weep my fill."
The Maudeleyn comforted me tho.
To lead me hence, she said, was best:
But care had smitten my heart so
That I might never have no rest.



“Sister, wherever that I go
The woe of Him is in my breast,
While my Sone hangeth so
His pains are in mine own heart fast.
Should I let Him hangen there
Let my Son alone then be?
Maudeleyn, think, unkind I were
If He should hang and I should flee.”

* * * * *

I bade them go where was their will,
This Maudeleyn and everyone,
And by myself remain I will
For I will flee for no man.

From St. Bernard’s “Lamentation On Christ’s Passion.”

Engl. version, 13th Cent., by Richard Maydestone.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XIX

THE DESCENT AND BURIAL

And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean
linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had
hewn out in the rock.

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S. Matt. XXVII, 59, 60.

It is meet in very truth to bless thee the Theotokos, the ever-blessed and all-immaculate and Mother of our God. Honoured above the Cherubim, incomparably more glorious than the Seraphim, thou who without stain gavest birth to God the Word, and art truly Mother of God, we magnify thee.

BYZANTINE.

The end had come—so it must have seemed to those who had loved and followed our Lord. As they came back from the burial, those of them who had remained true to the end, as they came out of their hiding places, those others who forsook Him and fled, they met in that “Upper Room” which was already consecrated by so many experiences. They came back from Joseph’s Garden, S. John leading the blessed Mother, the Magdalen and the other Mary following, S. Peter came from whatever obscure corner he had found safety in. The other Apostles came one by one, a frightened, disheartened group, shame-faced and doubtful as to what might next befall them. The thing that to us seems strangest of all is that no one seems to have taken in the meaning of our Lord’s words about His resurrection. Not even S. Mary herself appears to have seen any light through the surrounding darkness. I suppose that so much of what our Lord taught them was unintelligible until after the coming of the Holy Spirit that they rarely felt sure that they understood His meaning; and when the meaning was so unprecedented as that involved in His sayings about the resurrection we can understand that they should have been so little influenced by them.

S. Mary’s grief would have been so deep, so overwhelming, that she would have been unable to think of the future at all save as a dreary waste of pain. She could only think that her Son who was all to her, was dead. She had stood by the Cross through all the agony of His dying: she had heard His last words. That final word to her had sunk very deep into her heart. She had once more felt His Body in her arms as it was taken down from the Cross; and she had followed to the place where was a Garden and a new tomb wherein man had never yet lain, there she had seen the Body placed and hastily cared for, as much as the shortness of the time on the Passover Eve would permit. And then she had gone away, not caring at all where she was taken, with but one thought monotonously beating in her brain,—He is dead, He is dead.

It would not be possible in such moments calmly to recall what He Himself had taught about death. Death for the moment would mean what it had always meant to religious people of her time and circle. What that was we have very clearly presented to us in the talk with Martha that our Lord had near the place where Lazarus lay dead. There is a fuller knowledge than we find explicit in the Old Testament, showing a growth in the understanding of the Revelation in the years that fall between the close of the Old Testament canon and the coming of our Lord. There

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is a belief in survival to be followed by resurrection at the last day. That would no doubt be St. Mary's belief about death. That is still the belief of many Christians to-day. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." There are still many who think that they have accepted the full Revelation of God in Christ who have not appreciated the vast difference that the triumph of Christ over death has made for us here and now.

So we have no difficulty in understanding the gloom that fell on the Apostolic circle, accentuated as it was by the very vivid fear that at any moment they might hear the approaching feet of the Jewish and Roman officials and the knock of armed hands upon the door. What to do? How escape? Had they so utterly misunderstood and misinterpreted Christ that this is the natural outcome of His movement? Had they been the victims of foolish hopes and of a baseless ambition when they saw in Him the Christ, the one who should at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel? They had persistently clung to this nationalistic interpretation of His work although He had never encouraged it; but it was the only meaning that they were able to see in it. And now all their expectations had collapsed, and they were left hopeless and leaderless to face the consequences of a series of acts that had ended in the death of their Master and would end, they knew not how, for them. Was it at all likely that the Jewish authorities having disposed of the leader in a dangerous movement would be content to let the followers go free? Would they not rather seek to wipe out the last traces of the movement in blood?

So they would have thought, gathered in that Upper Room, while outside the Jewish authorities were keeping the Passover. What a Passover it was to them with this nightmare of a rebellion which threatened their whole place and power passed away. What mutual congratulations were theirs on the clever way in which the whole matter had been handled. There had been a moment when they were on the very point of failure, when Pilate was ready to let Jesus go free. That was their moment of greatest danger; and they took their courage in both hands and threw the challenge squarely in the face of the cowardly Governor: "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend!" The chief priests knew their man, and they carried their plan against him with a determined hand, declining to accept any compromise, anything less than the death of Jesus. Great was the rejoicing; hearty were the mutual congratulations in the official circles of Jerusalem. It had been long since they had celebrated so wonderful a Passover as that!

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So limited, so mistaken, is the human outlook on life. They had but to await another night's passing and all would be changed. But in the meantime the position of the disciples was pitiful. They were in that state of dull, hopeless discouragement that is one of the most painful of human states. It is a state to which we who are Christians do from time to time fall victims with much less excuse. We are hopeless, we say and feel. We look at the future, at the problems with which we are fronted, and we see no ray of light, no suggestion of a solution. We have been robbed of what we most valued and life looks wholly blank to us. For those others there was this of excuse,—they did not know Jesus risen, they did not know the power of the resurrection life. For us there is no such excuse because we have a sure basis of hope in our knowledge of the meaning of the Lord.

Hope is one of the great trilogy of Christian Virtues, the gift to Christians of God the Holy Ghost. As Christians we have the virtue of hope, the question is whether we will exercise it or no. It is one of the many fruits of our being in a state of grace. Many blunder when they think of hope in that they confound it with an optimistic feeling about the future. We hear of hopeful persons and we know that by the description is meant persons who are confident “that everything will be all right,” when there seems no ground at all for thinking so. They have a “buoyant temperament,” by which I suppose is meant a temperament which soars above facts. That not very intelligent attitude has nothing to do with the Christian virtue of hope. Hope is born of our relation to God. It is the conviction: “God is on my side; I will not fear what man can do unto me.” It is the serene and untroubled trust of one who knows that he is safe in the hands of God, and that his life is really ordered by the will and Providence of God.

This virtue, had they possessed it, would have carried the disciples through the crisis of our Lord's death. They had had sufficient experience of Him to know that they might utterly rely on Him in all the circumstances of their lives. He had always sustained them and carried them through all crises. They had often been puzzled by Him, no doubt; they had felt helpless to fathom much of His teaching, but they had slowly arrived at certain conclusions about Him which He Himself had confirmed. On that day at Caesarea Phillipi they had reached the conclusion of His Messiahship, a slumbering conviction had broken into flame and light in the great confession of S. Peter. The meaning of Messiahship was a part of their national religious tradition; and although in some important respects mistaken, they yet, one would think, have been led to perfect trust in our Lord when they acknowledged His Messianic claims. But death? They could not get over the apparent finality of death. But, again, perhaps we are not very far beyond this in our understanding of it. To us still death seems very final.

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But it was just that sense of its finality—of its constituting a hopeless break in the continuity of existence—that our Lord was engaged in removing during these days which to them were days of hopelessness and despair. When they came to know what in these days was taking place; and when the Church guided by the Holy Spirit came to meditate upon the meaning of our Lord's action it would see death in a changed light. The sense of a cataclysmic disaster in death would pass and be replaced by a sense of the continuity of life. Hitherto attention had been concentrated on this world, and death had been a disappearance from this world, the stopping of worldly loves and interests. Presently death would be seen to be the translation of the human being to a new sphere of activities, but involving no cessation of consciousness or failure of personal activities. Men had thought, naturally enough in their lack of knowledge, of the effect of death on the survivors, of the break in their relations with the dead. Now death would be viewed from the point of view of the interests of the person who is dead; and it would emerge that he continued under different conditions, and in the end it would come to be seen that even in the relations of the survivors with the dead there was no necessary and absolute break, but that the new conditions of life made possible renewed intercourse under altered circumstances.

Our Lord, the disciples learned not long after, during these days went to preach to the spirits in prison, which the thought of the Church has interpreted to mean that He carried the news of the Redemption He had wrought through His dying, to the place of the dead, to the region where the souls of the faithful were patiently waiting the time of their perfecting. The doors of the heavenly world could not be opened till the time when He by His Cross and Passion, by His death and resurrection, opened them. The Heads of the Gates could not be lifted till they were lifted for the entrance of the King of Glory. But once lifted they were lifted forever; and when He ascended up on high He led His troop of captives redeemed from the bondage of death and hell.

It is through these lifted Gates that the companies of the sanctified have been streaming ever since; and the difference that has been made in our view of death has been immense. If we have the faith of a Christian death has been transformed. There remains, of course, the natural grief which is ours when we part from those whom we love. This grief is natural and holy as it is in fact an expression of our love. It is not rebellion against the will of God, but is the expression of a feeling wherewith God has endowed us. But there is no longer in it the sting of hopelessness that we find, for instance, in the inscriptions on pagan tombs, nay, on tombs still, though created by Christians and found in Christian cemeteries. Rather it is the expression of a love which is learning to exercise itself under new conditions.

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We do not find it possible to reverse all our habits in a moment; and the new relation with the dead is one to which we have to learn to accustom ourselves. I remember a case where a mother and a son had never been separated for more than a day at a time, though he was far on in manhood. There came a time of indeterminate separation and the mother's grief was intense notwithstanding that there was no thought of a permanent separation. It took some time for her to accustom herself to the new mode of communication by letter. It is not far otherwise in death; it takes some time for us to accustom ourselves to the new mode of intercourse through prayer, but we succeed, and the new intercourse is very real and very precious. In a sense, too, it is a nearer, more intimate intercourse. It lacks the homely, daily touches, no doubt; but in compensation it reveals to us the spiritual values in life. We speedily learn, we learn almost by a spiritual instinct, what are the common grounds on which we can now meet. By our intercourse with our dead we get a new grasp on the truth of our common life in Christ: it is in and through Him that all our converse is now mediated. We have little difficulty in knowing what are the thoughts and interests which may be shared under the new conditions in which we find ourselves. Our perception of spiritual interests and spiritual values grows and deepens, and our communion with our dead becomes an indication of the extent of our own spiritual growth.

There come times in the spiritual experience of most of us when we seem to have got to the end. There is a deepening sense of failure which is not, when we analyse it, so much a failure in this or that detail, as a general sense of the futility of the life of the Church as expressed in our individual lives. It came to those primitive congregations, you remember, to which S. Peter was writing; "Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." It is the weariness of continuous effort from which we conclude that we are getting quite insufficient results.

No doubt that is true. The results are never what we expect, possibly because the effort is never what we imagine it to be. We continually underestimate the opposing force of evil, the difficulty of dealing with a humanity which falls so easily under the slightest temptation. It is not that sinners decline to hear the Word of God, but that those who profess themselves to be the servants of God, and who in fact intend to be such, are so lamentably weak and ineffective. We think of the effort of God in the Incarnation; we have been following that effort in some detail through the Passion. We are surprised, shocked, disheartened by the spectacle of the hatred that innocence stirs up, at the lengths men will go when they see their personal ends threatened. We are horrified by Caiphas, Pilate, Herod. But is that the really horrifying thing about the Passion of our Lord? To me the supreme example of human incomprehension is that all the disciples forsook Him and fled, that He was left to die almost alone. There we get the most disheartening failure in the tragedy.

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For we expect the antagonism of the world, especially that part of the world that has seen and rejected Christ. There we find Satanic activities. One of the outstanding features of the literature of to-day in the Western world, the world that had known from childhood the story of Jesus, is its utter hatred of Christianity; its revolt from all that Christianity stands for. This is markedly true in regard to the Christian teaching in the matter of purity. The contemporary English novel is perhaps the vilest thing that has yet appeared on this earth. There have been plenty of unclean books written in the course of the world's history—we have only to recall the literature of the Renaissance—but for the most part they have been written in careless or boastful disregard of moral sanctions which they still regarded as existing; but the novel of the present is an immoral propaganda—it is deliberately and of malice immoral, not out of careless levity, but out of deliberate intention. You do not feel that the modern author is just describing immoral actions which grow out of his story, but that he is constructing his story for the purpose of propagating immoral theory. He hates the whole teaching of the Christian Religion in the matter of purity. He has thrown it overboard on the ground that it is an “unnatural” restraint. To those who have studied the development of thought since the Renaissance there is nothing surprising in this.

But what does still surprise those who are as yet capable of being surprised is the light way in which the mass of Christians take their religion. Occasionally, in moments of frankness, they admit that they are not getting anything out of it; but it is harder to get them to admit that the reason is that they are not putting anything into it. You do not expect to get returns from a business into which you are putting no capital, and you have no right to expect returns from a religion into which you are putting no energy. What is meant by that is that those Christians who are keeping the minimum routine of Christianity, who are going to High Mass on Sunday (or perhaps only to low Mass) and then making the rest of the day a time of self-indulgence and pleasure; who make their communions but rarely; who do not go to confession, or go only at Easter; who are giving no active support to the work of the Gospel as represented in parish and diocese have no right to be surprised if they find that they do not seem to get any results from their religion; that it is often rather a bore to do even so much as they do, and that they see no point in permitting it further to interfere with their customary amusements and avocations. I do not know what such persons expect from their religion, but I am sure that they will be disappointed if they are expecting any spiritual result. Naturally, they will be disappointed if they look in themselves for any evidence of the virtue of hope. The most that can be looked for under the circumstances is that mockery of hope, presumption.

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We are not to be discouraged in our estimate of the Christian Religion by this which seems to be the failure of God. We are not to echo the cry: "Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." S. Peter pointed out to those pessimists that all things do not continue the same, that there are times of crisis which are the judgments of God. Such a judgment was that of old which swept the wickedness of the world away, "whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." He goes on to state that the present order likewise will issue in judgment: "The heavens and the earth which are now ... are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." What renders men hopeless is the feeling of God's inactivity; but this declaration of impending judgment certifies the active interest of God. God's dealing with the world is a perpetual judgment of which we are apt to decline the evidence until the cataclysm reveals the final scene. But every society, every individual life, is being judged through the whole course of its existence, and there is no need that either society or individual should be blind to the fact that such a judgment is taking place. There is no failure of God. There is a failure on our part to understand the works of God.

We may very well consider the problem an individual one and ask ourselves what ground of hope we have. On the basis of our present effort can we, ought we, to have more than we have? The spiritual life is not an accident that befalls certain people; it is an art that is acquired by such persons as are interested in it. It is attained through the careful training and exercise of the faculties wherewith we have been endowed. The answer to our question is itself a perfectly simple one, as simple as would be the answer to the question: "Do you speak French?" We speak French if we have taken the trouble to learn French; and we have gained results in the way of spiritual development and culture if we have taken the trouble to do so. I do not know why we should expect results on any other ground than that.

But certain persons say: "I have tried, and have not attained any results." Well, I should want to know what the trying means in that case. It is well for a person who aspires to spiritual culture to think of his past history. What sort of character-development has so far been going on? Commonly it happens that there has been no spiritual effort that is worth thinking about; but that does not mean that nothing spiritual has been happening. It means on the contrary that there has been going on a spiritual atrophy, the spiritual powers have been without exercise and will be difficult to arouse to activity. In such a case as that spiritual awakening will be followed by a long period of spiritual struggle against habits of thought and action which we have already formed, a period in which unused and immature

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spiritual powers must be roused to action and disciplined to use. The simplest illustration of this is the difficulty experienced by the enthusiastic beginner in holding the attention fixed on spiritual acts such as the various forms of prayer. In all such attempts at spiritual activity there will be the constant drag of old habits, the recurrence of states of mind and imagination that had become habitual. These hindrances can be overcome, but only by steady and rather tedious labour. They call for the display of the virtue of patience which is not one of the virtues characteristic of spiritual immaturity. Hence reaction and the feeling that one is not getting on, the feeling that we have quite possibly made a mistake about the whole matter.

This is the place for the exercise of hope; and hope will come if we look away from our not very encouraging acquirement to the ground that we have for expecting any acquirement at all. If we ask: "Why hope?" we shall see that our basis of hope is not in ourselves at all but in God. We hope because of the promises of God, because of His will for us as revealed in His Son. "He loved us and gave Himself for us"; and that giving will not be in vain. "He gave Himself for me," I tell myself, "and therefore I am justified in my expectation of spiritual success." So one tries to learn from the present failure as it seems; so one repents and pushes on; so one learns that it is through tenacity of purpose that one attains results.

And again: I am sustained by hope because I see that the results that I covet are not imaginary. They exist. I see them in operation all about me. I learn of them as I study the lives of other Christians past and present. They are reality not theory, fact not dream. And what has been so richly and abundantly the outcome of spiritual living in others must be within my own reach. The results they attained were not miraculous gifts, but they were the working of God the Holy Spirit in lives yielded to Him and co-operating with Him.

Once more: is it not true that after a period of honest labour I do find results? Perhaps not all that I would like but all that I am justified in expecting from the energy I have spent? I do not believe that any one can look back over a year's honest labour and not see that the labour has born fruit.

In any case the fact that we do not see just what we are looking for does not mean that no spiritual work is going on. It may seem that our Lord is silent and that to our cries there is no voice nor any that answers; but that may mean that we are looking in the wrong place or listening for the wrong word. The disciples looked that the outcome of our Lord's life should be that the Kingdom should be restored to Israel; and when they turned away from the tomb in Joseph's Garden they felt that what they had looked for and prayed for was hopeless of accomplishment. But the important point was not their vision of the

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Kingdom at all, but that they had yielded themselves to our Lord and become His disciples and lovers. This is not what they intended to do, but it is what actually had happened: and when the grave yielded up the dead Whom they thought that they had lost forever, Jesus came back with a mission for them that was infinitely wider than their dream: the mission of founding not the old Kingdom of David, but the Kingdom of David's Son. All their aspirations and prayers were fulfilled by being transcended, and they found themselves in a position vastly more important than had been reached even in their dreams.

Something like that not infrequently happens in our experience. We conceive a spiritual ambition and work for a spiritual end, and seem always to miss it; and then the day comes when God reveals to us what He has been doing, and we find that through the very discipline of our failure we have been being prepared for a success of which we had not thought: and when we raise our eyes from the path we thought so toilsome and uninteresting, it is to find ourselves at the very gate of the City of God. It will be with us as with the Apostles who in the darkest hour of their imagined failure, when they were gathered together in hiding from the Jews were startled by the appearance among them of the risen Jesus, and were filled with the unutterable joy of His message of peace.

"His body is wrapped all in woe,
Hand and foot He may not go.
Thy Son, Lady, that thou lovest so
Naked is nailed upon a tree.

"The Blessed Body that thou hast born,
To save mankind that was forlorn,
His body, Lady, the Jews have torn,
And hurt His Head, as ye may see."

When John his tale began to tell
Mary would not longer dwell
But hied her fast unto that hill
Where she might her own Son see.

"My sweete Son, Thou art me dear,
Oh why have men hanged thee here?
Thy head is closed with a brier,
O why have men so done to Thee?"

"John, this woman I thee betake;
Keep My Mother for My sake.

On Rood I hang for mannes sake
For sinful men as thou may see.

“This game alone I have to play,
For sinful souls that are to die.
Not one man goeth by the way
That on my pains will look and see.

“Father, my soul I thee betake,
My body dieth for mannes sake;
To hell I go withouten wake,
Mannes soul to maken free.”

Pray we all that Blessed Son
That He help us when may no man
And bring to bliss each everyone
Amen, amen, amen for Charity.

Early English Lyrics, p. 146. From an MS. in the Sloane collection.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XX

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THE RESURRECTION

And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted; ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here.

S. Mark XVI, 6.

O God, who wast pleased that thy Word, when the angel delivered his message, should take flesh in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, give ear to our humble petitions, and grant that we who believe her truly to be the Mother of God, may be helped by her prayers. Through. O Almighty and merciful God, who hast wonderfully provided perpetual succour for the defence of Christian people in the most blessed Virgin Mary; mercifully grant that, contending during life under the protection of such patronage, we may be enabled to gain the victory, over the malignant enemy in death. Through.

OLD CATHOLIC.

Whatever may be our grief, however life may seem to have been emptied of all interest for us, nevertheless the routine of life reasserts itself and forces us back to the daily tasks no matter how savourless they may now seem. We speedily find that we are not isolated but units in a social order which claims us and calls on us to fulfil the duties of our place. Blessed Mary was led away from the tomb of her Son in the prostration of grief; but her very duty to Him would have forced her thought away from herself and led her to join in the preparations which were being made for the proper care of the Sacred Body. And in that sad duty she would find solace of a kind; there is an expression of love in the care we give our dead. This body now so helpless and unresponsive, has been the medium through which the soul expressed itself to us; it has been the instrument of love and the sacrament of our union. How well we know it! How well the mother knows every feature of her child, how she now lingers over the preparations for the burial feeling that the separation is not quite accomplished so long as her hands can touch and her eyes see the familiar features. In the pause that the Sabbath forced on the friends of Jesus we may be sure that they were making what preparations might be made under the restrictions of their religion, and that they looked eagerly for the passing of the Sabbath as giving them one more opportunity of service to the Master. There was the group of women who had followed Him and “ministered of their substance” who were faithful still. The Mother had no “substance”; she shared the poverty of her Son. Her support during the Sabbath would be the expectancy of looking once more upon His Face.

But when the first day of the week dawned it proved to be a day of stupendous wonder. They, the Disciples and these faithful women, seemed to themselves, no doubt, to have passed into a new world where the presuppositions of the old world were upset and reversed. There were visions of angels, reported appearances of Jesus, an empty

tomb. Through the incredible reports that came to them from various sources the light gradually

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broke for them. It was true then, that saying of Jesus, that He would rise again from the dead! It was not some mysterious bit of teaching, the exact bearing of which they did not catch, but a literal fact! And then while they still hesitated and doubted, while they still hid behind the closed doors, Jesus Himself came and stood in the midst with His message of peace. It is often so, is it not? While we are in perplexity and fear, while we think the next sound will be the knock of armed hands on the door, it is not the Jews that come, but Jesus with a message of peace. Our fears are so pathetic, so pitiful; we meet life and death with so little of the understanding and the courage that our Lord's promises ought to inspire in us! We stand so shudderingly before the vision of death, are so much appalled by the thought of the grave! We shudder and tremble as the hand of death is stretched out toward us and ours. One is often tempted to ask as one hears people talking of death: "Are these Christians? Do they believe in immortality? Have they heard the message of the first Easter morning, the angelic announcement of the resurrection of Christ? Have they never found the peace of believing, the utter quiet of the spirit in the confidence of a certain hope which belongs to those who have grasped the meaning of the resurrection of the dead?" Here in Jerusalem in a few days the whole point of view is changed. The frightened group of disciples is transformed by the resurrection experience into the group of glad and triumphant missionaries who will be ready when they are endowed with power from on high to go out and preach Jesus and the resurrection to the ends of the earth.

What in these first days the resurrection meant to them was no doubt just the return of Jesus. He was with them once more, and they were going to take hope again in the old life, to resume the old mission which had been interrupted by the disaster of Calvary. All other feeling would have been swallowed up in the mere joy of the recovery. But it could not be many hours before it would be plain that if Jesus was restored to them He was restored with a difference. A new element had entered their intercourse which was due to some subtle change that had passed upon Him. We get the first note of it in that wonderful scene in Joseph's Garden when the Lord appears to the Magdalen. There is all the love and sympathy there had ever been; but when in response to her name uttered in the familiar voice the Magdalen throws herself at His Feet, there is a new word that marks a new phase in their relation: "Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended."

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This new thing in our Lord which held them back with a new word that they had never experienced before must have become plainer each day. S. Mary feels no less love in her Son restored to her from the grave, but she does not find just the same freedom of approach. S. John could no longer think of leaning on His Heart at supper as before. Jesus was the same as before. There was the same thoughtful sympathy; the same tender love; but it is now mediated through a nature that has undergone some profound change in the days between death and resurrection. The humanity has acquired new powers, the spirit is obviously more in control of the body. Our Lord appeared and disappeared abruptly. His control over matter was absolute. And in His intercourse with the disciples there was a difference. He did not linger with them but appeared briefly from time to time as though He were but a passing visitor to the world. There were no longer the confidential talks in the fading light after the day's work and teaching was over. There was no longer the common meal with its intimacy and friendliness. There was, and this was a striking change, no longer any attempt to approach those outside the apostolic circle, no demonstration of His resurrection to the world that had, as it thought, safely disposed of Him. He came for brief times and with brief messages, short, pregnant instructions, filled with meaning for the future into which they are soon to enter.

What did it mean, this resurrection of Jesus? It meant the demonstration of the continuity of our nature in our Lord. The Son of God took upon Him our nature and lived and died in that nature. Our pressing question is, what difference has that made to us? How are we affected? Has humanity been permanently affected by the resumption of it by God in the resurrection? If the assumption of humanity by our Lord was but a passing assumption; if He took flesh for a certain purpose, and that purpose fulfilled, laid it aside, and once more assumed His pre-incarnate state, we should have difficulty in seeing that our humanity was deeply affected by the Incarnation. There would have been exhibited a perfect human life, but what would have been left at the end of that life would have been just the story of it, a thing wholly of the past. It is not much better if it is assumed that the meaning of the resurrection is the revelation of the immortality of the human spirit, that in fact the resurrection means that the soul of Jesus is now in the world of the spirit, but that His Body returned to the dust. We are not very much interested in the bare fact of survival. What interests us is the mode of survival, the conditions under which we survive. We are interested, that is to say, in our survival as human beings and not in our survival as something else—souls.

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A soul is not a human being; a human being is a composite of soul and body. It is interesting to note that people who do not believe in the resurrection of our Lord, do not believe in our survival as human beings, consequently do not believe in a heaven that is of any human interest. But we feel, do we not? a certain lack of interest in a future in which we shall be something quite different in constitution from what we are now. We can think of a time between death and the resurrection in which we shall be incomplete, but that is tolerable because it is disciplinary and temporary and looks on to our restitution to full humanity in the resurrection at the Last Day. And we feel that the promise, the certainty of this is sealed by our Lord's resurrection from the dead. We are certain that that took place because it is needful to the completion of His Work.

The Creed is one: and if one denies one article one speedily finds that there is an effect on others. The denial of the resurrection is part and parcel of the attempt to reduce Christianity to a history of something that once took place which is important to us to-day because it affords us a standard of life, a pattern after which we are to shape ourselves. Else should we be very much in the dark. We gain from the Christian Revelation a conception of God as a kindly Father Who desires His children to follow the example of His Son. That example, no doubt, must not be pressed too literally, must be adapted to modern conditions; but we can get some light and guidance from the study of it. Still, if you do not care to follow it nothing will happen to you. It is merely a pleasing occupation for those who are interested in such things. The affirmation of the resurrection, on the other hand, is the affirmation of the continuity of the work of God Incarnate; it is an assertion that Christianity is a supernatural action of God going on all the time, the essence of which is, not that it invites the believer to imitation of the life of Christ, so far as seems practical under modern conditions, but that it calls him to union with Christ; it makes it his life's meaning to recreate the Christ-experience, to be born and live and die through the experience of Incarnate God. It fixes his attention not on what Jesus did but on what Jesus is. It insists on a present vital organic relation to God, mediated by the humanity of Jesus; and if there be no humanity of Jesus, if at His death He ceased to be completely human, then there is no possibility of such a relation to God in Christ as the Catholic Religion has from the beginning postulated; and unless we are to continue human there seems no continuing basis for such a relation to one another in the future as would make the future of any interest to us. For us, as for S. Paul, all our hope hangs on the resurrection of Christ from the dead; and if Christ be not risen from the dead then is our faith vain.

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For us then, as for the men who wrote the Gospel, and for the men who planted the Church and watered it with their blood, the resurrection of Jesus means the return of His Spirit from the place whither it had gone to preach to the spirits in prison and its reunion with the Body which had been laid in the tomb in Joseph's Garden, and the issuing of perfect God and perfect man from that tomb on the first Easter morning. That humanity had, no doubt, undergone profound changes to fit it to be the perfect instrument of the spirit of Christ Jesus henceforward. It is now the resurrection body, the spiritual body of the new man. We understand that it is now a body fitted for the new conditions of the resurrection life, and we also understand that it is the exemplar of what our risen bodies will be. They will be endowed with new powers and capacities, but they will be human bodies, the medium of the spirit's expression and a recognisable means of intercourse with our friends. We lie down in the grave with a certainty of preserving our identity and of maintaining the capacity of intercourse with those we know and love. That is what really interests us in the future which would be uninteresting on other terms; and that is what our Lord's appearances after the resurrection seem to guarantee. He resumed a human intercourse with those whom He had gathered about Him. He continued His work of instruction and preparation for the future. And when at length He left them they were prepared to understand that His departure was but the beginning of a new relation. But also they would feel much less that there was an absolute break with the past than if He had not appeared to them after the Crucifixion, and they had been left with but a belief in His immortality. They would, too, now be able to look on to the future as containing a renewal of the relations now changed, to read a definite meaning into His promises that where He is there shall His servants be.

It is much to know that we are immortal: it is much more to know that this immortality is a human immortality. One feels in studying the pre-Christian beliefs in immortality that they had very little effectiveness, and that the reason was that there was no real link connecting life in this world with life in the next. Death was a fearful catastrophe that man in some sense survived, but in a sense that separated his two modes of existence by a great gulf. Man survived, but his interests did not survive, and therefore he looked to the future with indifference or fear. This life seemed to him much preferable to the life which was on the other side of the grave. So far as the Old Testament writings touch on the future world, they touch upon it without enthusiasm. There is an immense difference between the attitude of the Old Testament saint toward death and that, for instance, of the early Christian martyr. And the difference is that the martyr does not feel that death will put an end to all he knows and loves and set him, alive

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it may be, but alive in a strange country. He feels that he is about to pass into a state of being in which he will find his finer interests not lost but intensified. At the center of his religious expression is a personal love of Jesus and a martyr's death would mean immediate admission to the presence and love of His Master. He would—of this he had no shadow of doubt—he would see Jesus, not the spirit of Jesus, but the Jesus Who is God Incarnate, whose earthly life he had gone over so many times, Whom he felt that he should recognise at once. Death was not the breaking off of all in which he was interested but was rather the fulfilment of all that he had dreamed. And this must be true always where our interests are truly Christian interests. It is no doubt true that we find in Christian congregations a large number of individuals whose attitude toward death and the future is purely heathen. They believe in survival, but they have no vital interest in it. I fancy that there are a good many people who would experience relief to be persuaded that death is the end of conscious existence, that they do not have to look forward to a continuous life under other conditions. And this not at all, as no doubt it would in some cases be, because it was the lifting of the weighty burden of responsibility for the sort of life one leads, because it was relief from the thought of a judgment to be one day faced, but because the world to come, as they have grasped its meaning, is a world in which they have no sort of interest. Our Lord in His Presentation of the future does actually point us to the natural human interest by which our affection will follow that which we do in fact value. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." But the class of whom I am thinking have no treasures. Notwithstanding some sort of conformity to the Christian Religion, conceived most likely under the aspect of a compulsory moral code, there is nothing in their experience that one can call a love of our Lord, no actually felt personal affection for Him that makes them long to see Him. There were those with whom they had intimately lived and whom they had loved and who have passed through the experience of death, but in the years that have passed they have become used to living without them and there is no passionate longing to be with them again. There are no interests in their lives which when they think of them they feel that they can carry with them to the world beyond. Whatever they have succeeded in accumulating in life is hardly to be regarded as heavenly treasure!

There then is the vital centre of the Christian doctrine of the world to come,—that it is a life continuous with this life, not in bare existence, but in the persistence of relations and interests upon which we have entered here. At the center of that world as it is revealed to us, is Jesus Christ, God in our nature, and about Him ever the saints of His Kingdom, who are still human with human interests,

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and who look on to the time when the fulness of humanity will be restored to them by the resurrection of the body. The interests that are vital here are also the interests that are vital there, the interests of the Kingdom of God. As the Christian thinks of the life of the world to come he thinks of it as the sphere in which his ambitions can be and will be realised, where the ends of which he has so long and so earnestly striven will be attained. His life has been a life given to the service of our Lord and to his Kingdom, and it had, no doubt, often seemed to small purpose; it has often seemed that the Kingdom was not prospering and the work of God coming to naught. And then he looks on to the future and sees that the work that he knows is an insignificant fragment of the whole work; and he thinks with longing of the time when he shall see revealed all that has been accomplished. He feels like a colonist who in some outlying province of an empire is striving to promote the interests of his Homeland. His work is to build up peace and order and to civilise barbarous tribes. And there are days when the work seems very long and very hopeless; and then he comforts himself with the thought that this is but a corner of the empire and that one day he will be relieved and called home. There at the centre he will be able to see the whole fact, will be able to understand what this colony means, and will rejoice in the slight contribution to its upbuilding that it has been his mission to make. The heart of the Christian is really in the Homeland and he feels acutely that here he is on the Pilgrim Way. But he feels too that his present vocation is here and that he is here contributing the part that God has appointed him for the upbuilding of the Kingdom, and that the more he loves our Lord and the more he longs for Him the more faithfully and exactly will he strive to accomplish his appointed work.

They are right, those who are continually reproaching Christians with having a centre of interest outside this world; but we do not mind the reproach because we are quite sure that only those will have an intelligent interest in this world who feel that it does not stand by itself as a final and complete fact, but is a single stage of the many stages of God's working. We no more think it a disgrace to be thinking of a future world and to have our centre of interest there than we think it a disgrace for the college lad to be looking forward to the career that lies beyond the college boundaries and for which his college is supposed to be preparing him. We do not consider that boy ideal whose whole time and energy is given to the present interests of a college, its athletics, its societies, and in the end is found to have paid so little attention to the intellectual work that he is sent there to perform that he fails to pass his examinations. Christians are interested in this world because it is a province of the Kingdom of God and that they are set here to work out certain

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problems, and that they are quite sure that the successful solution of these problems is the best and highest contribution that they can make to the development of life in this world. They do not believe that as a social contribution to the betterment of human life a saint is less valuable than an agnostic professor of sociology or an atheistic socialistic leader; nor does the Christian believe that strict attention to the affairs of the Kingdom of God renders him less valuable as a citizen than strict attention to a brewery or a bank. A whole-hearted Christian life which has in view all the relations of the Kingdom of God in this or in any other world, which loves God and loves its neighbour in God, is quite the best contribution that a human being can make to the cause of social progress. If it were possible to put in evidence anywhere a wholly Christian community I am quite convinced that we should see that our social problems were there solved. I think then we shall be right to insist that what is needed is not less otherworldliness but more: that more otherworldliness would work a social revolution of a beneficent character. The result might be that we should spend less of our national income on preparations for war and more in making the conditions of life tolerable for the poor; that we should begin to pay something of the same sort of care for the training of children that we now bestow on the nurture of pigs and calves. We might possibly look on those whom we curiously call the "inferior races" as less objects of commercial exploitation and more as objects of moral and spiritual interest.

We shall no doubt do this when we have more fully grasped what the resurrection of Christ has done and made possible. It is no account of that resurrection to think of it as a demonstration of immortality. It only touches the fringes of its importance when we think of it as setting the seal of divine approval upon the teaching of Jesus. We get to the heart of the matter when we think of the risen humanity of our Lord as having become for us a source of energy. The truth of our Lord's life is not that He gave us an example of how we ought to live, but that He provided the power that enables us to live as He lived. Also He gave us the point of view from which to estimate life. The writer of the Epistles to the Hebrews uses a striking phrase when he speaks of "the power of an endless life." Is not that an illuminating phrase when we think of our relation to our Lord? His revelation of the meaning of human life has brought to us the vision of what that life may become and the power to attain that end. The fact of our endlessness at once puts a certain order into life. Things, interests, occupations fall into their right places. There are so many things which seem not worth while because of the revelation of the importance of our work. Other things there are which we should not have dared to undertake if we had but this life in which to accomplish

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them. But he who understands that he is building for eternity can build with all the care and all the deliberation that is needed for so vast a work. There is no haste if we select those things which have eternal value. We can undertake the development of the Christian qualities of character with entire hopefulness. The very conception of the beauty and perfectness of the fruits of the Spirit might discourage us if our time were limited. But if we feel that the work we have done on them, however elementary and fragmentary, as long as it is honest and heartfelt, will not be lost when death comes, then we can go securely on. We can go on in any spiritual work we have undertaken without that sense of feverish haste lest death overtake us and put an end to our labour which so affects men in purely secular things. To us death is not an interruption. Death does not destroy our human personality, nor does it destroy our interest in anything that like us is permanent. We feel perfectly secure when we have identified ourselves with the business of the Kingdom of God. Then we almost feel the throb of our immortality; the power of an endless life is now ours. We have not to wait for death and resurrection to endue us with that power because it is the gift of God to us here, that gift of eternal life which our Lord came to bestow upon us. Only the gift which we realise imperfectly or not at all at its bestowal we come to understand in something of its real power; and henceforth we live in the possession and fruition of it, growing up "into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ."

Hail, thou brightest Star of Ocean;
Hail, thou Mother of our God;
Hail, thou Ever-sinless Virgin,
Gateway of the blest abode.
Ave; 'tis an angel's greeting—
Thou didst hear his music sound,
Changing thus the name of Eva—
Shed the gifts of peace around.
Burst the sinner's bonds in sunder;
Pour the day on darkling eyes;
Chase our ills; invoke upon us
All the blessings of the skies.
Show thyself a watchful Mother;
And may He our pleadings hear,
Who for us a helpless Infant
Owned thee for His mother dear.
Maid, above all maids excelling,
Maid, above all maidens mild,
Freed from sin, oh, make our bosoms
Sweetly meek and undefiled.
Keep our lives all pure and stainless,
Guide us on our heavenly way,



'Till we see the face of Jesus,
And exult in endless day.
Glory to the Eternal Father;
Glory to the Eternal Son;
Glory to the Eternal Spirit:
Blest for ever, Three in One.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XXI

THE FORTY DAYS

To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

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Acts I, 3.

Open unto us the door of thy loving kindness, O blessed Mother of God; we have set our hope on thee, may we not be disappointed, but through thee may we be delivered from adversity, for thou art the saving help of all Christian people. O Mother of God, thou who art a deep well of infinite mercy, bestow upon us thy compassion; look upon thy people who have sinned, and continue to make manifest thy power. For thee do we trust, and to thee do we cry, Hail! even as of old did Gabriel, the chief of the angelic hosts.

RUSSIAN.

These Forty Days that intervened between our Lord's resurrection and ascension must have been utterly bewildering in the experience of the Apostles. Our Lord was once more with them; He had come back from the grave; that would have been the central experience. But in His intercourse with them He was so changed, the same and yet with a vast difference. We think of the perplexed group of the disciples gathered in the familiar place, going over the recent facts and trying to adjust themselves to them. Just what is the difference that death and resurrection have made, we hear them discussing. Is it that He appears and disappears so strangely, not coming any longer to be with them in the old way, with the old familiar intercourse? There is obviously no failure in Himself, no decline in love; but there is a decline in intimacy. They themselves feel a strange awe in His presence such as they had not been accustomed to feel in the past. They feel too that this restrained intercourse is but temporary, that at any moment it may end. The instructions He is giving them are so obviously final instructions, fitting them for a future in which He will not be with them.

Amid all this perplexity we try to see Our Lady and to get at her mind. She was no doubt in the small group eagerly waiting our Lord's coming, dreading each time He left them that He would return no more. One thinks of her as less bewildered than the others because her interest was more concentrated. She had no problems to work out, no perplexities to absorb her; she had simply to love. Life to her was just love—love of the Son Whom she had brought forth and Whom she had followed so far. She lived in His appearances; and between them she lived in remembrance of them. One does not think of her as dwelling very much on what He says, but as dwelling upon Him. The thought of Him absorbs her. She has passed into that relation to our Lord that in the years to come many souls will strive to acquire—the state of absorbed contemplation, the state in which all things else for the time recede and one is alone with God. God so fills the soul that there is room there for nothing else.

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For the Apostles these were days of immense importance as days in which they were compelled to reconstruct their whole view of the meaning of our Lord's mission and of their relation to it. They came to these days with their settled notion about the renewed Kingdom of Israel and of our Lord's reign on earth which His teaching hitherto had not been able to expel; but now they are compelled to see that the Kingdom of God of which they are to be the missionaries is a Kingdom in another sense than they had so far conceived it. It differs vastly from their dream of an Israelite empire. It is no doubt true that this mental revolution is of slow operation, and that even when certain truths are grasped it will still take time to grasp them in all their implications. For long their Judaism will impede their full understanding of the meaning of the Kingdom of God. It will be years before they can see that it is a non-Jewish fact and that other nations will stand on an equality with them. But they will by the end of the Forty Days have grasped the fact that they are not engaged in a secular revolution and are not entering on a career of worldly power. They will be ready for their active ministry after Pentecost, a ministry of spiritual initiation into the Kingdom of God. When in response to their preaching men asked the question: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They were ready with their answer: "Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

So the Forty Days were filled with new meanings emerging from the old teaching, of suddenly grasped significance in some saying of our Lord that they had assumed that they understood but in reality had attributed little meaning to. It is one of the striking things about our relation to spiritual truth that we can go on for long thinking that we are attaching a meaning to something which in fact, it turns out, has meant almost nothing to us. Some day a phrase which we have often read or repeated suddenly is lighted up with a significance we had never dreamed of. We have long been looking some truth in the face, but in fact it has never laid hold of us; we have made no inferences from it, deduced no necessity of action, till on a day the significance of it emerges and we are overwhelmed by the revelation of our blunder, of our stupidity. The fact is that we assume that our conduct is quite right, and we interpret truth in the light of our conduct rather than interpret conduct in the light of truth. It is the explanation, I suppose, of the fact that so many people read their Bible regularly without, so far as one can see, the reading having any effect upon their conduct. The conduct is a settled affair and they are finding it reflected in the pages of the Gospel. Their minds are already definitely made up to the effect that they know what the Gospel means, and that is the meaning that they put into the Bible. One does

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not know otherwise how to account for the fact that it is precisely those who think themselves “Bible Christians” who are farthest from accepting the explicit teaching of the Bible. If there is anything plain in the New Testament it is that the whole teaching of our Lord is sacramental. If anything is taught there one would think it was the nature and obligation of baptism, the Presence of our Lord in the Sacrament of the Altar, the gift of Confirmation, the meaning of absolution. Yet it is to “Bible Christians” that sacraments appear to have no value, are things which can be dispensed with as mere ornaments of the Christian Religion.

I wonder if we have wholly got beyond that point of view? I wonder if we have got a religious practice which is settled or one that is continually expanding? I wonder if we force our meaning on the Bible or if we are trying to find therein new stimulus to action? That in truth is the reason for reading the Holy Scriptures at all—to find therein stimulus, stimulus for life; that we may see how little or how much our conduct conforms to the ideal set out there. We do not read to learn a religion, but to learn to practice the religion that we already have.

Now to take just one point in illustration. The commission of our Lord to His Church in the person of the Apostles was a commission to forgive sins. “He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.” As to how in detail, this commission is to be exercised is a matter for the Church to order as the circumstances of its life require. As I read my Bible certain facts emerge: I am a sinner; Christ died for my sins; He left power in His Church for the forgiveness of sin—of my sin. And then the question arises: What is the bearing of all that on my personal practice? Have I settled a practice for myself to which I am subjecting the teaching of the Bible and the Church? Or am I alert to see a contrast or a contradiction between my practice and the teaching of the Bible and the Church, if such exist? Now there are many people in the Church who make no use of the sacrament of penance, and there are many others who make use of it very sparingly. It is clear that either they must be right, or the Bible and the Church must be right. It is clear that such persons, to press it no farther, are imposing the interpretation of their own conduct on the teaching of the Christian Religion and asserting by their constant practice that that interpretation is quite inadequate, notwithstanding the contrary practice of the entire Catholic world. That, to put it mildly, is a very peculiar intellectual and spiritual attitude.

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We can most of us, I have no doubt, find by searching somewhere in our religious practice parallel attitudes toward truth. We have settled many questions in a sense that is agreeable to us. We cannot tell just how we got them settled, but settled they are. Take a very familiar matter which greatly concerns us in this parish dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the question of the honour and reverence due to our Blessed Mother. We had got settled in our practice that certain things were right and certain wrong. I doubt if a very intelligent account of this—why they were right or wrong—could, in many cases have been given. But the settled opinion and practice was there.

And then came the demand for a review; that we look our practice squarely in the face and ask, “What is the ground of this? Does it correspond with the teaching of Scripture and of the Catholic Church? And if it does not, what am I going to do about it? Have I only a collection of prejudices there where I supposed that I had a collection of settled truths? Do I see that it is quite possible that I may be wholly wrong, and that I am hindered by pride from reversing my attitude?” For there is a certain pride which operates in these matters of belief and practice as well as elsewhere. We are quite apt to pride ourselves on our consistency and think it an unworthy thing to change our minds. That is rather a foolish attitude; changing one’s mind is commonly not a mark of fickleness but of intellectual advance. It means oftentimes the abandonment of prejudice or the giving up of an opinion which we have discovered to have no foundation. This is rather a large universe in which we live, and it is improbable that any man’s thought of it at any time should be adequate. Intellectual progress means the assimilation of new truths. The Christian Religion is a large and complex phenomenon, and any individual’s thought of it at any time must be, in the nature of things, an inadequate thought. Progress in religion means the constant assimilation of new truths—new, that is, to us. Surely it is a very peculiar attitude to be proud of never learning anything, making it a virtue to have precisely the same opinions this year as last! I should be very much ashamed of myself if a year were to pass in which I had learned nothing, had changed my mind about nothing. In religion, one knows that the articles of the Faith are expressed in the dogmatic definitions of the Church; but one will never know, seek as one will, all that these mean in detail, all that they demand in practice. And our only tolerable attitude is that of learners constantly seeking to fill up the *lacunae* in our beliefs and practice.

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In fact, any living Christian experience is always in process of adjustment. Those who conceive a dogmatic religion as an immovable religion, as a collection of cut and dried formulae which each generation is expected to learn and repeat and to which it has no other relation, are quite right in condemning that conception, only that is not, in fact, what the Christian Religion is. The content of the Christian dogmas is so full and so complex that there is never any danger of intellectual sterility in those who are called to deal with them; and their application to life is so rich and so manifold that there is not the least danger that those who set out to apply them to the problems of daily existence will become mere formalists. The attempt to live a truly Christian life is a never-ending, inexhaustible adventure. Only those can miss this fact who have utterly misconceived Christianity as a barren set of prohibitions, warning its devotees off the field of great sections of human experience. There are those who appear to imagine that the primary business of Christianity is to deal with sin, and that in order to keep itself occupied it has to invent a large number of unreal sins. Unfortunately sin, as the deliberate rejection of the known will of God, exists; and, fortunately, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ Who came into the world to save sinners also exists. We can be unendingly thankful for that. But it is also true that the action of Christianity is not exhausted in the negative work of dealing with sin. Christianity is primarily a positive action for the bringing about and development of the relation of the soul with God in the state of union. We may say that Christianity has to turn aside from this its proper business of developing the spiritual life to the preliminary work of dealing with sin which kills spirituality and hinders its development. But it is not necessary to make the blunder of assuming that this dealing with sin is the essential work of Christianity because it has so continually to be at it, any more than it is necessary to assume that the essential work of a farmer is the digging up of weeds. Surely it would be no adequate treatise on agriculture which would confine itself to description of the nature of weeds and of methods of dealing with them. There is a branch of theology which deals with sin, the methods of its treatment and its cure; but there are also other branches of theology: and the direction of the Holy Scripture is not to get rid of sin and stop; but having done that, to go on to perfection.

Christian experience is a constant process of adjustment, a constantly growing experience. By the study of the Christian revelation it is always finding new meanings in old truths, new modes of application of familiar practices. This simply means that the Christian is alive and not a fossil. It means that his relation to our Lord is such that it opens to him inexhaustible depths of experience. It

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is easy to see this in the concrete by taking up the life of almost any saint. It is easy to trace the growth of S. John from the young fisherman, fiery, impatient, who wished to call down fire from heaven upon his adversaries as Elijah did, and gained the rebuke: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," to the mature and supremely calm and simple experience which is reflected in the Gospel and Epistles. It is easy to trace the development of the impulsive, zealous Pharisee that Paul of Tarsus was, through all the stages of spiritual growth that are reflected in his Letters, till he is Paul the aged waiting to depart and be with Christ "which is far better." You can study it in the confessions of S. Augustine in its first stage and follow it through its later stages in his letters and other writings, and in many another saint beside. If you have any spiritual experience at all you can trace it in your own case: you have grown, not through dealing with sin, but through the pursuit of ideal perfection, that perfection which is set before you by the Christian Religion. You may not feel that you have gone very far: that is not the point at present; you know that you have found a method by which you may go on indefinitely; that there is no need that you should stop anywhere short of the Beatific Vision. You do know that your religion is not the deadening repetition of dogmas which the unbeliever conceives it to be, but is the never ceasing attempt to master the inexhaustible truth that is contained in your relation to our Lord. You do know that however far you have gone you feel that you are still but on the threshold and that the path before your feet runs out into infinity. Let us go back again to our examination of the experience of the Apostles. When we examine their training we find there, I think, two quite distinct elements both of which must have had a formative influence upon their ministry. In the first place there was the element of dogmatic teaching. There is a class of persons who are accustomed to tell us that there is no dogma in the New Testament, by which they appear to mean that the particular dogmatic affirmations of the Creed are not formulated in the pages of the New Testament, but are of later production. That, no doubt, is true; but nevertheless it would be difficult to find a more dogmatic book than the New Testament, or a more dogmatic teacher than was our Lord. And our Lord taught the Apostles in a most definite way the expected acceptance of His teaching because He taught it. "He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes," it was noted. The point about the teaching of the scribes was that it was traditional, wholly an interpretation of the meaning of the Old Testament. It made no claim to originality but rather based its claim on the fact it was not original. Our Lord, it was noticed, did not base His claim on tradition. In fact He often noticed the Jewish tradition for the purpose of marking the contrast between it and His own teaching.

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“Ye have heard that it hath been said of old time ... but I say unto you.” He commonly refused to give an explanation of what He had said, but demanded acceptance on His authority. He brought discipleship to the test of hard sayings, and permitted the departure of those who could not accept them. He cut across popular prejudices and took small account of the “modern mind” as expressed by the Sadducees. He expected the same unhesitating submission from the Apostles whom He was training, though it was also a part of their training to be the future heralds of the Kingdom that they should have the “mysteries of the Kingdom” explained to them. But from the time when Jesus began to preach, saying “the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,” He preached and taught with the same unhesitating note of certainty, and with the same demand for intellectual submission on the part of those who heard Him.

And that continues to the end. During the Forty Days, the few sayings that have come to us have the same ring of authority, of dogmatic certainty. The result was that when the Apostles went out to teach they were equipped with a body of truth which they presented to the world in the same unhesitating way. Indeed, that is the only way in which the central truths of the Christian Faith can be presented. They are not the conclusions of argument, which may be taken up and argued over again to the end of the world,—they are the dicta of revelation. We either know them to be true because they have been revealed, or we do not know them to be true at all. They are mysteries, that is, truths beyond the possibility of human finding which have been made known to man by God Himself. They are the appropriate data of religion and what distinguishes it from philosophy. The presence of mystery in philosophy is annoying, and the aim is to get rid of it, but a religion without mystery is absurd. Religion deals with the fundamental relations between God and man and the light it brings us must be a supernatural light. Such a religion in its presentation naturally cut across the preconceptions of the traditionalists in Jerusalem to whom nothing new could be true, as across the preconceptions of the sophists of Athens, to whom nothing that was not new was interesting.

This dogmatic equipment was but one side, however, of the Apostolic training for their future work, a training to which the finishing touches, so to say, were put during the Forty Days. The other side of the training was the impression upon them of the Personality of our Lord, the effect of their close association with Him. This has an importance that dwarfs all other influences of the time; and we feel all through the Gospel that it was what our Lord himself counted upon in forming them for their mission. In the beginning “He chose twelve to be with Him,” and their day by day association with Him was constantly changing their point of view and reforming their character. It was not the teaching, the explanation of parables, or the sight of the miracles; it was the silent effect of a personality that was in contact with them constantly and was constantly presenting to them an ideal of life, an ideal of absolute submission

to the will of the Father and of utter consecration to the, mission that had been committed to Him.

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We all know this silent pressure of life upon life. We have most of us, I suppose, experienced it either from our parents or from friends in later life; and we can through that experience of ours attempt the explanation of our Lord's influence on the Apostles. There were not only the hours of formal teaching—they, in a way, were perhaps the less important from our present point of view. We have more in mind the informal talks that would go on as they went from village to village in Galilee, or as they gathered about the door of some cottage in the evening or sat in the shelter of some grove during the noon-day heat. It was just talk arising naturally out of the incidents of the day, but it was always talk guided by Jesus—talk in which Jesus was constantly revealing Himself to them, impressing upon them His point of view, making plain his own judgment upon life. And when we turn to His formal teaching we realise how revolutionary was His point of view in regard to life, how He swept aside the customary conventions by which they were accustomed to guide life, and substituted the radical principles that they have left on record in the Sermon on the Mount for the perplexity of a world yet far from understanding them. Evidently the Apostles would find their accustomed values tossed aside and a wholly new set of values presented to them.

I suppose we find it difficult to appreciate how utterly revolutionary the Gospel teaching continually is, not because we have become accustomed to follow it, but because we have got used to hearing it and evacuating it of most of its meaning by clever glossing. It was thus that the teaching classes in Jerusalem avoided the pressure of Old Testament ideals by a facile system of interpretation which made “void the Word of God by their traditions.” Human nature has not altered; and we succeed by the same method in making the Gospel of none effect. We are so well accustomed to do this that we lose the point and pungency of much of our Lord's teaching. But we know that the apostles did not. We know that they presented that teaching in all its sharpness to would-be disciples. It could not be otherwise with those who for three years had been in day by day intimacy with our Lord and had assimilated His point of view and his judgment on life.

One effect of their contact with our Lord in the days following the resurrection would be that whatever changes the passage to a new level of existence had wrought in Him, it had not changed either the tone of His teaching or the beauty and attractiveness of His Personality. The concluding charges that were given them, the great commission of proclaiming the Kingdom with which they were now definitely endued, the powers which were committed to them in the great words: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to

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observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," would but confirm and strengthen all that had gone before in their experience of Him. The Jesus of the resurrection was no pale ghost returned from the grave, intermittently to appear to them to assure them of the fact of immortality. He was "the same Jesus" Whom they had known for three years, and whose return from the dead triumphant over the powers that had opposed Him, set quite plainly and definitely the seal of indisputable authority upon all the teaching and the example that had gone before. The period of their probation was over: The commission was theirs: It remained that they should abide in Jerusalem until they should be "endued with power from on high."

Proclaimed Queen and Mother of a God,
The Light of earth, the Sovereign of saints,
With pilgrim foot up tiring hills she trod,
And heavenly stile with handmaids' toil acquaints;
Her youth to age, her health to sick she lends;
Her heart to God, to neighbor hand she bends.

A Prince she is, and mightier Prince doth bear,
Yet pomp of princely train she would not have;
But doubtless, heavenly choirs attendant were,
Her Child from harm, herself from fall to save:
Word to the voice, song to the tune she brings,
The voice her word, the tune her ditty sings.

Eternal lights enclosed in her breast
Shot out such piercing beams of burning love,
That when her voice her cousin's ears possessed
The force thereof did force her babe to move:
With secret signs the children greet each other;
But, open praise each leaveth to his mother.

Robert Southwell, S.J. 1560-1595.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XXII

THE ASCENSION

And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

S. Luke XXIV, 51.

O Mother of God, since we have obtained confidence in thee, we shall not be put to shame, but we shall be saved.

And since we have obtained thy help and thy meditation, O, thou holy, pure, and perfect one!

We fear not but that we shall put our enemies to flight and scatter them.

We have taken unto us the shelter of thy mighty help in all things like a shield.

And we pray, and beseech thee that we may call upon thee, O Mother of God, so that thou deliver us through thy prayers.

And that thou mayest raise us up again from the sleep of darkness, to offer praise through the might of God Who took flesh in thee.

COPTIC.

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There would be no doubt of the finality of our Lord's physical withdrawal this time. As the group of disciples stood on the hilltop in Galilee and watched the clouds close about Him, they would feel that this was the end of the kind of intercourse to which they had been accustomed. The past Forty Days would have done much to prepare them for the separation. Their conception of our Lord's work as issuing in the establishment of an earthly Kingdom had been swept away; the changed terms of their intercourse with Him in the resurrection state had emphasised the change that had taken place; His teaching during these weeks which was centered on the work of the future in which they were to carry on the mission He had initiated; all these elements prepared them for the definite withdrawal of the ascension. Nevertheless we can understand the wrench that must have been involved in His actual withdrawal. We face the dying of some one we love. We know that it is a matter of weeks; the weeks shorten to days, and we are "prepared" for the death; but what we mean is that the death will not take us by surprise. However prepared we may be, the pain of parting will be a quite definite pain; there is no way of avoiding that.

We know that there was no way for the disciples to avoid the pain of the going of Jesus. It was not the same sort of pain that they felt now, as they gazed up from the hill top to the cloud drifting into the distance, as the pain that had been theirs as they hurried trembling and affrighted through the streets of Jerusalem on the afternoon of the Crucifixion. This pain had no sting of remorse for a duty undone, or of fear for a danger to be met. It was the calm pain of love in the realisation that the parting is final.

We know that among the group that watched the receding cloud the eyes that would linger longest and would find it hardest to turn away would be those of the Blessed Mother. Her mission about our Lord during all these past years had been a very characteristically womanly mission, a mission of silence and help and sympathy. She was with the women who ministered to Him, never obtrusive, never self-assertive; but always ready when need was. It was the silent service of a great love. That is the perfection of service. There are types of service which claim reward or recognition. We are not unfamiliar in the work of the Kingdom with people who have to be cajoled and petted and made much of because of what they do. Verily, they have their reward. But the type we are considering, of which the Blessed Mother is the highest expression, is without thought of self, being wholly lost in the wonder of being permitted to serve God at all. To be permitted to give one's time and personal ministry to our Lord in His Kingdom and in His members is so splendid a grace of God that all thought of self is lost in the joy of it. We know that S. Mary could have had no other thought than the offering of her love in whatever way it was permitted to express itself; and we know that the quality of that love was such that the moment of the ascension would have left her desolate, watching the cloud that veiled Him from her eyes.

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All of which does not mean that we are wrong when we speak of the ascension as one of the “Glorious Mysteries” of S. Mary. There we are viewing it in its wide bearing as S. Mary would come to view it in a short while. When the meaning of the ascension became plain, when under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, S. Mary was able to view her Son as “the One Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus,” when she was able to think of the human nature that God had taken from her as permanently enthroned in heaven,—then would all this be to her creative of intense joy. We, seeing so clearly what the ascension essentially meant, can think of it as a mystery of intense joy, but as our Lord passed away from sight the passing would for the moment be one last stab of the sword through this so-often wounded heart.

There would be no lingering upon the hill top. The angel messengers press the lesson that the life before them is a life of eager contest, of energetic action. Jesus had indeed gone in the clouds of heaven, but they were reminded that there would be a reappearance, a coming-again in the clouds of heaven, and in the meantime there was much to do, work that would require their self-expenditure even unto death. Back must they go to Jerusalem and there await the opening of the next act of the drama of the Kingdom of God.

As we turn to the Epistles of the New Testament and to the slowly shaping theology of the early Church, we find set out for us the nature of our Lord’s heavenly activity; we see the full meaning of His Incarnation. The human nature which the Son of God assumed from a pure Virgin, He assumed permanently. He took it from the tomb on the resurrection morning, he bore it with Him from the Galilean hill to the very presence of uncreated God. When the Gates lift and admit the Conqueror to heaven, what enters heaven is our nature, what is enthroned at the Right Hand of God is man, forever united to God. And when we ask, “What is the purpose of this?” The answer is that it is the continual purpose of the incarnation, the purpose of mediatorship between the created and the uncreated, between God and man. The constant purpose of the incarnation is mediation—of the need of mediation there is no end. Our Lord’s work was not finished, though there are those who appear to believe that it was finished, when, as a Galilean Preacher He had taught men of the Father: nor was it finished when He bought redemption for us on the Cross, and triumphing over death in the resurrection, returned to heaven at the ascension. There is a very real sense in which we can say that all those acts were the preliminaries of His work, were what made the work possible. We then mean by His work the age-long work of building the Kingdom of Heaven, and through it bringing souls to the Father. To insist perhaps over-much: We are not saved by the memory of what our Lord did, we are saved by what He now does. We are saved by the present application to us of the work that was wrought in the years of His earthly life.

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We need to grasp this living and present character of our Lord's work if we will understand the meaning of His mediation. There is a gulf between the divine, the purely spiritual, and the human, which needs some bridge to enable the human to cross it. That bridge was thrown across in the incarnation when God and man became united in the Person of the second Person of the ever blessed Trinity. When God the Son became incarnate, God and man were forever united and the door of heaven was about to swing open. Henceforth from the demonstrated triumph of our Lord in the Ascension the Kingdom of Heaven is open to all believers, and there is an ever-ready way of approach to God the Blessed Trinity by the Incarnate Person of the Son Who is the One Mediator between God and man. Whoever approaches God, whoever would reach to the Divine, must approach by that path, the path of Jesus Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

He is the Way to God: and that Way is one that we follow by participation in His nature, by being taken up into Him. We do not reach God by thinking about our Lord, or by believing about our Lord: thinking and believing are the preliminaries of action. There are wonderful riches in the King's Treasury, but you do not get them because you think of them or because you believe that they are there. You get them when you go after them. And you get the ends of the Christian Religion not because you believe them to exist, but because you go after them in the way in which Christ directed. Inasmuch as He is the Way to the Father, we reach the Father by being made one with the Son, by being made a member of Him, by being taken into Him in the life of union. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," He says. And the process of coming is by believing all that He said and acting upon His Word to the uttermost. Those who by partaking of the Sacraments are in Christ have passed by His mediation to the knowledge of the Father.

For a road can be travelled in either direction. Christ is the road by which we come to the Father, to participation in the life of the Blessed Trinity; but also we can think of Him as the road by which the Father comes to us. We can think of ourselves as drawing near to God in His Beloved Son: I love to think the other way of the road, of God drawing near to me, of God pouring of His riches into human life and elevating that life to His very Self. I like to think of the Christian life as a life to which God continually communicates Himself, till we are filled "with all the fulness of God." Can we imagine any more wonderful expression of the life of holiness to which we are called than that? We "grow up into Him in all things." That is the true account of the Christian life, not some thin and dull routine of moral duty, but the spiritual adventure of the road that travels out into the infinite pursuit of spiritual accomplishment till it is lost in the very heart of God.

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This was the starting point of Blessed Mary. She was filled with all the fulness of God from the moment of her conception, and was never separated from the joy of the great possession. We are born in sin and have to travel the road to the very end. Yet we, too, begin in union, because we are born of our baptism into Christ soon after our natural birth, and our problem is to achieve in experience the content of our birthright. In other words: our feet are set in the Way from the beginning, and our part is to keep to the Way and not wander to the right hand or to the left; that this may be possible for us Christ lived and died and to-day is at the Right Hand of the Father where He ever liveth to make intercession for us. We need never walk without Christ. The weariness of the journey is sustained by His constant and ready help. The way is lighted by the Truth which is Himself, and the life that we live is His communicated life. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." There are those who find the road godward, the road of the Christ-life, wearisome because they keep their eyes fixed on the difficulties of the way and treat each step as though it were a separate thing and not one step in a wonderful journey. The way to avoid the weariness of the day's travel is to keep one's eye fixed on the end, to raise the eyes to the heavens where Jesus sitteth enthroned at the Right Hand of the Father. The day's song is the Sursum Corda,—“Lift up your hearts unto the Lord!”

The mediatorial office of our Lord is exercised chiefly through His Sacrifice. He ever liveth to make intercession for us; and this intercession is the presentation of the Sacrifice that He Himself offered once for all in Blood upon the Cross, and forever presents to the Father in heaven “one unending sacrifice.” This heavenly oblation of our Lord which is the means wherethrough we approach pure Divinity, is also the Sacrifice of the Church here on earth. The heavenly Altar and the earthly Altar are but one in that there is but one Priest and one Victim here and there. The Eucharistic Sacrifice is the Church's presentation of her Head as her means of approach to God, as the ground of all her prayers. These prayers make their appeal through Jesus Who died and rose again for us and is on the Right Hand of Power. We know of no other way of approach, we plead no other merit as the hope of our acceptance. Let us be very clear about this centrality of our Lord's mediation because I shall presently have certain things to say which are often assumed to be in conflict with his Mediatorial Office, but which in reality do not so conflict, but exist at all because of the Office.

We approach Divinity, then, through our Lord's humanity; and we at once see how that teaching, so common to-day, which denies the Resurrection of our Lord's Body, and believes simply in the survival of His human soul strikes at the very heart of the Catholic Religion. If Revelation be true, our approach to God is rendered possible because there is a Mediator between God and man, the MAN Christ Jesus. All our prayers have explicitly, or implicitly, this fact in view. All our Masses are a pleading of this fact.

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How great is our joy and confidence when we realise this! We come together, let us say, on Sunday morning at the High Mass. We are coming to offer the Blessed Sacrifice of our Lord's Body and Blood. But who, precisely, is to make the offering? When we ask what this congregation is, what is the answer? The congregation is the congregation of Christ's Flock: it is the Body of Christ gathered together for the worship of Almighty God. The act that is to be performed is the act of a Body, not primarily of individuals. Our participation in the act of worship in the full sense of participation is conditioned upon our being members of the Body. If we are not members of the Body we have no recognised status as worshippers. No doubt we each one have our individual aspirations and needs which we bring with us, but they are the needs and aspirations of a member of the Body of Christ, and our ability to unite them with the act that is to be performed grows out of our status as members of the Body; as such, we join our own intention to the sacrificial act and make our petitions through it. But we are here as offerers of the Sacrifice, and may not neglect our official significance, and attempt to turn the Mass into a private act of worship.

We, then, the Body of Christ in this place, offer the Sacrifice of Christ. What is the status of the priest? He is a differentiated organ of the Body, not created by the Body, but created by God in the creation of the Body. He is not separate from the Body, an official imposed upon it from the outside, nor is he a creation of the Body set apart to act upon its behalf. He is one mode of the expression of the Body's life—the Body could not perfectly perform its functions without him any more than a physical body can perfectly function without a hand or an eye. But neither has the priest any existence apart from the Body of which he is a function. The Sacrifice that he offers is not his on behalf of the Body, but the Body's own Sacrifice which is made through his agency.

But a complete body has a head; and of the Body which is the Church the Head is Christ. We, the members, have our life from Him, the Head; we are able at all to act spiritually because of our union with Him. He is our life; and the acts of the Body are ultimately the acts of the Head. The Sacrifice which the Body offers as the means of its approach to Divinity is One Sacrifice of the Head: and the priestly function of the Body has any vitality because it is Christ Who is its life, Who functions through the priest, Who is, in fact, the true Priest. He Himself is both Sacrifice and Priest; and that which is offered here is indetical with that which is offered there.

Our life flows from our Head, is the life of Christ in us. So closely are we associated with Him that we are called His members, the instrument through which His life expresses itself, through which He acts. By virtue of the life of Christ of which all we are partakers, we are not only members of Christ, but members one of another. Our spiritual life is not our own affair, but we have duties one to another, and all the members of the Body are concerned in our exercise of our gifts, have, in fact, claims on the exercise of them.

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This mutual inherence of the members of the Body and these obligations to one another are in strict subordination to the Head; but they are very real duties and privileges which are ours to exercise. What we are concerned with at present is that from, this view of them that I have been presenting there results the possibility and obligation of intercession; the love and care of the members for one another is exercised in their prayers for one another. This privilege of intercession is one of the privileges most widely valued and most constantly exercised throughout the Church. Days of intercession, litanies, the offering of the Blessed Sacrifice with special intention, the constant requests for prayers for objects in which people are interested, all testify to the value we place on the privilege. Here is one action in regard to which there is no doubting voice in Christendom.

But curiously, and for some reason to me wholly unintelligible, there are a great many who think of this right and duty of intercession between the members of the One Body as exclusively the right and duty of those who are living here on earth; or at least if it pertain to the “dead” it is in a way in which we can have no part. One would think—and so the Catholic Church has always thought—that those whom we call dead, but who are really “alive unto God” with a life more intense, a life more spiritually clear-visioned, than our own, would have a special power and earnestness in prayer, and that a share in their intercessions is a spiritual privilege much to be valued. They are members with us of the same Body; death has not cut them off from their membership, rather, if possible, it has intensified it, or at least their perception of what is involved in it. They remain under all the obligations of the life of the Body and consequently under the obligation to care for other members of the Body. The intercession of the saints for us is a fact that the Church has never doubted and cannot doubt except under penalty of denying at the same time the existence of the Body. That certain members of the Church have of late years doubted our right to invoke the saints, to call upon them for the aid of their prayers, is true; but there seems no ground for rejecting the tradition of invocation except the rather odd ground that we do not know the mode by which our requests reach them! As there are a good many other spiritual facts of which we do not know the mode, I do not think that we need be deterred from the practice of invocation on that ground: certainly the Church has never been so deterred.

It is strange how little people attempt to think out their religion, and especially their obligation to religious practice. I have so often heard people say, when the practice of invocation of saints was urged: Why ask the saints? Why not go directly to God? And these same people are constantly asking the prayers of their fellow Christians here on earth! Suppose when some pious soul comes

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to me and asks me if I will not pray for a sick child, or a friend at sea, I were to reply: "Why come to me? Why not go directly to God?" I should be rightly thought unfeeling and unchristian. But that is precisely what the same person says when I suggest that the saints or the Blessed Mother of God be invoked for some cause that we have in hand! A person comes to me and asks my prayers, and I go to a saint and ask his prayers on precisely the same basis and for precisely the same reason, namely, that we are both members of the Body of Christ and of one another. We have the right to expect the interest and to count on the love of our fellow-members in Christ. We go to the saints with the same directness and the same simplicity with which we go to the living members of the Body, living, I mean in the Church on earth. If it be not possible to do that, then death has made a very disastrous break in the unity of the Body of Christ.

And if we can count so without hesitation upon the love and sympathy and interest of the saints, surely we can count upon finding the same or greater love and sympathy in the greatest of all the saints, our blessed Mother, who is also the Mother of God. She in her spotless purity is the highest of creatures. She by her special privilege has boundless power of intercession; not power as I have explained before, because of any sort of favouritism, but power because her spiritual perfection gives her unique insight into the mind of God. Power in prayer really means that, through spiritual insight we are enabled to ask according to His will "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." That is why righteousness is the ground of prevailing intercession, because righteousness means sympathetic understanding of the mind of God.

And in none is there such sympathetic understanding because in none is there such nearness to God, as in Blessed Mary. To go to her in our prayers and to beg her to intercede for us is, of course, no more a trenching upon the unique mediatorship of our Lord than it is to ask my human friend to pray for me. We tend, do we not? to select from among the circle of our acquaintance those whom for some reason we feel to have what we call a special power in prayer when we seek for some one to pray for us in our need. Is it not wholly natural then that we should go to our Blessed Mother on whose sympathy we can unfailingly count and in whose spiritual understanding we can implicitly trust, when we want to interest those who are dear to our Lord in our special needs? We have every claim upon their sympathy because they are fellow-members of the same Body; and we know, too, that He Who has made us one in His Body wills that we should receive His graces through our mutual ministrations.

Mary, Maiden, mild and free,
Chamber of the Trinity,
A little while now list to me,
As greeting I thee give;

What though my heart unclean may be,
My offering yet receive.

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Thou art the Queen of Paradise,
Of heaven, of earth, of all that is;
Thou bore in thee the King of Bliss
Without or spot or stain;
Thou didst put right what was amiss,
What man had lost, re-gain.

The gentle Dove of Noe thou art
The Branch of Olive-tree that brought,
In token that a peace was wrought,
And man to God was dear:
Sweet Ladye, be my Fort,
When the last fight draws near.

Thou art the Sling, thy Son the Stone
That David at Goliath flung;
Eke Aaron's rod, whence blossom sprung
Though bare it was, and dry:
'Tis known to all, who've looked upon
Thy childbirth wondrous high.

In thee has God become a Child,
The wretched foe in thee is foiled;
That Unicorn that was so wild
Is thrown by woman chaste;
Him hast thou tamed, and forced to yield,
With milk from Virgin breast.

Like as the sun full clear doth pass,
Without a break, through shining glass,
Thy Maidenhood unblemished was
For bearing of the Lord:
Now, sweetest Comfort of our race,
To sinners be thou good.

Take, Ladye dear, this little Song
That out of sinful heart has come;
Against the fiend now make me strong,
Guide well my wandering soul:
And though I once have done thee wrong,
Forgive, and make me whole.
Wm. De Shoreham's translation
from the Latin, or French of
Robt. Grosseteste; C. 1325.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts II, 3.

Holy Mother of God, Virgin ever blessed, glorious and noble, chaste and inviolate, O Mary Immaculate, chosen and beloved of God, endowed with singular sanctity, worthy of all praise, thou who art the Advocate for the sins of the whole world; O listen, listen, listen to us, O holy Mary, Pray for us. Intercede for us. Disdain not to help us. For we are confident and know for certain that thou canst obtain all that thou wilt from thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, God Almighty, the King of ages, Who liveth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever.

MS. Book of Cerne, belonging to Ethelwald, BP. of Sherbourne, 760.

“When the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place”—I suppose the “all” will be not merely the “twelve,” but the “all” that were mentioned by S. Luke a few verses before. He mentions the Apostles by name and then adds, “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.”

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We think of our Lady as sharing in the Pentecostal gift. This was the first act of her ascended Son, this sending forth of the Holy Spirit whom He had promised. It was the fulfilment of the prophecy: "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." I do not know of anything in the teaching of the Church to lead us to suppose that this gift was to the Apostles alone: rather the thought of the Church is that to all Christians is there a gift of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is imparted to the Church as such, and within the organisation He functions through appropriate organs. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." Whatever the operations of God through the Body of Christ, the same divine energy is making them possible. "All these worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

That the Holy Spirit should manifest Himself in her life was, of course, no new experience for S. Mary. Her conscious vocation to be the Mother of God had begun when the Holy Ghost had come upon her, and she had conceived that "Holy Thing" which was called the Son of God. And we cannot think that the Spirit Who is the Spirit of sanctity had ever been absent from her from the moment of her wonderful conception when by the creative act of the Spirit she was conceived without sin, that is, in union with God. But as there are diversities of gifts, so the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost would have meant to her some new or increased gift of God.

For the Church as such this coming of the Spirit meant the entrance of the work of the Incarnation upon a new phase of its action. We may, I suppose, think of the work of our Lord during the years of His Ministry as intensive. It was the work of preparing the men to whom was to be committed the commission to preach the Kingdom of God. They had been chosen to be with Him, and their training had been essentially an experience of Him, an experience which was to be the essence of their Gospel and which their mission was to interpret to the world. "Who is this Jesus of Nazareth Whom ye preach? What does He mean?" was to be the question that they would have to answer in the coming years; and they would have to answer it to all sorts of men; to Jews who would find this conception of a suffering and rejected Messiah "a stumbling-block"; to the Greeks who would find "Jesus and the resurrection" "foolishness"; to all races of men who would have to be persuaded to leave their ancestral religions and revolutionise their lives, and before they would do so would wish to know what was the true meaning of Christ in whose name their whole past was challenged. As we watch the perplexity, the bewilderment, of these Apostles in the face of the collapse of all their hopes on the first Good Friday, as we see them struggling with the fact of the Resurrection, and attempting to adjust their lives to that; and then listen to their preaching and follow their action in the days succeeding Pentecost, we have brought home to us the nature of the action of the Holy Spirit when He came to them as the Spirit of Jesus to enable them to carry on the work that Jesus had committed to them.

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We understand that the work of the Spirit was first of all the work of interpreting the experience of the last three years. During these years they had been with Jesus, and the result was an experience which, however wonderful, or rather, just because it was wonderful, was in their consciousness at present little more than a chaotic mass of impressions and memories. It was the work of the Spirit to enkindle and illuminate their understanding so that they could put the experiences of the last three years in order, if one may put it in that way. He enabled them to draw out the meaning of what they had gone through. We are at once impressed with the reality of the work of the Spirit when we listen to the sermon of S. Peter to those who have witnessed the miracle of Pentecost. Here is another miracle of which we have, perhaps, missed something of the wonder. This man who in answer to the mockeries of the crowd—"these men are full of new wine"—stands forth to deliver this exposition of Jesus is the same man who but a few days before had denied his Lord through fear; he is the same man who even after the Resurrection was filled with such discouragement that he could think of nothing to do but to return to the old life of a fisherman, who had said on a day, "I go a-fishing." If we wish to understand the meaning of the coming of the Spirit, let us forget for the moment the tongues of fire, which are the symbol, and read over the words of S. Peter which are the true miracle of Pentecost.

And this action of the Spirit is not sporadic or temporary. We follow the annals of the Church and we find the constant evidence of the Spirit's power and action in the Christian propaganda. The courage with which the Christians meet the opposition of Jews and Romans, in their resourcefulness in dealing with the utterly unprecedented problems they are called on to face, in the intellectual grip of the Apologists who have to meet the criticism of very diverse sets of opponents, in their rapidly growing comprehension of what the Incarnation means, and of all in the way of action that our Lord's directions involve,—all these, when we recall the antecedents of these men, lead us to a clearer apprehension of the nature of the Spirit's work in the Church. As our Lord had promised, He is bringing "all things to their remembrance" and "leading them into all the truth." If we need proof of the constant supernatural action of God in the Church, we get all we can ask in the preaching of Jesus by His followers in these opening years of their ministry.

I said that our Lord's work in the time of His ministry was intensive, the preparing of instruments for the founding of the Kingdom. With Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit it passes into a new stage; it becomes *extensive* in that it now reaches out to gather all men into the Kingdom. To this end there is now a vast development of the machinery (so to call it) of the Gospel, a calling into existence

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of the means whereby Christ is to continue His action in men's souls. For there must continue a direct action of Christ or the Gospel will sink to the condition of a twice-told tale: it will be the constant repetition of the story of Jesus of Nazareth Who went about doing good: and it will have less and less power to be of any help to men as it recedes into the past. Without the means which are called into existence to produce continual contact between the Redeemer and the Redeemed we cannot conceive of the Gospel continuing to exist as power.

This is not a matter of pure theory: it is a thing that we have seen happen. We have seen the growth of a theory of Christianity which dispenses wholly or nearly wholly with the means of grace, and reduces the presentation of the Gospel to the presentation of the ideal of a good life as an object of imitation. When one asks: "Why should I imitate this life which, however good in an abstract way, is not very harmonious with the ideals of society at present?" one is told that it is the best life ever lived, the life that best interprets God, our heavenly Father to us. If one asks: "What is likely to happen if one does not imitate this life, but prefers some more modern type of usefulness?" the answer seems to be: "Nothing in particular will happen." In other words, the preaching of the Gospel divorced from the means of grace tends more and more to decline to the presentation of a humanitarian ideal of life which has little, and constantly less, driving power.

We see then as we study the history of the early days of the Church the constant presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the mode and means by which the Gospel is presented. We see it particularly in the development of the ministry and the growth of the sacramental system. It seems to me not very important to find a detailed justification of all the things that were done or established in explicit words or acts in the New Testament. If we are dealing, as we believe that we are, with an organism of which the life is God the Holy Ghost Who is the Vicar of Christ in the building and administration of His Kingdom, I do not see why we should not find in the action of the Kingdom as much of inspiration as we find in its writings. I do not see why we should accept certain things on the authority of the action of the early Christian community, as the baptism of infants and the communion of women, and reject others, as the reservation of the Blessed Sacraments and prayers for the dead. Nor do I see why we should draw some sort of an artificial line through the history of the Church and declare all the things on one side of it primitive and desirable, and all on the other late and suspect! Especially as no one seems to be able to explain why the line should be drawn in one place rather than in another.

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If the Holy Spirit was sent by our Lord as His Vicar to preside in the Church, as I suppose we all believe, it was in fulfilment of our Lord's promise to be with it till the end of the world and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it. There is nothing anywhere in Holy Scripture indicating that the Holy Spirit was to be sent to the "primitive Church," even if any one could tell what the primitive Church is, or rather when the Church ceased to be primitive. The Holy Spirit is present as a guide to the Church to-day quite as fully as He was in the first century. His presence then was not a guarantee that all men should believe the truth or do the right, nor is it now. The state of Christendom is a sufficient evidence of the ability of men to defy the will of God, the Holy Spirit; but that does not mean that the Holy Spirit has withdrawn any more than the state of things at Corinth which called out S. Paul's two Epistles to that Church is a proof that God the Holy Ghost never came or did not stay with that primitive Christian community. The power of the Spirit is not an irresistible power, but a spiritual influence which will guide those who are willing to be guided, who will to be submissive to His will. But the will of God can always be resisted—and always is. Nevertheless the Holy Spirit is in the Church. He shaped and is shaping its beliefs and institutions: and to-day we trust that He is leading us back to His obedience that we may at length realize the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.

The work of the Holy Spirit in the individual Christian is a constructive work; it has in view the growth of the child of God in holiness. He makes the soul of the baptised His dwelling-place and wishes to remain there as in His Temple, carrying on the work of its sanctification. The state of guiltlessness that follows absolution is not the equivalent of sanctity. Guiltlessness is a negative, sanctity is a positive state, and is acquired as the result of active correspondence with the will of God. In order that there may be this correspondence the will of God must be known, not merely as we know the things that we have learned by rote, but known in the sense of understood and appreciated. The will of God is knowable: that is, it has been revealed to man; but it needs to be effectively made known to the individual man. He must be convinced of the importance of divine truth to him. We know that just there is the supremely vital point in the teaching of the truth. Men assent to truth as true; but they are not thereby necessarily moved to act upon it: it may remain unassimilated. The vast majority of the people of this country, if they were questioned, would assert a belief in God; but a surprising number of them are unmoved by that belief, are led by it to no action. Or take the membership of any parish; they would all profess a belief in the efficacy of the sacraments: yet there is a surprisingly large number who do not frequent the sacraments. How many of you, for example, make your confessions and communions with the frequency and regularity that your theory about the sacraments implies?

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Now it is the work of the Holy Spirit to effect the passage in life from theory to practice, from profession to action. He illuminates the mind that we may understand; He stirs the will that we may act. He aids us to overcome the intellectual and physical sloth which is the arch-enemy of Christian practice. He intercedes for us, and He pleads with us that we may act as the children of God that we believe ourselves to be. But all He can do is to entice the will; if we remain unwilling, unmoved, He is ultimately grieved and leaves us. We may hope that that despair of the Holy Spirit of a soul rarely happens because it is a spiritual disaster awful to contemplate. In most men and women we can see enough impulse toward God, enough struggle with evil, to encourage us to think that the Holy Spirit has not utterly abandoned them. And it is never safe for us to judge definitely of another's spiritual case; but we do see lives that are so given over to malignancy that our hope for them is an optimism which has small basis on which to rest.

In most we may be certain that there is going on a very active pleading of the Holy Spirit. He is interpreting the meaning of the truth we accept. He is present in a careful reading of the Bible, in meditation, in devotional study. He receives of Christ and shows it unto us. I am sure we ought to think more of this interpretative assistance of the Holy Spirit in the work of understanding the Christian Religion, especially in its application to the daily life. I am quite certain, and I have no doubt that the experience of some of you, at least, will bear me out, that it makes a vast difference in the results of our reading and study if we undertake it under the direct invocation of the Holy Spirit and with the conscious giving ourselves up to His guidance. We have to make a meditation, for example, and we begin with prayer to God the Holy Ghost for guidance and enlightenment. It is often well to let that prayer run on as long as it will. It may be in the end that instead of making the meditation we had planned we shall have spent the time in a prayer of union with the Holy Spirit and will find ourselves refreshed and enlightened as the result. There is need of that sort of yielding of self to the promptings of the Spirit. I think that it not infrequently happens that our rules get in the way of His action by destroying or checking in us a certain flexibility which is necessary if we are to respond quickly to the voice of the Spirit. As in the case just mentioned where the Spirit is leading us to communion with Him we are apt to think: "I must get on with my meditation or the time will be up and I shall not have made it," and we turn from the Spirit and stop the work that He was accomplishing.

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He has so much to do for us, so many things to show us, so many grounds to urge for our more earnest seeking of sanctity. The true point of our Bible reading is that it is the opportunity of the Holy Spirit to exhibit truth to us so that in us it will become energetic. We already are familiar with the incidents of our Lord's Passion. If it be a matter of knowledge there is no need to-night to take up the Gospel and read the chapters which tell of the Crucifixion. There is not much point in reading through a chapter as a matter of pious habit. It is extraordinary how many there are who speak with contempt of "mediaeval prayers" such as the recitation of the Rosary, who yet "read a chapter" once a day in the shortest possible time and with the minimum of attention. We can think of all religious practices as opportunities that we offer to God the Holy Ghost. The few verses of Holy Scripture we read may well be the medium of His action upon us. He may give us new insight into their meaning, He may stir our wills to correspondence with their teaching, He may kindle our hearts by the evidence of the divine love that He presses home. Who does not remember moments when new meaning seemed to flash from the familiar pages, when we felt ourselves convicted of inadequate response to the knowledge we have, or when we felt our heart stir and send us to our knees in an act of thanksgiving and love?

Our constant need is the clear knowledge of ourselves. We may, we often do, see clearly God's will, and then we deceive ourselves as to the nature of our response. We think we are seeking for God when in reality we are seeking our own ends. We make our own plans and then seek to impose them on the will of God. Self-seeking, which we mistake for something else, is at the root of much spiritual failure. We try to believe that God's will is our will, and we succeed in a measure. We need therefore to be constantly examining ourselves by the revealed standard of God's will, to let in the light of the Spirit on our judgments and acts. For the struggle of the Spirit for control is a struggle with a resisting and sluggish will. We see, but we do not move; we know, but we do not act. The horrible inertia of spiritual sloth paralyses us, and the call of the Spirit is heard in vain. Like the man in our Lord's parable we plead the lateness of the hour, and our unwillingness to disturb others as our excuse for not rising at the Spirit's summons. But the Spirit, like the Friend at midnight, still knocks at the door, and the sound of the summons penetrates the quietness of the house and breaks in upon our slumbers. Well is it for us if in the end we rise and open to Him.

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It is only as we thus become energetic by the yielding to God of our wills that He can go on to His desired work. The aim of God in dealing with our lives is creative. He wills that we bring forth fruit, and the fruit that He wills that we bring forth is the Fruit of the Spirit. The general notion of holiness analyses into these qualities which are the evidence of God's indwelling, of His actual possession of the soul. When the soul yields at last to the divine will and begins to follow the divinely indicated course of action, then it loses self and finds God, then the results begin to show in the growth of the character-qualities that we call fruits or virtues. The presence or the absence of these is infallible evidence of the Spirit's success or failure in His work in us. If we abide in Christ, then the natural results of such abiding must be forthcoming. "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

A vine bears fruit because it assimilates the natural elements which are furnished it by the Providence of God through earth and air and water, and works them into the fruit which is the end, the meaning of its existence. Our Lord through the constant operation within us of the Holy Spirit gives us the spiritual power to work over the endowments of nature and the opportunities of life into the spiritual product which is holiness. We can just as well, and perhaps easier, work up the same natural elements into a quite different product. The result of our life's action may be that we can show the works of the flesh. But what is the will of the Spirit, S. Paul sets before us in these words: "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Any adequate self-examination, therefore, bears not only on our sins, our failures, but on our accomplishment. A tree is known by its fruits; and fruits are things which are evident to all men. If indeed the work of the Spirit in us is love, joy, peace and the rest of the fruits, these qualities cannot be hid. Certainly they cannot be hid from ourselves. They are the evidence to us of precisely where we stand in the way of spiritual accomplishment. And we must remember that they are supernatural qualities, and not be deceived by the existence in us of a set of human counterfeits. Love is not good-natured tolerance; joy is not superficial gaiety, peace is not clever dodging of difficulties. The fruits of the Spirit are not of easy growth, but come only at the end of a long period of cultivation, of energetic striving. But like all the gifts of God they

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do come if we want them to come. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." But when we ask our Lord for gifts we must remember that the giving is not a mechanical giving. What our Lord gives is the Might of the Spirit to effect what we desire. If a man ask of God a good harvest the prayer is answered if there be given the conditions under which a good harvest can be produced; it will not be produced without the appropriate human labour. And when we ask of God the Fruits of the Spirit the prayer is granted if the conditions are given under which this Fruit may be brought forth. But neither here may we expect Fruit without appropriate action on our part. God gives, but He gives to those who want.

I

others do of grace bereave, When, in their mother's womb, they life receive, God, as his sole-borne Daughter, loved thee: To match thee like thy birth's nobility, He thee his Spirit for thy Spouse did leave, Of whom thou didst his only Son conceive; And so was linked to all the Trinity. Cease, then, O queens, who earthly crowns do wear, To glory in the pomp of worldly, things: If men such respect unto you bear Which daughters, wives and mothers are of kings; What honour should unto that Queen be done Who had your God for Father, Spouse and Son?

II

Sovereign of Queens, if vain ambition move My heart to seek an earthly prince's grace, Show me thy Son in his imperial place, Whose servants reign our kings and queens above: And, if alluring passions I do prove By pleasing sighs—show me thy lovely face, Whose beams the angels' beauty do deface, And even inflame the seraphins with love. So by ambition I shall humble be, When, in the presence of the highest King, I serve all his, that he may honour me; And love, my heart to chaste desires shall bring, When fairest Queen looks on me from her throne, And jealous, bids me love but her alone.

III

Why should I any love, O Queen, but thee, If favor past a thankful love should breed? Thy womb did bear, thy breast my Saviour feed, And thou didst never cease to succour me. If love do follow worth and dignity, Thou all in thy perfections dost exceed; If love be led by hope of future meed, What pleasure more than thee in heaven to see? An earthly sight doth only please the eye, And breeds desire, but doth not satisfy: Thy sight gives us possession of all joy; And with such full delights each sense shall fill, As heart shall wish but for to see thee still, And ever seeing, ever shall enjoy.

IV

Sweet Queen, although thy beauty raise up me From sight of baser beauties here below, Yet, let me not rest there; but, higher go To him, who took his shape from God and thee. And if thy form in him more fair I see, What pleasure from his deity shall flow, By whose fair beams his beauty shineth so, When I shall it behold eternally? Then, shall my love of pleasure have his fill, When beauty's self, in whom all pleasure is, Shall my enamoured soul embrace and kiss, And shall new loves and new delights distill, Which from my soul shall gush into my heart, And through my body flow to every part.



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HENRY CONSTABLE: 1562-1613.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XXIV

THE HOME OF S. JOHN

And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

S. John XIX, 27.

But now we unite to praise thee, O Pure and Immaculate One, blessed Virgin and sinless Mother of thy great Son and the God of all. O perfectly spotless and altogether holy, thou art the hope of despairing sinners. We bless thee as most full of grace, who didst give birth to Christ, God and Man. And we fall down before thee. We all invoke thee and implore thy help. Deliver us, O Virgin, holy and undefiled, from every pressing strait and from all temptations of the Evil One. Be thou our peacemaker in the hour of death and judgment. Do thou save us from the future unquenchable fire and from the outer darkness. Do thou render us worthy of the glory of thy Son, O Virgin and Mother, most sweet and clement.

A PRAYER OF S. EPHREM THE SYRIAN.

There is no scene in the whole range of Scripture narrative which is more full of pathos than this scene of the Cross. Two agonies meet: the agony of the nailing, the lifting, the dying; and the agony that looks on in silent helplessness. But while our Lord's physical agony was in some sort swallowed up in the intensity of the love which was the motive for enduring it, overpassed in the vision of the need of those for whom He was dying, S. Mary's agony was the pain of a love concentrated upon the Sufferer Who hangs dying before her eyes. If there be anything that can lighten the pain of such love it is that it feels itself answered, that its object is conscious of it and is helped by it. And S. Mary had that consolation: the love poured to her from the Cross, and revealed itself when the suffering Son turned His eyes upon her agony and, understanding what her desolation would be, committed her to His beloved disciple: "Behold thy Mother; behold thy son." These two great loves which had been our Lord's human consolation were thus committed to one another. And when the darkness fell, and death relieved the agony, and the Sacred Body had been cared for, then the mother found refuge with S. John: "and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

From the day of Pentecost on, S. Mary is no more heard of in the history of the Church. As so often, the Scriptures are silent and decline to answer our interested questions. They go on with the essentials of their story, the founding of the Church of God, and

leave other things aside. So we do not know any of the last years of the life of Blessed Mary. Where did she live? How long did she live? The traditions, in any case of quite an untrustworthy nature, are contradictory. Jerusalem and Ephesus contend for the honour of our Lady's residence. Jerusalem must have been the site of that "home"

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to which S. John took her after the crucifixion. Did she remain there, or did she follow S. John, and at length come to live with him in Ephesus? Ephesus puts forward the claim, and we feel that it would be well founded in the nature of the relation between these two, if S. Mary lived until the settlement of the last of the apostles in the Asian city. Our Lord's committal of His Mother to the beloved disciple implies their personal association as long as S. Mary lived: if till S. John was settled in Ephesus, then we may be sure that she was there. She would be with S. John as long as she lived, but can we think of her as living long? Would not a great love draw her to another world and the presence of her triumphant Son?

Let us, however think, as one tradition bids us, of our Lady as living some time with S. John at Ephesus. We can understand the situation because it is so much like our own. These Asia Minor cities of the imperial period were curiously like the great centers of population in the Western world of to-day—London, Paris, New York, Chicago. There was the same over-crowding of population, the same intense commercial activity, the same almost insane thirst for amusement and excitement, the same degeneracy of moral fibre. The sins that sapped the life of Ephesus are the same that degrade contemporary life. In some ways Ephesus was, possibly, more frankly corrupt; but on the other hand it had no daily press to advertise and promote sin and social corruption. There is more of Christianity and of Christian influence in the modern city, but even here there is a curious resemblance between the two. The Christian Religion had but recently been introduced into Ephesus, but already it had precisely that touch of ineffectiveness that seems to us so modern. The message of the risen Lord to the angel of the Church in Ephesus is: "Nevertheless I have this against thee, that thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

The things that hearten us are sometimes strange; but I suppose that there is a feeling of encouragement in our present day distress and spiritual ineffectiveness in the thought that even under S. John the Church in Ephesus was not wholly ideal. The conditions which baffle us, baffled him. The converts who were so promising and enthusiastic declined in zeal and fell back under the spell of worldliness. Zeal is a quality which is maintained with great difficulty, and the pull of the world, whether social or business, is steadily exercised. Converts in Ephesus, like converts in New York, felt that their friends were right who declared that they were quite unnecessarily strict, and that in order to serve Christ it was not necessary to turn their backs absolutely on Diana.

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As one tries to reconstruct the situation in Ephesus, one feels that our Lady would have had no prominence in the Church in the way of an actively exercised influence. One thinks of her as living in retirement, as not even talking very much. If she lived long she would be an object of increasing interest and even of awe to the new converts, and an object of growing love to all those who were admitted to any sort of fellowship with her. But one cannot imagine a crowd about her, inquiring into her experiences and her memories of her divine Son. Once she told of her experience, for it was necessary that the Church should know of the circumstances of the coming of the Son of God into the world, but beyond that necessary communication of her experience we cannot think of her as speaking of her sacred memories. Silence and meditation, longing and waiting, would have filled the years till the hour of her release.

But in the quiet hours spent with S. John it would be different. Between the Blessed Virgin and S. John there was perfect understanding and perfect sympathy, and we love to think of the hours that they would have spent together in deep spiritual intercourse. Those hours would not be hours of reminiscence merely; they would rather be hours in which these two would attempt with the aid of the Spirit Who ruled in them so fully to enter deeper and ever deeper into the meaning of Incarnate God. Jesus would be the continual object of their thought and their love, and meditation upon His words and acts would lead them to an ever increasing appreciation of their depth and meaning.

We have all felt, in reading the pages of S. John, how vast is the difference both in attitude toward his subject and in his understanding of it from that of the other Evangelists. The earlier Evangelists seem deliberately to keep all feeling out of their story, to tell the life of our Lord in the most meagre outline, confining themselves to the essential facts. Anything like interpretation they decline. In S. John all this is changed. The Jesus whom he presents is the same Jesus, but seen through what different eyes! The same life is presented, but with what changes in selection of material! The Gospel of S. John seems almost a series of mediations upon selected facts of an already familiar life rather than an attempt to tell a life-story. And so indeed we think of it. When S. John wrote, the life of our Lord as a series of events was already before the Church. The Church had the synoptic Gospels, and it had a still living tradition to inform it. What it needed, and what the Holy Spirit led S. John to give it, was some glimpse of the inner meaning of the Incarnation, some unfolding of the spiritual depths of the teaching of Jesus.

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We know how it is that different people listening to the same words get different impressions and carry away with them quite different meanings. We hear what we are able to hear. And S. John was able to hear what the other disciples of our Lord seem not to have heard. What dwelt in his memory and was worked up in his meditations and was at length transmitted to us, was the meaning of such incidents as the interview with Nicodemus, and the talk with the woman of Samaria, the discourse on the Holy Eucharist and the great High-priestly prayer. Men have felt the contrast between S. John and the other Evangelists so intensely that they have said that this is another Christ who is presented by S. John, and the influences which have shaped the author of the Fourth Gospel are quite other than those which shaped the men of the inner circle of Jesus. But no: it is the instinctive, or rather the Spirit-guided, selection of the material afforded by those years of association with Jesus for the purpose of transmitting to the Church a spiritual depth and beauty, a spiritual significance in our Lord's teaching, that the earlier Gospel had hardly touched.

Which perhaps they could not touch because when they wrote there was not yet in the Church the spiritual experience which could fully interpret our Lord. Through the life of union with the risen Jesus and all the spiritual experience, all the illumined intelligence that that life brought, S. John was enabled to understand and interpret as he did. Writing far on toward the end of the first century he was writing out of the personal experience of Christian living of many years, which brought with it year by year an increased power of spiritual vision opening to him the depth and wonder of the fact of God made man. It is to an experience of our Lord that he appeals as the basis of his teaching. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life: (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ." And as we read on in S. John's Epistles we cannot fail to see how deeply the years of meditation have influenced his understanding of our Lord and His teaching, and how much his past experience of our Lord has been illumined by the experience of the risen Jesus which has followed. At no time, we are certain, has S. John been out of touch with his Master.

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And can we for a moment think that the years of intercourse with our Lady meant nothing in the spiritual development of S. John? On the contrary, may we not think that much of the spiritual richness which is the outstanding feature of his writings was the outcome of his association with the blessed Mother? No one has ever shown the sympathetic understanding of our Lord, has been so well able convincingly to interpret Him, as the beloved disciple. I myself have no doubt that much of his understanding came by way of S. Mary. Her interpretative insight would have been deeper than any one else's, not only because of her long association with Jesus, but because of her sinlessness. No two lives ever touched so closely; and there was not between them the bar that so blocks our spiritual understanding and clouds our spiritual vision, the bar of sin. I suppose it is almost impossible for us to appreciate the effect of sin in clouding vision and dulling sympathy. Our every day familiarity with venial sin, our easy tolerance of it, the adjustment of our lives to habits that involve it, have resulted in a lack of spiritual sensitiveness. Much of the meaning of our Lord's life and words passes over us just because of this dimness of vision, this insensitiveness to suggestion. And therefore we find it difficult to imagine what would be the understanding, the insight, the response to our Lord, of one between whom and Him there was no shadow of sin. And such an one was the blessed Mother. With unclouded vision she looked into the face of her Son. As His life expanded she followed with perfect sympathy; indeed, sometimes, as at Cana, her understanding of what He was made her precipitate in concluding as to His necessary action. When He became a public teacher and unfolded largely in parable His doctrine, it was her sinless soul which would see clearest and deepest, and with the most ready response. And therefore I am sure that we cannot go astray in thinking that S. John's relation to S. Mary was not simply that of a guardian of her from the pressure of the world, but was indeed that of a son who listened and learned from the experience of his Mother. No doubt S. John himself was of a very subtle spiritual understanding; notwithstanding that, and notwithstanding his exceptional opportunities of learning, we may still believe that there are many touches in his Gospel which are the result of his association with his Lord's Mother.

Is it not possible for us to have our share in that pure insight of blessed Mary? When we try to think out the lines of our own spiritual development and the influences that have contributed to shape it, do we not find that the presence or absence of devotion to our Lady has been a factor of considerable importance? Devotion to her injected an element into our religion which is of vast moment, an element of sympathy, of gentleness, of purity. You can if you like, in condemnatory accents, call that element sentimentalism,

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although it is not that but the exercise of those gentler elements of our nature without whose exercise our nature functions one-sidedly. You may call it the feminine element, if you like; you will still be indicating the same order of activity. Surely, an all around spiritual development will bring out the feminine as well as the masculine qualities. And it seems to be historically true that those systems of religion which represent a revolt against the cultus of our Lady and carefully exclude all traces of it from their worship, show as a consequence of this exclusion a hardness and a barrenness which makes their human appeal quite one-sided. And when those same systems have realised their limitations and their lack of human appeal, and have tried to supply what is lacking, they have again failed, because instead of reverting to historical Christianity they have taken the road of humanitarianism, basing themselves on our Lord's human life and consequent brotherhood with us, rather than upon His supernatural Personality as operative through His mystical Body. Stress is laid upon charitable helpfulness rather than upon the power of grace. The modern man tries to reform life rather than to regenerate it.

And, I repeat, I cannot help associating with a repudiation of the cultus of the saints, and especially of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a consequent failure to understand the Christian life as a supernatural creation. If one leaves out of account the greater part of the Kingdom of Heaven, all the multitudes of the redeemed, and their activities, and fastens one's attention exclusively upon that small part of the Kingdom which is the Church on earth, one can hardly fail to miss the significance of the earthly Church itself. Religion understood in this limited way may well drift more and more toward Deism and Humanitarianism, and further and further from any supernatural implications. This is no theory; it is what has happened. It was the course of Protestantism from the Reformation to the eighteenth century; and, after a partial revival of supernaturalism, is once more the rapid course of Protestantism to-day. Protestantism has lost or is fast losing any grip on the Trinity or the Incarnation: to it God is more and more a barren unity, and Jesus a good man. And this largely because all interest in the world of the Redeemed has been abandoned and all intercourse with the inhabitants of that world denied.

It is therefore of the last importance that we, infected as we are with Protestantism, should stress the revival of the cultus of the saints, and should insist upon our right and privilege to pay due honour to the Mother of God and ask our share in her prayers. We must do all we can to make her known to our brethren. We need her sympathy, her aid, her example.

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Above all, the example of her spotless purity. It is notorious that one of the most marked features of our time is the virulent assault on purity. We had long emphasised a certain quality of conduct which we called modesty; it was, perhaps, largely a convention, but it was one of those protective conventions which are valuable as preservative of qualities we prize. It was protective of purity; and however artificial it was, in some respects, it existed because we felt that purity was a thing too precious to be exposed to unnecessary risk. Well, modesty is gone now, whether in conduct or convention. One hears discussed at dinner-tables and in the presence of young girls matters which our mothers would have blushed to mention at all. The quality of modesty is declared Puritanical and hypocritical. "Hypocritical virtue" is a phrase one frequently meets; and we seem fast going on to the time when all virtue will be regarded as hypocrisy. Customary standards are falling all about us, overthrown in the name of personal liberty.

And by liberty, one gathers, is meant freedom to do as one pleases, and especially as one sexually pleases. The assault is pushed hardest just now against the sanctity of the sacrament of matrimony and the morals of that sacrament as they have been developed by the Christian Church. Protestantism long ago assented to the overthrow of Christian standards in the marriage relation and has aided the sexual anarchy with which we are faced to-day. To-day the chief attack is on the purity of marriage in the interests, ostensibly, of humanity. A vigorous campaign in favour of what is called birth-control is being carried on, and is being supported in quarters which are professedly Christian. There are many grounds for opposing the movement, social, humanitarian and other. We are here concerned with it only as it is an attack on purity. From the Christian point of view the marriage relation has for its end the procreation of children for the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God. If circumstances are such, through reasons of health or economy, that children seem undesirable, the remedy is plain, self control. The theory that human beings have no more control over their appetites than beasts, while it has much to support it in contemporary life, cannot be admitted from the point of view of religion. Self-control is always possible, and is constantly exercised by many men and women who choose to be guided by principle rather than by passion. And in any case the Christian Religion can become no partner, not even a silent one, in a conspiracy to murder, or in the sort of compromise that turns marriage into a licensed sodomy. If indeed the economic status of the modern world is such that the average couple cannot support a family, then the Christian Church may well aid in the bringing about of an economic revolution; but it can hardly aid in the destruction of its own ideals of purity.

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What is ultimately at stake in the modern world is the whole conception of purity as a quality that is desirable. This attitude has become possible among us for one reason because we have consented to the suppression of ideals of life which were calculated to sustain it. To sustain any moral or spiritual conception there must be maintained certain appropriate ideals which, while out of the reach of the average man, create and sustain in him an admiration and respect for the ideal standard. So the standard of purity presented in Mary and protected by the belief in her Immaculate Conception and her assumption, has the effect, not only of commending the life of chastity in the sense of the vows of religion, but also in the broad sense of the restraint and discipline of appetite whether within or without the marriage relation. It impresses upon us the truth that purity is not only a human quality but a divinely created virtue, the result of the infusion of sanctifying grace into the soul. Is it not largely because the young are taught (when they are taught anything at all in the premises) that purity is a matter of the *will*, that they so often fail? If they were taught the nature of the *virtue* and were led to rely more on the indwelling might of the Holy Spirit would they not have better success? And if there were held constantly before their eyes the example of the saints and especially of Blessed Mary ever-virgin, would not they have an increased sense of the value of purity?

The life and example of S. Mary are an inestimable treasure of the Church of God, and her removal from the world has only enhanced that value. To-day her meaning is clearer to us than ever. The spirit-guided mind of the Church has through the centuries been meditating on the meaning of her office as Mother of God. The words in which she accepts her vocation, Behold the handmaid of the Lord, implying, as they do, an active co-operation with the divine purpose, a voluntary association of herself with it, imply, too, the perpetual continuance of that association, and contain in germ all Catholic teaching in regard to her office. She passed from this world silently, and to the world unknown; but to the Church of God she ever remains of all human beings the greatest spiritual force in the Kingdom of God.

Weep, living things, of life the Mother dies;
The world doth lose the sum of all her bliss,
The Queen of earth, the Empress of the skies;
By Mary's death mankind an orphan is.
Let Nature weep, yea, let all graces moan,
Their glory, grace and gifts die all in one.

It was no death to her, but to her woe,
By which her joys began, her griefs did end;
Death was to her a friend, to us a foe,
Life of whose lives did on her life depend:
Not prey of death, but praise to death she was.
Whose ugly shape seemed glorious in her face.

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Her face a heaven; two planets were her eyes,
Whose gracious light did make our clearest day;
But one such heaven there was, and lo, it dies,
Death's dark eclipse hath dimmed every, ray:
Sun, hide thy light, thy beams untimely shine;
True light since we have lost, we crave not thine.
Robert Southwell, 1560-1595

PART TWO

CHAPTER XXV

THE ASSUMPTION

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.

S. John XVII, 24.

Hail! Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, hail! Our life, our sweetness, our hope, all hail. To thee we cry, poor exiled children of Eve. To thee we send up our cries, weeping and mourning in this vale of tears. Turn, then, Most gracious Advocate, thy merciful eyes upon us, and now, after this our exile, show unto us the blessed Fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O gracious, O merciful, O sweet Virgin Mary. Anthem from the breviary. Attributed to Hermann Contractus, 1013-54.

There is nothing more wonderful or beautiful, nothing that brings to us a more perfect revelation of our Lord's mind, than this prayer which is recorded for us by S. John. There is in it a complete unfolding of that sympathy and love which we feel to underlie and explain our Lord's mission. As we come to know what God is only when we see Him revealed in Jesus; when we enter into our Lord's saying, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father," so in the revelation of Jesus we understand God's attitude toward us. In Jesus the love of God shows itself, not as an abstract quality, a philosophical conception, but as a burning, passionate eagerness to rescue, an outgoing of God to individual souls. There is a deep personal affection displayed in this final scene in the Upper Chamber. This is our Lord's real parting from His disciples. He will see them again, but under conditions of strain and tragedy, or under such changed circumstances that they cannot well enter into the old intimacy. But here there is no bar to the expression of love. Here He gives them the final evidence of His utter union with them in the humility of the foot-washing. Here He marvellously imparts Himself in the Breaking of the Bread, wherein is consummated His personal union with them. This is

the demonstration, if one were needed, that having loved His own, He loved them unto the uttermost.

It is inconceivable that passionate love such as this should ever end. It is a personal relation which must endure while personality endures. It is really the demands of love which more than anything else outside revelation are the evidence of immortality. We are certain that the love of God which in its fulness has been made known in Christ cannot be annihilated by death. "I have loved thee with an everlasting

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love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.” Love such as that must draw men, not only in this world, but in all worlds. If it can draw men out of sin to God, it must create an enduring bond. If it can draw God to men, it must be the revelation of a permanent attitude of God to man. It is a love that goes out beyond the world, that love of which S. Paul says: “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Our instinctive thought of the Judgment seems to be of it as condemnation, or, at best, as acquittal. But why not think of it as consummation? Why not think of it as setting the seal of God’s approval upon our accomplishment of His will and purpose for us? The final Judgment is surely that,—the entrance of those who are saved into the full joy of their Lord. There once more will our humanity be complete because it is the whole man, not the soul only, but the soul clothed with the body of the resurrection, once more clothed upon with its “house from heaven,” which is filled with the joy of the Beatific Vision. The thought of the particular judgment may fill us with dread; but if we are able to look beyond that to the general Judgment at the last day, we shall think only of our perfect bliss in the enjoyment of God.

The belief in the Assumption of our Lady is a belief that in her case that which is the inheritance of all the saints, that they shall rise again with their bodies and be admitted to the Vision of God, has been anticipated. In her, that which we all look forward to and dream of for ourselves, has been attained. She to-day is in God’s presence in her entire humanity, clothed with her body of glory.

This teaching, one finds, still causes some searching of hearts among us, and is thought to raise many questions difficult to answer. And it may be admitted at the outset that it is not a truth taught in Holy Scripture but a truth arrived at by the mind of the Church after centuries of thought. Unless we can think of the Church as a divine organism with a continuous life from the day of Pentecost until now, as being the home of the Holy Spirit, and as being continuously guided by Him into all the truth; unless we can accept in their full sense our Lord’s promises that He will be with the Church until the end of the world, we shall not find it possible to accept the assumption as a fact, but shall decline to believe that, and not only that but, if we are consistent, many another belief of the Christian Church. But if we have an adequate understanding of what is implied in the continuity of the Church as the organ of the present action of the Holy Spirit, we shall not find that the fact that a given doctrine is not explicitly contained in Holy Scripture is any bar to its acceptance. We shall have learned that the revelation of God in Christ, and our relation to God in Christ, are facts of such tremendous import and inexhaustible content that it would be absurd to suppose that all their meaning had been understood and explicitly stated in the first generation of the Christian Church.

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We shall not, then, find it any bar to the acceptance of belief in the assumption of our Lady that its formal statement came, as is said, "late." We simply want to know that when it came it came as the outcome of the mature thought of the Church, the Body of Christ, the Fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

It is to be noted that the assumption is not a wholly isolated fact. There are several cases of assumption in the Old Testament though of a slightly different character in that they were assumptions directly from life without any interval of death. Such were the assumptions of Enoch and Elijah. Moses, too, it has been constantly believed, was assumed into heaven,—in his case after death and with his resurrection body. A case which is more strangely like what is believed to have taken place in the experience of blessed Mary is that closely connected with our Lord's resurrection and recorded by S. Matthew. "And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Although it is not asserted that these were assumed into heaven, it seems impossible to avoid the inference; and if "many saints which slept" were raised from the dead and assumed into the heavenly world, there can be no *a priori* difficulty in believing the same thing to have taken place in the Blessed Mother of God. Nay if such a thing as an assumption is at all possible for any human being one would naturally conclude from the very relation of S. Mary to our Lord that the possibility would be realised in her.

And there were elements in her case which were lacking in all the other cases which suggest a certain fitness, if not inevitability, in her assumption. She was conceived without sin,—never had any breath of sin tainted her. Was it then possible that she should be holden by death? Surely, in any case, it was impossible that her holy body should see corruption: we cannot think of the dissolution of that body which had no part in sin. If ever an assumption were possible, here it was inevitable—so the thought of the Church shaped itself. The compelling motives of the belief were theological rather than historical. The germ out of consideration of which was evolved the belief in the assumption was the relation of Blessed Mary to her Son. That unique relation might be expected to carry with it unique consequences, and among these the consequence that the body which was bound by no sin should be reunited to the soul which had needed no purgation, but had passed at once to the presence of its God and its Redeemer who was likewise Son. It is well to stress the fact that the assumption is not only a fact but a doctrine. Fact, of course, it was or there could be no doctrine; but the truth of the fact is certified by the growing conviction in the mind of the Church of the inevitability of the doctrine.

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What is implied in the word assumption is that the body of the Mother of our Lord was after her death and burial raised to heaven by the power of God. It differed therefore essentially from the ascension of our Lord which was accomplished by His Own inherent power. When this assumption took place we have no means of knowing. We do not certainly know where S. Mary lived, nor where and when she died. Jerusalem and Ephesus contend in tradition for the privilege of having sheltered her last days and reverently carried her body to its burial. There is no way of deciding between these two claims, although the fact that our Lord confided His Mother to S. John throws some little weight into the scale of Ephesus. And yet S. Mary may have died before S. John settled in Ephesus. We can only say that history gives us no reliable information on the matter.

In the silence of Scripture we naturally turn to the other writings of the early Church for light and guidance on the matter; but there, too, there is little help. There is, to be sure, a group of Apocryphal writings which have a good deal to say about the life of S. Mary, where the Scriptures and tradition are silent. Among other things these Apocryphal writings have a good deal to say, and some very beautiful stories to tell, of S. Mary's last days, of her burial and assumption. Are we to think of these stories as containing any grain of truth? If they do, it is now impossible to sift it from the chaff. These stories are generally rejected as a basis of knowledge. And there has been, and still is in some quarters, a conviction that the belief of the Church in the assumption rests on nothing better or more stable than these Apocryphal stories; that the authors of these Apocrypha were inventing their stories out of nothing, and that in an uncritical age their legends came to be taken as history. Thus was a belief in the assumption foisted upon the Church, having no slightest ground in fact. The human tendency to fill in the silences of Scripture has resulted in many legends, that of the assumption among them.

There is a good deal to be said for this position, yet I do not feel that it is convincing. That the incidents of the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary as narrated in the Apocrypha are historical, of course cannot be maintained. But neither is it at all probable that such stories grew up out of nothing: indeed, their existence implies that there were certain facts widely accepted in the Christian community that served as their starting point. While the Apocryphal stories of the life of our Lady cannot be accepted as history, they do presuppose certain beliefs as universally, or at least widely, held. Thus one may reject all the details of the story of the death and burial and assumption of our Lady, and yet feel that the story is evidence of a belief in the assumption among those for whom the story was written. What was new to them was not the fact of the assumption but the detailed incidents with which the Apocrypha embroidered it. I feel no doubt that these Apocryphal stories are not the source of belief in the assumption, but are our earliest witness to the existence of the belief. They actually presuppose its existence in the Church as the necessary condition of their own existence.

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Another fact that tells in the same direction is the absence of any physical relics of our Lady. At a time when great stress was laid upon relics, and there was little scruple in inventing them, if the authentic ones were not forthcoming, there were no relics produced which were alleged to be the physical relics of S. Mary. Why was this? Surely, unless there were some inhibiting circumstances, relics, real or forged, would have been produced. The only probable explanation is that the inhibiting circumstance was the established belief in the assumption. If the assumption were a fact, there would be no physical relics; if it were an established belief, there would be no fraud possible. Add to this that various relics of our Lady were alleged to exist; but they were not relics of her body.

Again: by the seventh century the celebration of the feast of the assumption had spread throughout the whole church. This universal establishment of the feast implies a preceding history of considerable length, going well back into the past. The feast was kept in many places, and under a variety of names which seem to imply, not mere copying, but independent development. It is alleged, to be sure, that the names by which the feast was called do not imply belief in the assumption. The feast is called “the Sleeping,” “the Repose,” “the Passage” of the Virgin, as well as by the Western title, the assumption. But a study of the liturgies and of the sermons preached in honour of the feast will convince any one that the underlying tradition was that of our Lady’s assumption.

These quite separate and yet converging lines of evidence seem to me to show convincingly what was the wide-spread belief of the early Christian community as to the destiny of Blessed Mary. They imply a tradition going well back into the past, so far back, that in view of the theological expression of the mind of the Church they may well be regarded as apostolic. Our personal belief in the assumption will still rest primarily upon its theological expression in the mind of the Church, but having attained certainty as to the doctrine, which is of course at the same time certainty as to the fact, we shall have no difficulty in finding in the above sketched lines of historical development the evidence of the primitive character of the belief.

It may not be amiss to give a few characteristic quotations as indicating the mind of the Church in this matter.

S. Modestus, patriarch of Jerusalem (d. 614), preaching on the Falling Asleep of the Mother of God, said:—

“The Lord of heaven and earth has to-day consecrated the human tabernacle in which He Himself, according to the flesh, was received, that it may enjoy with Him forever the gift of incorruptibility. O blessed sleep of the glorious, ever-virgin Mother of God, who has not known the corruption of the grave; for Christ, our all-powerful Saviour, has kept intact that flesh which gave Him His flesh.... Hail, most holy Mother of God: Jesus has willed to have you in His Kingdom with your body clothed in incorruptibility.... The most

glorious Mother of Christ our Lord and Saviour, Who gave life and immortality, is raised by her Son, and forever possesses incorruptibility with Him Who called her from the tomb.”

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S. Andrew, Archbishop of Crete (d. 676), also preaching on the Falling Asleep of the Mother of God, says:—"It is a wholly new sight, and one that surpasses the reason, that of a woman purer than the heavens entering heaven with her body. As she was born without corruption, so after death her flesh is restored to life."

In one of his sermons at the same feast, S. Germanus of Constantinople (d. 733), speaks thus:—"It was impossible that the tomb should hold the body which had been the living temple of the Son of God. How should your flesh be reduced to dust and ashes who, by the Son born of you, have delivered the human race from the corruption of death?"

Preaching on the same festival, S. John Damascene (d. 760) said:—"Your flesh has known no corruption. Your immaculate body, which knew no stain, was not left in the tomb. You remained virgin in your child-bearing; and in your death your body was not reduced to dust but has been placed in a better and celestial state."

There are one or two practical consequences of this doctrine concerning which, perhaps, it may be well to say a few words. The first is as the result of such devotions to our Lady as are implied in, or have in fact followed, a belief in her assumption. It is objected to them that even granting the truth of the fact of the assumption, still the stress laid on the fact and the devotions to our Lady which are held to be appropriate to it, are unhealthy in their nature, and do, in fact, tend to obscure the worship of our Lord: that where devotions to our Lady are fostered, there devotion to our Lord declines. That therefore instead of trying to advance the cultus of our Lady, we should do much better to hold to the sanity and reserve which has characterised the Anglican Church since the Reformation.

These and the like arguments seem to me to hang in the air and to be quite divorced from facts. They imply a state of things which does not exist. The assertion that where devotion to our Lady prevails devotion to our Lord declines is as far as possible from being true. Where to-day is the Deity of our Lord defended most ardently and devotion to Him most wide spread? Is it in Churches where devotion to our Lady is suppressed? On the contrary, do you not know with absolute certainty, that in any church where you find devotion to our Lady encouraged, there will you find the Deity of our Lord maintained? Has the Anglican "sanity and reserve" in regard to the Blessed Virgin Mary saved the Anglican Church from the inroads of unitarianism and rationalism? Is it not precisely in those circles where the very virginity of our Lady is denied that the divinity of our Lord is denied also? No, devotion to Mary is far indeed from detracting from the honour due to Mary's Son.

And we cannot insist too much or too often that the doctrines of the Christian Church form a closely woven system such that none, even the seemingly least important, can be denied without injuring the whole. No article of Christian belief expresses an independent truth, but always a truth depending upon other truths, and in its turn

lending others its support. To deny any truth that the mind of the Church has expressed is equivalent to the removal of an organ from a living body.

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And to-day we feel more than ever the need of the doctrine of the assumption. One of the bitterest attacks on the Christian Faith which is being made to-day, emanating principally from within the Christian community, and even from within the Christian ministry, is that which is being made on the truth of the resurrection of the body, whether the resurrection of our Lord, or our own resurrection. In place of the Christian doctrine believed and preached from the beginning, we are asked to lapse back into heathenism and a doctrine of immortality. Not many seem to realise the vastness of the difference that is made in our outlook to the future by a belief in the resurrection of the body as distinguished from immortality. But the character of the religions resulting from these two contrary beliefs is absolutely different. It needs only to study them as they actually exist to be convinced of this fact.

And it is precisely the doctrine of the assumption of our Lady which contributes strong support to the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body. It teaches us that in her case the vision and hope of mankind at large has been anticipated and accomplished. The resurrection of our Lord is found, in fact, to extend (if one may so express it) to the members of His mystical body; and the promise which is fulfilled in Blessed Mary, is that hope of a joyful resurrection which is thus confirmed to us all. In its stress upon the assumption the mind of the Christian Church has not been led astray, has not been betrayed into fostering superstitions, but has been led by the Spirit of Christ which He promised it to the development of a truth not only revealing the present place of His glorious Mother in the Kingdom of her Son, but encouraging and heartening us in our following of the heavenly way.

Whoe is shee that assends so high
Next the heavenlye Kinge,
Round about whome angells flie
And her prayses singe?

Who is shee that adorned with light,
Makes the sunne her robe,
At whose feete the queene of night
Layes her changing globe?

To that crowne direct thine eye,
Which her heade attyres;
There thou mayst her name discrie
Wrytt in starry fires.

This is shee, in whose pure wombe
Heaven's Prince remained;
Therefore, in noe earthly tombe
Cann shee be containd.



Heaven shee was, which held that fire
Whence the world tooke light,
And to heaven doth now aspire,
Fflames with fflames to unite.

Shee that did so clearly shyne
When our day begunne,
See, howe bright her beames decline
Nowe shee sytts with the sunne.

Sir John Beaumont, 1582-1628.

PART TWO

CHAPTER XXVI

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THE CORONATION

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

Rev. XII, I.

To-day the Angel Gabriel brought the palm and the crown to the triumphant Virgin. To-day he introduced to the Lord of all, her, who was the Temple of the Most High, and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit.

FOR THE ASSUMPTION. ARMENIAN.

The heaven which S. John the Evangelist shows us is the continuation of the earthly Church. As we read his pages we feel that entrance there would be a real home-coming for the earnest Christian. We are familiar enough with presentations of heaven which seem to us to be so detached from Christian reality as to lack any human appeal. We think of philosophic presentations of the future with entire indifference. It is possible, we say, that they may be true; but they are utterly uninteresting. It is not so in the visions of S. John. Here we have a heaven which is humanly interesting because it is continuous with the present life, and its interests are the interests that it has been the object of our religion to foster. The qualities of character which the Christian religion has urged upon our attention are presented as finding their clear field of development in the world to come. There, too, are unveiled the objects of our adoration, the ever-blessed Three who yet are but one. Love which has striven for development under the conditions and limitations of our earthly life, which has tried to see God and has gone out to seek Him in the dimness of revelation, now sees and is satisfied. Whom now we see in a mirror, enigmatically, we shall then see face to face.

And it is a heaven thronged with saints, with men and women who have gone through the same experiences as those to which we are subjected, and have come forth purified and triumphant. We sometimes in discouragement think of life as continuous struggle. It is perhaps natural and inevitable that we should thus concentrate attention upon the present, but if we lift our eyes so as to clear them from the mists of the present we see that it is far from a hopeless struggle, but rather the necessary discipline from which we emerge triumphant. Those saints whom we see rejoicing about the throne of God, those who go out to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, passed through the struggle of persecution to their triumphant attainment of the Vision. It is our eternal temptation to expect to triumph here; but it is only in a very limited sense that this can be true: our triumph is indeed here, but the enjoyment of it and all that is implied in it is elsewhere. Here even our most complete achievement is conditioned by the limitations of earth: there the limitations are done away and life expands in perfectness.

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So we look eagerly through the door that is opened in heaven as those who are looking into their future home. That is what we all are striving for—presumably. We are consciously selecting out of life precisely those elements, are centering on those interests, which have eternal significance and are imperishable values. As we travel along the Pilgrim Way it is with hearts uplifted and stimulated by the Vision of the end. We advance as seeing Him Who is invisible. We live by hope, knowing that we shall attain no enduring satisfaction until we pass through the gates into the City, and mingle with the throng of worshippers who sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. Therefore our life is always forward-looking and optimistic: because we are sure of the end, we wait for it with patience and endurance, thankful for all the experience of the Way. As the years flow by we do not look back on them with regret as the unrenewable experiences of a vanished youth, but we think of them as the bearers of experiences by which we have profited, and of goods which we have safely garnered, waiting the time when their stored values can be fully realised.

Over all the saints whom the Church has seen rejoicing in the heavenly life, rises the form of Mary, Mother of God. S. John's vision of the "great sign in heaven" in its primary meaning has, no doubt, reference to the Church itself; but the form of its symbolism would be impossible if there were not a secondary reference to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is the thought of her and of her office as Mother of the Redeemer that has determined the form of the vision. The details are too clear to permit of doubt, and such has been the constant mind of Catholic interpreters.

And how else than as Queen of the heavenly host should we expect her to be represented? What does the Church teaching as to sanctity imply?

It implies the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision. The normal Christian life begins in the sacramental act by which the regenerate child is made one with God, being made a partaker of the divine nature, and develops through sacramental experience and constant response to the will of God to that spiritual capacity which is the medium of the Beatific Vision and which we call sanctity or purity. "The pure in heart shall see God."

But the teaching of the Church also implies that there is a marvellous diversity in the sanctity of the members of the Body of Christ. Each saint retains his personal characteristics, and his sanctity is not the refashioning of his character in a common mould but the perfecting of his character on its own lines. We sometimes hear it said that the Christian conception of heaven is monotonous, but that is very far from being the fact. It is only those conceptions of heaven which have excluded the communion of saints, and have thought of heaven as the solitary communion of the soul with God; which have in other words, excluded the notion of human society from heaven, which have

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appeared monotonous. As we read any series of the lives of the saints, and realise that it is these men and women and multitudes of others like them, that make up the society of heaven, we get rid of any other notion than that of endless diversity. And thus studying individual saints we come to understand that not only is the sanctity of them diverse in experience but different in degree. All men have not the same capacity for sanctity, we infer; all cannot develop to the same level of attainment. We may perhaps say that while all partake of God, all do not reflect God in the same way or in the same degree.

But if there be a hierarchy of saints it is impossible that we should think of any other at its head than Blessed Mary. Whatsoever diversity there may be in the attainments of the saints, there is one saint who is pre-eminent in all things, who,—because in her case there has never been any moment in which she was separate from God, when the bond of union was so much as strained,—is the completest embodiment of the grace of God. That is, I think, essentially what is meant by the Coronation of our Lady,—that her supremacy in sanctity makes her the head of the hierarchy of saints, that in her the possibilities of the life of union have been developed to the highest degree through her unstained purity and unfailing response to the divine will.

It is of the last importance, if the Catholic conceptions are to be influential in our lives, that we should gain such a hold on the life of heaven, the life that the saints, with Saint Mary at their head, are leading to-day, as shall make it a present reality to us, not a picture in some sort of dreamland. Our lives are shaped by their ideals; and although we may never attain to our ideals here, yet we shall never attain them anywhere unless we shape them here. Heaven must be grasped as the issue of a certain sort of life, as the necessary consequence of the application of Christian principles to daily living. It is wholly bad to conceive it as a vague future into which we shall be ushered at death, if only we are “good”; it must be understood as a state we win to by the use of the means placed at our disposal for the purpose. Those attain to heaven in the future who are interested in heaven in the present.

And a study of the means is wholly possible for us because we have at hand in great detail the lives of those whom the Church, by raising them to her altars, has guaranteed to us as having achieved sanctity and been admitted to the Beatific Vision. They achieved sanctity here—that is, in the past. They achieved it under an infinite variety of circumstances,—that is the encouragement. They now enjoy the fruits of it in the world of heaven,—that is the promise.

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And nowhere can we better turn for the purpose of our study than to the life of Blessed Mary. There is the consummate flower of sainthood; and therefore it is best there that we can study its meaning. And for two principal reasons can we best study it there. In the first place because of its completeness: nowhere else are all the elements of sanctity so well developed. And in the second place because of the riches of the material for understanding Blessed Mary that is placed at our disposal by the labour of many generations of saints and doctors. All that devout meditation can do to understand the sanctity of Blessed Mary has been done.

Our limit is necessarily reduced, our selection partial and our accomplishment fragmentary. We cannot however miss our way if we follow in the steps of Holy Revelation in making love the central quality. S. Mary's greatness is ultimately the greatness of her love. It began as a love of the will of God. She appears as utterly selfless, as having devoted herself to the will of God as He shall manifest that will. And therefore when the time comes she makes the great sacrifice that is asked of her without hesitation and without effort: "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And all her life henceforth is loving response to what is unfolded as the content of the accepted revelation. That is a noteworthy thing that I fancy is often missed. It is not uncommon for one to accept a vocation as a whole, and then subsequently, as it unfolds, shrink from this or that detail of it. But in the case of S. Mary the acceptance of the vocation meant the acceptance of *God*, and there was no holding back from the result of that.

That must be our guide in the pursuit of the heavenly life: we must understand that we are not called to accept this or that belief or practice, but are called to accept God—God speaking to us through the revelation He has entrusted to His Catholic Church. We do not, when we make our act of acceptance, know all or very much of what God is going to mean; but whatever God turns out to mean in experience, there can be no holding back. The note of a true acceptance of vocation is precisely this limitless surrender, a surrender without reservation. S. Mary could by no means understand what was to be asked of her: she only knew it was God Who asked it. She could not foresee the years of the ministry when her Son would not have where to lay His head, followed by the anxiety of Holy Week and the watch by the Cross on Good Friday; but as these things came she could understand them as involved in her vocation, in her acceptance of God.

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And cannot we get the same attitude toward life? In the acceptance of the Christian Religion what we have accepted is God. We have acknowledged the supremacy of a will outside ourselves. We say, "we are not our own, we are bought with a price," the price of the Precious Blood. But if our acceptance is a reality and not a theory it will turn out to involve much more than we imagined at the first. The frequent and pathetic failures of those who have made profession of Christianity is largely accounted for by this,—that the demands of the Christian Religion on life turn out to be more searching and far-reaching than was supposed would be the case. Religion turns out to be not one interest to be adjusted to the other interests of life, but to be a demand that all life and action shall be controlled by supernatural motive. Those who would willingly give a part, find it impossible to surrender the whole. The world is full of Young Rulers who are willing "to contribute liberally to the support of religion," but shrink from the demand that they "sell all." "I seek not yours, but you," S. Paul writes to the Corinthians; and that is also the seeking of God—"Not yours but you." And because the limit of our willingness is reached in contribution and does not extend to sacrifice, we fail.

But Blessed Mary did not fail because there was no limit to her willingness to sacrifice. Her will to sacrifice had the same limitless quality as her love; and because of the limitless quality of her self-giving her growth in the life of union was unlimited, or limited only by the limitations of creaturehood. When therefore we think of her to-day as Queen of Saints we are not thinking of an arbitrarily conferred position; we are thinking of a position which comes to her because she is what she is. She through the unstinting sacrifice of her love came into more intimate relations with God than is possible for any other, and through that relation came to know more of the mind of God than any other. The power of her intercession is the power of her understanding, of her sympathy with the thoughts of God. When we come to her with our request for her intercession we feel that we are sure of her sympathy and her understanding. Her experience of human life, we think, was not very wide: can she whose life was passed under such narrow conditions understand the complex needs of the modern man or woman? It is true that her actual experience of human life was not very wide; but her experience of God is very wide indeed, and she is able to understand our experience better than we can understand it ourselves because of her understanding of God's mind and will. It is seeing life through God's eyes that reveals the truth about it.

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Hence the blunder and the tragedy of those who seek to know life by experience, when they mean experience gained by participation in life's evil as well as in its good. They succeed in soiling life rather than in understanding it; for participation in evil effectually prevents our understandings of good. It is on the face of things that the farther a man goes into sin, the less is righteousness intelligible to him. Our Lord's rule "He that doeth the will shall know of the doctrine" is not an arbitrary maxim, but embodies the deepest psychological truth. There is but one path to full understanding, and that is the path of sympathy. And therefore are we sure of our Lady's understanding and come to her unhesitatingly for the help of her intercession. She understands our case because she sees it revealed in the mind of her Son.

It cannot be questioned that much of the weakness of religion to-day is due to the fact that Christian ideals make but faint appeal. By many they are frankly repudiated as impossible of attainment in a world such as this, and as weakening to human character so far as they are attained. Christians, of course, are unable to take this point of view, and, therefore, they treat the ideals with respect, but continue to govern their lives by motives which are not harmonious with them. It is tacitly assumed on all sides that a consistent pursuit of Christians ideals will assure failure in social or business life. This, of course, is tantamount to a confession that social and business life are unchristian, and raises the same sort of grave questions as to the duty of a Christian as were raised in the early days of the Church under the heathen empire. With that, however, we may not concern ourselves now. We are merely concerned to note and to emphasise the fact that, whatever may be true of society or business, our religion is lamentably ineffective because of its failure to emphasise the ideals of sanctity and to present those ideals as the ideals of *all* Christian life, not as the ideals of a select few. While religious teachers asquiesce in the present set of compromises as an adequate expression of Christian character, we may expect a decline in the Church as a spiritual force, whatever may be true of it as a social force.

If Christian ideals are to resume their appeal to the membership of the Church as a whole it is requisite that they be studied by the clergy and intelligently presented. But little is to be hoped in this direction so long as our theological training ignores religion and concentrates its attention on something that it takes for scholarship. The raw material that is sent by our parishes to the seminaries to be educated for Holy Orders is commonly turned out of the seminary with less religion that it entered. The outlook for the presentation of Christian ideals is not hopeful. We seem destined to drift on indefinitely in our habitual compromises.

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All the more is it necessary that we should lift our eyes to the heavens where humility and meekness, where sacrifice and obdience, are, in the person of Blessed Mary, crowned as the most perfect expression of sanctity, as the qualities that raise man nearest God. And what consoles us in the present depressing circumstances of the Church is that we are permitted to look through S. John's eyes into the world of heaven, and there see "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands." Somehow, we feel, under whatever distressing and discouraging circumstances, the work of God in the regeneration of souls goes on. No doubt it is a work that is largely hidden from our eyes, from those eyes which are blinded to the reality of spiritual things. Humility and meekness are the qualities of a hidden life; they do not flaunt themselves before men's eyes. But in their silence and obscurity great souls are growing up, growing to the spiritual status of the saints of God. In our estimate of values we shall do well to lay to heart the utterances of WISDOM: "Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labours. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they had looked for. And they repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit shall say among themselves, This is he, whom we had sometime in derision, and a proverb of reproach: we fools accounted his life madness, and his end without honour: how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints! Verily we went astray from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness shined not unto us, and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us."

When we have attained to the point of view as to life's value which is expressed in the ideal of sanctity then we shall know how to estimate at their true worth the constant criticisms which are directed against those ideals and those who seek them. The saints, we are told, were no doubt estimable men and women, but they were weak, and for the purpose of the world's work, useless. But is this true, to keep to a specific example, of the Blessed Virgin Mary? What is there about her life that suggests weakness? And what can be the meaning of calling such a life useless to the world? Take but one aspect of it. It has for centuries furnished an ideal of womanhood. It is contended that the women who have taken Blessed Mary for their ideal have shown themselves weak and useless?—that those women are stronger in character and of more value to the world who have thrown over the ideals of sanctity and built their lives upon the social ideals prevalent at present? I do not care to attempt any characterisation of the feminine ideal which is commended to us at present; it is sufficient to say that it is difficult to understand how it can be considered socially valuable; still less how it can be considered an advance on the character qualities which distinguish the Christian ideal of sanctity.

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In the midst of the present confusion of values it is for us of vast significance that we have in this matter the mind of Christ. There need be no confusion in our minds. What Christ commended has proved to be practical of accomplishment, the evidence of which is the great multitude which no man can number who to-day sing about the throne of God and of the Lamb. What God approves is evidenced by the Coronation of the Blessed Mother over all the multitudes of the saints of God. Blessed Mary is the embodied thought of God for humanity, the realised ideal of a human life. He that is mighty hath magnified her, till she shines resplendent in spiritual qualities over all the hosts of the elect.

But though so highly exalted she is not thereby removed to an inaccessible distance. She who is privileged to bear the incredible title, MOTHER OF GOD is our Mother as well. Upon the Cross our Lord said to us in the person of His beloved Disciple, "Behold thy Mother"; and it is a mother's love that we find flowing to us from the heart of Mary. Have we been cold to her, and inappreciative of her love? Have we felt that we have no need of her in the conduct of our lives? If so, what we have been doing is to isolate ourselves from the divinely provided fount of human sympathy which ever flows from our star-crowned Mother. Is life so rich in sources of help and sympathy and love that we can afford to over-pass the eagerness of God's saints to help us, the willingness of the very Mother of God to intercede? Is not the life that shuts out from itself the society of heaven pitifully impoverished?

Too many of us are like the man who owned the field wherein was the buried treasure. Limitless aid is at our disposal, but on condition that we want it and will seek it. Let us try to understand what it is to have at our disposal the love and sympathy of the saints of God,—that they are not remote inhabitants of a distant sphere whose present interests have led to forgetfulness of what they once were, whose present joy is so intense as to make them self-centred, but that their very attainment of perfection implies the perfection of their love and the completeness of their sympathy. The perfection of God's saints and their attainment of the end of their course in the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision, has but made them more sensitive of our needs and more eager to help.

The spiritual wisdom and power of the Mother of God is at our disposal to-day. To the feebleness of our prayers may be added the spiritual wisdom and strength of her intercession. He Whose will it is that we should pray for one another, wills too that the prayers of His Blessed Mother should be at the disposal of all who call upon her. Let us take the fact of the intercession of the Queen of Saints seriously as a source of power ever open to us.

Thou who art God's Mother and also ours, thou who lookst constantly into the Face of the Son, thou who art the fullest manifestation of the love of the Blessed Trinity, thou Mary, our Mother, pray for us now and in the hour of our death.

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All hail, O Virgin crowned with stars
and moon under thy feet,
Obtain us pardon of our sins
of Christ, our Saviour sweet;
For though thou art Mother of any God,
yet thy humility
Disdaineth not this simple wretch
that flies for help to thee.
Thou knowest thou art more dear to me
than any can express,
And that I do congratulate
With joy thy happiness.
Thou who art the Queen of Heaven and Earth
thy helping hand me lend,
That I may love and praise my God
and have a happy end.
And though my sins me terrify,
yet hoping still in thee,
I find my soul refreshed much
when to thee I do flee;
For thou most willingly to God
petitions dost present,
And dost obtain much grace for us
in this our banishment.
The honour and the glorious praise
by all be given to thee,
Which Jesus thy beloved Son,
ordained eternally;
For thee whom he exalts in heaven
above the angels all,
And whom we find a Patroness
when unto thee we call.
O Mater Dei, memento mei. Amen.

Dame Gertrude More, O.S.B.
Ob. 1633.