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THE
Redemption
by

REV. BENEDICT EHMANN

A DISCUSSION CLUB TEXT WITH OUTLINE

Nihil Obstat:

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THE REDEMPTION

A Discussion Club Text with Outline

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REV. BENEDICT EHMANN

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The Creator of man became man

And, like man,

The Bread of Life hungers,
The Living Fount thirsts,
The Light of the World sleeps in swaddling clothes,
And the Way grows weary in the way.

That for man

Truth by lies might be accused,
Justice by injustice condemned,
Strength made weak,
Life crucified.

For all this

God became man
That man may become God.

St. Augustine (354-430).

INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, three Moors of the Moroccan desert were touring in the French Alps. Their guide led them to a tremendous waterfall, roaring over the rocks. They stood rooted in dumbfounded amazement.

"That is all there is to see," the guide said.

"We must wait."

"Wait for what?"

"The end."

They were used to the desert's thirst, the dying caravans maddened for want of water, the miserly oozing of the sparse wells. Water was gold to these men of the hot sands. It was a rare gift of God.

But at this waterfall Nature seemed to have gone mad, recklessly spendthrift with the precious liquid. It could not last. Moroccans would do a year's penance for one minute's flow of this prodigal cataract.

* * * *

Once in the early days of His public life, Jesus sat down by the old well of Jacob in Samaria. He was tired and thirsty from His journey on the dusty roads. He asked a Samaritan woman to give Him a drink from the pitcher which she had just brought. Because He belonged to an alien race, she hesitated. He said:

If thou didst know the gift of God, and Who He is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou perhaps would have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water (John iv. 10).

This pamphlet has been prepared to help you "know the gift of God" which is yours in the Redemption . . . to help you stand in grateful wonder before "the fountains of the Saviour" which our generous God has made to flow through the desert of this life.

It may have been a long time since you reviewed the doctrine of the Redemption. You cannot be a genuine Christian unless you have its essence by heart. Pray to the Holy Ghost each time you attempt to study or discuss it, and to Mary, Mother of our Redeemer, "who kept all these words, pondering them in her heart."



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CHAPTER I

GOD'S PLAN: THE OLD TESTAMENT

Doctrine: God raised Adam, the father of the human race, to the state of grace, *i. e.*, a supernatural sharing of God's nature. Adam's sin lost this grace for himself and all his posterity. But God decreed to restore it to man through His own Son. In order to prepare for the coming of His Son, He established a Covenant with a chosen people. Because this Covenant was incomplete and preparatory, it is called the Old Testament.

INTRODUCTION—GOD'S PLAN: A TESTAMENT OF LIFE

PART I. 1. Adam's Part.

2. Adam's Sin.

3. Our Loss in Adam.

PART II. The Divine Son in Adam's Place.

PART III. The Preparation for the Coming of the Saviour.

1. The Old Testament.

2. The Temple.

3. The Sacrifices.

4. The End of the Preparation.

INTRODUCTION

A Testament of Life

Imagine that some leader of your community announces you as the beneficiary of all his insurance policies. He is deeply interested in you. He is anxious to secure and promote your future.

"Quite overwhelming, if true," you say. "But quite as incredible! One chance in a million! Why waste time on a day-dream?"

However, there is a marvelous plan for our future, which is no day-dream. It was made by God Himself. So great and wonderful was it that God spent many centuries in unfolding it to the world. It was like a deep secret, of which God kept giving hints and clues, until He told it all in the Person of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is the record of these hints and clues. The New Testament is the record of the full revelation.

The plan is as deep in power as it is simple in words: God gives His Son to us, and the Son gives His life to us, to make us sons of God. God becomes one with us, that we may become one with Him. God becomes partaker of our humanity, that we may become sharers of His Divinity. Through Jesus, true God and true Man, we are united by what He has in common with us, to what He has in common with God. In Jesus Christ, all those who receive Him are born into the life of God.

This great Testament of divine life which Jesus sealed with His own Blood is the great glory of our faith. It seals our relationship with God by covenant. Christians are not people who are merely seeking after God; they are people to whom God has given possession of Himself by a guaranteed and sworn covenant.

But if we are to appreciate this covenant, we must go back to the beginning and trace its history.

I

Adam's Part

God made Adam the father of our race, the first repository or container (so to speak) of human nature. From Adam, human nature would be multiplied in its thousands and millions until the end of time.¹

God gifted human nature, in Adam, with a share in His own divine life. This gift of divine life is called "grace," to remind us of the love and free choice which moved God to grant it to man. If Adam were to remain faithful, he would transmit this "grace," along with his life, to his descendants.

Adam's Sin

We know that Adam sinned. He forfeited his "grace," and incurred the wrath of God. He sinned as the father and representative of the race, and transmitted his liability to his descendants. We understand, of course, that the actual guilt of sin cannot be inherited. When our Faith teaches us that we inherit original sin, we ought to understand that we do not inherit Adam's personal guilt. What we do inherit from our first father is his being disbarred, disqualified, from the life of grace. We are the children of an outcast, born into the world with his mark upon us.

¹ The question of evolution must be noticed here, if only to clear up the following points:

1. That there is nothing against faith in supposing that the body of Adam was produced by animal evolution. The whole question of *human* evolution is still only a theory, and the Church asks us not to say things on the matter of which a true scientist would not approve;

2. That the soul of Adam, being a spirit, could not have been produced by evolution, but was directly created by God, and infused into Adam's body (whether that body was produced by evolution or made directly by God);

3. That Adam is the only father of the human race—a fact which is indirectly revealed in the doctrines of Original Sin and Redemption. The great differences in racial types are taken by leading ethnologists (*e. g.*, Wilhelm Schmidt) as explainable by differences in climate, food, modes of work, etc.

Our Loss in Adam

Because of Adam's sin, our human nature was tainted at its source. Disorder set in to upset the order implanted by the Creator. In turning against God, man found that he had turned himself against himself; he became an enemy to himself, his flesh battling against his soul, his soul struggling against the flesh.

. . . The good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do (Romans vii. 19).

In turning against God, man also found that he was turned against his own fellow man, brother locked against brother, family against family, nation against nation, race against race, in bitter feud. Hardly has Adam's sin been announced in the Bible, when we read of the murder of Abel by his brother Cain, and of the division of tongues at the tower of Babel.

Seemingly, God's loving plan is thwarted. The treasure of grace is rejected. The race of man is outcast, divided against itself, driven by concupiscence, biassed against God.

II

The Divine Son in Adam's Place

But "where sin abounded, grace did more abound" (Romans v. 20). God's thoughts were "thoughts of peace, and not of affliction" (Jeremias xxix. 11). Foreseeing the fall of man, God's plan decreed a wonderful restoration. This restoration was to be a masterpiece of God's wisdom and love. In power and beauty it would far surpass the original "grace" of Adam.

This time God Himself would come personally to fulfill His plan. He would take the place forfeited by Adam. He would become the Head of a restored human race. Taking on human flesh, and becoming man, He would pay the

debt of sin by dying in that flesh, and so restoring to man the "grace" of Divine Life.

It is this which gives the answer to those people who complain that God was unjust to create the race of man, knowing that it would sin; or to permit men to be born with the liability of original sin. God did not cause man's sin or his liability; He permitted it. And in permitting it, He was foreseeing at the same time the wonderful work of Redemption, and the tribute of a Redeemed Race.

That which we have now in Grace Restored is more wonderful than what we would have had in Original Grace. Each day in the Mass the Church prays:

O God, Who, in creating human nature, didst wonderfully dignify it, and hast still more wonderfully renewed it . . . (*Offertory Prayer*).

And on Holy Saturday, the eve of the Resurrection, the Church sings, in inspired language:

. . . it availed us nothing to be born, unless it had availed us to be redeemed. O how admirable is Thy goodness towards us! O how inestimable is Thy love! Thou hast delivered up Thy Son to redeem Thy servant. O truly necessary sin of Adam, which the death of Christ has blotted out! O happy fault, that merited such and so great a Redeemer!—(*Blessing of Easter Candle*.)

III

The Preparation for the Coming of the Saviour

It was the will of the Father that man should pass through a long Advent of preparation before the coming of the Saviour. Whether it was 4,000 years or 40,000 years from Adam to Christ is immaterial; in any case it was a long novitiate of pain and longing and bitter need in

which the human millions were groping toward their release.

The Old Testament is the panorama of this preparation. God stands out in it as a wonderful Teacher keeping alive in His human family the hope of a Redeemer, and in the mouth of His patriarchs and prophets building up by little and little the picture of the Messiah.

In the Old Testament God appears as a Divine Dramatist, with the whole world for His stage, raising up heroic leaders, directing His people through the ruins of dynasties and kingdoms, hammering at them with calamity and exile, hewing at their stubborn souls with the words of His prophets, enticing them and cajoling them as with the tenderness of a mother, never letting them forget that their destiny was the birth of the Messiah from Whom blessing would go forth to the whole world.

The Old Testament

God guarantees His plan with His chosen people by making it a Covenant, establishing it in Abraham, sealing it in the blood of circumcision, renewing it again and again as the centuries move on, confirming it with a ritual and a sacrifice and the revelation of the Ten Commandments. Truly God's chosen people were a people of Covenant, prepared for the destined moment when the Messiah would come, to fulfill the Old Testament with a New Testament, sealed in His Blood, and to bequeath to the lost race of man His own life.

The Temple

The great shrine of the chosen people was the Temple at Jerusalem. Its ritual sacrifices and ceremonial were ordained by God Himself in the time of Moses. Its most sacred sanctuary was called the Holy of Holies, and contained the Ark of the Covenant, a visible memorial of God's Testament and living Presence among them. No one was

ever allowed to enter into the Holy of Holies, except the High Priest—and he, only once a year, during the feast of the Passover, bringing in the blood of the paschal lamb and sprinkling the Holy of Holies with it.

The Sacrifices

Outside the Holy of Holies there were two other courts of worship: in one of them there was an altar of incense always burning, together with a table holding what were called the loaves of proposition, which were renewed every Sabbath day; in the other court was the altar of holocausts, on which burnt-offerings were offered up to God every day.

These official sacrifices were intended by God to keep the memory of His Covenant alive among His people, and at the same time to instruct and prepare them for the New Covenant which was to come. Through them the people pledged their fidelity to God, and God ratified His Testament to His people. In the blood of the sacrificed victims, God accepted the lives of His people, and sealed His Covenant with them.

The End of the Preparation

At last came the "fullness of time" for which the Old Testament had been made. All these former things were but shadows of the substance which was to come. They were only types and symbols of the better gifts which God would give to His people in a New Testament—a Testament which was to be ratified and sealed, not with the blood of animals, but with the Blood of God's own Son.

When the fullness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, that He might redeem them who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. . . . (Galatians iv. 4, 5.)

Questions

Introduction

1. What is God's plan for the human race?
2. What is the covenant called which God made with His people before the coming of Christ?

Part I

1. In what state was Adam created by God?
2. What do you call the sharing of Adam in God's life?
3. Would Adam have transmitted the gift of God to us if he had not sinned?
4. Do we inherit Adam's personal sin?
5. What is original sin in us?

Part II

1. Who was to take Adam's place as the supernatural head of our race?
2. How was this head of our race to satisfy God for sin?
3. Prove by quoting the Offertory prayer and the prayer used on Holy Saturday that we are now in a higher state of grace than Adam was before his fall.

Part III

1. What people were chosen by God to prepare the world for the coming of the Redeemer?
2. How did God little by little build up the expectation of the coming Redeemer?
3. Where was the great sanctuary of the Jews located?
4. What was the purpose of the sacrifices of blood victims in the Jewish religion?
5. What was the true religion in the time of the Old Testament?

CHAPTER II

GOD'S PLAN: THE NEW TESTAMENT

Doctrine: In the "fullness of time," God sent His Son to redeem the world, and to restore grace to mankind. By His humiliation, suffering, and death, the Redeemer became a Victim and a Mediator for the sins of the world. He fulfilled the Old Testament, and established a New Testament of infinite love and mercy, sealing it with His Blood, making it effective by His death.

INTRODUCTION—THE "FULLNESS OF TIME": THE END OF THE PREPARATION

PART I. The Coming of the Redeemer.

1. A Victim and Mediator.
2. His Humiliation.
3. His Suffering.
4. His Death.

PART II. The Fulfillment of the Redemption.

1. New Life for the World.
2. A New Deliverance.
3. A New People of God.

PART III. The New Testament.

1. Made Effective by Christ's Death.
2. The Annulment of the Old Testament.
3. The Effects of the Redemption.

INTRODUCTION

The Fullness of Time

When the fullness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (Galatians iv. 4, 5).

Jesus taught us about this *fullness of time* in a dramatic parable:

A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it out to husbandmen: and he was abroad for a long time.

And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard. Who, beating him, sent him away empty.

And again he sent another servant. But they beat him also, and treating him reproachfully, sent him away empty.

And again he sent the third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out.

Then the lord of the vineyard said: What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be, when they see him, they will reverence him.

Whom when the husbandmen saw, they thought within themselves, saying: This is the heir, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.

So casting him out of the vineyard, they killed him. What, therefore, will the lord of the vineyard do to them?

He will come, and will destroy these husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others (Luke xx. 9-16).

I

The Coming of the Redeemer

The Jewish prophecies were ripe for fulfillment. The pagan sages felt that the order of the ages was rising to some great and blessed event. The heart of the world was pregnant with the hope of a golden age. After centuries of war and conquest, there came at last that celebrated peace which will always live in the history books as the *Pax Romana*. It was the *fullness of time*, and God sent into the world His beloved Son.

The coming of the Divine Son was as strange as it was remarkable. His birthplace was a stable, outside a despised town, in a remote and despised colony of the Roman Empire. His parents were poorest of the poor, forgotten relics of a royal family.

"He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant," St. Paul tells us (Philippians ii. 7).

Victim and Mediator

From the very first moment of His Incarnation, the Son of God comes to spend Himself, to give Himself, to undergo suffering. In the Blessed Trinity, He had offered Himself to the Father as a Mediator and Victim for sinful man. But to act as Mediator and Victim, He must become a man. It was man who had contracted the debt of sin; only a man could pay it off, representing all his fellow men. But the debt was infinite, since it was God against whom man had sinned, and only God could restore with a payment of infinite value.

It looked like a hopeless dilemma for man, but the love of God found a way. The Son of God would become a man. He would undergo the brunt of the Father's jus-

tice. He would offer up His life in payment of the debt of sin. As man, He could take the human debt upon Himself; as God, He could give His payment an infinite value, fully satisfying to the Father.

Mercy and truth have met each other: justice and peace have kissed (Psalm lxxxiv. 11).

His Humiliation

Even if the Son of God had taken a human nature without any of its handicaps or hardships, that would still have been an "emptying" and a humiliation beyond any power of ours to imagine. Our human nature has a certain beauty and nobility which set it high in the order of created beings. But, by comparison with the Being of God, it is allied to darkness and nothingness.

A few years ago, a royal prince visited the slum homes of a mining district. Many a time he had to overcome his revulsion to dirt and foul odors and ugliness. Suppose, instead of just visiting these slum derelicts, he had abdicated his royal living to become one of them, and live their life—a whole lifetime of disgust and nausea for his refined nature.

This gives us only a dim picture of what it meant for the Divine Son to invest Himself with our human nature. The only word which St. Paul can find to express the sheer power and wonder of this condescension of God is that

He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant.

His Suffering

But the love of the Saviour went further than that. He subjected His human nature to lowliness and poverty, to humiliation, to shame and reviling, "even to the death of the cross" (Philippians ii. 8). "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends," Jesus told His apostles on the eve of His death (John xv. 13).

As a Victim for sin, it is natural to find that all of Jesus' life was a reversal of that perverseness which had caused man's sin. To man's pride, Jesus opposed His humility; to man's lust, Jesus opposed His love; to anger, His meekness; to greed, His poverty; to revenge, His patience; to luxury, His suffering; to hatred, His charity.

This explains the whole way of Jesus' life from Bethlehem to Calvary: it is a way of expiation and regeneration. This perverseness of man is a legacy from Adam. Jesus comes to take Adam's place, to be the Royal Head of a new race, to purge the spoiled blood of Adam with a second birth in His own Blood. He comes to recreate a "new man" and to show a new way of life free of the perverseness of sin—a way of peace, of humility, of patience, and of charity.

His Death

But in living this new way of life, Jesus comes into conflict with the old and perverse way of sin. It rises up to oppose Him; it hates Him; it attempts to overpower Him. "This is your hour, and the power of darkness," Jesus says to His enemies when they come out to seize Him in Gethsemane (Luke xxii. 53). He succumbs to its fury. It is the death-grapple of Good and Evil, and the fate of man hangs in the balance. In pain and blood, "with a strong cry and tears" (Hebrews v. 7), Jesus dies. It is the Feast of the Passover, when the high priest in the temple enters the Holy of Holies with the blood of the paschal lamb to commemorate the ancient deliverance of God's chosen people out of Egypt.

II

The Fulfillment of the Redemption

Never has Evil enjoyed a greater victory than this in which it brought God to shameful death. But at this moment of its greatest victory, it suffered its greatest defeat.

Out of the death it has inflicted comes forth the Life which defeats it. Foretelling His death, Jesus had said,

Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit (John xii 24, 25).

When Peter had protested to the Saviour that He should never undergo sufferings and death, Jesus answered,

Thou savorest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men (Matthew xvi. 23).

And after His Resurrection, on the way to Emmaus, Jesus upbraids the two puzzled disciples,

O foolish, and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken.

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory? (Luke xxiv. 25, 26.)

New Life for the World

It was the plan of God that the Saviour should become the Source of the new life by undergoing death. It was a masterful stroke of Divine Wisdom that the Son of God should turn the course of sin against itself. Adam had sought to become like God by eating of the forbidden tree, and had brought death into the world. The Son of God became man, suffered death on the tree of Calvary, and restored Life to the world.

Dying upon His Cross on the Passover Feast, the Saviour beholds with His divine glance the "former things" of the Old Testament. He sees the ancient Israelites when they were slaves in Egypt, laboring under a bitter yoke; He remembers their deliverance under Moses—how God commands them, before they depart, to offer up in each of their families a lamb for a sacrifice; how they flee, tens of thousands of them, toward the Promised Land; how the

Red Sea is divided to let them pass over, dry-shod, and how its walls of water come together to engulf their enemies; how they complained in the wilderness, and hankered once more for the fleshpots of Egypt, so that the Lord God condemned them to forty years wandering; how the Lord fed them with manna, and guided them in the cloud and in the pillar of fire; how they came, at the end of their penance, into the Land of Promise.

The New Deliverance

All these things Jesus sees in review before His soul as He hangs on Calvary, offering His life for the sins of the world. In the Holy City, the lambs of the Passover festival are being sacrificed, and all pious Jews are recalling their ancient deliverance and the Old Testament which God had given to their fathers. But outside the walls, on the little mound of Calvary, hangs the true Lamb of God. It is the sacrifice of a new deliverance and a new Passover.

A New People of God

The people of this new deliverance are to be gathered, not only from the Jews, but from all the nations of the world. The bondage in which they are chained is that of sin. But they are purchased and ransomed by the Blood of Jesus, and brought into the freedom of the children of God. Not, however, until they have paid their own debt of sin by death will they enter into the Promised Land. For the time of this life, they must pass through the wilderness of this world. But God nourishes them with a heavenly Bread, and leads them with His word and His law.

III

The New Testament

They are a Redeemed People, purchased by Jesus with His Blood and belonging to Him. The Old Testament is

now annulled, and a new and greater Testament is given to man. In this New Testament, Jesus bequeaths us His Divine Life. He ratifies it and seals it with His Blood.

This is My Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins (Matthew xxvi. 28).

Made Effective by Christ's Death

Jesus makes His Testament effective by His death.

. . . (Christ) is the mediator of the New Testament: that by means of His death, for the redemption of those transgressions, which were under the former Testament, they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where there is a testament, the death of the testator must of necessity come in (Hebrews ix. 15, 16).

In this New Testament, the Father promises all those who are joined to His Son complete reconciliation and peace.

In Christ it hath well pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, making peace through the Blood of His cross (Colossians i. 19, 20).

The Annulment of the Old Testament

We are told in the Gospel that, at the death of our Redeemer, the great veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom. We may see in this a sign from God that the Old Testament is annulled. No longer is there need for the Jewish high priest to enter the Holy of Holies with the blood of the paschal lamb: from now on, the divine High Priest, Jesus Christ, presents to the Father His own Blood—the Blood of the Lamb of God. No longer is there need for sacrifices and burnt-offerings of animals for sin: the Divine Victim has been slain in a Perfect Sacrifice.

For the former things are passed away. Behold I make all things new (Apocalypse xxi. 4, 5).

The Effects of the Redemption

It will be helpful to conclude this chapter with the following "digest" of the effects of the Redemption:

1. *Liberation from sin.*

He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood (Apocalypse i. 5).

When you were dead in your transgressions, . . . He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, and blotted out the written bond of the decrees against us, which was adverse to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross (Colossians ii. 13, 14, Father Spencer's translation).

2. *Release from the power of the devil.*

"Now is the judgment of the world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself (John xii. 31, 32).

3. *Payment of the debt of punishment due to sin.*

. . . (God) spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all (Romans viii. 32).

For the wickedness of My people have I struck Him (Isaias liii. 8).

4. *Reconciliation with the Father.*

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life (Romans v. 10).

5. *The union of all the Redeemed in Christ's life.*

I pray . . . that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us.

And the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one, as We also are one (Jesus' Prayer at the Last Supper—John xvii. 20-22).

6. *The opening of Heaven.*

We have therefore, brethren, a confidence in the entering into the Holies by the Blood of Christ (Hebrews x. 19).

Questions

Introduction

1. What is meant by the clause: "When the fullness of time was come . . ."?

Part I

1. In what country and town was the Redeemer born?
2. Why did the Redeemer have to be both God and man to satisfy for man's sins?
3. Explain St. Paul's words: "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant."
4. What other things did Christ suffer for our sake?
5. As a rebuke to what sins did Christ undergo poverty, humility, and suffering?
6. Explain Christ's words to His enemies in the Garden of Gethsemane: "This is your hour and the power of darkness."

Part II

1. Explain Jesus' words about the grain of wheat in the ground: "But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."
2. How did Jesus' death bring life to us?
3. Why is Jesus called the Lamb of God?

4. Explain the resemblance between the deliverance of the Chosen People from Egypt and the deliverance of the Redeemed from sin by Jesus.
5. From whom did Christ recruit the new people of God.

Part III

1. By Whose Blood are we redeemed?
2. What did Christ mean when He said at the Last Supper: "This is My Blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins"?
3. When was the Old Testament annulled?
4. What is the New Testament?
5. Name six effects of the Redemption. Quote a Scripture text for each one.

CHAPTER III

THE LIVING CHURCH

Doctrine: The Redeemed, the new people of God, receive a sharing in the life of Christ. This is accomplished by Baptism. Christians are a living Church, vitally united with Christ, as branches with the vine, or as members of the body with the head. Christ is the Life of the Church. The Church is Christ in His members, continuing the work of the Redemption until the consummation of the world.

INTRODUCTION—GOD DWELLS AMONG US

PART I. New Life in the "Second Adam."

1. Birth of the New People of God by Baptism.
2. Sharing the Christ-Life.

PART II. The "Good News" of Salvation.

1. The Vine and the Branches.
2. The Body: Head and Members.
3. The Whole Christ.

PART III. The Catholic Church: The Body of Christ.

1. The Work of the Church.
2. Evil in the Church.

INTRODUCTION

God Dwells Among Us

A familiar verse says:
God's in His heaven,
All's right with the world!

But that is only one half of God's "good news." The other and the better half tells us that God's in His world . . . that He "dwells among us" . . . that He takes up His abode in our hearts.

I

New Life in the "Second Adam"

Jesus came to restore the fallen race of Adam, but only on condition that He would become the Head of the race He redeemed. Jesus thus became "the second Adam." The first Adam had forfeited his right to transmit eternal life to his children. Jesus took his place, paid his debt, and received the right to transmit eternal life to all those who desire it.

As by one man sin entered the world, and through sin death, and so death extended to all men inasmuch as all sinned—much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the One Man, Jesus Christ, overflow upon the many.

Even as, by the transgression of one, sentence was passed upon all men to their condemnation, thus also, by the righteousness of One, grace was offered to all men to justification of life.

As by the disobedience of the one man, the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of the One, the many shall be rendered just (Romans v. 12, 15, 18, 19, Father Spencer's translation).

There is now an everlasting agreement between the Father and the Son that when any child of Adam's race, even though guilty of the vilest sins, turns in sincere repentance and love to his Redeemer, he is at the very moment reborn into the life of Jesus. He becomes one with God's Son; the Father's anger is reconciled, and now He says of the sinner, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased," even as He once said it of Jesus (Matthew iii. 17). For Jesus and the converted sinner are one.

Sharing the Christ-Life

The redeemed are all those who are baptized into the life of the Redeemer. God pours into their souls a sharing in the life of His Son Jesus. Because this baptism is a giving of life, Jesus called it a birth.

Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit (John iii. 5, 6).

And St. John writes, in the foreword of his Gospel,

As many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name. Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (i. 12, 13).

When the priest blesses the baptismal water on Holy Saturday, he says a prayer which clearly shows that the holy fountain of baptism has power to give birth:

May the Holy Spirit by the secret infusion of His divine power make fruitful this water that we have prepared, for the giving a new birth unto men; so that, conceived in holiness, from the stainless womb of this

most sacred font a heavenly offspring may come forth, reborn into a new creation; and that those whom sex may divide in body, or age in years, Grace their mother may bear, all equally, unto one new childhood (C. T. S. pamphlet, "Holy Saturday Morning Service," translated and edited by Rev. C. C. Martindale, S.J.).

By our first birth, from our parents, we are born as children of Adam, sharing the dispossessed human life of which he was the original father.

By our second birth, in baptism, we are born as children of God, sharing the life of Jesus, and entering into a divine family.

II

The "Good News" of Salvation

This is what the first Christians meant by the word Gospel. It was the "good-spell"—the "good news" of salvation. Open your Bible to the Epistles of St. Paul, or to the Acts of the Apostles, and read for yourselves what joy those early Christians took in their Redemption. We find that the same joy carries over into the writings of the Fathers, and into the Acts of the Martyrs. Nothing was too terrible for them to face, for they knew that they bore the Lord God in their bodies.

If God be for us, who is against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? But in all these things we overcome, because of Him that hath loved us.

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans viii. 31, 35, 37-39).

As for ourselves, we cannot hope to make this great Gospel of love our own if we do not dwell upon it, or turn it over in our minds, or pray about it to the Holy Spirit. We must bring to it a reverent and attentive spirit, and not expect to pick it up between supper and a movie.

The Vine and the Branches

Listen to how Jesus taught it to His disciples. Like a good teacher, He used a familiar picture to bring it home to them. The time was the Last Supper, and Jesus was giving His chosen twelve the deepest secrets of His love.

I am the vine; you the branches. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing.

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me (John xv. 5, 4).

Like wild branches, cut out of the stock of Adam, we have been engrafted into the Vine of Christ, and we grow now and bear fruits of goodness in Him. When they are cut off from the vine, the branches wither and die; but when they are part of the vine, they live with its life and bear its fruit. So it is with us in the Vine of Christ: we live with His life, and bear His fruit.

The Body: Head and Members

The Apostle Paul learned this lesson in a dramatic way. He had been a persecutor of the infant Christian Church. One day he was on his way to Damascus with writs of arrest to be served on some of the Christians there. On the road, an invisible force toppled him off his horse to the ground, and a blazing light struck him blind; and from the light a voice cried, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Paul asked, "Who art Thou, Lord?" The voice replied, "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest" (Acts of the Apostles ix. 4, 5).

He became a Christian, changed his name to Paul, and went for five years into the desert of Arabia to reorganize his whole life; there he learned the new Gospel, as he tells us, "by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians i. 12).

His whole missionary life from that time on was one long and perilous adventure to preach the great tidings which came to him on the Damascus road: that Christ is in His Christians . . . that Christ and His Christians are one . . . that you strike at Christ when you strike at His Christians.

The image that St. Paul used most to describe this oneness of Christ and His Christians is the image of the human body.

As the body is one, and hath many members; and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body, so also is Christ.

You are the body of Christ, and members of member (1 Cor. xii. 12, 27).

Surely St. Paul did not mean that Christians were members of Christ's physical body—the body that suffered and died, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, where it now sits at the right hand of the Father. What then could he have meant?

When the father of a family sees his little flock around him, he can say within himself, "This is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh: this family is my body."

If Adam is given a vision of the human race, he can say, "These are bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh: this multitude of nations is my body." But they are Adam's body only in the natural order. By his original sin, Adam lost the privilege of transmitting the life of supernatural grace in the process of generation. He remained the physical father of the race, but lost his position as spiritual father of the family of God.

It was this lost position as Head of the family of God which Jesus came to fill. He had within Himself the supernatural life which was being restored to Adam's race. He offered up that life as a ransom and as a gift. From that time on, it is transmitted to man by a second birth—a spiritual birth, by faith and baptism.

The Whole Christ

As Jesus beholds this family of the Redeemed and of the Reborn, He can say, "These are members of My Body, of My Flesh, and of My Bones (*cf.* Ephesians v. 30). Through My Blood, they are reborn into My life. To nourish them, I give them My Flesh to eat, and My Blood to drink. Truly, My life courses through them. I am their Head, and they are My Body."

It is the time-honored custom to call this body of Christ, His "Mystical" Body, to signify a communication and a communion of life between Jesus and His members, which cannot be seen by physical observation: it is hidden under visible realities, in much the same way as the grace of the sacraments is hidden under visible signs.

But those people who find some difficulty with the idea of "the Mystical Body of Christ" may find their problem somewhat simpler if they use the phrase "the Social Body of Christ."

Here, then, you have the proper concept of the Catholic Church. It is a living organism. Its life is the "fullness of Christ." Externally, it is the congregation of all the Redeemed. Internally, it is Christ in His Social Body.

St. Augustine's forceful words come to mind on this point:

The Whole Christ is head and body. The head is the only-begotten Son of God; the body is His Church. Like bridegroom and bride, they are two in one flesh (*The Unity of the Church*, ix. 341).

III

The Catholic Church: The Body of Christ

The Catholic Church is not merely a memorial of the past. It is a miracle of the living present. It is Christ always in the world, living and growing in His Christians until, at the end of time, He will present to His Father His completed Body (His "pleroma," or "fullness," as St. Paul calls it).

It is only in the light of this great truth that we can really understand the history of the Church. If you consider the Church merely as an efficient and complex organization with a certain code and ceremonial, you are missing the main point about it. But if you regard the Church as Christ in the world extending His Incarnation and Redemption until the end of time, then its whole history resolves itself into an awe-inspiring pattern.

The Work of the Church

In all her missionaries, from Peter and Paul to the lonely Gospel-bringers of today's outposts, it is Christ still preaching the holy Word. In all her popes and bishops, from Peter to Pius XII, from the Apostles to the living bishops of today, it is Christ still holding the power of the keys, and giving the commandments of life. In all her priests, it is Christ still giving the word of forgiveness, still offering His Calvary to His Father, still feeding the faithful with the Bread of life. In all her words of charity, it is Christ ever "going about, doing good," bringing God's comfort and healing. In all her sufferings and persecutions, it is Christ still buffeted and spat upon, driven along the way of His Cross, and crucified. In all her vindications and perennial youth, it is Christ still rising from His tomb unto new glory.

Evil in the Church

And what of her scandals? Of course, some of them are painted much worse than they are by her enemies; we must always be careful to hew close to the facts. But even so, what are we to say? How is it possible to see Christ at work in the midst of scandals?

But, even in His visible life on earth, Jesus worked in the midst of scandals—the scandal of His disciples' incredulity, of Peter's denial, of Judas's treachery. He, the very Son of God, was borne in the arms of the evil spirit during His temptations in the wilderness. The kingdom of the Church, He tells us, is like a net which catches bad fish as well as good; it is like a field, where an enemy oversows the wheat with cockle, and both are allowed to grow until the harvest.

If a person objects to the idea of Christ incorporated in His Church when that Church has members, and even rulers, who were men of great sin, he is like the Pharisees who objected to Christ's consorting with publicans and sinners. Let such a person ponder on Jesus' immortal reply, "I am not come to call the just, but sinners" (Matthew ix. 13).

In conclusion: Jesus is not only the Teacher of the Church, giving it the Wisdom of God; nor is He only the Ruler of the Church, giving it commandments for its way to God. He is also the Life of the Church, making it one Body with Himself, identifying Himself with that Body, and fulfilling His mission through it in all nations until the end of time.

Questions

Part I

1. Why is Christ called the "second Adam"?
2. Through Whom did sin and death enter the world?

3. Through whom did eternal life and forgiveness come?
4. In whom are all Christians united and made one?
5. Through what Sacrament does this uniting occur?
6. Quote two texts from the New Testament which show that there is a rebirth in Baptism.
7. What do the words "born of God" mean?

Part II

1. What does the word "Gospel" mean?
2. Read Jesus' words on the "Vine and the Branches."
3. Explain the comparison which Jesus made by these words.
4. What words of Jesus to St. Paul show us how closely we are united to Christ?
5. Read the Bible passage in which St. Paul describes the oneness of the members of Christ.
6. What is the name given to this communion of life between Jesus and His members?
7. Quote St. Augustine's words on "the Whole Christ."
8. What did St. Augustine mean by "the Whole Christ"?

Part III

1. How is Jesus the Life of the Church?
2. How ought we to picture the history of the Church in the world?
3. Name two scandals that occurred among the apostles.
4. Explain the scandals in the Church by using Christ's parable of the wheat and the cockle.

CHAPTER IV

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Doctrine: By mortal sin, the Christian severs the life-line of sanctifying grace between himself and Christ. He loses the Christ-Life. He becomes a dead branch on the Vine of Christ—a dead member of the Body of Christ. But if he is repentant, God's mercy forgives him through the merits of the blood of Christ. He is reinstated in vital union with Christ, and is made once again a living member of Christ's Body.

INTRODUCTION—THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON (Luke xv. 11-32)

PART I. The Prodigal Christian.

1. His Inheritance Squandered.
2. His Position in God's Family Lost.

PART II. The Repentant Prodigal.

1. God's Search for the Sinner.
2. The Sinner's Contrition.
3. His Confession.

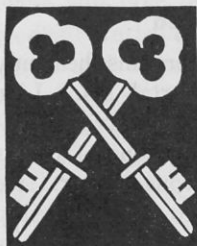
PART III. The Father's Mercy.

1. The Restoration of the Prodigal.

CONCLUSION. Three Wrong Attitudes.

1. Laxity.
2. Scrupulosity.
3. "It's impossible to stay in the state of grace."

INTRODUCTION

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

If being a Christian means being incorporated into Christ and living in Christ's life, we might suppose, offhand, that sin (and, in particular, grievous sin) inflicts more drastic damage in the Christian than in the non-Christian. And we might also suppose that the forgiveness of the Christian's sins is effected under conditions which are

different from the forgiveness of the non-Christian's sins.

It will be the purpose of this chapter to explain the special malice of the Christian's sin, and the special conditions of the Christian's repentance and forgiveness. Christ's parable of the Prodigal Son will serve as a simple and dramatic illustration.²

I

The Prodigal Christian

The prodigal son asks for his share of the inheritance from his father. He goes off with it and spends it wastefully on riotous living. He is finally reduced to such poverty that he must be content to hire out as a feeder of swine.

The Christian receives an inheritance from his Father in heaven. It is a sharing in the inheritance of God's own Son, Jesus. By it the Christian is made one with Jesus, and receives a divine nobility: God lives in him, and he lives in God. At the same time, the Christian is united with his fellow Christians in the bond of Christ's Social Body: the Divine Life circulates through him, and its

² This famous parable is recorded in St. Luke's Gospel, chapter 15, verses 11-32. It should be read in full for the study of this chapter, especially at the beginning of the discussion meeting.

influence goes out from him to the other members, just as it goes out from them to him.

His Inheritance Squandered

Such is the Christian's inheritance from his heavenly Father. Now suppose he commits a mortal sin. Like the prodigal son, he "wastes his substance, living riotously." With sufficient reflection, and full consent of his will, he chooses to disobey God in a grievous matter. He prefers a forbidden satisfaction of self to his fellowship with Christ and with his fellow Christians. He squanders his sharing in the life of Christ, and pays it off to satisfy his own lust of pride or passion. That life was made available to him by Jesus' spending of it in His agony and death: but the prodigal Christian holds cheap his Redeemer's sufferings. Like a gambler with his father's lifetime savings, he stakes all for one evil choice.

As a result, the prodigal Christian is a dead member in the Body of Christ: a dead branch on the Vine of Christ. The life of Christ is no longer in him. No longer does it radiate from him to the other members of Christ's Body. Like a dead limb, he is a burden and a hindrance to the rest of the Body, and he is cut off from all its vitality.

It is hardly enough to say that mortal sin is a grievous offense against God. Of course, it *is* that, and that is terrible enough. But it is more than that for the Christian. It severs the lifeline with Christ; it cuts off from fellowship in Christ's Body; it injures the Church by isolating a precious member, bought with Christ's Blood.

Worst of all, it uses what is Christ's for base purposes. As St. Paul says in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (vi. 15) about one kind of mortal sin:

Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot? God forbid.

His Position in God's Family Lost

The sight of the prodigal son working in the pen of swine will give us some idea of the "come-down" of the prodigal Christian from the state of grace. He is living in shame and disgrace. His inheritance is gone. He is the shadow of his former self, cut off from his home and his father, and from the fellowship of his people. It would not be so bad if he had not had all these good things to begin with. But having all these, and casting them away "in one throw," makes his sin more drastic and more bitter.

It is not God Who has separated Himself from the sinner, but the sinner who has separated himself from God. God cannot give grace back without the consent of the sinner. If the sinner dies, separated from God—a dead member of Christ's Body, a withered branch of Christ's Vine—his will is fixed in his sin for all eternity. God cannot save such a man. The damned soul has damned itself to irrevocable loss. His bitterest punishment in hell is the eternal isolation from his loving Father and from His merciful Redeemer.

There is little point in saying that God is too good to punish so severely. The unrepentant sinner puts a limit, so to speak, on the power of God: he is set against God, and God cannot save Him. We can get a dim idea of what this means when we see a stubborn child refusing all the kind words and comfort of its mother: the mother is powerless. God, of course, is all-powerful, and could force the sinner's will to repentance. But as the gift of God is free, so is it given only to man's free choice. Although love and union with God in Jesus is the Christian's destiny, God will not force that love. But if the Christian refuses it, up to his death, he must face eternal isolation from God. That is hell's worst punishment, and he has no one to blame for it but himself.

II

**The Repentant Prodigal
God's Search for the Sinner**

But God "does not will the death of the sinner, but that he be converted, and live" (Ezechiel xviii. 23). Therefore, God sends him reminders, warnings, hints—in a thousand ways. Passing a church, seeing an accident, getting a letter from his mother, suffering an illness, finding no peace of mind, the sinner hears God tracking him down in the "labyrinthine ways" of his mind and heart.

God caught up with the prodigal son in the swine pen. All things have failed the poor sinner, because he has failed God. What thought does God send him now to wake him up?

How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger!

Now is a critical moment for him. Will he harden his heart, or will he swallow his false pride and admit he is in the wrong? Everything depends now on his answer. If he refuses this call of his father, he may never get another: he may die an outcast.

The Sinner's Contrition

What does he say?

I will arise, and will go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee: I am not worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

This is his act of contrition, sincere and humble. It is not a wish: it is a decision. He rises up, shakes off the slough of his shameful life, and sets his face toward his father.

But what will his father say? Will he close the door against him? Will he take him at his word, and make him

like one of the hired servants? The prodigal son knows that whatever reception he gets he has deserved.

When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck, and kissed him.

No one knows the heavenly Father like Jesus, His Son. How carefully Jesus paints these details in the parable! Surely He is intent on having us understand how rich in mercy His Father is. It would be mercy enough for the prodigal's father to stand on his dignity, to wait until the servants had cleaned off the dirt of the sty from his son, to hold the offender in suspense, and then, finally, after accepting the confession, to give him room and board in the servants' quarters. But his love and his joy are too great for such cold mercy. No sooner does he see the familiar figure coming over the distant hilltop, than he goes out to meet him halfway, to embrace him, and give him the kiss of reconciliation—and this, even before the boy has said a word. "Such," Jesus teaches us, "is My heavenly Father toward His prodigal children."

His Confession

But the confession is necessary. The offender must accuse himself of his misdeeds. Now, in his father's embrace, he repeats the confession he had prepared before he started.

Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son.

The prodigal Christian makes his confession directly to one of God's priests. Some people say, not appreciating God's expressed will, "But why should I confess my sins to a man? I will confess them directly to the Father." That, of course, is choosing one's own way of going back to God. But the Father's will has been made known to

us by Jesus; and Jesus entrusted the ministers of His Church, which is His Body, with the power of forgiving sins.

Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained (John xx. 23).

No matter how private a Christian's sin may be, it has a social consequence. As was said earlier in this chapter, the Christian's sin injures the Body of Christ of which he has been a member; it takes away from the Church his power of merit and grace; it often causes scandal and loss of grace to the other members of the Body. It is fitting, therefore, that confession be made, not only to God, but also to the Church which is Christ's Body on earth. The priest is, at one and the same time, God's minister and the Church's representative in receiving the confession of the Christian.

This explains, also, the meaning of the penance which is assigned to the penitent. In union with Christ's merits, the prayers and good works given as a penance satisfy for the temporal punishment which is still due to sin even after the mortal guilt has been absolved; and at the same time, they help to pay back to the Church the good which was lost to her during the time of sin.

III

The Father's Mercy

After the prodigal's confession, the father's forgiveness is complete and dramatic. He calls his servants:

Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry: because this my son was dead, and is come to life again: was lost, and is found.

The Restoration of the Prodigal

So does the heavenly Father to His prodigal Christians when they have sincerely repented, and confessed their sins. There is no stinginess in the divine Mercy. The first robe of grace again clothes the soul; the ring of the divine union again adorns it; the shoes of the divine protection again shield it from the roughness of the road; the banquet table of the Eucharist is again set for it; and there is joy in the Church, "more than for ninety-nine just who need not penance" (Luke xv. 7).

When the builders were all but finished on the Panama Canal, there remained one last, obstructing dam. To remove it, twelve hundred and twenty-seven drills were used, and forty tons of dynamite. The power was turned on by a switch in the White House, three thousand miles away. One turn of the arm, and two oceans were joined.

The priest's arm traces the sign of the cross in the shadows of the confessional, as he pronounces the words of absolution. Instantly, the ocean of God's mercy meets the ocean of the sinner's misery. Even if the sinner cannot go to confession, but desires with all his heart to do so, and tells God he repents of his sins because they have offended a kind Father's love, God forgives him instantly and restores grace to him, so rich is God's mercy in His Son's sufferings and death.³

CONCLUSION

Three Wrong Attitudes

Despite this bountiful mercy of God, there are many Christians whose attitude toward it is very unjust to Him.

There is the *careless* person, flippant, easy-going, who rushes into, through, and out of confession, on the way to a show or a date. Innocent enough, perhaps, but very

³ Even so, the intention of going to confession must be fulfilled; because it is the will of God that all mortal sins be submitted to sacramental absolution, even though they have already been forgiven by a perfect act of contrition.

childishly thoughtless of Jesus' sufferings and of the heavenly Father's embrace.

Then there is the *scrupulous* person, distressed about his chances of salvation, struggling but never satisfied with his confessions, finding (or thinking he finds) sin in the most innocent occasions. He makes the sacrament of mercy and of peace an instrument of torture for himself. For him the kind father of our parable is a tyrant, easily offended, laying down hard conditions, never satisfied. Since this is not a treatise on scrupulosity, all that can be said here is, that when the trouble has gone very far the *only* remedy is *absolute* obedience to the confessor and *blind trust* in God.

Lastly (and men, particularly, are like this) there is the person who thinks it easy to lose the state of grace, and so he goes to confession the last moment before going home, so that he may be sheltered until Communion the next morning; and then, after Communion, he breathes easier again for another month. *But*: God means the state of grace to be like fresh air and food: His Life flowing through our veins. It is not a hot-house plant that wilts in the heat and cold of daily living. It is a hardy perennial, and if it is torn out of the soul, we have torn it out ourselves, knowingly and deliberately choosing a grievous sin.

Questions

Part I

1. What inheritance does the Christian receive from his heavenly Father?
2. How does the Christian sin against his Father?
3. Why is the Christian who is in mortal sin, a dead "branch" on the Vine of Christ?
4. From what does the Christian in mortal sin cut himself off?

5. What is the punishment of a Christian who dies in mortal sin?
6. Does God force sinners to repent?

Part II

1. What warnings does God send the sinner to call him to repentance?
2. Quote the words of the prodigal son in making up his mind to return to his father.
3. What means must the Christian use in repenting of his sins?

Part III

1. How was the prodigal son received by his father?
2. What two reasons did the father give for rejoicing in the return of his son?
3. How does the heavenly Father receive the sinner?
4. Why can't we merely tell our sins secretly to God, without having to go to confession?
5. What should the Christian do when he cannot get to confession?

Conclusion

1. What is the only remedy for a scrupulous person?
2. What should be the normal state for the Christian, the state of sin or the state of grace? Why?

CHAPTER V

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Doctrine: Christian Worship is the offering of Jesus to the Father, and the offering of ourselves through Jesus.

PART I. The Offering of Jesus to the Father.

1. The Glory of God in Nature.
2. Perfect Glory of God through Jesus.
3. Christ's Devotion to the Father.
4. Christian Worship—"through Jesus Christ our Lord."

PART II. The Offering of Ourselves to the Father.

1. Offering of the Whole Christ—Head and Members.
2. Offering of Self with Jesus.

PART III. The Mass: the Perfect Act of Christian Worship.

1. Offering of the Head to the Father.
2. Offering of the Members to the Father.

I

The Offering of Jesus to the Father

Right before the *Pater Noster* of the Mass, the priest takes the Body of Jesus, holds It over the chalice of the Blood, and says the majestic words:

Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, is to Thee, God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honor and glory.

Meditate seriously on this scene and on those words. They form the real essence of Christian worship. No other religion has anything remotely like it. Without an understanding of it, you cannot have a true notion of Christian prayer.

The Glory of God in Nature

The supreme purpose of life is the glory of God. All creatures were made for the honor and glory of God. Even the creatures without a soul bear silent witness to the glory of their Creator. The Psalmist knew this when he sang,

The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands (Psalm xviii. 1).

Each creature small or great, from stones to stars, is a reflection of the power and beauty of its Maker. It pays tribute to Him, as a fine statue does to its sculptor, or a beautiful painting to its painter.

Higher up in the scale of creation is the realm of creatures with life—the plants and the animals. Since they possess life, they bear greater witness to God's glory. In fulfilling the laws of their being, they give unwitting homage to their Creator.

We cannot have a whole view of the universe, great and small, unless we regard it as a marvelous symphony of order and power and beauty, bearing witness to the glory of God.

God made man the master of this visible world, with a soul to know the True, a will to choose the Good, and a heart to love the Beautiful. Man is the mirror of creation, discovering with his mind its harmony and power. He is the voice of creation, expressing with words of understanding and love its hidden meaning and its silent praise. The Holy Bible says,

Hath not the Lord made the saints to declare all His wonderful works, which the Lord Almighty hath firmly settled to be established for His glory? (Ecclesiasticus xlii. 17.)

Perfect Glory of God Through Jesus

Perfect glory is given to the Father by Jesus, His Son. Even at best, man's praise of God must fall far short of the ideal. The Scripture says,

Glorify the Lord as much as ever you can, for He will yet far exceed, and His magnificence is wonderful (Ecclesiasticus xliii. 32).

The praises of even the noblest philosophers and poets cannot do God justice. They are but men, and God is God: their praises in His presence are like sparks before the sun, or like a child's whisper in the surging music of a symphony orchestra.

But in our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, the Father has given human beings an instrument of perfect worship. As the Son of God, He is the Word in the bosom of the Father Who perfectly expresses the Father's perfections. As the Epistle of the Third Mass on Christmas puts it, He is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the figure of His substance, upholding all things by the word of His

power" (Hebrews i. 3). As man, Jesus is one of us, humbling Himself to the level of our humanity. As God, He is equal to the Father: as man, He is less than the Father, and can offer Him a true worship of humility, submission, and obedience. In Jesus, this worship is perfect, because it comes from the humanity of the God-Man.

Christ, therefore, has at His disposal the *only* worship worthy of the Father.

Christ's Devotion to the Father

It will be instructive for us to consider, even briefly, what the Gospels tell us about Jesus' devotion to His Father. Like a concentrated flame, Jesus' whole being is directed to His Father:

As the Father hath taught Me, these things I speak, and He that sent Me, is with Me, and He hath not left Me alone: for I do always the things that please Him (John viii. 28, 29).

The Will of the Father is the supreme law to Jesus:

Not My will, but Thine be done (Luke xxii. 42).

My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work (John iv. 34).

Jesus' whole mission is to glorify His Father, by restoring all things to Him:

I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do (John xvii. 4).

Jesus came into the world, therefore, not only for our salvation, but also to give glory to His Father. The Redemption is not only Jesus' gift to man, but also His gift to the Father. Through it, He gives to the Father a worship which is without flaw or limit; and at the same time, He gives Himself to man as a Mediator and a High Priest of human worship.

Christian Worship—"Through Jesus Christ Our Lord"

Christ has incorporated His Christians into Himself: He has made them "one Body" with Himself. When they pray, the Father sees Jesus in them, praying with them and for them, and He cannot refuse the face of His beloved Son.

If you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in My Name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full (John xvi. 23, 24).

When the Christian prays, the Father hears the voice of Jesus, for Jesus and His Christian are "one Body," one voice, one worshiper.

We must remember, therefore, that even though Jesus is true God and is, consequently, worthy of divine worship, He has come among us not to be worshiped, but to worship: to unite Himself, the perfect Worshiper, with us poor human beings, so that we may give perfect glory to His Father. In our name, He has satisfied the Divine Justice with His wounds, spending His life's blood to purchase us from the bondage of sin; and in our name, He unites Himself with us to present to the Father a perfect homage of worship.

How well the Church's prayer recognizes this doctrine! Almost all her orations end with the appeal: "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Many of us are very careless when we say this familiar conclusion in our prayers. We should say it thoughtfully, aware of our union with Jesus, and of the power which that gives to our prayer.

II

The Offering of Ourselves to the Father

At this point the thought may bother some people: "This seems like a lazy kind of worship. Jesus makes all

the offering, and all that's left for us to do is to offer up what He has offered. That's like spending someone else's money: it doesn't cost much. It seems that Christian worship should cost *us* something, too, as it did Jesus."

The doctrine of Chapter III gives the answer to this difficulty.

Offering of the Whole Christ

Jesus offers His whole Self to the Father, i. e., Head and members, His Social Body. Jesus offers Himself, not alone as *Head*, but as *Head and members*. When Jesus presents Himself as the perfect offering to His Father, it is His complete self that He presents—Himself united with His members. You and I and every fellow Christian are gathered up into this offering of Jesus.

Offering of Self With Jesus

Now our action, when we offer Jesus to the Father, should correspond to Jesus' action, when He offers us. *When we offer Jesus to the Father, we must offer ourselves with Him.* We belong to Jesus, and we cannot offer Him without at the same time offering ourselves. This demands sacrifice; it demands generosity. Jesus' Sacrifice is complete: so must ours be, in union with Him, holding nothing back.

We do not have to become priests or nuns to do this. Our heavenly Father expects the complete gift of self from every Christian, in union with the gift of His Son, Jesus: ourselves as we are—laborers, housekeepers, students, craftsmen, artists, in youth, in age, in sickness, in health, in poverty, in riches—ashamed of our sins, struggling, maybe falling, but rising again—hopeful and needy human beings. United with Jesus in one Body, we are not ashamed to present ourselves to the Father: as "one with Jesus," we are confident that we are "well pleasing" in the sight of the Father.

The Mass—The Perfect Act of Christian Worship

Hanging on the Cross, His life's Blood pouring out of His wounds for our salvation, our Redeemer completed His perfect offering to the Father. He wished that offering to be perpetual in His Church, and so He instituted the Eucharist as its living memorial. According to His command, His priests consecrate bread into His Body, and wine into His Blood. Each time the Holy Mass is offered, Jesus renews the Victim state of His separated Body and Blood.⁴ The offering of Calvary is made once again on our altar each time a priest celebrates the Holy Mass.

Offering of the Head to the Father

In the Mass, we offer Jesus to the Father. At the Consecration of the Mass, the Victim Body and Blood of our Redeemer become ours to offer to the Father, in adoration, in atonement, in thanksgiving, and in petition. Jesus gives Himself to us as an instrument of divine worship. At that precious time we can say to the Father: "This is Thy beloved Son in Whom Thou art well pleased: hear Ye Him, as we offer Him to Thee, and as He offers Himself for us."

Offering of the Members to the Father

In the Mass, we offer ourselves to the Father through Jesus. At the Offertory, the priest offers up the bread and wine which are to be consecrated into Jesus' Sacrifice. Bread and wine are the traditional symbols of the staff of life: they represent man's nourishment and man's handiwork. For that reason (we may say) Christ chose them as the materials of His great Sacrament.

When the Church, at the Offertory of the Mass, offers

⁴ Not physically, as if He were again nailed and pierced, but sacramentally, "in an unbloody manner."

the bread and the wine to God, she means at the same time to offer us. Our lives are represented by that precious food. Those who are assisting at the Mass are expected to offer themselves at that moment—the life of that day or of that week, with its devotion, its labor, its trials and temptations, its sufferings and its joys. We should place ourselves, in spirit, upon the holy plate and within the sacred cup in which the priest is offering the bread and wine. We should be generous, holding nothing back from the gift of ourselves to the Father.

Now comes the wonderful exchange: Jesus changes our gift of bread and wine into His Body and Blood, by the consecrating words of the priest. At the same moment, He identifies our sacrifice of self with His: He gathers up our labors and sufferings and joys, which we had already presented at the Offertory, and He joins them with His own great Sacrifice of Calvary, and presents ours and His, together, to His Father.

This is the supreme moment of Christian worship. It is the essence of the Christian Liturgy. Mortal man can do nothing more powerful, this side of the grave. Wars and treaties, conquests and discoveries and inventions, have been mighty instruments to change the human destiny of the world. But all of them together cannot be compared with the power of one Mass, in which the redeemed people of God, standing around their priest at the altar of the Holy Sacrifice, offer themselves to the Father in union with Jesus, as the priest lifts the Saviour's sacrificial Body and Blood, and prays,

*Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, is to Thee,
God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy
Ghost, all honor and glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

Questions**Part I**

1. What is the supreme purpose of life?
2. What part does man have in this supreme purpose?
3. What part does Jesus have in giving glory to the Father?
4. How can Jesus, Who is equal to His Father, give adoration to the Father?
5. Repeat three sayings of Jesus which show His devotion to the Father.
6. What does this phrase mean at the end of our prayers, "through Jesus Christ our Lord"?
7. Is this statement right or wrong: "The main object of Christian worship is to adore Jesus"? Give a reason for your answer.

Part II

1. With Jesus as our Mediator before the Father, is any part left to us in Christian worship?
2. Can we offer ourselves to the Father without being joined to Jesus? Explain.

Part III

1. What is the perfect act of Christian worship?
2. At what part of the Mass do we offer ourselves to the Father?
3. How do the gifts of bread and wine express the offering of our lives to the Father?
4. At what part of the Mass does Jesus offer Himself and us to His Father?
5. Why is the Mass the most wonderful thing on earth?

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTIAN LIFE

Doctrine: In his labors, and trials, and death, the Christian expresses the Christ-Life within him. "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." These works benefit the Christian who performs them, by increasing within him the fruits of the Redemption. They also benefit the Church, the Body of Christ, by giving it an increase of grace and energy.

INTRODUCTION. Holy Communion.

1. The Food of the Soul.
2. "Ite Missa Est"—"Go and live the Mass."

PART I. The Christian's Work.

1. His Vocation.
2. His Way to Perfection.
 - (a) Penance.
 - (b) Imitation of Christ.

PART II. The Christian's Suffering.

1. Jesus' Acceptance of Suffering.
2. Suffering—An Instrument of Redemption.
3. Christ Suffers in Us.

PART III. The Christian's Death.

1. Dying with Jesus.
2. Birthday Into Full Life.
3. "Face to Face" with God.

INTRODUCTION

Holy Communion

Our heavenly Father accepts the offering we make to Him at Mass, of Jesus and of ourselves. He knows we will need strength to be faithful to it throughout the pressure and tedium of daily living. So He gives us a Divine Food. It is His gift in return for ours. We have offered Him the Body and Blood of His Son as a Sacrifice. He returns them now as our Food . . . "Come and eat."

Our action at Mass is not complete if we do not go to Holy Communion. We have finished making our gift to God. Now that God is ready to respond to us, by giving us the Flesh and Blood of His Son as our Food, we cut Him short. We stay away from His Table. We as much as say, "I do not want your Gift."

The Food of the Soul

Communion is not a prize for being good. It is Food for the hungry; it is Medicine for the sick; it is Nourishment for the weak. We should not say, "I'm not good enough to go to Holy Communion." Who *is* good enough? No one: not even the holiest priest; not even the Popé. We should rather say, "I'm a poor sinner, wayward and weak—just the kind of unsatisfactory beggar for whom God has made Holy Communion."

The only spiritual conditions which the Church requires of us for receiving Communion are, that we be free of mortal sin,⁵ and that we have a desire for this sacred Food.

⁵ *I. e.*, certain that we are guilty on the three counts: grievous matter, sufficient reflection, full consent.

We will please God, then, if we approach the Holy Table more often, and so complete our part in divine worship.

"Go and Live the Mass"

At the close of the Mass, the priest says to the people, "Ite Missa Est." This is a signal for dismissal, like the tap of a chairman's gavel. But it is at the same time a challenge to the congregation: "Go now, out into your world, and live your Mass. Be a living Eucharist—in your home, on the street, in the shop and office—with your friends, with your superiors, with your fellow workers, with your enemies. You are a living Christ wherever you go. It is in you, and with you, that He still goes about the world, doing good."

This last chapter will develop the theme of the Christ-life as it works itself out in the daily life of the Christian.

I

The Christian's Work

His Vocation

In a certain sense it is true to say that the Christian's vocation is in whatever way of life God's Providence has led him to. For some people, the will of God is expressed in a clear bent of the soul to the religious life, or to marriage, or to some career. For others, the will of God is indirectly manifested by an unavoidable combination of circumstances—for instance, as when a parent becomes an invalid, and no one is left to give support and care except an unmarried son or daughter.

Whatever it may be, the fact remains that the Christian brings to his way of life a special character. It is the character of the Christ-life. He is Christ at work. Christ works with *his* hands, speaks through *his* voice, looks through *his* eyes. It is worse than the Judas-kiss, when his hands do evil, when his lips speak evil, when his eyes

dwell on evil. That is taking Christ's members and using them for Satan.

Does this being a Christ-bearer seem a hard burden? But think of the immense compensations it brings. Our way is hard and toilsome, full of nettles and dust; we grow weary, discouraged; we are battered by temptation; we are beaten hard by life. But Christ is in us. He bears it all with us. He makes it part of His own Calvary. He asks us to bear the cross—not *after* Him, but *with* Him.

In Christ, we are one with the whole Body of our fellow Christians. Our labors are not sterile. Whether it be on the assembly line, or at the mangle of a laundry, or behind the wheel of a truck, if the Christian does his work in union with Christ, it receives a heavenly value from Him, and the power of it goes out from us to our fellow members in Christ's Body. Perhaps economically, or socially, we seem to get nowhere. But spiritually, we are "laying up treasures in heaven."

This community of our labors with those of Christ and of our co-members in His Body gives them a dignity which raises them above the dinginess of their surroundings, and makes them dynamic with spiritual power.

"Workers of the world, unite!" is the Communist rallying cry. The Christian worker knows that he is united with his fellow workers by a stronger bond than that of his drudging work: for he has the bond of kinship with Christ and all Christians. He has more than the brawn and sweat of his body in common with them: he has the life of Christ coursing through his soul. He says to his fellow workers, not "Comrades!" but "Brothers!"

His Way to Perfection

In the Christian's daily living, there is a discipline and an order which are aimed to help him overcome evil habits, and to acquire more and more a likeness to Christ. There are many traces of the old Adam still within us. Our Cate-

chism calls them the seven Capital Sins: Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy, and Sloth. These work the opposite way to the grace that is within us. They are forces on the side of death. Grace is on the side of life.

(a) *Penance*

The issue depends upon us. Shall we work with the one, or with the other? If we give way to the vicious side of our nature, the Christ-life in us will die out, like a plant strangled by weeds. But if, by discipline and penance, we mortify the deeds of the flesh, the Christ-life in us will increase and be strengthened.

The Christian, then, is a man of discipline. This is not to say that he has no joy in life, or that he may take no pleasure in the good things of God. He has the "good news" of salvation; he has the Christ-life in his soul; he has found genuine happiness. By comparison, the pleasures of the world, the flesh, and the devil are a cheap price to pay. But like the wise merchant of the parable, he pays them gladly that he may possess "the pearl of great price."

Our monks go robed in rain and snow
But the heart of flame therein,
But you go clothed in feasts and flames
When all is ice within;

Nor shall all iron dooms make dumb
Men wondering ceaselessly,
If it be not better to fast for joy
Than feast for misery.

So sang King Alfred to the pagan Danish invaders of his kingdom, in G. K. Chesterton's *Ballad of the White Horse*. It is true not only of the monks, but of every faithful Christian. He mortifies himself, particularly on the prescribed days of fast and abstinence, and in the Lenten season; he makes it a point, on occasion, to give up an innocent pleasure—a show, or a party, or a dance.

If he is a true Christian, he lives in the spirit of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, who could not bear to wear her golden crown when she beheld her Crucified Saviour with a crown of thorns. If we possess Jesus within us, we must have some portion of His Cross, by voluntary penance and self-denial.

(b) *The Imitation of Christ*

Besides mortification, the Christian must practice the imitation of Christ, if he wishes to become perfect. "Learn of Me," Jesus said (Matthew xi. 29). We must study the Gospels, to see how Jesus spoke and acted. They are, so to speak, our book of etiquette. It ought to be in our hands frequently, to be meditated on, to be mastered by heart.

In the social etiquette books you have the portrait of the perfect lady, and of the perfect gentleman. In the Gospels, you have the portrait of the perfect Christian. But never forget that you already bear the perfect Christian within you, by the state of grace. Your program of conduct should aim simply to give Him more and more freedom of action through you: less and less of your own Ego, more and more of Christ. "I must decrease; He must increase," as John the Baptist said of Jesus (John iii. 30).

II

The Christian's Suffering

I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His Body, which is the Church (Colossians i. 24).

The note of joy in suffering is something special to the Gospel: you do not find it in the world before Christ. The ancient philosophers taught two ways of facing the ills of life: one of them was the way of pride—"keeping a stiff upper lip," and shedding no tears; the other was the way of

distraction—"eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die." They regarded misfortune and suffering as a waste. They accepted it in a spirit of defiance. There is a line in one of their greatest dramas, "Who but a god goes woundless all his way?" (Aeschylus, "Agamemnon.")

Jesus' Acceptance of Suffering

Jesus gave the world a new view of suffering:

(1) He Himself accepted suffering with all its anguish. Even God now bears the wounds of pain. We may know very little about the dark mystery of suffering; but one thing we *do* know with joy: that ever since Calvary, suffering has the power to make men like unto Jesus.

Suffering—An Instrument of Redemption

(2) He made suffering the instrument of the Redemption. One prayer of Jesus would have been enough to save the world. But He chose to drain the chalice of bitterness. By so doing, He gave all human suffering the power of redemption. No longer need it be a waste. When it is offered in union with Jesus' sufferings, it bears the fruit of salvation.

Christ Suffers in Us

(3) He undergoes our sufferings with us. This is a direct consequence of the Christ-life within us. St. Paul said, "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians ii. 20). Christian sufferers can say, "I suffer, now not I, but Christ suffereth in me." When St. Felicitas, the slave-girl whose name we honor in the Canon of the Mass, was groaning in prison with the travail of her pregnancy, one of the jailers mocked her, asking her how, if she cried with *that* pain, would she expect to endure death by the wild beasts. Her answer is one of the golden texts of Church History: "Now *I* suffer what *I* suffer; but then, Another

will be in me Who will suffer for me, as I shall suffer for Him.

Since, therefore, Jesus and I are yokemates in suffering, it will be rude and ungracious of me to be peevish in misfortune, to complain and whine under the cross. If that is my reaction, I deprive myself of salutary penance; and I deprive the Church of fruitful graces. But if I have the right spirit, I will say, "After all, I have been a scapegrace to God, an unprofitable child. He asks me now to bear the cross of Jesus in penance. It is not more than I deserve, for I have been a sinner; and yet it is more than I deserve, for it is a great privilege to be crucified with Jesus. Over and above what I need to atone for my sins, I offer the rest for the Church, like those hundreds of sick who are brought on Pentecost to the basilica of Montmartre in Paris that they may offer their pains, like a great sacrifice around the altar of the Mass, for the Missions of the Church."

III

The Christian's Death

The poet, Browning, says in "Rabbi Ben Ezra":

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made.

Death is the last great penalty of Adam which all his children must pay. The Redemption, which Jesus, the second Adam, accomplished by His death, changes this final penalty from defeat to victory.

Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? (1 Corinthians xv. 54, 55.)

In the Requiem Mass, the Church consoles us with this reminder:

Unto Thy faithful, O Lord, life is changed, not taken away, and, the abode of this earthly sojourn being dissolved, an eternal dwelling is prepared in heaven.
—(*Preface of the Dead.*)

Dying With Jesus

Jesus died for our sins: we also, His members, ought to die.

Jesus gave us life and resurrection by His death: it is by our death, also, that we shall live.

The Christian's death should not be a collapse, or a defeat. In Christ and with Christ, it should be an act of sacrifice, a "beau geste," a handing over to God: "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."

A special, unmerited grace is necessary for it: the grace of final perseverance. A special Sacrament of Redemption is ordained for it: the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. By this Sacrament, Christ's grace anoints and seals the five senses, which were the instruments of sin, and fortifies the soul for its last sacrifice.

Each day, the faithful Christian should pray the invocation of the Litany, "From a sudden and unprovided death, O Lord, deliver us." When he joins himself to Jesus' Sacrifice at the Holy Mass, he should offer up, not only his life, but also his death, with all the pains and sufferings which may precede it.

To any Christian who, with true love of God, makes the intention of accepting patiently from the hand of God whatever kind of death it may be his lot to bear, the Church grants a plenary indulgence, applicable at the hour of death under the prescribed conditions of Confession, Communion, and prayers for the Holy Father's intentions; as often as that intention is made, there is granted a further indulgence of seven years: so careful is the Church to have us prepare for a holy death in Jesus Christ.

Birthday Into Full Life

The Christians of the early Church spoke of the day of death as a birthday. For indeed this life is like a life in the womb: a life of shadow; where we see "as in a glass, darkly"; where we live by faith, not by sight; where our Christ-life is restricted and confined.

"Face to Face" With God

But death is our birth into eternity: a life of light, where we see, "face to face"; where we live by sight; where our Christ-life reaches its fullness, and "Christ is all in all." Then we shall see God, even as now He sees us, and seeing Him shall be our unending joy: we shall see Him with the eyes of Jesus, praise Him with the voice of Jesus, know Him with the mind of Jesus, love Him with the love of Jesus—all of us, one Body in Jesus, the Communion of Saints, the chorus of the Redeemed, the Family of God's children united in the life of the Divine Son to the unending glory and praise of the Father.

Questions

Introduction

1. How is Holy Communion the completion of the Mass?
2. Why is it incorrect to regard Holy Communion as a reward for the good?
3. What should the "Ite Missa Est" tell the congregation?

Part I

1. What does the Catholic worker have different from his non-Christian comrade?
2. What is the chief good of penance and self-sacrifice?

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3. We know that Christ dwells within us, by the state of grace. What light does that throw upon our imitation of Christ?

Part II

1. Why does the Christian's suffering have a redemptive power?
2. Explain: "I suffer, now not I, but Christ suffers in me."
3. Why is it wrong for the Christian to complain about his sufferings and trials?

Part III

1. Does our death contribute to our Redemption? Explain.
2. What special grace is given by God for a good death?
3. What special Sacrament do we receive in danger of death?
4. Why is it correct to speak of "a happy death"?
5. Explain the special indulgence which the Church grants to those who make an act of resignation to God concerning their death.
6. What truth was there in the early Christians' calling the day of death a birthday?

Christian, acknowledge thy dignity!

Thou art a partner in the Divine nature: refuse to return to the old baseness by degenerate conduct.

Remember the Head and the Body of which thou art a member.

Recollect that thou wert rescued from the power of darkness and brought into God's light and kingdom.

By the mystery of Baptism thou wert made the temple of the Holy Ghost: do not put such a guest to flight by base acts, nor subject thyself once more to the devil's thralldom: because thy purchase money is the Blood of Christ; because He shall judge thee in truth Who ransomed thee in mercy.—*From a Christmas Sermon of Pope St. Leo the Great* (died 461 A. D.).

