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A MANUAL FOR HIGH SCHOOL
AND COLLEGE STUDENTS AND -
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S AND - -
ADULT DISCUSSION GROUPS -

By REV. RUDOLPH G. BANDAS

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BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

A Discussion Club Manual for
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by

Rev. Rudolph G. Bandas

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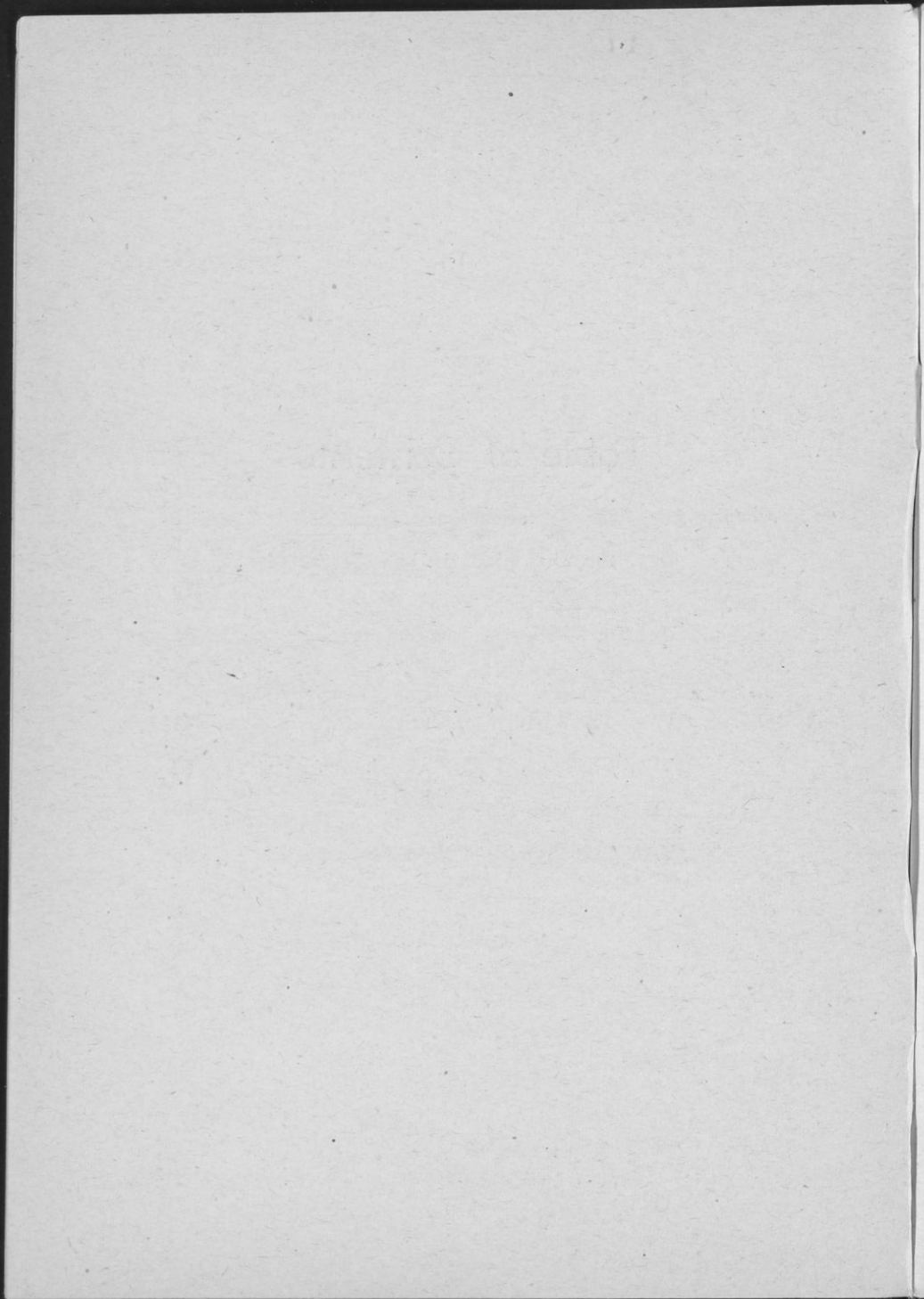
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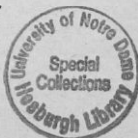


Chapter I

The Visitation

The place of the Visitation—the exact abode of Zachary and Elizabeth—cannot be determined with certainty. Some conjecture that the “city of Juda” to which Mary betook herself is the city of Juttah mentioned in Exodus 15:55. Others believe that it was Hebron. The Franciscans, who are the custodians of the Holy Land, locate the spot in a picturesque mountain region, about five miles southwest from Jerusalem; there they have built a church and a hospice. The place is called by the Arabs 'Ain Karim, and by the Christians St. John's in the Mountains. The tradition which places in the present village of 'Ain Karim the house of Zachary and the composing of the *Magnificat*, goes back to a time long before the Crusade.

The purpose of Mary's haste to visit Elizabeth was her eagerness to felicitate her relative on the blessing of an offspring granted to her, and to be of use to her in her confinement. The historian Josephus tells us that it took normally three days to travel from Galilee to Jerusalem, and hence Mary's journey lasted not less than three or four days. She made the journey on foot or seated on a she ass, the popular riding animal of Palestine in ancient times. Mary probably made the journey alone, for among the Jews of that period women enjoyed much greater liberty than among other Oriental people; or perhaps she set out in the company of a servant or in a group of Galileans going



to Jerusalem. Some Scripturists are of the opinion that, since the Pasch was near, Joseph accompanied Mary to Jerusalem, and that Mary proceeded thence alone to the home of Zachary and Elizabeth. After traversing the plain of Esdraelon, she passed over the mountains of Samaria and a considerable part of Judea, before reaching Zachary's home. It is quite certain that St. Joseph was not present at the interview, for had he heard the interchange of salutations, he would have known that his virgin spouse was the Mother of God, and he consequently would not have been troubled at the evidence of her motherhood. Zachary (who was still mute) likewise does not appear on the scene.

When Elizabeth had received Mary's salutation, the infant in her womb "leaped for joy" (Luke 1:41-44). On the basis of this statement of St. Luke the Fathers and Scriptural scholars hold that John had, at least transitorily, the use of his reason in his mother's womb. For "joy" presupposes a knowledge of the object causing the joy. Hence John's leaping in his mother's womb was not one of those natural movements sometimes occurring during pregnancy; it was a supernatural, conscious and rational movement resulting from the joy which the future Precursor, suddenly gifted with reason, experienced at finding himself in presence of the Incarnate Word. John in the womb salutes Christ in the womb, believes in Him and adores Him. John exults, not because of his mother's joy but because of his own joy, and indicates to his mother the presence of God and of the Mother of God. The Church makes these sentiments her own in the hymn of the office of the feast of the nativity of St.

John the Baptist, especially in the phrase: "Thou, in thy mother's womb all darkly cradled, knowest thy Monarch, biding in His chamber."

On the basis of Luke 1:15, "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb," the Fathers commonly teach that John, while still in his mother's womb, was not only endowed with the prophetic office but was at the same time cleansed from original sin. For fullness of the Holy Ghost is not compatible with slavery to Satan and sin. The Church celebrates the nativity of John as holy. If John was holy at his birth, he was undoubtedly sanctified when at the first presence of the Word he exulted with joy, indicated His presence and adored Him.

Elizabeth's mind was strengthened and elevated by an impulse of the Holy Spirit, with the aid of which she recognized the Divine maternity of Mary and uttered prophetic declarations concerning her. So vehement was the impulse of the Holy Ghost that Elizabeth cried out with a loud voice the inspired truth which the Spirit placed in her mouth: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Luke 1:42). In the first part of her exclamation—"blessed art thou among women"—Elizabeth repeated the words of Gabriel at the Annunciation; as mother of Messiah, Mary is most blessed among women. The phrase, "blessed is the fruit of thy womb," was a common form of benediction among Hebrews. In Deuteronomy 28:4, it is placed among the blessings that should follow a faithful observance of the Law. Of itself it could be applied to any pregnant woman. But it is certain that it was never predicated of any

woman in the sense that the inspired Elizabeth applied it to Mary. By the power of the Holy Ghost Elizabeth became appraised of the inexpressible dignity of the Mother of God—the Mother of Him Who was to be the source of all blessings and gifts to us.

Let us note here on what authority rests that prayer which is never out of the mouths of the Church's children—the Hail Mary. The words "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee, blessed art thou among women," were spoken by the Angel Gabriel, the messenger of God. The words, "blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb," were pronounced by Elizabeth under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. If Catholics err in this prayer, they err with the Angel Gabriel and with St. Elizabeth speaking under the influence of the Holy Ghost. For it is clear that the words either of the Angel Gabriel or of Elizabeth can not be reconciled with the attitude of those who deny veneration to Mary. The following is a brief paraphrase of the Hail Mary:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. Hail Mary; | 1. Peace or joy to thee;
Be well; I congratulate thee and salute thee; |
| 2. Full of grace; | 2. Mary was always free from all sin; she had the fulness of grace required by her dignity as Mother of God; during her whole lifetime she grew in grace. |

3. The Lord is with thee;
4. Blessed art thou among women;
5. And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
6. Holy Mary;
7. Mother of God;
8. Pray for us sinners;
3. The Lord preserved thee from sin and enriched thee with grace, He loves and favors thee in a special way;
4. Mary is the most fortunate among women because she was chosen before all to be the Mother of the Messiah;
5. He, Whom she conceived in her womb, was to be the source of all blessings and gifts to us.
6. Being "full of grace," Mary is truly holy;
7. Since her Son is God-Man, Mary is the Mother of God;
8. As Mother of the Head of the Human race, she is also the Mother of each of us, she is interested in us, and intercedes for us in our struggle against sin;

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 9. Now; | 9. In our present struggles against the world, the flesh and the devil; |
| 10. And at the hour of our death | 10. And especially at that critical moment on which our eternal salvation will depend. |

Mary, likewise, filled with the Holy Spirit, was transformed into a poet, and answered Elizabeth's praise by chanting the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). Several women of the Old Testament had celebrated great events in beautiful canticles; Miriam, the sister of Moses, Debora, Anna, the mother of Samuel, and Judith praised God in this way. The principal thought of the *Magnificat* is appreciative gratitude to God for the graces which He poured out so abundantly upon the Virgin Mother, upon the lowly and humble in general, and upon Israel His chosen people. Let us join the Blessed Virgin in this magnificent hymn and try to understand the meaning of each phrase:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 46. My soul doth magnify the Lord. | 46. I praise and extol God with all the powers of my being. |
| 47. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour | 47. My soul exults greatly in God my Saviour and the Author of all my felicity. |
| 48. Because he hath regarded the humility | 48. For God has looked favorably upon my |

of his handmaid; for
 behold from hence-
 forth all generations
 shall call me bless-
 ed;

lowliness and elevat-
 ed me to be the Moth-
 er of God; from now on
 men of all successive
 generations until the
 end of the world
 shall proclaim me
 blessed and honor
 me.

49. Because he that is
 mighty hath done
 great things to me;
 and holy is His
 name;

49. God, by a miracle of
 His Omnipotence,
 has made me a moth-
 er of His Son and
 at the same time
 preserved my virgin-
 ity; He is holiness
 itself and all His
 works are holy and
 praiseworthy.

50. And His mercy is
 from generation in-
 to generations to
 them that fear Him,

50. In His mercy He at
 all times confers
 blessings upon those
 who serve and wor-
 ship Him, just as He
 has now through His
 humble handmaid
 conferred upon men
 the greatest of all
 blessings.

51. He hath shewed
 might in His arm;
 he hath scattered the

51. God has worked
 wonders by His di-
 vine power (History

- proud in the conceit
of their heart.
- of the Jews), He has scattered and crushed the conceited and the arrogant (the ten plagues in Egypt; the destruction of Pharaoh and the Egyptians in the Red Sea, etc.).
52. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble;
52. He has cast down princes and tyrants from their thrones (kings of Canaan, Saul, Vasthi, Aman), and replaced them by the lowly (Israelites, David, Esther, Mardocheaus).
53. He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich he hath sent empty away.
53. He filled the needy (Israelites in Canaan) with riches; the rich (Canaanites) He reduced to want.
54. He hath received Israel his servants, being mindful of his mercy.
54. And even now He has favored His own chosen and devoted people by sending a Saviour of the Jewish race Who is incarnate in my womb.
55. As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham
55. To show that He was mindful of the mercy

and to his seed forever.

which—as He told our patriarchs—He promised Abraham would be shown to his spiritual posterity and to all the believers (Romans 4:11-12).

The Birth of St. John the Baptist and the Benedictus

The birth of John the Baptist is narrated in the following passage of St. Luke's Gospel:

Now Elizabeth's full time of being delivered was come, and she brought forth a son. And her neighbours and kinsfolks heard that the Lord had shewed his great mercy towards her, and they congratulated with her. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they called him by his father's name Zachary. And his mother answering, said: Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said to her: There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And demanding a writing table, he wrote, saying: John is his name. And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened, and his tongue loosed and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came upon all their neighbours; and all these things were noised abroad over all the hill country of Judea. And all they that had heard them laid them up in their heart, saying: What an one, think ye, shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him." (Lk. 1:57-66).

After the circumcision Zachary, filled with the Holy Spirit, uttered a sublime prophecy which has

come to be known as the Benedictus (Luke 1:68-79). The theme of the Benedictus is the coming of the promised Messiah (68-75), the part which John the Baptist is to play in the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (76-77), and the blessings which the reign of the Messiah will bring (78-79). Doctrinally, the canticle teaches that the Incarnation is a work of mercy and the fulfilment of God's promises; its purpose is to liberate mankind from the slavery of sin, dispel spiritual darkness, bring sanctification, and lead men to eternal happiness. We shall quote the text of this canticle and give a paraphrase of each verse.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 68. Blessed by the Lord God of Israel; because He hath visited and wrought the redemption of His people. | 68. May Jahve, the true God Whom Israel alone worships, be praised; for He has come to the help of His people and all nations, and wrought their deliverance from the slavery of Satan and of sin. |
| 69. And hath raised up an horn of salvation to us, in the house of David his servant. | 69. For He has raised up for us a most powerful Saviour Who through His mother Mary is a descendant of the family of David, God's faithful servant. |
| 70. As he spoke by the mouth of his holy | 70. The Saviour is a fulfilment of the pro- |

prophets, who are
from the beginning.

mises which God
made by the lips of
His holy ones, that
is, by the prophets
of olden times.

71. Salvation from our
enemies, and from
the hand of all that
hate us.

71. He will free us from
our spiritual enem-
ies (the world and
the devil) and from
all those who seek
the ruin of our souls.

72. To perform mercy
to our fathers, and
to remember his holy
testament.

72. He will bring the
grace of the Redemp-
tion to the patri-
archs themselves and
to their posterity ac-
cording to the pro-
mise made to Abra-
ham that the Messias
would descend from
his family.

73. The oath, which he
swore to Abraham
our father, that he
would grant to us.

73. To show that He was
mindful of the in-
violable covenant
which he made to
Abraham, that He
would grant this
blessing to us and to
all nations.

74. That being delivered
from the hand of
our enemies, we may

74. That being freed
from our spiritual
enemies by the di-

serve him without
fear.

vine grace of the Re-
deemer we may
henceforth serve God
in peace without
fear.

75. In holiness and jus-
tice before him, all
our days.

75. Leading a life of
true sanctification
and holiness, all the
day of our life.

76. And thou, child,
shalt be called the
prophet of the High-
est; for thou shalt
go before the face of
the Lord to prepare
his ways.

76. And thou little child,
John, shalt be and
shalt be acknowl-
edged as God's am-
bassador to prepare
before the Lord His
ways by announcing
His advent, preach-
ing penance, and
preparing the souls
of men for the com-
ing of the Saviour.

77. To give knowledge
of salvation to his
people, unto the re-
mission of their sins.

77. That you may teach
the people of Israel
the way of obtaining
salvation so that
they may attain the
remission of their
sins.

78. Because of the lov-
ing kindness of our
God, wherewith the

78. This salvation has
come to us not be-
cause of our own

Orient from on high
hath visited us.

merits but solely because of the mercy and love of God, and was brought to us from heaven by the "Rising Sun," that is, the Incarnate Son of God.

79. To enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; to direct our feet into the way of peace.

79. The "Rising Sun" visited us, that by His doctrine and grace He might enlighten those who are surrounded by the thick cloud of ignorance and sins, and that by the aid of this light we may all discern and follow the true way which leads to peace and eternal salvation.

DISCUSSION AIDS (12)

1. Where did the Visitation take place? On your map in the Bible trace the Blessed Virgin's journey from Nazareth to the home of Zachary and Elizabeth.
2. What was the purpose of Mary's visit to Elizabeth?
3. Did Joseph accompany her?
4. How did Mary make the journey?
5. What is meant by the statement that John "leaped for joy" in his mother's womb?

BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

6. When was John cleansed from original sin?
7. What truths did Elizabeth profess under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? What mystery of the Rosary recalls this event?
8. What was the origin of the *Hail Mary*? Give a brief explanation of this prayer.
9. Where and by whom was the *Magnificat* first uttered? Give a brief explanation of this canticle. Where is it used in the Liturgy?
10. By whom was the *Benedictus* first uttered? Give a brief explanation of it.
11. Why is the *Benedictus* recited at burial services?
12. In your Missal read the proper parts of the Mass for the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 24) and for the Feast of the Visitation (July 2).
13. What is a Litany? How many officially approved Litanies are there? In what way do the Litanies refer to the principal events of Our Lord's Life?

Religious Practices

1. I will visit or write to those who are ill or in need of help.
2. Like Zachary and Elizabeth in naming their child, I will not permit others to dissuade me from obedience to the divine will.
3. I will recite devoutly the *Magnificat* at Vespers and the *Benedictus* at burial services.

Chapter II

The Birth of Christ and The Sacred Infancy

The Enrollment

The Prophets of old predicted that Christ would be born at Bethlehem: "And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda; out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel" (Micheas 5:2). And yet, when the birth of the Son of God was only a few days distant, Mary and Joseph were at Nazareth, which is situated almost eighty miles north of Bethlehem. The ancient prophecy, however, was not to remain void and unfulfilled. Through a providential concurrence of events the eternal decree of God would take infallible effect. From imperial Rome came forth the edict that the whole world was to be enrolled: "And it came to pass that in these days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria" (Luke 2:1-2). This enrollment was a registration in the official documents of the name, age, occupation, wealth and children of residents within the Roman empire. Such statistics were collected in order to determine the *per capita* tax and the potential strength of the army.

The Roman census was taken in the place of residence, and in case of outlying hamlets, in the town on which that hamlet depended. The Jews, however, in conformity with ancient practices

which the Romans still respected, registered in their ancestral towns according to their tribes and the "house of their fathers." This enabled the Jews to keep up their genealogies and maintain the property as far as possible within the tribe. Now, since Joseph was of the house and family of David, he was obliged to register in David's city, namely, Bethlehem. Knowing from the Scriptures that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem, Mary saw in the decree the providential hand of God; she accomplished the journey without any discomfort, being strengthened by Him Whom she bore.

"No Room for Them at the Inn"

When Joseph and Mary arrived at Bethlehem they found the city crowded with people who had also come to register. In the inn every available place was occupied. This "inn" was quite distinct from the hostelry to which the Good Samaritan conducted the wounded man, and which presupposes a host and hospitality. It resembled a modern kahn or caravanserai; it merely gave shelter; the travelers provided their own food. How, it may be asked, was a caravanserai constructed? A raised platform was built around an open court. On this leewan covered alcoves opening into the court were erected. A pilgrim might take possession of any empty recess. Accommodations for the animals were provided either in the court or in adjoining stables. Natural and artificial caves were frequently utilized to provide shelter for the beasts. A tradition, referred to by St. Justin Martyr and Origen, states that our Lord was born in a cave which served as a stable. The manger in which Christ the Infant was laid, was a trough contain-

ing food for the animals. The ox and the ass in Christian representations of the Nativity were suggested by the word "manger" and by Isaias 1:3; "The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib." They are also mentioned by Origen and by the apocryphal gospel of Matthew.

Near Bethlehem, where Jacob and David once fed their flocks, the shepherds were keeping their night watches. Each watch lasted three hours, and at the beginning of each watch a different group of shepherds went on duty. These nocturnal vigils were necessary in order to protect the flocks against wild beasts and robbers, whose attacks were generally made under cover of darkness. And while the shepherds were thus occupied an angel of the Lord—probably Gabriel—stood by them, announcing that this day is born He Who is the Saviour, the Anointed One—God. And forthwith the angel was joined by a celestial army praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men who are now the object of God's good will, of His will to save all mankind.

The Circumcision

The circumcision ("cut," "incision in the flesh") was a rite by which the child was admitted into the Jewish Synagogue, became heir to its blessings and privileges, and fell under the yoke of the Mosaic Law. It was instituted by God as a sign of the covenant between Himself and Abraham (Genesis, 17). Whether circumcision was practised in the world prior to Abraham is not certain. Some ancient authors, as Herodotus, affirm that circumcision was of Egyptian origin and that it was adopted from the Egyptians by the surrounding nations, in-

cluding the Syrians and Jews. Others maintain with equal probability that the Egyptians adopted the practice of circumcision from Moses. The monuments of antiquity have so far yielded no conclusive proof that circumcision was practiced anywhere prior to the Biblical date at which God made it "a sign of the covenant" between Himself and Abraham.

The ceremony of circumcision was not reserved to the Jewish priests. Every male Israelite was authorized to perform it. Usually the child's father himself—sometimes the mother—performed the rite. Thus we know that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob yielded their paternal right to no one else. Later, the "Mohel," one skilled in the operation, usually a surgeon, performed it. To St. Joseph, then, the head of the Holy Family, very likely fell the honor of marking on the Child's body the traditional sign of the people of God. According to the Talmud, as he made the incision, the father of the child said: "Blessed be Jehovah, the Lord! He has sanctified His beloved in his mother's womb and has written His law in our flesh. He marks His sons with the sign of the covenant, to give them the blessings of Abraham, our father." Those present responded in the words of the Psalmist: "May he live, whom Thou hast taken for Thy child."

Following the Jewish custom, Jesus was circumcised, not in the Temple or in the synagogue—although painters sometimes so represent it—but in the stable itself, or rather in some private house where the Holy Family had found a rather late hospitality (Matt. 2:11).

According to the Mosaic Law, the circumcision

was to take place early in the morning on the eighth day after birth: "An infant of eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations; he that is born in the house, as well as the bought servant shall be circumcised, and whosoever is not of your stock. And my covenant shall be in your flesh for a perpetual covenant" (Genesis 17:12,13). Since Christ was "born under the law" and came to fulfill the law, He, too, was circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:21; Galatians 4:4).

The ceremony was performed in the presence of ten witnesses who attested the child's official enrollment among the theocratic people. The one who held the child during the ceremony was called "sandek." In the popular belief Elias—the zealous champion of this rite and of the Mosaic Law—held his place invisibly among the witnesses; a special seat was prepared for him, and the child was placed upon it for a moment to receive the blessing of the great servant of God.

According to an ancient custom, on the day of circumcision the new born infant received a name, which was usually chosen by the father. This was done to commemorate the change of the patriarch's name from Abram to Abraham, when God made the covenant with him and made circumcision the sign of it (Genesis 17:5). The incident connected with the naming of the Precursor, St. John the Baptist (Luke 1:59), presupposes that among the Jews of that time as, for that matter, among most peoples, certain names passed from father to son or from grandfather to grandson and became settled in the family, thus keeping alive the memory of the ancestors.

The Heavenly Father exercised His paternal prerogative in regard to our Lord by proclaiming that His Son, born of Mary, should be called Jesus or "Saviour": "His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb" (Luke 2:21). From the very beginning another name was added to that of Jesus, in order to designate more fully the Saviour of mankind—namely, Christ, or the Anointed One. The Old Testament gave the title of "anointed" to kings, priests and prophets, because all were consecrated by a symbolic unction. But this title belongs in a special manner to the Redeemer. For in Him human nature—through the hypostatic union—was to receive a perfect anointing through contact with the Divinity. Custom has made these two names inseparable. The Apostle Paul seems especially to have contributed to make them pass into the language of the primitive Church.

By circumcision the child was directly aggregated to the people of God and indirectly sanctified in so far as God—by occasion of this rite and in virtue of His promise and of Christ's merits—conferred grace on the infant. According to the teaching of St. Thomas,¹ just as Baptism remits original sin and actual sin committed before its reception, so circumcision remitted both—not, however, by its own intrinsic efficacy but because of the faith of the recipient, or in the case of infants, the faith of the parents. Adults, however, did not receive the remission of all the temporal punishment due to sin as they do now in Baptism, since the graces of Baptism are far more abundant. Infants who lived prior to the institution of circumcision, infants who

died before being circumcised, and females even after the institution of circumcision, were saved by some sign expressive of faith, as, for example, the parents' prayer.

Christ was not bound by the law of circumcision, since He was conceived by the Holy Ghost. He was free from original sin and infinitely holy. He submitted to circumcision for the following reasons: to honor the Mosaic Law by complying with its precepts; to give us an example of obedience and humility; to prove Himself our Saviour by thus early shedding His blood for our salvation; to show that He was of the family of Abraham and so give no pretext to the Jews for not receiving Him.

The Purification and Presentation

In her visit to the Temple—forty days after our Lord's birth—the Blessed Virgin Mary fulfilled two obligations: first, that of her Purification; second, that of consecrating her first-born to the Lord.

1. The days of Purification were forty from the date of the birth of a son, eighty from the date of a birth of a daughter. On the fortieth or on the eightieth day the Jewish mother presented herself at the Temple for the removal of the legal impurity which she had contracted. This journey could be postponed for a sufficient reason—if, for example, the mother was to go shortly to the Holy City for one of the Jewish festivals. If she lived too far from Jerusalem, she could be replaced by a proxy, provided that the sacrifice was offered in her own name. Jewish mothers, however, were usually eager to fulfill the law in person.

1, Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 70.

According to some authors, the ceremony of Purification consisted in sprinkling the woman with lustral water and in the priest's recitation of special prayers over her. The essence of the rite, however, was the offering of two sacrifices: the one, a "sacrifice for sin" or expiatory sacrifice, namely, a turtle-dove or a young pigeon; the other, a holocaust—a yearling lamb. The law made an exception for the poor: If she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtledoves or two pigeons, the one for a burnt offering (holocaust), the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean (Leviticus 12:2-8). The Holy Family came under this legal exception (Luke 2:24). The Lord of heaven and earth and the Creator of all the lambs in Judea was born in conditions so poor that His parents could not afford one little lamb for Him.

Joseph very likely bought the two pigeons or two turtle-doves from a Temple agent, who in the name of the priests sold the various animals intended for the sacrifice, or from one of those avaricious merchants whose cages our Lord overturned later. Without detaching the head from the body, the priest broke the neck of the bird which served as a sin offering and let the blood flow at the foot of the altar; the meat of the bird was reserved for the priests on Temple duty. The bird which served as a holocaust was burned entire on the brazen altar.

The law of Purification did not apply to Our Lady, since she neither conceived nor gave birth to our Lord in the ordinary natural manner. The birth of Christ rather sanctified her. She submitted

to the Law, however, out of obedience and humility. Besides, the Virgin Birth was unknown to others at this time.

2. The ceremony of the Presentation took place on the same day as that of the Purification. The law of the offering of the first-born is contained in several passages of the Old Testament and especially in Exodus 13:2: "Sanctify unto Me all the first-born, whatever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine." The first-born of animals was—according to its nature—offered in sacrifice or redeemed. The first-born of Israel's sons were to constitute the Jewish priesthood; but by a subsequent decree (Numbers 8:16), God substituted the tribe of Levi for the first-born, leaving to the latter only the obligation of being presented in the Temple.

The rite of Presentation was instituted in memory of the first-born of the Hebrews being spared when God struck the first-born of man and beast in the houses of the Egyptians (Exodus 12:12). The rite could not take place until thirty-one days after the birth. Any priest could perform it. The first-born was presented to the priest who pronounced two benedictions over him. The parents then paid to the Temple treasury five shekels—about three dollars—and received back the child. If the child died before the time appointed for the Presentation, the obligation of paying the five shekels ceased. If the new-born could not be brought to Jerusalem and presented in the Temple, the father paid the sacred tax to the priest of the district. If the child was afflicted with any of the deformities that would originally have rendered him

unfit for the priesthood, the obligation of the Presentation ceased.

Christ was not subject to this law because He was not conceived and born in a natural manner. From the viewpoint of His Divine Person He was not the property of the Heavenly Father but rather in all things equal to Him; He was infinitely above all law and bound by no tax. Yet out of obedience Christ submitted to this prescription and offered Himself in behalf of the human race.

Discussion Aids

Set I

1. What was the enrollment? What was its purpose?
2. Where did the Romans register? What exception was made for the Jews?
3. Why did Mary go with Joseph to Bethlehem?
4. What was an "inn" in New Testament times?
5. Where was Our Lord born?
6. What was the purpose of the night watches kept by the shepherds? Into how many watches was the night divided?
7. Why does the priest say three Masses on Christmas? Read the proper parts of these Masses.
8. What is the meaning of the word "Bethlehem"? Show how Bethlehem, Nazareth and the hidden life of Christ are repeated in the Blessed Sacrament.

Set II

1. What was the rite of circumcision?
2. When was this rite instituted?
3. By whom was it performed?
4. What ceremonies accompanied the rite?
5. Where was the rite performed? When?
6. Why did the child receive a name at circumcision?
7. What were the effects of this rite?
8. Was Christ bound by the law of circumcision? Why did He submit to it?
9. Read the proper parts of the Mass for the Feast of the Circumcision.
10. When is the Feast of the Holy Name. Read the proper parts of the Mass. Why is the Gospel the same as for the Feast of the Circumcision?
11. Give five reasons why men should pronounce the Holy Name with reverence.

Set III

1. When did the ceremony of Purification take place? Where?
2. Of what did the ceremony consist? Is the Catholic rite of "churching women" after child-birth to be identified with the Jewish rite of purification? Read the prayers said by the priest in the churching of women.
3. Was our Lady bound by the law of Purification? Why did she submit to it?
4. What was the ceremony of the Presentation? When did it take place?

BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

5. What historical event did the rite commemorate?
6. Of what did the rite consist?
7. Was Christ bound by the law of Presentation?
8. Why did He submit to it? What mystery of the Rosary recalls this event?
9. Read the proper parts of the Mass for the Feast of the Purification.
10. Why are candles blessed on this day. Read the prayers for the "Blessing of the Candles." When should Catholics use candles?

Religious Practices

1. In imitation of the Holy Family I will gladly accept poverty and hardship.
2. I will imitate Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary in observing faithfully and accurately all of God's laws.
3. Like Our Lord I will be content to lead a hidden and humble life, and strive to attain spiritual perfection by doing the ordinary things of life extraordinarily well.

Chapter III

The Magi — The Innocents

St. Matthew represents the "wise men" as coming "from the East" (Matthew 2:1), but tells us no more concerning their native country. Since the term "East" may denote all the vast portion of the earth toward the rising sun, the particular country from which the Magi came will always remain uncertain. Nevertheless, Persia seems to be the most probable place. The very name "Magi" is Persian in origin; in the early representations in Christian art, the headdress of the Magi is Persian. The Magi constituted a highly respected priestly class in Media and Persia, and were engaged in the pursuit of natural science, medicine, astrology and theology. Their double title of priest and scholar obtained considerable influence for them among the different classes of society. In several countries they were members of the king's council. In the course of time their prestige decreased because many of them began to devote themselves to the occult arts and became sorcerers and magicians (Acts 8:9-12; 13:6-11).

A popular tradition dating back to the sixth century conferred royal dignity on the Magi. Certain Biblical texts (Psalm 71:10; 67:32; Isaias 60:3-6), which described in advance the general conversion of the pagans to the religion of Christ, although appropriated in an accommodated sense to the Epiphany by the liturgy, were also applied to the specific event of the adoration of the Magi.

The Evangelist is silent about the regal dignity of the Magi. Had the travelers from the East been kings, St. Matthew, who was eager to point out to the Jews the honors that were paid the Messiah by the distinguished men of other lands, would certainly have told us so. But throughout the narrative he calls them Magi and only Magi. Then, too, since they most probably came from the same country, they could not all have been kings. Finally, early Christian art in the catacombs and basilicas represents them as wealthy Persians but without royal insignia.

Three seems the traditional number of the Magi. But in representations of the adoration of the Magi on early monuments, we find two, four and sometimes even six. The Syrians and Armenians (as well as St. John Chrysostom) reckon twelve Magi. The number three originated in the threefold number of the gifts which they offered. It is not improbable that there were more than three in the retinue. The Orientals of those days, setting out on such a journey, would usually gather into caravans of several persons.

Since the ninth century the three Magi have been designated by proper names—Gaspar, Balthasar and Melchior. It is a mere creation of art, however, to represent one of them as black, the other two as white. Since they probably were of the same country, a difference in color is not to be easily admitted.

One of the most discussed phenomena in connection with the Epiphany is the mysterious star which the Magi beheld from their own native country and which reappeared to them on their journey

from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Some maintain that it was an ordinary fixed star, making its first appearance at that time with successive phases; others contend that it was a comet (Origen); still others think it was a conjunction of planets (Kepler). It seems to be quite certain, however, that it was not one of the planets. In order to be able to direct the Magi, it would have had to be close enough to the earth to guide them onward by its course from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. The heavenly body nearest to the earth is the moon. Now, it would be impossible to guide a man from Jerusalem to Bethlehem by the sensible movements of the moon without taking it out of its orbit. That the star was not one of the ordinary heavenly bodies is clear, finally, from St. Matthew's statement that it "went before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was" (Matthew 2:9). Hence, it was sufficiently close to earth to point out not only Bethlehem but the particular habitation of the Holy Family as distinguishable from other dwellings.

Scripturists usually adopt one or another of the following two explanations: 1) The "star" was a moving meteor which miraculously appeared, disappeared, advanced and stopped without leaving the terrestrial atmosphere. 2) The "star" was created light of special brightness, obeying the bidding of the Creator and moving—after the manner of the cloud of fire that guided the Hebrews in the desert—in such a manner as to be a sure guide to those who followed it.

Scripturists also discuss the cognitive process by which the Magi arrived at the conclusion that the

star indicated the birth of the King. From the Jews of the Captivity and of the Dispersion and from the Greek version of the Scriptures, prophecies concerning the future Messiah penetrated into the distant Orient. The presentiment of a new golden era, over which a glorious personage was to preside, was felt throughout the Roman Empire. Judea was looked upon as the starting point of this new age. In the East men were seeking in the stars—where it was thought one could read everything and find out everything—the premonitory signs of the liberator's coming. The Magi were by their very profession of this number. When the astral phenomenon occurred in their clear sky, they at once regarded it as a special sign. To this sign from without was added a much clearer message from within—a Divine revelation making precise the meaning of the sign and urging the Magi to go and offer their homage to the newborn King.

As to the time of their arrival in Bethlehem, opinions likewise differ. From the fact that Herod caused all male children two years old and under to be massacred some argue that our Lord was about two years old at the time and that, consequently, the Magi arrived about two years after Christ's birth. This conclusion is hardly logical, since the age limit chosen by Herod might have been only a measure of cruel precaution. A rather ancient tradition, accepted by St. Augustine, places it on the thirteenth day after Christ's Nativity (January 6). But this date creates certain difficulties; since the massacre of the Innocents followed shortly upon the visit of the Magi, it would be hard to explain the quiet visit of the Child and Mother to the Temple

on the day of the Purification, forty days after Christ's birth. Hence the more generally accepted date is about two months after the Nativity.

It was customary when visiting an Eastern monarch to offer him costly gifts; the queen of Saba, for example, presented precious gifts to Solomon. The Fathers of the Church give a mystical interpretation of the three gifts presented to the Child by the Magi: gold is said to symbolize Christ's royalty, frankincense His Divinity, and myrrh His humanity. The Gospel is silent as to the use made of these presents. Everything seems to indicate that they were accepted by Christ. The frankincense and myrrh may have been sold and their price, together with the gold, used to support the Holy Family in their flight to Egypt and during their sojourn there. As is evident from our Lord's subsequent life, the gifts did not materially change the condition of the Holy Family, which was one of poverty.

With the return to their country, the Magi pass out of history. A later tradition tells us that they were martyred for the Faith and that their bodies, after having been preserved for some time at Constantinople and Milan, were transferred to the great Dome of Cologne where they are venerated today.

The Innocents

The inquiry of the Magi in Jerusalem—"Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" (Matthew 2:2)—soon caused a stir in the capital of the Jewish kingdom. "And King Herod hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (Matthew 2:3). Herod, who was detested by most of his subjects because of his tyranny and cruelty, trembled

at the mere mention of a possible rival, and feared for his life and throne. The inhabitants were elated at the thought of the proximate realization of Messianic hopes, but they shuddered at the probability of the bloodshed which would ensue as a result of Herod's attempt to save his crown.

In fact, Herod immediately took steps—one public and the other secret—to ascertain the whereabouts of the announced rival. That the new King was born he was assured beyond doubt by the Magi. The exact location of His birthplace remained to be determined. Concealing his anxiety and feigning a religious motive, Herod convoked the great Jewish council, the Sanhedrin, and directly asked the question: "Where Christ should be born?" (Matthew 2:4). The answer, confirmed by the prophecy of Micheas, was clear and immediate: "In Bethlehem of Juda." To carry out successfully the homicidal project which he had conceived, Herod wishes now to obtain from the Magi secretly two additional details: the moment of the appearance of the star to the Magi, a fact which would be indicative to some extent of Christ's age; and secondly, the exact spot in Bethlehem where the Wise Men would find the Child.

The Magi thereupon set out joyously upon their journey. Having found our Lord and His Mother, they adored the Child as God and offered Him their gifts. They apparently remained only a short time in Bethlehem. They were no doubt eager to bring back to Herod the information which he desired. But God thwarted the schemes of the bloodthirsty tyrant. In a supernatural dream He enjoined the Wise Men to take a different route for

their return journey. God did more than this. The very night of the Magi's departure from Bethlehem, an angel appeared in a dream to Joseph and urgently said to him: "Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him" (Matthew 2:13). Though a pagan country, Egypt was designated to Joseph as the most convenient place for escaping Herod's fury. Egypt was then subject to Rome and entirely outside of Herod's jurisdiction. After six or seven days of fatiguing travel, the Holy Family reached the ancient province of Gessen, once the home of the Jews. From there, according to a local tradition—after a stop at a place now called Matoriyeh—they proceeded to Memphis where, in the opinion of some, they remained several months, in the opinion of others, over two years.

When Herod, who was well versed in the methods of espionage, discovered that the Magi would not come back, he became enraged. Highly insulted and profoundly suspicious, he abandoned himself to one of those blind excesses to which he was frequently subject. He sent forth the soldiers of the guard with orders to massacre within Bethlehem and in the hamlets and isolated houses of the neighborhood all male children two years old and under. By enlarging his order as to space and time, Herod hoped to make sure that our Lord would not escape from him. The number of the massacred innocents was not as large as is occasionally believed. The number 144,000 suggested by Apocalypse 14:1 is clearly figurative. If we assign to Bethlehem about two thousand inhabi-

tants; if we allow, in the natural course of events, about thirty births annually for such a population, nearly equally divided among the males and females—we obtain a figure of about thirty males for the two years. This rather small number explains why profane writers hardly refer to an incident which seemed insignificant when compared to the other crimes of the bloodthirsty Herod.

St. Matthew emphasizes the pathos of the event by applying to the Massacre of the Innocents the words of Jeremias: "A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning; Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not" (Matthew 2:18). In this passage Jeremias goes back to one of the bitterest scenes in all Jewish history. When the tribes of Benjamin and Juda were about to be deported into captivity in Babylon they were assembled at Rama, a small village about five miles north of Jerusalem (still called "Er Ram" in our day). Jeremias dramatically pictures Rachel, the ancestress of the Jewish people, as coming forth from her tomb located near Bethlehem and weeping over the children about to be snatched from her. In that ancient mourning of Rachel, St. Matthew sees an image of the grief of the mothers of Bethlehem whose children the executioners of Herod had cruelly slain.

Discussion Aids

Set I

1. Who were the Magi? Were they kings?
2. From what country did they come?
3. What was the number of the Magi?
4. Were they all of the same color?
5. What were their names?

6. What was the "star" which appeared to them? Give the various explanations.
7. How did the Magi know that the star indicated the birth of the Messiah?
8. When did they arrive in Bethlehem?
9. What gifts did they present to Our Lord? What is meant by the word "Epiphany"?
10. What became of the Magi after their visit to Christ?
11. Who was responsible for the custom of the crib? What figures are placed in the crib at Christmas? at Epiphany?
12. Read the proper parts of the Mass for the Feast of the Epiphany.

Set II

1. What two steps did Herod take to ascertain the whereabouts of Christ?
2. Why did Herod wish to obtain information about Christ?
3. Did the Magi bring to Herod the desired information? Why?
4. Why did the Holy Family flee to Egypt?
5. Where did it sojourn in Egypt? How long?
6. What measure did Herod adopt to destroy Christ?
7. How many innocents were massacred?
8. In what sense is Rachel pictured as bewailing the Innocents?
9. Why are the Innocents classified as martyrs? What color vestments are worn on their feast day? Why? What must one do in order to be a martyr? What is meant by the "Baptism of Blood"?

10. Read the proper parts of the Mass for the Feast of the Holy Innocents.

Religious Practices

1. I will avoid all hypocrisy in my religious zeal.
2. I will imitate St. Joseph and the Magi in their prompt obedience to the will of God.
3. I will present gifts to Christ by being generous to His Church.

Chapter IV

Baptism

The sacrament of Baptism was foreshadowed in the Old Testament in at least five different ways: by *circumcision*, through which the Jew was aggregated to the chosen people of God and indirectly cleansed from the guilt of original sin; by the *ark of Noe*, which rose above the flood and saved Noe's family from the common destruction (I Peter 3:20, 21); by the *passage through the Red Sea*, in which the enemies who had held the Jews captive were completely blotted out (I Corinthians 10:1, 2); by the *washing of Naaman* the Syrian in the Jordan—a washing which completely cleansed him from leprosy (IV Kings 5:14); by the *Probatina pond*, whose waters were periodically moved by an angel, and where those who were submerged into the waters after the moving, were cured (John 5:2).

These types and figures were succeeded by the more specific prophecies of St. John the Baptist. The Precursor announced the imminent institution of a rite which would confer the Holy Ghost. The activity of the Holy Spirit, Who will dispel the darkness of the soul, consume the stains of sin and inflame us with love, will be like unto that of "fire." "I indeed baptize you in water unto penance," says the Baptist, "but He that shall come after me, is mightier than I, Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire" (Matt. 3:11); "I have baptized you with water, but He shall baptize you with the Holy

Ghost" (Mark 1:8); "And I knew Him not; but He Who sent me to baptize with water, said to me: He upon Whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon Him, He it is that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost" (John 1:33).

St. Thomas and many theologians place the institution of the Sacrament of Baptism at the moment of Christ's baptism in the river Jordan. A sacrament is said to be instituted at the moment that it receives the power of producing its effect. The Sacrament of Baptism received its distinctive power when Christ—in His own baptism by John in the river Jordan—conferred on water the power of sanctifying, and when the Blessed Trinity, in Whose name Baptism is conferred, manifested Its presence. It derived its efficacy, of course, ultimately from the Passion and death of our Lord. Christ privately inculcated the necessity of Baptism in His discourse with Nicodemus: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). He publicly proclaimed its universal necessity after His Resurrection: "Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matthew 28:19).

Our Lord began His public mission by receiving the baptism of John in the river Jordan. In the Christian Sacrament of Baptism the soul is cleansed from original sin, receives the character, is filled with sanctifying grace, and becomes the abode of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of John, although its rite was from God, produced none of these effects. Those who received it were obliged to receive also

the Christian Baptism (Acts 19:1-5). It was a sort of sacramental preparatory to Christ's Baptism. Yet it was superior to the ceremonial legal washings of the Jews, for while the many ablutions of the Pharisees were ordained merely unto carnal cleanness, John's baptism was ordained unto spiritual cleanness since it led men to do penance. It excited in men sentiments of repentance and induced them to confess their sins. But remission of sins was obtained through subsequent penance and the baptism of Christ. In a word, just as John's mission was a preparation for the work of Christ, so John's baptism was a preparation for Christ's Baptism.

Since Christ was conceived in a supernatural and miraculous manner, He was free from original sin and from all sin. He was "full of grace and truth" from the very beginning. He "grew in grace" only in the sense that He gradually manifested the treasures of grace that were in Him. Why, then, did Christ receive John's baptism? Theologians assign the following reasons: 1) That He might give due honor to a rite instituted by God and so fulfill the Father's will; 2) That He might give to all an example of humility; 3) That He might signify that He wished to expiate *our* sins; 4) That He might receive at the beginning of His public mission a testimony from heaven that would set Him forth clearly as the Messiah and Son of God; 5) That He might sanctify the waters so that they might have the power of the true Baptism.

Many events which accompanied our Lord's baptism in the Jordan foreshadowed the effects of the Sacrament of Baptism. Let us point out a few of these prophetic circumstances:

1) Christ was baptized in the Jordan river. It was through this river that the Jews entered into the land of promise. Now it is the prerogative of Christ's Baptism over all other baptisms that it is an entrance into the kingdom of God which was foreshadowed by the land of promise.

2) At Christ's baptism the heavens were opened. Because of original sin, entrance to the heavenly kingdom had been closed to all men. Hence, at Christ's baptism the heavens were opened in order to indicate that the way to the heavenly kingdom is opened to the baptized. Christ's Passion, it is true, is the common cause of the opening of heaven to men. But for a man actually to enter heaven, the merits of Christ's Passion must be applied to his soul through Baptism. Hence, mention is made of the opening of the heavens at His baptism rather than at His Passion.

3) At Christ's baptism "a voice came from heaven: Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22), in order to indicate that in our Baptism we become the adopted sons of the heavenly Father.

4) The sacred writers tell us that the "Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, as a dove," upon Christ. For all who are baptized with Christ's Baptism receive the Holy Spirit unless they approach unworthily. Hence, it was fitting that when Our Lord was baptized, the Holy Ghost should descend upon Him. The Holy Ghost descended visibly upon Christ, in order that we may believe Him to descend invisibly on all those who are baptized. But why did not the Holy Ghost descend under the form of fiery tongues? At Pentecost He came upon the

Apostles thus in order to indicate the ardor of charity which would inflame them to preach the Gospel. At Christ's baptism the Holy Ghost appeared under the shape of a dove to designate the proper effect of baptism—namely, the remission of sins and reconciliation with God. The dove is a gentle creature, and symbolized the meekness of Christ Who came to reconcile men with God and forgive us our sins. It was a dove which brought Noe an olive branch for a sign that the flood had ceased and that tranquillity was to be restored after the tempest.

5) Christ prayed at His baptism. For man needs to pray continually after Baptism in order to gain heaven. Though our sins are remitted through Baptism, our concupiscence still assails us from within and the world and the devil continue to attack us from without. Hence, the faithful stand in need of prayer even after Baptism.

The phrases, "Baptism in (into) Jesus" and "Baptism in (into) the name of Jesus," which occur occasionally in the New Testament, were not baptismal formulas but had some such meaning as the following: Baptism which our Lord instituted; a Baptism whereby a believer is consecrated to Christ and united to Him; Baptism of those belonging to Christ; the Baptism of Christ as opposed to the baptism of John; Christian Baptism. The New Testament had few technical theological terms. The noun "baptism" and the corresponding verb "to baptize" were not sufficiently technical or specific to designate Christian Baptism. The word "baptism" in the New Testament retains its profane meaning to dip, immerse, wash (Luke 11:38; Mark 7:8). In addition, the adjective "Christian" is never used in

the New Testament, and the noun occurs only three times. Hence to say "Christian Baptism" a circumlocution was necessary—such as "Baptism in (into) Jesus" or "Baptism in (into) the name of Jesus."

Discussion Aids

1. Name five foreshadowings of Baptism in the Old Testament.
2. How did John the Baptist describe the Christian Baptism?
3. When was the Sacrament of Baptism instituted? When was its necessity promulgated to the people?
4. What was the difference between the baptism of John and the Sacrament of Baptism?
5. Why did Christ receive John's baptism?
6. Why was Our Lord baptized in the river Jordan?
7. Why were the heavens opened at His baptism?
8. Why did a voice come from heaven?
9. Why did the Holy Ghost descend upon Him? Why in the form of a dove?
10. Why did Christ pray at His baptism?
11. What is meant by "Baptism in or into Jesus"?
12. What is the meaning of the word "baptism"?

Religious Practices

1. I will frequently reflect on the great dignity and prerogatives bestowed upon me by the Sacrament of Baptism.

2. I will try to carry out more perfectly the promises which I made and the obligations which I assumed when I received Baptism.
3. I will carefully learn how Baptism should be administered in case of necessity.

Chapter V

The Divinity of Christ

"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord." Thus we pray in the Apostles' Creed. Yet possibly not many of us have ever inquired into the reason for this belief. True, the Church teaches this dogma and nothing more is required for the Catholic to accept it. The Catholic believes because he has an infallible teacher, the Church. But when our belief is challenged, when we are informed by impious pseudo-scientists that Christ was a mere man, when irresponsible journalists present us with, as they think, new arguments to show that Christ was a man and not God, what are we to say, what reasons have we for believing as we do? Is Christ really God?

Christ is really God, the only-begotten Son of God, the Eternal Word. Using the Sacred Scriptures, not necessarily as revealed truth nor as an inspired and holy book, but as history, reliable history, Christ is clearly shown to be God. Christ Himself, in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) affirms that He is God; the early Church believed and taught that Christ is God; St. Paul in his Epistles constantly declares the Divinity of Christ; and St. John in the Fourth Gospel explicitly taught that Christ was truly God.

I: The Synoptics

Our Lord did not begin His public ministry by openly proclaiming that He was God. To do so would

have been poor pedagogy (and Christ was an excellent teacher); and above all it would have called down upon Him the wrath of the Jews before the work of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth could be well advanced. On the contrary, Christ manifested His Divinity gradually, in the course of His three-year ministry. He began by announcing that He was greater than Solomon or Jonas or even David (Matthew 12:41; Mark 12:35-37), who were considered the greatest of all the Jews; that He was greater than John the Baptist, whom He Himself had declared to be the greatest man born of woman (Matthew 11:1-11); that He was superior to "His angels" "who came and ministered to Him" (Matthew 4:11). By inference, then, Christ was showing that He was God, because the Jews admitted no intermediary creatures or inferior gods between angels and God.

Moreover Christ claimed and exercised—as proper to Himself—an authority which no legate ever before claimed for himself and which in Old Testament times belonged to God alone (Jahve). He worked miracles in His own name—He cast out devils, raised the dead, healed the sick, commanded the elements (cf. Mark 5:30; Luke 6:10; Mark 1:25; 5:41; 4:39; Matthew 8:27). Healing power went out from Him at the mere touch of His garment: "And immediately Jesus knowing in Himself the virtue that had proceeded from Him, turning to the multitude said, Who hath touched My garments?" Moreover this power of miracles was so proper to Him that He communicated it to others and they worked miracles in the name of "Jesus Christ": "And the seventy-two returned with joy, saying;

Lord, the devils also are subject to us in thy name" (Luke 10:17; cf. Mark 16:17; Matthew 10:8; Luke 9:12). Furthermore He taught as God and with supreme authority, not saying, as the Prophets and Apostles, "Thus saith the Lord" but rather "But I say to you." He acknowledged the law as being divine, yet He interprets and supplements it as the very Lawgiver Himself. He even pardoned the breakers of the law, the sinners, and by His own authority. He does not say: "May God forgive thee," but rather says: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." The Pharisees were scandalized and said: "Who can forgive sins but God?," thereby showing that they recognized what He was doing as an actual forgiving of sins (cf. Mark 2:3-13; Luke 8:36-50). This power also Christ conferred on His Apostles when He said, " whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven" (Matthew 18:18).

He went further and required as a condition for salvation, faith and love toward Himself as toward God: "Everyone that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father Who is in heaven . . . He that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father Who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32, 33; cf. Matthew 16:24, 25; Mark 10:29, 30; 8:34, 35; Luke 9:23, 24). For works done because of love for Him, He promises eternal beatitude (Mark 9:40).

In His prophecy of the last judgment Christ shows Himself as the Supreme Judge. From Him men will receive their eternal reward or will be punished by Him forever with eternal damnation (Matthew 25:34ff.)

Above all, however, Christ called Himself and permitted Himself to be called the "Son of God." It is certain that He called Himself "Christus" or Messias, i.e., the Divine legate by Whom the kingdom of God was to be instituted; but He also called Himself the "Son of God" in the most strict sense of the term—the actual, natural Son of the Heavenly Father. In certain Gospel texts Jesus calls Himself the Son of God in a very proper sense so that from this title one can certainly infer His Divinity.

He taught His disciples to pray saying "Our Father." But He Himself never uses this phrase, but prays rather "Father" or "My Father." "Thus therefore shall *you* pray: *Our Father* Who art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9). "But he that shall deny Me before men I will, also, deny him before *My Father* Who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:33). "At that time Jesus answered and said, I confess to Thee, *O Father*, Lord of heaven and earth," etc. (Matthew 11:25-27). "For whosoever shall do the will of *My Father* that is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12:50). "And going a little farther He fell upon His face, praying and saying: *My Father*, if it be possible let this chalice pass from Me" (Matthew 26:39). "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

Men become sons of God, but Christ truly is the Son of God: "But I say to you love your enemies, do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: that you may be the *children of your Father* Who is in heaven," etc. (Matthew 5:44, 45). "And behold a voice from

heaven saying: This is *My Beloved Son* in Whom I am well pleased;" "And then came a voice from heaven: Thou are *My beloved Son*; in Thee I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11). From these passages it is clear that the filiation of His disciples is not the same as His own; they are adopted sons of God, He is the natural Son of God. Christ, in fact, tells us that the Father is of such a nature that He can be known and comprehended only by the Son, and that in like manner the Son is so great that He can be known only by the Father, that is, by an Infinite Being; "No one knoweth the Son but the Father, neither doth anyone know the Father but the Son" (Matthew 11:27).

Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi definitely shows that the Apostles recognized Christ as the Son of God in a very proper sense: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:13-20). The solemn approval which Peter's confession elicited from our Lord Who, as a reward, promised Peter headship in His Church, the fact that Peter's profession of faith in Christ was attributed to Divine revelation, shows that Peter saw in Christ more than a Messiah—that he recognized Christ as God.

Before the judges Christ called Himself the Son of God in a very strict sense. When asked by the chief priest: "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us if thou art the Christ, the Son of God," Jesus answered "Thou hast said it," meaning thereby, "That is just who I am." And because of this statement Jesus was judged guilty of blasphemy and worthy of death. The Jews could only pass the death sentence on one who said he was the Son of God in the strict sense and not on one who used

the term in the adoptive sense. That they sentenced Him to death clearly shows they understood the term to mean a natural sonship.

The Synoptics, then, equivalently teach that Christ is God. He placed Himself above all creatures. He exercised powers and enjoyed gifts which belong to God alone. He assumed the title, Son of God, in the proper and strict sense, and for this reason was condemned to death.

II: ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The faith of the early Church as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles clearly shows that Christ is God. The early Church believed and taught the Divinity of Christ. In all their preaching to the Jews and Gentiles, the Apostles taught that Christ was not only a holy and just man approved by God, the prophet foretold by Moses, the prophet slain by the Jews, raised up and exalted by God, but One even greater than David: "the Author of life you killed, Whom God hath raised from the dead of which we are witnesses" (Acts. 3:15). "God sent the word to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)" (Acts 10:36).

Miracles were worked in His name and in no other name is salvation possible. "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth arise and walk" (Acts 3:1-16), said Peter to the man lame from his mother's womb. And again: "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Christ had knowledge of the minds of men; he could read their hearts. "And praying they said: Thou, Lord, Who knowest the hearts of all men,

show whether of these two Thou hast chosen" (Acts 1:24).

Christ gave men grace which was sometimes called the grace of God, and at other times the grace of Christ (cf. Acts. 13:45; 15:11).

Sins were remitted in His name. St. Stephen invoked His name when he prayed, using the same words that Jesus used on the Cross when He prayed to His heavenly Father for the Jews (cf. Acts 7:55-60; Luke 23:34, 46).

The early litanies used the name of Christ and placed it alongside of that of the Father. The liturgy as used in the early Church contains hymns and doxologies in His honor and attributes to Him the title of *Kyrios*—"Lord" (see *Kyrie* in Mass), which title in the Old Testament was applied only to Jahve—God the Father. Truly these titles and offices which the early Church attributed to Christ belong to God alone. To attribute them to a mere creature would be blasphemy.

III: ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES

Even if we abstract from the authority St. Paul enjoys as an inspired writer, his testimony is of the greatest weight since he is a witness to the faith of the early Church. His Epistles were written thirty years after the death of Christ. He was therefore sufficiently close to the time of Christ to be well informed. Paul does not propose the doctrine of Christ's Divinity professedly but assumes it as belonging to the faith of the early Church. The other Apostles, therefore, must have taught the same truth. Nor is there a record of any dispute between Paul and the other Apostles on this point.

In general there are innumerable places where

St. Paul assigns to Christ a dignity and offices which could not be attributed to a creature without blasphemy. Paul calls himself an "Apostle of Jesus Christ"; his mission is equally from Jesus Christ and from God the Father; this mission consists of preaching Christ Crucified, and at the same time, the ineffable goodness of God. He says that to obtain salvation the Christians must believe in Christ, obey His commands and love Him with a supreme love. "You are the sons of God through the faith, which is in Christ Jesus . . . So you shall fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2) . . . Not I but the Lord commandeth" (I Corinthians 7:10). "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Romans 8:35). He calls Christ "Lord" indiscriminately and equally with the Father. He applies the Old Testament words concerning the Lord God to Christ: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).

More particularly and more expressly, St. Paul shows in the Epistle to the Colossians that Christ is Creator—God: "For in Him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible . . . all things were created by Him and in Him" (Colossians 1:16). "For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the God-head corporeally; and you are filled in Him Who is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:19).

The majesty and essence of God is expressly attributed to Christ in the Epistle to the Philip-pians: "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man

. . . For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:6-11).

In the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul writes concerning Christ: "Who is over all things, God blessed forever" (Romans 9:5).

St. Paul says of Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews that He is the "brightness of glory and the figure of the substance of God" (Hebrews 1:3); that He is the "heir of all things," (Hebrews 1:2) because all things were made through Him.

IV: ST. JOHN

St. John wrote against the heretics of the first century, the Cerinthians and the Ebionites, who denied the Divine personality in Christ. In the Fourth Gospel, St. John presents in a very clear manner the words of Christ concerning His own Divinity: "For God so loved the world that He gave His *only-begotten Son*" (John 3:16). "The Jews sought to kill Him . . . He said God was His Father, making Himself equal to God". (John 5:18). "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). "Philip, he that seeth Me seeth the Father also" (John 14:9). "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" (John 14:10). In the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, St. John clearly affirms the Divinity of Christ: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (John 1:1). "All things were made by Him: and without Him was made nothing that was made" (John 1:3). "And the Word was made flesh,

and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Truly the testimony of St. John is clear and unmistakable for the Divinity of Christ. Who was in a better position than he to testify to these things, for was he not an apostle, and eyewitness, and the beloved disciple of the Lord?

That Jesus Christ is true God, the only-begotten Son of the Father, is clearly evident from the testimonies we have just examined. In the Synoptics Christ testified that He is God; the faith of the early Church testified to the Divinity of Christ; St. Paul believed and taught that Christ was God; and finally St. John in the Fourth Gospel clearly affirmed the Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Word.

Discussion Aids

1. Why should we be prepared to prove the Divinity of Christ?
2. What are the sources of our proofs for the Divinity of Christ?
3. Did Christ manifest His Divinity suddenly or gradually? Why?
4. Christ exercised an authority and power which in the Old Testament belonged to God alone. Give proofs.
5. Christ called Himself or was called Son of God in the strict sense. Give instances.
6. Give five arguments for Christ's Divinity from the Acts of the Apostles.
7. Why is St. Paul's testimony concerning the Divinity of Christ of the greatest weight?

8. Give the argument for the Divinity of Christ from the Epistles
 - a) to the Colossians;
 - b) to the Philippians;
 - c) to the Romans;
 - d) to the Hebrews.
9. Give two arguments for Christ's Divinity from St. John's Gospel.
10. By what words does John affirm the Divinity of Christ in the prologue?
11. Could Christ have redeemed us if He had not been God?
12. What is the relation between Christ's Divinity and the Church's claim that she possesses the truth?
13. What is the relation between Christ's Divinity and the Infallibility of the Church?
14. How did Christ's raising of Himself from the dead prove His Divinity?
15. Make a list of Catholic doctrines which would be destroyed, if we denied Christ's Divinity.

Religious Practices

1. I will promptly accept the teachings of Christ Who is God and Supreme Truth.
2. I will say with great devotion and faith the words at the Elevation: "My Lord and My God."
3. I will recite with a reverent faith at Mass the Nicene Creed which in its second part contains a profession of Christ's Divinity.

Chapter VI

St. Peter, Head of the Church

Revelation clearly teaches that the bishops are the lawful successors of the Apostles and constitute the ruling body in the Church. The Church, consequently, is neither a democracy nor a républic in her form of government. But here further questions arise: Is the Church governed by these bishops as a body whose members have equal authority? Or are they subject to one who exercises supreme power over the whole Church? Is the Church an oligarchy, or is it a monarchy? All of these questions involve the problem of the primacy of St. Peter and of his successors, the Roman Pontiffs.

The term "primacy" comes from the Latin word *primus* ("first"), and denotes the state of being first among others. Primacy may be of various kinds. The two most important ones, at least for our present purpose, are those of honor and jurisdiction.

Primacy of honor consists in being first among equals. It confers no other claims except that of being accorded certain marks of respect, such as the place of honor at banquets and meetings. Most non-Catholic writers maintain that Peter's preeminence among the Apostles was this kind of primacy. They maintain that St. Peter attained to this primacy of honor accidentally because of his age and deeply religious spirit. The Orthodox and the Anglicans likewise concede to Peter and to the Popes this primacy of honor, but contend that power in the

Church was conferred equally upon all the Apostles to be exercised by them and their successors as a body.

Primacy of jurisdiction, on the other hand, consists in holding supreme authority in a society, the supreme legislative, judicial and coercive powers. Such is the primacy which Catholics claim for St. Peter over the universal Church—such, too, is the primacy vindicated for him by the Vatican Council.

While our Lord was upon the earth, He Himself was the teacher and ruler of the Apostles. Yet even while Christ was still present among the Apostles, St. Peter already enjoyed a certain preeminence. He conducts himself as a special friend and companion of Christ. He is one of the three—and is mentioned first among them—who accompany our Lord to Mt. Tabor and to the Garden of Gethsemani (Matthew 17:1; 26:37). When Christ wishes to preach to the crowds pressing upon Him, He enters into the ship of Peter: "And sitting He taught the multitudes out of the ship" (Luke 5:3). Peter alone is bidden to cast the hook into the sea, to take the stater out of the fish's mouth, and to pay the tax for Christ and for himself (Matthew 17:23-26). If a parable is obscure, Peter, in the name of the rest, asks the Master for a clearer explanation (Matthew 19:27; John 6:69; Matthew 15:15). Peter is the first to confess the Divinity of our Lord (Matthew 16:16). When Christ asks the Twelve, "Will you also go away?", Peter answering for all exclaims: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:69). St. Peter always heads the lists of the Apostles, al-

though the order of the others varies. St. Matthew distinctly calls St. Peter "the first": "The names of the twelve Apostles are these: The first, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, James," etc. (Matt. 10:2). Occasionally St. Peter's relation to the other Apostles is designated by a form of speech which is employed in connection with princes and their subjects: "Peter and they that were with him" (Luke 8:45; 9:32). Peter's pre-eminence is again indicated in the following passage from St. John: "Mary Magdalen ran therefore and cometh to Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 20:2-3).

All these passages form a fitting prelude to a description of the high office which our Lord first promised to St. Peter and later on conferred upon him—the primacy of jurisdiction over the universal Church.

Promise of the Primacy

The promise of the primacy takes us back to the regions of Caesarea Philippi. In answer to our Lord's query, "Whom do men say that the Son of Man is?" (Matthew 16:13), St. Peter, under the inspiration of the Heavenly Father, professes the Divinity of Christ: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." This signal profession of faith was not to go without a reward. As the Apostle had proclaimed the grandeur of the Master, so our Lord in turn eulogizes Peter and discloses to him the high honor in store for him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of

hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: And whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" Matthew 16:17-19). This great dogmatic passage contains several distinct elements each of which is deserving of further study.

1. St. Peter is the rock on which the Church is to be founded: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The original Jewish name of the Apostle was Simeon or Simon. He was the son of John, and hence his full name was Simon Bar-Jona (Simon, son of John). On the occasion of his first meeting with our Lord, he received from Him the Aramaic surname Kepha: "And Jesus looking upon him, said: Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter" (John 1:42). The title "Cephas," which is a symbolical name and prophetic of some high office in store for the Apostle, finds its interpretation in our Lord's statement in Caesarea Philippi. Since our Lord spoke in Aramaic, He in reality said: "Thou art KEPHA and on this KEPHA I will build My Church." Since Christ used the word "Kepha" in both instances, the identity of the two is unmistakable. The Greek text of Matthew, however, used two different words: "Thou are PETROS (Peter) and upon this PETRA (rock) I will build My Church." The Greek "PETROS" is simply a masculine form of "petra" adopted for use as a proper name. The same distinction is carried over into the Latin Vulgate: "Tu es PETRUS et super hanc

PERAM aedificabo ecclesiam meam." The important point to remember, in this connection, is the fact that "Peter" is equivalent to "Cephas" (Kepha) (John 1:42). The proper English translation would be: "Thou art Rock and upon this rock I will build My Church." The French reading correctly uses only one term: "Tu es Pierre et sur cette Pierre."

The passage in St. Matthew is a play on the Apostle's surname Kepha. It contains an explanation of its symbolism and a prediction of its fulfillment. The Church is compared to a building, to an impregnable fortress against which the powers of evil and error and the gates of death will be powerless. All down the centuries the forces of evil will beat upon the Church, but it shall not fail because Peter is the foundation, the bed-rock of the edifice. He is to give the Church strength and solidity, and preserve the unity of its parts against all extrinsic and intrinsic forces of destruction. In a society such strength and unity is procured by means of authority. St. Peter is to be in supreme command of all the Church's forces, with authority to make ordinances, appoint or remove subordinates, and provide everything necessary for defensive operations. Peter's position in the Church shall under Divine Providence be the instrument of the perennity and indefectibility of the Church; he makes it an impregnable stronghold against which Satan hurls his forces in vain.

In his First Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul writes that "the rock was Christ" (I Corinthians 10:4), and that "other foundation on man can lay, but that which is laid which is Christ Jesus" (I Corinthians 3:11). Hence, some Protestant com-

mentators contend that the "rock" in the Matthean passage is Christ and not Peter. Grammar and the context, however, make such an interpretation impossible. The pronoun "this" in the phrase "upon this rock" connects the rock in question with some other rock spoken of before; now, the only rock mentioned before is that in the sentence, "Thou art Rock" (Peter, Kepha). The passage is, as we already indicated, a play on the Apostle's surname Kepha. If the "rock" is Christ, the passage is in reality a denial of any symbolism attaching to the name which Christ gave to the Apostle. The passage would then have the following meaning: "Although thy name is Rock, and although I Myself gave thee this surname, it has no significance; thou art not the rock on which I will build my Church but I Myself am that rock." The frequently recurring pronoun "thou" indicates that Peter is spoken of throughout the passage. The text says that Christ is the builder ("I will build"); hence, He cannot at the same time be the foundation. Finally, as is apparent from the whole setting and context, Christ is promising some signal honor to the chief Apostle. The Protestant interpretation directly contradicts this manifest implication of the passage.

The appeal to St. Paul is of no avail. St. Paul's words are simply an instance of one and the same metaphor being used in a different way. The meaning of a metaphor must be determined from the context in which it is found. Because rock is a metaphor for Christ in one passage, this does not prove that it must be in another. Christ's calling Himself the "Light of the World" (John 8:12) did not prevent Him from saying to the Apostles: "You

are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Both Christ and Peter are the rock on which the Church is built—but not in the same way. Our Lord is in a special sense the foundation of the Church and its only foundation; He is its founder and the source of its life. Peter is the visible foundation and the visible head, but only as the Vicar of Christ, even as he is the chief shepherd in Christ's stead. In I Corinthians 3:11 St. Paul is not speaking of Christ as the foundation of the Church but as the foundation of *faith* and *doctrine*. In 10:4 he applies the metaphor of rock to Christ to signify the source from which even the Jews of the Old Testament obtained the grace of God.

2. Primacy of jurisdiction is implied, secondly, in the metaphor of the keys: "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:19). Since our Lord gives no explanation of the symbol, the metaphor is to be understood in the sense then in vogue; otherwise, Christ's words would not have been understood. Now, among all ancient people, especially those of the Orient, keys were the symbol of authority, and the giving of keys implied a transfer of authority (Isaias 22:22; Apocalypse 1:18; 3:7); 9:1; 20:1). A similar usage prevails even today in the transference of a building; a person leasing or purchasing a building does not receive full control until the keys have been handed over to him.

Having compared His Church to a building, Christ now promises to St. Peter the keys of that edifice. The keys of the house belong to the Master. By giving them to St. Peter, He entrusts him with the care and administration of the household during

His absence. This power of keys does not mean that Peter is to be merely a doorkeeper, with power to admit or to exclude from the Church. He is to be the major-domo, the chief administrator, the sole custodian of the palace. He is to exercise full authority over all the departments ("keys") in the house. As the building is at the same time "the kingdom," it is evident that Peter's authority is very extensive; the keys of the kingdom denote a power and authority over the Church which is the kingdom of heaven on earth. The metaphor of the keys, then, clearly brings out the supreme jurisdiction of Peter as Vicar of Christ, and excludes the theory that his primacy was intended by Christ to be something merely ornamental—a primacy of honor.

3. Christ promised to St. Peter the primacy of universal jurisdiction under the symbol of binding and loosing: "And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). In this passage Christ used the words "bind" and "loose" according to the Hebrew acceptance current at the time; otherwise, St. Peter and the Apostles would not have grasped their meaning. The two terms occur frequently in Hebrew literature and in the majority of cases "to bind" (Asar) means to declare unlawful, while "to loose" (Hitter) is to pronounce lawful. If a person officially declares a thing lawful or unlawful, he declares it as binding in conscience. He commands or forbids, makes laws or abrogates them. Hence, the terms "to bind" and "to loose" assumed the sense of making and abrogating laws (cf. Matt-

hew 5:17; 22:4). By these words our Lord made Peter the lawgiver in the Church as was Moses in the Synagogue. Peter will be the supreme administrator of the Church, the official interpreter of the law of Christ. His power will be limited in extent only by the confines of the earth, it will be a supreme and plenary power of jurisdiction over the universal Church, nay more, his every official act on earth shall be ratified in heaven.

The fact that Christ conferred the power of binding and loosing upon all the Apostles (Matthew 18:18) does not militate against Peter's primacy. Whatever the Apostles received they received as a body, of which Peter was a member; whatever Peter received, he received alone. Peter alone received a new name; Peter alone was made the rock of the Church; Peter alone received the keys, the symbol of supreme authority; he alone received the office of confirming his brethren; he alone received the commission to feed the lambs and the sheep. Peter received the power of binding and loosing in all its fullness—without restriction or limitation—and was to exercise it over the other Apostles. The Apostles were to exercise the power of binding and loosing dependently upon Peter, their head, and not over him.

4. Universal jurisdiction over the Church is likewise contained in St. Peter's commission to confirm his brethren: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32). Satan seeks to tempt all the Apostles—"Satan hath desired *you*."

But Christ prays for Peter alone—"I have prayed for *thee*, that thy faith fail not." St. Peter is constituted the supreme and infallible teacher in the Church, the future guide for all in matters pertaining to faith. This primacy of the teaching authority necessarily postulates the supreme power of ruling. In Christ's Church unity of truth and faith must be preserved at all times until the end of the world. But such unity cannot be procured without the proper laws and precepts binding on all.

Peter's denial of our Lord during the Passion constitutes no objection to this supreme office of the Apostles. For at that time he was neither the rock of the Church nor the confirmer of his brethren. These promised powers and dignities were actually conferred upon him only after the Resurrection.

Most Protestant scholars admit today that the Catholic interpretation of Matthew 16:17-19 is the only admissible explanation. This does not mean, however, that these writers have rallied to the Catholic position; it means that they will henceforth change their line of attack. They contend now that the passage is not a genuine saying of our Lord, that it was not found in St. Matthew's autograph but was inserted into the first Gospel in the early centuries of the Christian era. Nothing, however, is further from the truth. The passage is found, without notable variants, in all the oldest codices and in all the versions. The Fathers of the Church show no hesitation about it. The pronounced Aramaic coloring of the passage is clearly indicative of its Palestinian origin. The text contains such Hebraisms as the following: "Blessed," "Simon-Bar-Jona," "flesh and blood (human nature)," "Father

Who is in heaven," "the keys," "the gates," "kingdom of heaven," "binding" and "loosing." The play on the Apostle's surname Kepha originated where Aramaic was spoken. All these details make it clear that the text is not an insertion by a later hand. Besides, if the passage is a later addition to the Gospel, when and by whom was the interpolation made? No two Protestant authors even remotely agree on assigning the same date.

These authors make much of the fact that the Petrine primacy is not recorded by St. Mark (8:27-30) nor St. Luke (9:18-21). But this omission is easily understood. St. Mark's Gospel is based on the preaching of St. Peter. In narrating the episode of his confession Peter in his humility possibly omitted the eulogy and the promise which his confession elicited from the Master. As a result, Mark wrote down the account of the episode as he heard it from the Apostle. Secondly, Mark and Luke were primarily interested in the Person of Christ. The Church and its organization were already an established fact when the Gospels were written, and are mentioned more or less accidentally. St. Luke was a Greek and wrote his Gospel for the Hellenistic Churches. St. Mark was a Jew who wrote his Gospel for the Christians of Rome. The Hebraisms of the passage and the play on the word "Kepha" would have been unintelligible to the readers of their Gospels. The Aramaic coloring of the passage accounts for its presence in the Gospel of St. Matthew, who was a Jew and wrote for the Jews. In conclusion, let us note that the presence of the passage in only one Gospel is the best proof of its authenticity. If a later hand had inserted it, the passage would have

been introduced also into the parallel passages of Mark and Luke.

The Primacy Conferred

The conferring of the primacy upon St. Peter by the risen Lord took place on the shores of Lake Tiberias. The Good Shepherd is approaching the end of His earthly mission and is about to entrust His flock to St. Peter's care. At Caesarea Philippi He exacted a profession of faith from the chief Apostle; now He demands a profession of undying love and devotion. For, since the sheep belong to Christ ("Feed My sheep"), Peter's devotion to the flock will be measured by his love for the Master. As chief shepherd, his love and devotion must be more complete than that of the other disciples: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these? He said to Him: Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him: Feed My lambs. He saith to him again: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? He saith to Him: Yea Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him: Feed My lambs. He said to him the third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me? Peter was grieved because He had said to him the third time: Lovest thou Me? And he said to Him: Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He said to him: Feed My sheep" (John 21:15-17).

The terms "sheep" and "lambs" denote the whole body of Christ's faithful. Such is the meaning given to these words in another passage of St. John's Gospel: "I am the Good Shepherd, and I lay down My life for My sheep. And other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice and there shall be one

fold and one shepherd" (John 10:11-16). The nomadic origin of the Jewish nation left a permanent impression on its language. The shepherd and his flock are favorite metaphors for God and His people ("The Lord is my shepherd"), the ruler and subjects, the teacher and his followers.

The Lord's command, "Feed My sheep," does not mean that Peter should merely provide the faithful with spiritual food of doctrine by preaching the Gospel to them. In fact, the original Greek for "Feed My sheep" is "Shepherd My sheep." In all ancient literature whether sacred or profane—in the works of Homer, Hesychius, and the old Testament writers—"to shepherd" is to rule with supreme authority as a king. "To shepherd a flock" is one of the oldest and most universal figures to express a supreme and yet beneficent government.

When about to ascend into heaven, Christ constituted Peter supreme pastor in His stead to care for the entire flock, including the Apostles. Now, what are the duties of the shepherd of a flock? A shepherd provides the sheep with suitable nourishment, protects them from harm and injury, defends them against the enemy, seeks out the neglected and abandoned, brings back those who have strayed from the fold. As shepherd of the faithful, St. Peter is endowed with supreme power to guide the people in all things pertaining to faith and morals, to teach and legislate for the universal Church, to judge and correct, to appoint pastors and determine their jurisdiction.

Such, then, according to St. John, was the high office and prerogative of the chief shepherd. When we turn to the Acts of the Apostles, we find

St. Peter already assuming the role of leader among his colleagues and exercising the rights of his primacy. He proposes the election of a successor to Judas (Acts 1:15). He is the first to preach the Gospel to the Jews, and confirms his sermon by miracles (Acts 2:14; 3:6). He defends the other Apostles before Annas and Caiphas (Acts 4:8). He is the first to receive the Gentiles into the Church (Acts 10:44-48). He judges and punishes Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:3-5). At the Council of Jerusalem, when Peter speaks, the matter is settled (Acts 15:7, 12). St. Paul also presupposes the pre-eminence of Peter, when he says that he went to Jerusalem for the express purpose of seeing him: "Then after three years, I went to Jerusalem to see Peter, and I tarried with him fifteen days" (Galatians 1:18). St. Paul's withstanding Peter "to the face" at Antioch (Galatians 2:11)—far from being an argument against the primacy—shows that St. Paul recognized a superiority in Peter; besides, the rebuke concerned disciplinary matter and not questions of faith.

In conclusion, let us note that the primacy was not a strictly personal prerogative but was to be transmitted to Peter's successors, the Roman Pontiffs. For the Gospel was to be preached "to every creature" and the Church was to endure "even to the consummation of the world." The foundation, then, must remain as long as the building itself stands. The power and authority which made St. Peter the Rock of the Church, and which secure it against the powers of evil in all ages, must remain intact for all time. Again, the power of the keys—the power of binding and loosing—was not granted

for the benefit of the ruler but for the benefit of those over whom he rules; it still therefore endures as long as the Church itself exists. The permanent nature of St. Peter's primacy is deduced, finally, from the injunction to confirm his brethren. The successors of the Apostles, lacking the gift of personal infallibility, will stand in need of such a guide to prevent them from being tossed about by every wind of doctrine. If the primacy was necessary in the Apostolic days when the Church was still in its infancy, it will be all the more necessary in the following centuries when the Church will grow into a world-wide and complex organization, and heresies and schisms will arise.

Discussion Aids

Set I

1. What problems are involved in the question of the primacy of St. Peter and of the Popes?
2. What is meant by the word "primacy"?
3. What is a primacy of honor? of jurisdiction?
4. Did St. Peter enjoy a certain preeminence among the Apostles from the very beginning?

Set II

1. On what occasion was the primacy of jurisdiction promised to St. Peter? Where?
2. To whom does the "Rock" refer? Explain.
3. In what way is St. Peter the "rock" on which the Church is built?
4. Could the "rock" refer to Christ?
5. What is meant by the phrase, "keys of the kingdom of heaven"?
6. What is meant by the power of "binding" and "loosing"?

7. Did the other Apostles enjoy the power of "binding" and "loosing" in the same way as St. Peter? Explain.
8. Show how Christ conferred universal jurisdiction upon St. Peter by the words recorded in Luke 22:31-32.
9. Is Peter's fall an obstacle to his infallibility and supreme authority?
10. Is Matthew 16:17-19 a genuine saying of Our Lord?
11. How are we to explain the omission of this passage from St. Mark's and St. Luke's Gospel?

Set III

1. When and where was the primacy actually conferred on St. Peter?
2. What is the meaning of the words "sheep" and "lambs" in John 21:15-17?
3. What is the meaning of Christ's command, "Feed My sheep"?
4. Did St. Peter exercise this primacy of jurisdiction?
5. How would you prove that the Popes possess the same prerogative?
6. Who is the present Pope? Name the last six Popes. The first six after Peter.
7. How is a Pope elected? How many Popes have there been since St. Peter?
8. What in the Papal Curia corresponds to the President's cabinet?
9. Point out the different ways in which the Pope's authority affects your daily life.
10. Who appoints bishops? To whom are bishops subject.

Religious Practices

1. I will always show reverence and love to the Pope, the Vicar of Christ on earth.
2. I will accept with respect and obedience all his prescriptions but especially those designed to correct modern evils concerning education, movies, dress, etc.
3. I will recite with special fervor the prayers "for the intentions of the Holy Father" when they are prescribed for the gaining of indulgences.

Chapter VII

The One True Church

In our day it is not uncommon to hear non-Catholics make statements such as these: "One religion is as good as another"; "Protestants and Catholics worship the same God"; "We are all going the same way"; "Religion is a matter of the heart, not of the head"; "Do what you think is right, and do not worry about creeds"; "It matters not what a man believes, provided he be a good man after his own fashion"; "Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish faiths are of the same pattern in their plan of accomplishment." The viewpoint and attitude which prompt these expressions are being engendered by the decay of religion outside of the Catholic Church. For non-Catholics are gradually giving up doctrines and dogmas; they are slowly rejecting such fundamental truths as the Divinity of Christ, the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the Eucharist and hell. The countless forms which this diluted Christianity may assume are naturally one as good as another. Men prefer this state, in which they can follow their own tastes and whims, to a mode of life in which they must be subject to the unchangeable law of God. On the other hand, when the non-Catholic realizes that Protestantism has split into seven hundred sects—when he sees that these religions cannot possibly all be the same—he quiets his conscience by affirming that "all religions are good and lead to God."

Religious indifferentism can hardly justify itself before the supreme tribunal of Christ's Divine

revelation. Christ came into the world to teach and to save all men. He wishes all men to come to a knowledge of the truth and to be saved. Now, it is inconceivable that Christ would have been so vague in His teaching as to prepare the way for the babel of conflicting views—for the hundreds of different religious bodies which we find coexisting today. He could not have originated all the different religious systems, mutually destructive as they are of one another. Christ, Who is God, Who is infinite Truth and Holiness, cannot possibly be the author of the false doctrines such as are necessarily contained in the contradictory teachings of the non-Catholic sects. God is one; truth is one.

Secondly, Christ established a definite, visible religious society, which would differ from all previously established religions. He promised to build a Church of His own—a Church that would last till the end of time: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Immediately after promising to make him the foundation of His Church, Christ said to Peter: "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). The supreme authority here promised Christ afterward conferred upon the same Peter when He said: "Feed My lambs, feed My sheep" (John 21:15-18). Upon the other Apostles Christ also conferred powers which—though not supreme as those of Peter's but rather dependent upon his—were magnificent indeed: "Whatsoever you shall

bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). All these passages show that Christ gave His approval to a definite religious society and organization.

In this society Christ established certain well-defined doctrines which constitute the supernatural revelation of the new law. That each and every one of these revealed truths was to be accepted and believed by the Apostles is quite evident, for the very fact that God communicates a certain truth implies the obligation of belief on the part of him to whom this communication is vouchsafed. Not to believe God's word would be to deny His omniscience, His veracity—His existence. Hence the Apostles were not free to believe one truth and reject another. They had no choice of creeds.

Christ, furthermore, placed this same obligation of belief upon all His followers. He gave the Apostles a twofold commission: first, to teach all nations; second, to teach them all His doctrines in their entirety—no more and no less. "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, teach ye *all* nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe *all* things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20). In St. Mark's Gospel we read: "And He said to them: Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15, 16). Christ then intended His religion to be the one universal religion of the world. The Apostles were to preach

the whole Gospel to all nations—nothing was left to their own choice and discretion. Christ said nothing of “branch theories,” of essentials and non-essentials, of fundamentals and non-fundamentals. The hearers, in turn, were obligated, under the severest of penalties, to accept the whole Gospel thus announced.

Someone might say that the Apostles were, after all, human beings, fallible men, liable to error and misapprehension. Would they not unwittingly lead others into false beliefs? No! Christ promised His Divine assistance and the help of the Holy Spirit, so that the doctrines which they announced should be as infallibly true as if they came directly from His mouth: “Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world” (Matt 28:20). “But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father shall send in My Name, He will teach you *all* things, and bring *all* things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you” (John 14:26).

If all must believe the same identical doctrines, there cannot possibly be more than one true religion. If there is and can be only one religion, it is folly to say that one religion is as good as another. If Christ established one religion, and commanded all to accept that religion in its entirety, He by that fact condemned all other religious systems. St. Paul rightly says: “If any man preach to you a Gospel, besides that which you have received, let him be anathema” (Galatians 1:9). The fact that the centurion Cornelius was “a religious man, and fearing God with all his house, giving much alms to the people, and always praying to God” (Acts

10:2), was not sufficient in the sight of the Lord, Who sent St. Peter to convert him to Christianity. When the Judaizers strove to engraft certain Jewish practices upon Christianity and declared them necessary for salvation, the Apostles under the leadership of St. Peter quickly gathered in Jerusalem and solemnly declared that in Christ alone—exclusive of all Jewish rites—is man saved. In the early centuries Christians died by the thousands rather than alter by one iota Christ's immutable message.

Christ's Church, then, was to be one. Christ always speaks of His Church as one, not as many. He speaks of it as one family, one fold, one city, one kingdom. He builds it upon one foundation, the rock which is Peter. He appoints but one supreme pastor to feed His lambs and sheep. Unity among His followers is the object of His last prayer on the eve of His death: "Holy Father keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We also are . . . Not for them only (the Apostles) do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me" (John 17:11, 20). Christ's desire for unity was deeply impressed upon the minds of the Apostles. Listen, for example, to the words of St. Paul, to whom Protestants sometimes foolishly appeal in support of their doctrines: "(Be) careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one Baptism. One God and Father of all" (Ephesians 4:3-6).

The most essential mark of Christ's religion, whereby it may with certainty be recognized as

His own, is absolute unity of faith among all believers. The Catholic Church, in which individual judgments are united in regard to revealed truths, has always had in itself the principle of unity. Protestantism threw unity to the winds when it adopted the principle of private judgment, the principle, namely, that each one has a right to interpret the Bible as he likes. The principle of private interpretation is necessarily a principle of division, for when a matter is left to the decision of many, there are as many opinions as there are heads. Division has been the distinguishing mark of Protestantism from its very birth. Only a few years had elapsed after the introduction of Protestantism when the short and simple phrase, "This is My body," was explained in as many as two hundred different ways. There are at present about seven hundred different religious denominations which profess to prove their system of theology from the Bible and which claim Christ as the founder of their religion. Frequently the greatest diversity of opinion exists among members of one and the same denomination. Older sects are continually splitting into new ones. Thus it is that we have today at least thirteen kinds of Baptists, twelve kinds of Presbyterians, seventeen of Methodists, and twenty-two of Lutherans.

The assertion that one religion is as good as another implies that falsehood is as good as truth, vice as good as virtue, idolatry as good as true worship. It implies that a religion which denies the Divinity of Christ, the Trinity, hell, the indissolubility of marriage, the Eucharist, is as good as the religion which believes in all of these. It im-

plies that God Himself is indifferent to truth and error. What could be more blasphemous and unreasonable? What an insult to the God of holiness and truth, and to man who is an image of God! God is Truth itself, the unchanging and eternal Truth, and cannot be worshipped except in the spirit of truth.

The truths which we have established in this chapter have given rise to certain well-defined principles in moral theology and in canon law. We can readily understand why the Church forbids her members to participate in Protestant religious ceremonies and services, why she forbids Catholics to contribute to Protestant missionary activities, and why she is opposed to mixed marriages. In all this she may be considered narrow-minded and intolerant. But truth is one. And truth is never liberal.

Discussion Aids

Set I

1. What are some of the causes of the modern attitude that one religion is as good as another?
2. Can religious indifferentism be reconciled with Christian revelation? with the teaching of religion concerning God's nature and attributes?
3. Did Christ give His approval to several religious societies? Explain.
4. Did Christ leave the Apostles free to choose their own creeds?
5. Did He leave us free to choose our own creeds?
6. Were the Apostles liable to error and to lead us into false beliefs?

7. Why must there be only one true religion?
8. Show how the early Christians clearly understood that there can be only one true religion.
9. Did Christ speak of His Church as one or as many?
10. Why is the principle of private judgment the principle of disunion and division?
11. Is Protestantism characterized by a lack of unity?
12. Is truth intolerant?

Set II

Criticize the following statements:

1. "You Catholics must be narrow-minded to think that you have the sole and whole truth."
2. "It seems to me pretty safe to hope for the best."
3. "We are all going the same way."
4. "Protestants and Catholics agree in fundamentals."
5. "Protestants and Catholics worship one and the same God."
6. "The Catholic Church consists of three branches: the Anglican, the Orthodox, and the Roman Catholic."
7. "Christ came not to teach us doctrine but how to lead a good life."
8. "Do what you think is right, and do not worry about creeds."
9. "Christianity failed because it did not stop the World Wars."
10. The statement of a Protestant man to a Catholic girl: "If you really love me, you will give up your religion and accept mine."

11. The statement of a Protestant friend with whom you are visiting over Sunday: "I shall go with you to early Mass and then we shall go to the Protestant church for our services."

Religious Practices

1. I shall recite with profound conviction the words of the act of faith: "I believe all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because thou hast revealed them who canst neither deceive nor be deceived."
2. I shall be grateful to God for belonging to a Church which has preserved for me the whole and entire Gospel of **Christ**.
3. I shall never compromise in my observance of the teachings of the Catholic Church because of human respect or because of earthly advantage.

Chapter VIII

The Promise of The Eucharist

The promise of the Eucharist is recorded in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel. The Evangelist gives an account of the miraculous multiplication of the loaves (John 6:1-25), and shows how the minds of the Jews were prepared by this miracle for the great Eucharistic discourse. This marvelous act effected the recognition of a Divine power in Christ, supplied the needs of the people in a manner hitherto unheard of, and established His authority as a teacher. Attracted by what they had seen and heard of this great Wonder Worker, the multitude followed Him to Capharnaum and eagerly awaited His further teaching. With the miracle uppermost in their minds, their thoughts were easily led on to a more wonderful and more powerful Bread. From the material and corruptible bread, which they had seen multiplied and with which were fed, Christ directs their thoughts to a heavenly Bread, which was to be marvelously multiplied, which was to be the food of their souls, and with which the Divine Master was to nourish countless multitudes of His followers.

When questioned by the Jews how one may obtain this Bread, Christ requires faith as an indispensable preliminary condition. The previous mention of the "bread of heaven" also recalls to the Jews the miraculous manna in the desert. Christ

seizes the opportunity to point out the difference between the two: whereas the effects of the manna—and of the bread which He had multiplied—are material and temporary, those of the new Bread are spiritual and eternal. Our Lord then makes a further advance in His teaching by pointing out that He Himself is this Bread, that this Bread is His own flesh and blood, and that all must partake of it if they wish Christ to abide in them and if they desire to enjoy life everlasting.

The promise of the Holy Eucharist is clearly enunciated in the following section: "I am the Bread of Life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven, that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living Bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever; and the Bread that I will give, is My flesh, for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying: How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them: Amen, amen, I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. This is the Bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this Bread, shall live forever" (John 6:48-59).

Catholics have always contended that these words of our Lord contain the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist. Their arguments are based principally on the context and are reducible to the following: The reaction to Christ's discourse of the three groups of His listeners—the Jews, the disciples, the Apostles—and the customary manner of Christ's teaching and speaking.

1. The Jews, understanding His words literally, object that the very idea of eating human flesh is revolting: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (John 6:53). Yet our Lord neither corrects them nor affirms that His language was a mere figure of speech, but with all possible force and solemnity reiterates—in six different ways—the formula so objectionable to them. Nay more, although the Jews were forbidden to use animal blood as food, Christ in His repetitions declares explicitly that they must not only eat His flesh but also "drink His blood." Our Lord, therefore, makes it emphatically clear that He is not speaking figuratively but means exactly what He says.

2. The disciples found Christ's doctrine a "hard saying"; "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" (John 6:61). Our Lord explains His teaching but retracts nothing, so that many of the disciples leave Him: "After this many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him" (John 6:67). If the disciples were deceived, Christ's wisdom and goodness demanded that He correct the error. He Who came to seek and to save what was lost could surely not permit many of His disciples to perish because, through no fault of their own, they misunderstood a metaphor. If our Lord meant

that He was present merely spiritually in the Eucharist, or that the Eucharist was to be only a commemorative meal, He should have said so and all difficulty would immediately vanish. Yet He insists throughout that His words must be taken literally.

3. After Christ's second explanation the Apostles are still perplexed by the strange doctrine, so that our Lord asks the Twelve: "Will you also go away" (John 6:68)? St. Peter answers that there is nothing left for them but to accept His teaching solely on faith: "And Simon Peter answered Him: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God" (John 6:69,70). Here, at least, we would expect our Lord to indicate that He was misunderstood, that He did not speak literally but figuratively; He did not do so.

4. Our Lord spoke to be understood. When His hearers understood Him correctly but took exception to His teaching or statement, He would reaffirm His words in a solemn manner (John 6:41-47; 8:56-58; Matthew 9:2-6). When He spoke in figurative language and His hearers—in good faith and through no fault of their own—misunderstood what He said, He would explain His meaning in plain terms (John 3:4, 5; 4:32-36; 8:21-23; 11:11-14; Matthew 16:6-11). If the language in the Eucharistic discourse were figurative, some hint would be given that such is the case. This would all the more be the case since the entire audience understood our Lord's words literally and found it most difficult to believe them. Could He Who is Supreme Truth and Wisdom Incarnate deliberately lead His

hearers into error, deliberately drive away some of His disciples by attaching some novel figurative meaning to certain expressions without explaining it? Nowhere is there any indication of a figurative signification of His words. In the other passages of the New Testament which speak of the Holy Eucharist (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; I Corinthians 11:23), the same doctrine of the Real Presence is set forth and again not the slightest hint is given that the words are to be taken in any but the strictly literal sense.

It is true that the expressions, "to eat the flesh" and "to drink the blood" of someone are used figuratively in Sacred Scripture. But in that case they invariably have a well defined meaning. "To eat the flesh" of some one means "to hate, calumniate, persecute and feel enmity" against him (Job 19:22; Psalm 26:2; Micheas 3:3; Eccli. 4:5; Galatians 5:15). Similarly, the expression "to drink the blood" is a metaphor for malediction (Leviticus 3:17; 7:26; Wisdom 11:7; Apocalypse 16:6). It is clear that, unless we wish to reduce the Eucharistic discourse of Christ to an absurdity, this figurative signification is not applicable to the words of our Lord.

On the basis of John 6:64—"It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you, are spirit and life"—some of the old Protestant controversialists maintain that our Lord's discourse concerning His body and blood is to be understood figuratively ("spirit") and not literally ("flesh"). In support of their interpretation they appeal to II Corinthians 3:6: "Who also hath made us fit ministers of the New

Testament, not in the letter but in the spirit. For the letter killeth but the spirit quickeneth." Sacred Scripture, however, never uses the term "spirit" to denote a spiritual or figurative sense, and the term "flesh" to mean the literal sense. The Johannine text and the Pauline passage are not parallel; the one contrasts "flesh" and "spirit," the other, "letter" and "spirit." Besides, the usage of one is not necessarily the norm for the usage of the other. The term "letter" in Corinthians 3:6 does not denote a literal as opposed to a spiritual interpretation of the Gospel; St. Paul is contrasting Judaism—a "book" religion which was powerless of itself to give life—with the lifegiving religion of Christ.

What then is the meaning of John 6:64? Christ corrects the gross materialistic conception which the Jews placed upon His words and makes it plain that He is not speaking of the physical eating of His material flesh. The eating of mere flesh—be it even His own sacred flesh—is not a source of spiritual life. The Eucharist will not be the lifeless material flesh of Christ. The flesh of Christ will vivify and be the source of supernatural life for those who receive it because of its intimate union with the Divinity of the Word. At the Resurrection Christ will become a "vivifying spirit," endowing with spiritual life those who receive Him in this glorified state in the Holy Eucharist.

The sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel contains only the promise and prediction of the Holy Eucharist. The institution of the Eucharist will make it plain exactly how the body and blood of Christ are to become the nourishment of His followers.

Discussion Aids

1. How were the multitudes prepared for Christ's discourse on the Eucharist?
2. What according to Our Lord is an indispensable preliminary condition for accepting the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist?
3. How does the Eucharist differ from the manna?
4. Read Christ's promise of the Eucharist in John, Chapter 6.
5. Show that Christ's discourse contains the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist. Give four arguments.
6. May the expressions, "to eat the flesh" and "to drink the blood" be taken figuratively in this discourse?
7. Does John 6:64 demand a figurative interpretation of the discourse?
8. What gross misconception does Christ wish to remove in this passage?

Religious Practices

1. I will participate eagerly in the Sacrifice of the Mass, which is the highest form of worship which I can render to God on earth.
2. I will receive Holy Communion frequently in order to fortify my soul against sin and assist it in the growth in virtue.
3. I will make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament whenever I have occasion to pass by a church, and ask Our Lord to guide and strengthen me in my daily tasks.

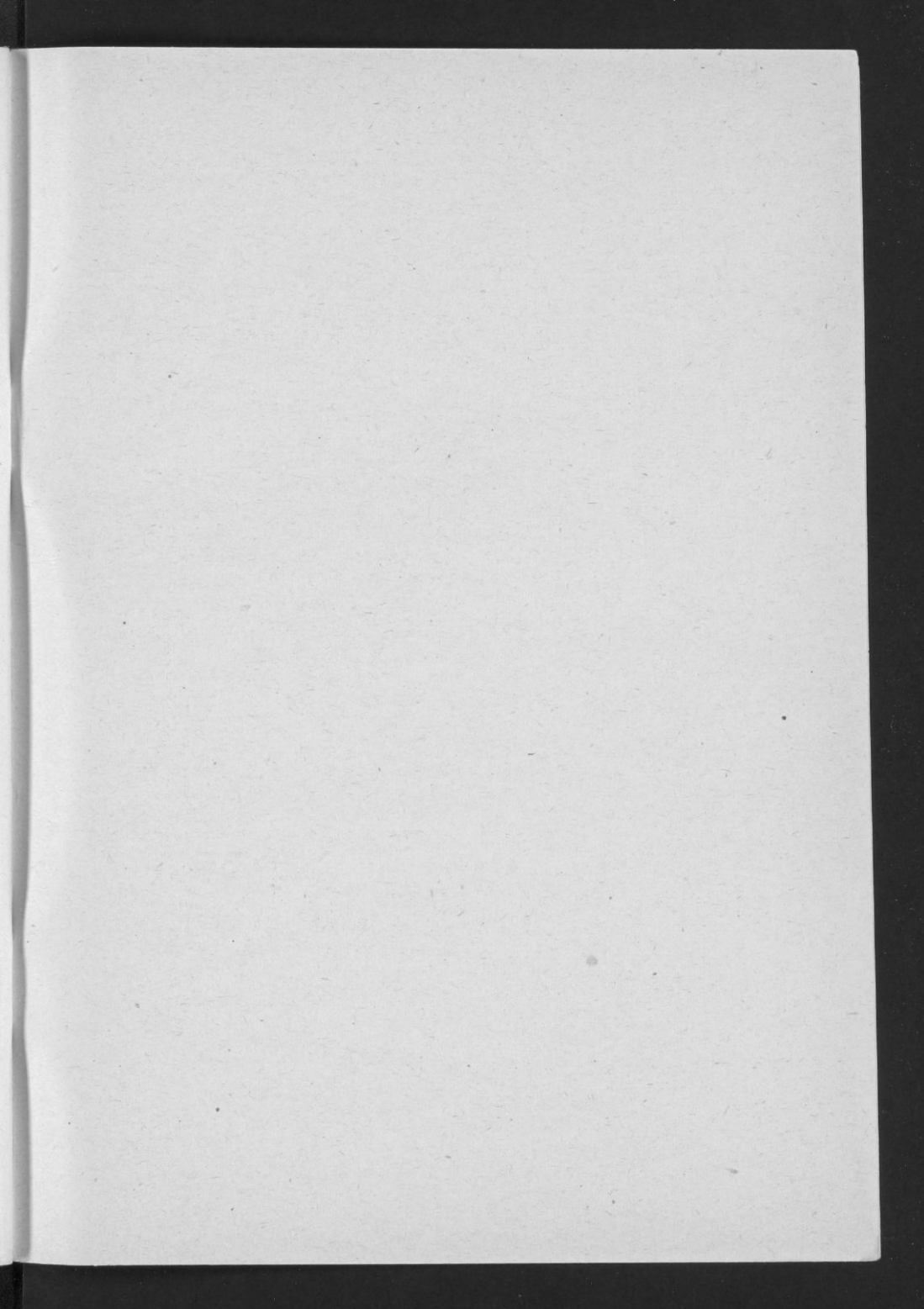
Series I of Biblical Questions aims to give the student a general acquaintance with the Bible. The Chapters and Discussion Aids are constructed in such a way as to oblige the student to page the Bible, become acquainted with the arrangement of the Books, and read some sections of each Book.

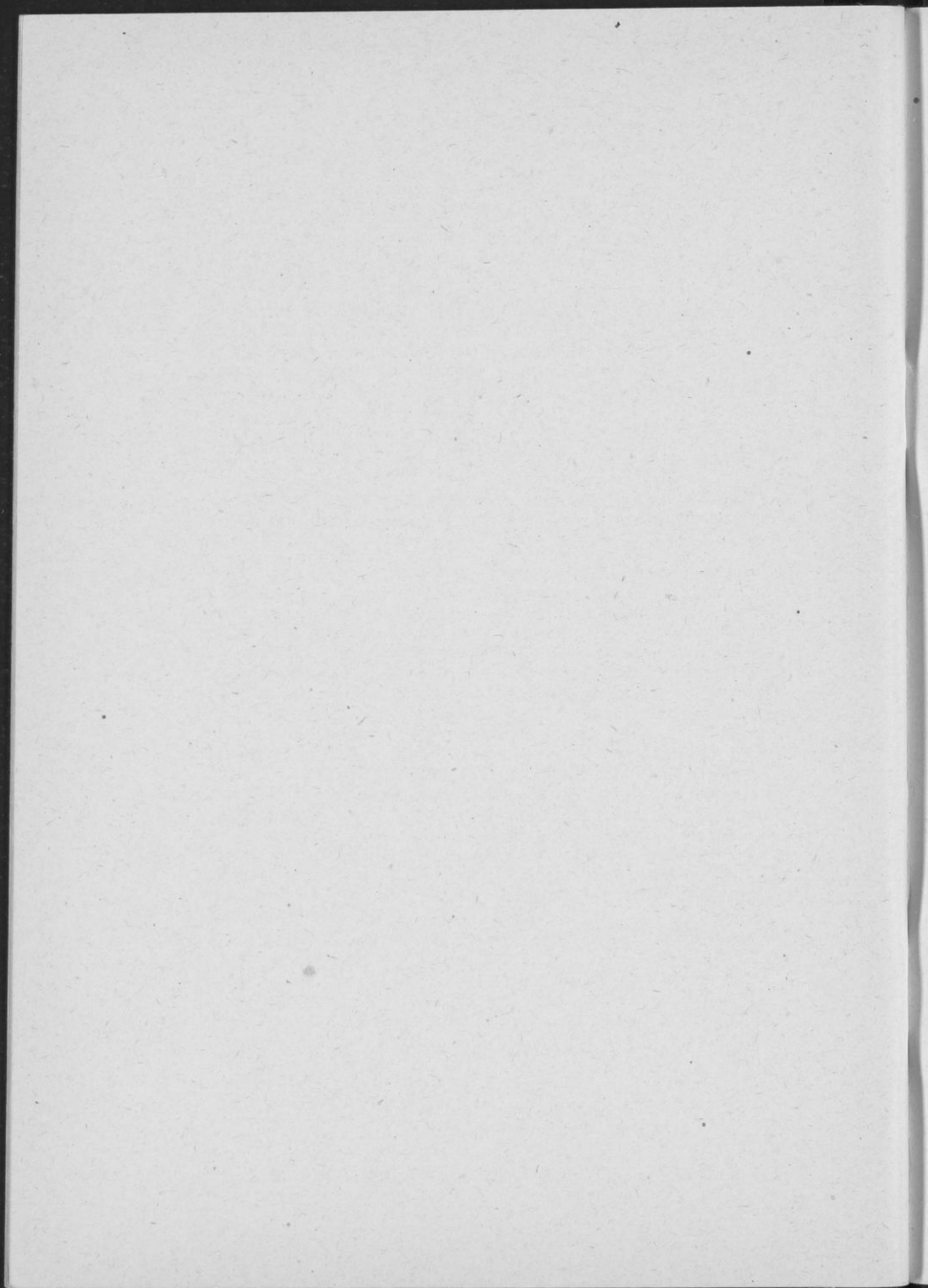
Series II continues this general discussion about the Bible.

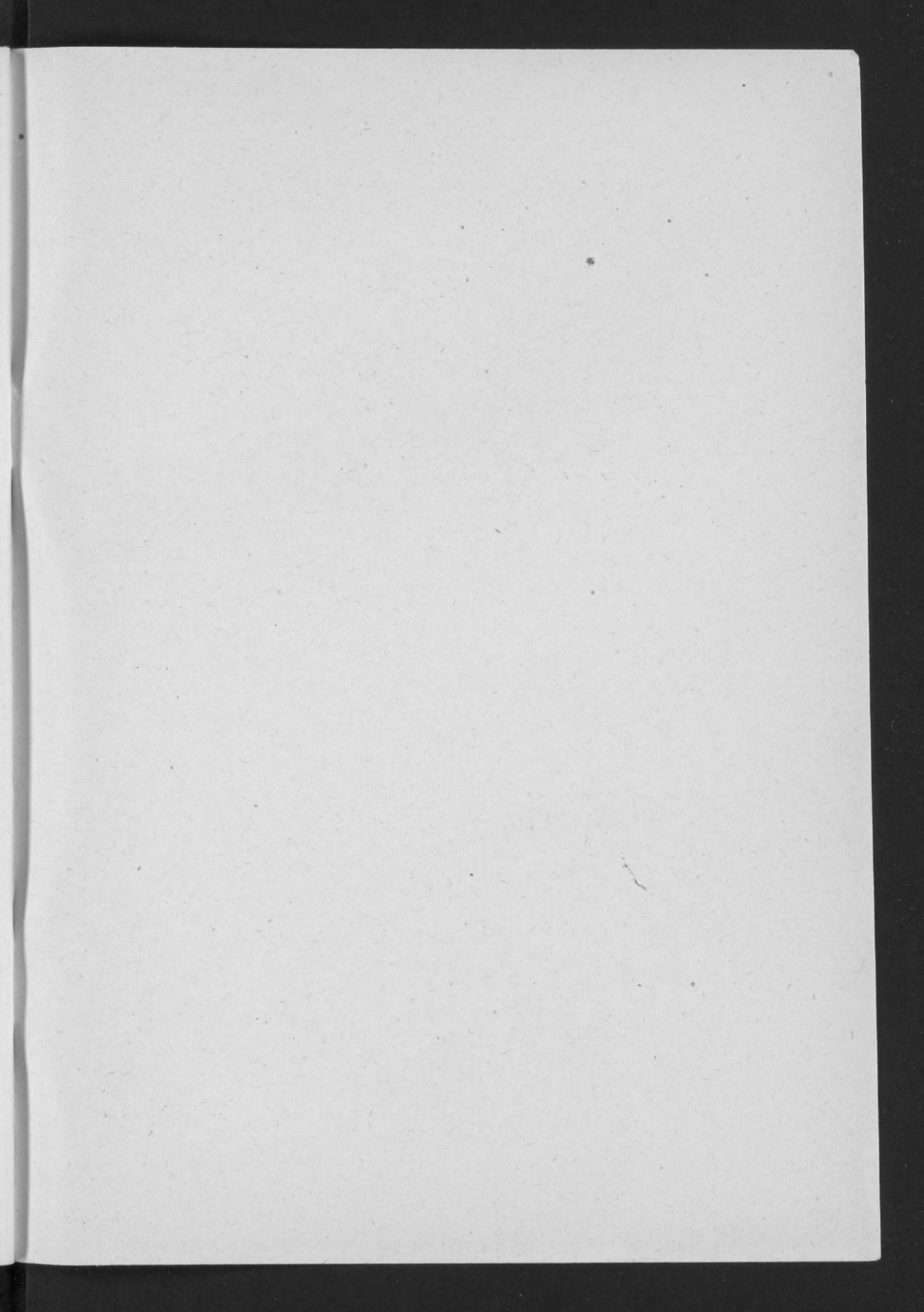
Series III takes up specific questions in the Old and the New Testament, and this method is continued in the subsequent Series.

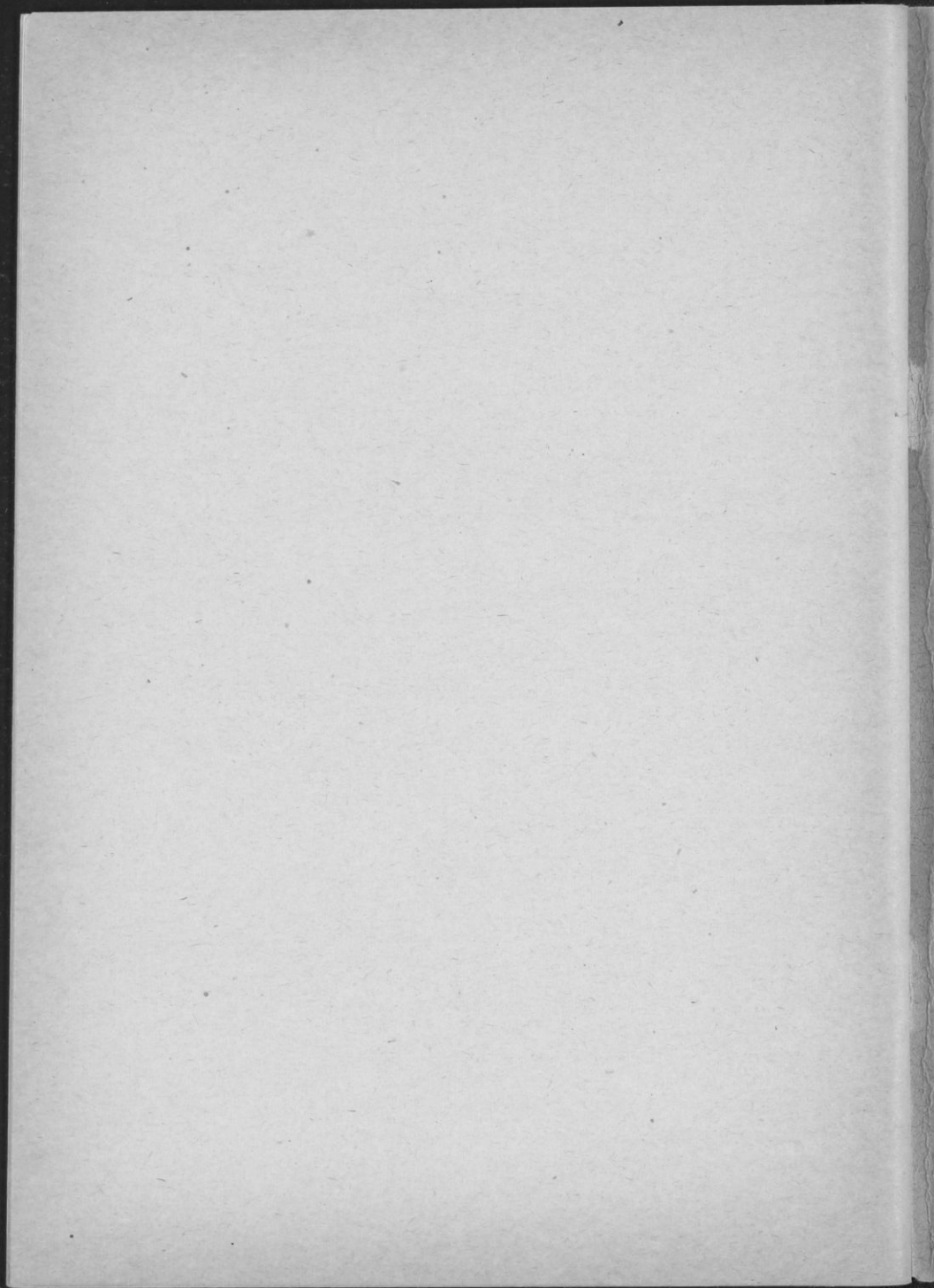
With the permission of the Bruce Publishing Company of Milwaukee, some of the materials in the Series are taken from our work, *Biblical Questions, Old Testament*, a book which is now out of print. We also wish to express our gratitude to St. Anthony's Guild of Paterson, New Jersey, for permission to incorporate into these booklets materials found in our volume "*Biblical Questions, Vol. II: New Testament*," published by the Guild, and to use its Scriptural publications in the preparation of these booklets. The Biblical texts are from the Rheims-Douay Version published by the E. M. Lohmann Company of St. Paul. In enunciating the Church's traditional and unchanging dogmatic teachings bearing upon the questions under discussion, we have used as source books J. M. Herve's *Manuale Theologiae Dogmaticae* (Paris, 1924) Vol. II, Tanqueray's *Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae* (Tournai, 1921) Vol. II, and our own work, *The Master Idea of St. Paul's Epistles or the Redemption* (Bruges, 1925).

THE AUTHOR









BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

SERIES I

- I. The Book of Books
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