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Old Christianity vs. New Paganism

BY

REV. BERNARD J. OTTEN, S. J.
Professor of Philosophy in St. Louis University

ST. LOUIS, MO., 1910

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PREFACE

“THERE is a scholarly repudiation of all solemn authority. The decalogue is no more sacred than a syllabus. Everything is subjected to searching analysis. The past has lost its grip on the professor. The ancient prophet is less potent than the new political economy. Nothing is accepted on the ipse dixit of tradition. Olympus and Mount Sinai are twin peaks beautiful, but not made sacred by mythology. From the college standpoint there are no God-established covenants. What happens at the primaries is more to the point than what took place in Palestine. Time is a laboratory wherein reactions are eternally producing new phases of civilization having changing forms and hues.”

This paragraph, we are assured by its author, Harold Bolce, faithfully sums up the results of his protracted study and personal investigation of the religious attitude of most of our secular universities. “From Boston to

Berkely," he says, "I found the universities curiously alive and alert. The professors believe that they are in the forefront of progress. Whether the subject be a god or a gas, a matter of morals or volcanic mud, a syllogism or a star, the professor approaches it impersonally, critically determined to know the truth. A government is great, but so is a gnat — either may afflict the land. There is nothing *ex cathedra* in the professor's curriculum, save as he expresses it himself."

Not a few thoughtful persons, presumably conversant with university teaching, have expressed their doubts whether Mr. Bolce's portrayal of existing conditions is altogether reliable. They are of opinion that he has over-emphasized certain radical tendencies, or that he has unconsciously attributed to the many what are in reality but the views of a few. For the honor and well-being of this fair country one would gladly believe that these men were right, but the mass of evidence, and that the very best kind of evidence, too, which Mr. Bolce advances to prove the truth of his assertions, is so overwhelming that it can hardly fail to carry conviction to every thoughtful mind. There seems to be nothing

for it but to admit, however reluctantly one may do so, that the secular institutions of higher education in this Christian country have completely broken with the religious beliefs of the Christian past.

What will be the practical consequences of this lamentable condition of things, no one can fail to see. In a country where believers and unbelievers come in daily contact, and where the ties of friendship and family bind together in closest union persons of divergent religious views, there is always more or less danger that many will lose their hold on the faith of their fathers; but when in addition to this young men and young women are systematically taught that the belief of their childhood years was merely a fantastic dream, and that the most sacred doctrines of their Church are but the idle speculations of an uncritical age, the result in most instances can be nothing less than a total loss of supernatural faith. As a necessary consequence, the yearly output of these same educational institutions goes almost entirely to swell the ranks of unbelievers, and before many more generations have gone to their graves, the vast majority of our educated men and women will be as thoroughly

pagan as were the Greeks and Romans in the days of old. In the first ages of Christianity, pagan tyrants used every form of physical torture to rob the people of their new-born faith, but they failed ignominiously; now our state-supported universities labor for the attainment of the same end by employing the less barbarous but more fatal means of intellectual perversion, and they are apt to succeed even beyond the measure of their own expectation. Christ has assured us that the powers of hell shall never prevail against His Church, and as far as the Church herself is concerned that assurance admits of no doubt; but the powers of hell have never before made a more successful onslaught than they are now doing through the agency of our secular universities. The Church will indeed weather the storm, yet meanwhile millions of immortal souls are sinking to the very depths of infidelity to rise no more.

They tell us that a faith which cannot withstand the attacks of its enemies is not worth having — that its very surrender is proof positive of its unreasonableness, but surely such a statement cannot be based upon the serious conviction of any thoughtful man. Faith like

health is a perishable gift, and the possibility of its being lost is no more an argument against its intrinsic value than a similar possibility is in the case of health. Both require a prudent care in safeguarding them against dangers, and where such care is wanting, the result must prove disastrous. It is true enough that faith must ultimately rest upon so solid a basis that nothing can shake it, and so it does ; but from this it does not follow that the young, whose religious knowledge is not rarely of a somewhat elementary kind, should be in a position to answer the thousand and one difficulties that are flung at them by men whom they are taught to regard as responsible teachers ; nor does it follow that these difficulties, remaining for the time being unanswered, should not gradually obscure in their untrained minds the reasons for the faith that is in them. If all those who enter our secular universities were trained theologians, little harm would come from the infidel dogmatism with which university professors are pleased to crowd their lectures — nay, it is more than likely that many of these same professors would soon turn pupils and learn again the lesson which first they learnt at their mother's knee.

But taking things as they are, the necessary result of all this infidel dogmatizing can be none other than the loss of faith in those who are unfortunately subjected to its demoralizing influence.

Reflections of this kind suggested to the writer of the following pages the advisability of subjecting the pronunciamentos of these professors to a searching analysis, and to show up their inconsistencies and gratuitous assumptions in the most convincing manner, so that the unwary might be put on their guard and be enabled to ward off the dangers that are becoming more proximate with each passing hour. He carefully gathered the various assertions made by the different professors, classified them according to their contents, and then worked out the respective answers along historical and theological lines, as called for by the nature of the subject under consideration. But before he had proceeded very far, it became quite evident that such a method would mean the writing of a large book, which more than likely would not be read by the very persons for whom it was intended. He therefore concluded that it would be more advisable to take up only one or another of the

more important assertions and show how completely these professors misunderstand the very teaching which they labor to prove untenable, and this done, to present in clear and definite terms the Church's doctrine concerning some other fundamental points, which these same professors claim to be especially repugnant to the enlightened spirit of the present age.

The assertion thus chosen, and investigated in the opening chapter of this little treatise, forms the foundation-stone of the so-called New Religion, of which Dr. Eliot has made himself the high priest. Its sum and substance is the relation of God to the world wherein we live. The Old Religion, we are told, has outlived its usefulness, because the twentieth century needs a God who is indwelling in the world and in man, and such a God Christianity has failed to supply. How unwarrantable this assertion is, we shall see in the proper place.

The other points touch the origin of man, the fact and consequences of his fall, the nature of sin, man's redemption through Christ, and the presence of evil in a world made by a good God. In the discussion of these several points, controversy was allowed to enter

only in so far as the practical application of the doctrines in question absolutely required. The reason for this limitation of controversial treatment must be looked for in the fact that truth is her own best advocate. In matters of this kind, it is of greater advantage to the reader to find the truth clearly expressed than to witness the discomfiture of an adversary.

It is possible that the reader will be somewhat disappointed in not finding any reference to the much discussed question of Christ's divinity, especially as our university professors pride themselves on having at last succeeded in reducing the Nazarene to the common level of human beings. The author's only excuse is that he has treated this subject very fully in another pamphlet, entitled: "What think you of Christ?" He might indeed have inserted a chapter on that subject in the present treatise, but as that would not admit of as full a treatment as the importance of the matter requires, he thought it best to refer the reader to the previous publication.

CHAPTER I

GOD WITH US

THROUGH the narrow and crooked streets of ancient Athens, there strolled one day, nearly two thousand years ago, a stranger, who, without much apparent reason, seemed to draw upon himself the eyes of every passer-by. He was low of stature and mean of aspect. His garments were travel-stained, and upon his pale features lay the shadows of great sufferings. Yet there was an air of peace about him that marked him out as belonging to another world; whilst in his eyes, there was a look of such intense longing, that those, upon whom it fell, stopped involuntarily and wondered what might be his quest. He wandered up and down, taking note of everything — the people and their ways, public buildings and monuments, and above all of the many altars and temples of worship. That man was Saul

of Tarsus, whom the Lord Jesus had changed into Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles.

When he had thus surveyed the city and studied its inhabitants, he directed his steps towards the market place. There certain philosophers began to dispute with him, and when they heard him announce a new doctrine, they took him to the Areopagus, or meeting place of the city's council, saying: "May we know what this new doctrine is which thou speakest of? But Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious. For passing by, and seeing your idols, I found an altar also, on which was written: To the unknown God. What therefore you worship, without knowing it, that I preach to you: God, who made the world, and all things therein; He, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is He served with men's hands, as though He needed anything; seeing it is He who giveth to all life, and breath, and all things: and hath made of one, all mankind, to dwell upon the whole face of the earth. . . . That they should seek God, if happily they may feel after Him or find Him, although

He be not far from every one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and are; as some also of your own poets said: For we are also His offspring." Acts xvii, 19-28.

In these few terse and striking sentences, the Apostle placed before the Athenians five of the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity—the existence of a personal God, the creation of the world by God's almighty power, the common origin of all mankind, the duty of worshipping God in spirit and in truth, and the all-pervading presence of God in the world which He created. Every one of these doctrines differentiates Christianity from the various religious systems which St. Paul found flourishing in pagan Greece, and every one of them deserves to be emphasized in our own day, when pagan ideals are again placed in the forefront of religious innovations. It is, however, only of the last, namely, of the indwelling of the Creator in His own creation, that I wish to make some remarks in the present chapter. The reason for this choice of subject lies mainly in the fact, unfortunately too much noised abroad to be passed over in silence, that just now men in high stations, men whose position of public

trust and educational responsibility would seem to entitle them to a hearing, openly charge Christianity with having banished God from the world which He was supposed to have called into being; with having made of Him a sort of landlord who dwells in foreign parts, and who visits His mundane domains only for the purpose of receiving a passing act of homage from His tenants — a God therefore, “who once set the universe a-going, and then withdrew, leaving it to be operated by physical laws, which He made His vicegerents or substitutes.” And hence, these men contend, there is need of a new religion, “the God of which shall pervade the universe, just as the spirit of man pervades his body, and acts, consciously or unconsciously, in every atom of it.” “The twentieth century,” they will have it, “will accept literally and explicitly St. Paul’s statement, ‘in Him we live, and move, and have our being,’ and God is that vital atmosphere or incessant inspiration.” Cf. Eliot: “The Religions of the Future,” p. 8, *et passim*.—*Cosmopolitan*: 1909.

In view of this terrible indictment of Christianity, and the alleged need of a new religion, it seems timely to offer a clear statement of the

Church's doctrine concerning the point at issue, so that it may appear to evidence whether these self-constituted critics of Christianity rest their charges upon an objective condition of things, or draw them wholly and entirely from their own exuberant imagination: whether they are the profound philosophers they claim to be, or are but idle babblers, who presume to criticise a religious system of which they have not yet learnt the first elements. This we propose to do in the present chapter.

The Church's doctrine bearing upon God's presence in the world, and upon His operation in the same, may, for clearness' sake, be reduced to four heads, which we shall briefly consider in their natural order of sequence. First of all, the Church teaches us that God is present in the world by reason of His immensity — an attribute of His infinitely perfect nature, whereby He is and must be without any change on His part intimately present to all that exists in the universe of created beings. These beings are the creation of God, and God is indwelling in His creation. He is indeed a pure spirit, and as such He has no extension, yet this notwithstanding He fills

with the fullness of His infinite being the universe that to human reckoning is all but infinite in extent. This the Psalmist strikingly indicated, when he said: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there: if I descend into hell, thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there also shall thy hand lead me: and thy right hand shall hold me." Ps. cxxxviii, 7 sqq. This again we learnt as little children at our mother's knee, who taught us the simple Catechism lesson that God is omnipresent; that He fills every void of space and all things contained therein; that He is in our bodies and in our souls, in our minds and in our hearts; that His voice is heard in the roarings of the winter's storm and in the whisperings of the summer's breeze; that His eyes shine upon us in the light of the day and His arms enfold us in the darkness of the night. We learnt even then that we are the offspring of God and that He as our Father hides us in the folds of His bosom; that His presence to us and our presence to Him is of

so close and intimate a nature that it falls short only of identification.

Furthermore, as according to the teaching of our holy faith, God is thus everywhere present with us, so is He also according to that same teaching everywhere working with us. God's presence is not passive, but active. Holy Scripture tells us indeed that on the seventh day God rested from all His works which He had done; but that rest was only relative, not absolute. The work of creation was finished — from that He rested; but the work of conservation and concurrence, which had only just begun, was to continue for all eternity. His almighty power called all beings into existence; His almighty power preserves and sustains them all. Were He but for a moment to withdraw His sustaining hand, they would all sink back into that nothingness out of which they were taken. He gave all created beings their powers and their faculties, and He concurs with them in their every action. Without His active assistance not a deed is done, not a word is spoken. He is exerting His all-pervading activity everywhere and at all times. He is busy in field and for-

est, on land and in the sea, on earth and in the sky. It is He that causes the sun to give out its light and warmth and the clouds to pour upon the earth their refreshing showers. He is working in the sprouting seed, in the blowing flower, and in the ripening fruit. He thinks in our minds, loves in our hearts, accomplishes in our members. He is co-operating in every single action of His creatures, even in their sins in as far as they are physical realities, although not in as much as they are morally bad. He is in very truth, according to Catholic teaching, pervading the universe, as really as the spirit of man pervades his body, and He acts, not unconsciously, but consciously, in every atom of it. We as Christians and as Catholics accept literally and explicitly St. Paul's statement, "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." He is more than a vital atmosphere, more than an incessant inspiration.

And as God is thus working with us, so is He also working for us. He created the world for man, and in that world He constantly works for man's advantage. With God we labor and toil, but God alone gives the increase. With God we plant and sow,

but God alone causes the seed to sprout, the crops to grow, and the harvest to ripen for the reaper. When we rest from toil and close our eyes in refreshing sleep, He still continues His never-ending work, even as a mother goes about her household duties, whilst her babe sleeps peacefully in the cradle. It is in this that He exerts His active providence, without which all our labors would come to naught. It is this that gives meaning and force to our Blessed Saviour's touching words: "Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat; nor for your body, what you shall put on. The life is more than the meat, and the body is more than the raiment. Consider the ravens, for they sow not, neither do they reap, neither have they storehouse nor barn, and God feedeth them. How much are you more valuable than they? And which of you, by taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit? If then ye be not able to do so much as the least thing, why are you solicitous for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these. Now if God clothe in this manner the grass that is to-day

in the field, and to-morrow is cast in the oven; how much more you, O ye of little faith? . . . Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." Matth. vi, 25 sqq. That is God's providence, as our Blessed Lord conceived it — a providence ever active, ever interested in the world's well-being. We must work indeed for our temporal welfare, even as we labor for our soul's salvation; but God works with us and for us — His blessing gives the increase to all our undertakings.

So much for the natural order of things, in which, according to the teaching of Christianity, God is so intimately and actively present to the world that no presence more intimate or more active can be conceived, except that of essential identity, in which, however, God would cease to be God. But coexisting with the order of nature, and elevating the same to a higher sphere of being, there is according to Christian teaching the order of grace, which brings man into so close and so mysterious a relationship to his God, that he is called and is in very truth the child of God. Of this our religious censors do not seem to have so much as heard, although it has been a

fundamental doctrine of Christianity from its very birth. Did not Christ say: "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him"? John xiv, 23. Did not St. Peter tell the first Christians that God had given them most great and precious gifts, that by them they might become partakers of the divine nature? II Pet. i, 4. Did not St. John assure his followers in words that have ever since been echoed by the Church of Christ: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and be the sons of God"? I John iii, 1. And what does all this mean but a union between God and man, which is so close and real that if, to make an impossible supposition, God should cease to be present everywhere else by reason of His immensity, He would still with all His infinite perfections abide in the souls of the just. He dwells there as a God in His temple, as a Friend in the house of His friend, as a Father who enfolds in His arms the child of His love.

And here again He is present, not merely in a passive state, but He is exerting Himself

actively for man's interests. He is working most effectually for man's eternal salvation. He is pouring the light of His grace into man's intellect, and the strength of His grace into man's will, and thus enables him to lead a life that is becoming a child of God. He encourages him in his difficulties, bears him up in his trials, consoles him in his sufferings, and never ceases from His loving care until that happy moment when He can say: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of the Lord." Matth. xxxv, 21. It was of this that our Blessed Lord spoke, when He said to His Apostles: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. 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." John xv, 3 sqq.

This then is the second mode of God's presence in the world—His indwelling in the souls of the just through sanctifying grace: this His second sphere of divine operation—

the perfecting of His adopted children for their eternal happiness in heaven. The third mode of that same divine presence, as taught by the Christian Church, is realized in the Incarnation, which has brought God into our midst as the Son of man. For Christ "being in the form of God," says St. Paul, "took upon Himself the form of a servant, and in habit was found as a man." Philip. ii, 7. This is the culmination of God's love for the world which He called into being—He Himself took up His visible abode therein, and in His own divine person walked the way of human sorrows. This is the central fact of the world's history, as it is the source and foundation of the Christian religion. From this mystery of God's love all lines of human progress radiate; to this mystery of God's wisdom all lines of human aspiration converge. All that was best and highest in the thoughts and endeavors of primitive peoples was inspired and sustained by the hope of the Saviour's coming; all that is noblest and divinest in the recorded achievements of subsequent ages drew from Him its life and inspiration. In Him human nature was elevated to a substantial participation of the divine—was so in-

timately united to the Godhead that it shared the infinite holiness of the Most High; that its actions were the actions of God expressed in human terms. True God as well as true man, He took His stand between the Creator and the creature, gathering up in His own being the perfections of the one and the weaknesses of the other. He brought heaven down to earth, lifted earth up to heaven, and filled both with the brightness of His incarnate glory. He introduced into the world a divine element, that imparts life and light to the individual and to society alike. "The purest among the strong, and the strongest among the pure," as a modern writer expresses it, "the God-Man has with His wounded hands lifted empires from their hinges, and changed the stream of ages." He is the truth, the way, and the life—the truth that all must know, the way that all must follow, the life that all must attain.

Absolutely speaking there was no need of God's coming into our midst; there was no need of His emptying Himself and hiding the brightness of His eternal glory under the sombre vesture of our mortal nature: but of all the means which He might have used to re-

store fallen man, there was none other as worthy of Himself and as beneficial to us. It was an act of surpassing goodness and love that moved Him in the beginning to create man to His own image and likeness; it was an act of greater goodness and love that inspired Him after the fall to take upon Himself the likeness of man. In the first instance He caused the light of His infinite perfection to be reflected in the soul of a finite being; in the second, He took that finite being and made it the bearer of His own divinity. Through this substantial communication of His personal perfection to human nature, He became man's brother and companion, a sharer in his sorrows and a partaker of his joys. He met man, so to speak, on equal terms, bearing the same burdens, bound to the performance of the same duties, subject to the same laws. He passed through all the varied phases of human life, sin alone excepted. He might have commanded as God, yet He preferred to obey as man, that so He might lead man to an eternal union with his God.

This union of the human and the divine in the person of the Saviour; this outpouring of God's mercy upon fallen man, is a funda-

mental doctrine of the Christian religion, and is it possible to excogitate any other doctrine that would be more in accord with the manifold needs of human nature, even in this our twentieth century? Do what you may, you cannot escape the fact that in his inmost being man feels the consciousness of guilt; he knows that in many things he has gone astray from his God, who must be his all in all, and in consequence his whole being cries out for a reconciliation. Yet mere reconciliation does not satisfy the cravings of his heart. He is like a child that has been frightened in the dark; it does not venture out again save in the arms of its mother. So man discomfited by sin, looks for a protector and guide in life's inevitable struggles; he must have a leader in his conflict with evil, and a model in his strivings after perfection. He needs not only power to act, but also perseverance to accomplish. He craves for sympathy, fellow-feeling, inspiration, and these he finds in the human heart of his God. The crib, the cross, and the open sepulchre, these are for him sources of inspiration that will never fail. They place before him under three most impressive aspects that sympathetic love of the

God-Man, which in the days of old led captive the hearts of men and made them cry out in transports of joy: Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed be he who cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest! With these before him, he finds courage to say with David's friend: "Wherever my Lord the King shall be, be it in life or be it in death, there I His servant will also be." With these before him, he fears neither poverty nor sufferings nor death itself, for he knows and feels that he is upheld by the wounded hands of his God, who from the crib to the cross walked the way of human sorrows and through His triumphant resurrection robbed the tomb of all its terrors.

It was this personal presence of the God-Man, and His active participation in human affairs, that gave the Christian religion in the days of old its vitality and its boundless power over the hearts of men. The appearance of the Son of God in human form, it has been well said, was like a flash of lightning, which laid open to the eyes of a startled world the bosom of God's infinite love. It revealed to sinful man an ideal of human perfection unheard of since time began, and created an all-

absorbing desire to imitate Him in every detail of His human life. This visible presence was indeed withdrawn after the work of redemption had been accomplished, but the same God-Man according to the teaching of our holy faith, will abide in the world till the very end of time. The same human sympathy that caused the living Christ to gather about Him the poor and the forsaken, the afflicted and the suffering, moved Him to establish His sacramental presence on every Christian altar, and there to abide forever as a Father in the midst of His children. And this is the fourth mode of God's presence in the world which He called into being — His sacramental presence under the appearance of bread and wine.

Though unseen of our bodily eyes, Christ is with us in as real and personal a manner as He was with the Jews of old; He is with us for the same purpose, namely, to do good to all. You gather in His temple of worship to testify your belief in His personal presence and to pay Him the tribute of your homage. Do you realize what this presence implies? Have you ever brought home to yourselves in a practical way the full import of the God-

Man's sacramental presence in your midst? It almost sounds like irreverence, and yet the statement is literally true that your God has taken lodgings in your community and that He is in a true sense of the word your next-door neighbor. For what are our churches but the houses of our God? There He dwells as really and personally as we dwell in our own houses. When at the last supper Christ said to His disciples, "I will not leave you orphans," He meant not only that He would send them the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth and love, but also that He Himself would abide with them in person, although they should no longer be able to discern Him with their bodily eyes. He made then and there provision that the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation, wherein the Eternal Word was united to human nature, should be extended and completed in another union, through which the Incarnate God would become in a manner one with His worshipers on earth.

Nor is the God-Man present on our altars in a merely passive way; on the contrary, He takes a most active interest in all that concerns the welfare of His followers. His

sacramental presence is not only a call for worship, but also an offer of assistance. As in the long ago, His apostles gathered around Him as the source of all their strength and guidance and aspiration, so in like manner may all His followers do until the very end of time. His voice still appeals to wounded human hearts as it did in the days of old, when He said, "Come to Me all you that labor and are heavily burdened, I will refresh you." His eyes rest upon us with the same tenderness as they rested upon His apostles at the last supper. His heart still throbs with the same love that made Him lay down His life for the salvation of the world. He knew that we would yearn to have Him in our midst; to be able to gather around Him even as children gather about their mother, to tell her of their sorrows, to share with her their disappointments, and to be cheered by a glance from her eyes and a word from her lips. Even so would He be with us, to console, to strengthen, to cheer us on, until the sorrows of earth should merge into the joys of heaven.

Nay, more. He would not only abide with us on our altars, but He would come into our

very hearts. The same love that resulted in the substantial union of His divine personality with our human nature, tended to another union of which each individual human soul should be the immediate object. As through love of us He graciously condescended to take up His abode on our altars, so through that same love would He deign to come into our hearts and abide there as the life of our lives, as the soul of our souls. He has prepared for us a banquet wherein He establishes between Himself and us a union so close and intimate that it makes us in a manner one with Himself. Even as a mother nourishes the child of her womb with her own substance, so does Christ nourish us with His own flesh and blood, so that we may know and feel and realize that His love for us is all and more than a mother's love can ever be. Through the words of consecration He, the God-Man, is mystically slain and becomes for our sakes a victim of love, and we in Holy Communion partake of that victim and identify ourselves with the same in a union that passes all understanding. He is in us and we in Him; His heart beats on our hearts; His soul compenetrates and trans-

forms our souls ; so that, as the Apostle words it, it is now no longer we that live, but Christ liveth in us.

And now, if all this be true — if according to the most certain and explicit teaching of our holy religion, God our Creator is indwelling in all His creatures ; if He is working with them and for them by day and by night ; if for man's sake He himself became man and walked the way of human sorrow ; if for our consolation and assistance He dwells even now in our churches as in His own house ; nay, if for the nourishment of our souls He, as the living God-Man, comes into our very hearts and welds our being to His own in a union so close that we are in a manner identified with Him and He with us — if all this be true according to the teaching of our holy faith and the practical belief of Christians, how dare any man insult us with the statement that we Christians have exiled God from the lives of individuals and from the life of society ? How dare men of public trust and educational responsibility, whose very position in an intelligent community demands of them that they be both honest and well informed, come forward with the decla-

ration that Christianity is a failure, or must in the end prove to have been a failure, because it has made of God a sort of landlord who lives in foreign parts and cares not what becomes of the tenants that farm His domains, so long as they yield Him the yearly revenue of homage and worship? How dare they attempt to drag the God of Christianity from His throne, when that throne is set up in our very hearts? How dare they charge Him with neglect of His creatures when He bound these creatures to Himself in a personal union, and for their sake poured out the very last drop of His blood? Nay, when He day by day nourishes these same creatures with His own substance, with His own flesh and blood, as truly as a mother nourishes her babe with her own milk? Yes, how dare they make such statements, and then still expect that we should consider them neither grossly ignorant nor criminally dishonest?

Were they simply to dissent from us in doctrine, we should have no fault to find; because on points of doctrine honorable and well-informed men may differ, even though one side or the other must needs be in error. But when they will not take the trouble to

inform themselves of the most elementary teaching of Christianity, and then proclaim to the world that the teaching of Christianity falls short of the requirements of the twentieth century, it is time that they be put in the pillory of public contempt. For they abuse the trust which a Christian community has placed in them, and they prostitute the influence of their position to work their country's ruin.

CHAPTER II

MAN AS GOD MADE HIM

“OF all the difficult problems that vex the mind of man, there is certainly none the presence of which is so wide and deeply felt as that of the existence of evil.” Evil seems present everywhere and at all times. It confronts us in every shape and form; it gains an entrance into our very beings—into our souls and bodies, into our hearts and minds. Scarcely has the babe been born into the world, when physical pain forces from its lips the cry of distress and draws from its eyes the tear of sorrow. Scarcely has the growing child unfolded its intellect to the discernment of right and wrong, when moral evil lays hold of the soul and burns into its very substance the consciousness of guilt. Want and sickness, temptation and sin cling to us through all life’s devious ways and in one form or another are our constant com-

panions from the cradle to the grave. There is, indeed, found in men's lives much that is good and high and noble; there are virtues that bear upon them the stamp of the heroic, but the good ever finds its counterpart in what is bad, the high in what is low, the noble in what is mean, and all too often the most heroic of men's virtues are overshadowed by the most groveling of vices. Life has its pleasures, its joys, its comforts; yet they are all so bound up with disappointments, sorrows and vexations that there is no enjoying the one without tasting a considerable portion of the other. No matter who we may be or what station in life we may occupy, the chalice of suffering will sooner or later be put to our lips, and drink it we must. Wheresoever beats a human heart, there sorrow dwells side by side with joy; there good and evil forever mingle, even as the lights and shadows of an April day.

This universal law of suffering, which forces itself upon our notice at every step, has puzzled the worldly wise of all generations. Nay, numberless men and women are daily going astray from their God because of the sorrows that fall like a blight upon

their hearts and homes. What, they ask despairingly, is the meaning of it all? Is man but the sport of some evil genius, who baits his appetite with the vision of bliss, only to make him feel the more keenly the pangs of disappointment? Is he the victim of a blind and cruel fate—of some juggernaut that crushes its devotees under the wheels of its progress? Is man's life but a riddle which no philosophy can solve?

These are strange questions, yet these questions are dinned into our ears in season and out of season—they are the harvest sprung from the seed of unbelief, which men of materialistic bias, whose one-sided education has hopelessly warped their minds, have scattered broadcast over the land. Matters have come to such a pass that one is involuntarily reminded of the prophecy of St. Paul: "There shall be a time when they will not endure sound doctrine; but according to their own desires they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: and will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables." II Tim. iv, 2 sqq. Men will no longer endure the God of truth; they banish Him from their minds

and hearts; they set up in His place a sphinx that will answer no questions, and having accomplished all this to their own satisfaction, they tell us that man's life is and ever must remain a riddle. Or, worse still, as some of them will have it, man is but a wheel in the vast and intricate mechanism of nature, and his failures and successes are governed by nature's inexorable laws, to which for his greater weal or woe he must needs submit. A strange philosophy this, a philosophy that sets nature at war with herself and makes her devour the children of her own womb. Yet strange though it be, it has become the fashion of the hour, and whatever fashion dictates, that, in certain quarters at least, may not be gainsaid by reason.

And what then is the meaning of it all? If man is not the powerless victim of a blind and irresistible fate, whence the sorrows and sufferings that overwhelm him on his way through life? Whence the moral blight that falls upon his soul at reason's earliest dawn? The answer to this question prepares the way for a consideration of the great Atonement, which the God-Man wrought for us upon the cross; and this answer we shall endeavor to

work out in the present and the following chapter.

To place this whole matter in its proper perspective, we must first make some reflections on man's origin as it is known to us from revelation. I say, as it is known to us from revelation; because reason alone cannot dispel the darkness that necessarily hangs about the first beginning of things. It points out clearly enough, as I have shown at some length in another place, that the human race owes its origin to a creative act of a personal God; but what was the extent of God's bounty in man's regard, reason alone cannot show. For this we must look to another source of information; to a source that contains God's own word; for in the very nature of things He is the only one from whom such information can come. Such a source is the Bible. Of course, the men who cause all this disturbance will not accept the Bible as an authority in regard to the point at issue; but neither will they accept any other authority that does not fit in with their preconceived notion of things. On this head we need not take them very seriously; especially as they are forced to content themselves with mere

denials, without being able to put forward arguments that will bear critical examination. Thus far the Bible has stood every test and challenge, and we may safely trust Providence for its doing so in the time to come.

Now, one of the very first points to which the Bible directs our attention, and upon which it places a special emphasis, is the fact that in the beginning man was made right — that he is not the chance product of blind fate, but the divinely conceived and lovingly perfected handiwork of an all-wise Creator. It teaches not only that man was made for happiness, but also that happiness was the dowry which he received from the hands of his Maker. It emphasizes the fact that in the beginning man was not an incongruous compound of warring elements, but the harmonious result of perfectly adjusted constituents; that he was not in conflict with antagonistic forces of nature, but the undisputed lord of all visible creation. God said: "Let us make man to our image and likeness: and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth." Gen. i,

26. "And the Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth: and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Gen. ii, 7. "And the Lord God planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning: wherein He placed man whom He had formed." Gen. ii, 8.

Such is the sublimely simple account which the Bible gives of man's origin; such the happy destiny appointed him by his Creator. Think for a moment what this means! "God made man to His own image and likeness." Natural theology teaches us, and, indeed, proves to evidence, that God is a spirit; all-wise, all-holy, all-perfect. That He is self-existent, without beginning and without end. That He contains within Himself all physical and moral perfection, and that His very being is synonymous with perfect and unending happiness. And man was made to His image and likeness, somewhat after the fashion that a child is made to the image and likeness of its parents. Man therefore shares in a finite degree the infinite perfections of God. Man is godlike! Finite indeed by nature, yet in essence fashioned after the Infinite. Unlike God, man has a beginning, but like God, he

shall not have an end. He is dowered with immortality even as the God who made him. His body shall indeed some day sink into the grave and return to the dust out of which it was taken; but his soul shall pass beyond the darkness of the tomb and return to the God by whom it was given. The earth itself, the star-strewn firmament—all shall pass away; but man's soul shall not pass away. As long as God is God, so long shall the soul subsist in all the youth and vigor and vitality with which it was dowered at the moment of its creation. Why? Because it is immortal—the indestructible image of the self-existent and eternal God.

And the soul is intelligent, even as the God to whose image it was made. Possessed of a spiritual soul, man mirrors forth the wisdom of his Creator in every act of his intellectual faculties. His intellect transcends the limitations of the material order and reaches upward to the mysteries of the spirit world. It was made to know and to understand and to body forth the shapes of things unseen. It discerns truth and falsehood, right and wrong, and if true to itself, it sets forth in finite

terms the infinite judgments of an all-true God. After its own limited fashion, it shares even in God's creative power. It is the inventor of all the sciences, the creator of all the arts. All that is beautiful in architecture, in sculpture, in music, in painting, is the creation of man's intellect. It descends into the depths of the earth and brings to light its hidden treasures; it soars aloft to the heavenly bodies and reveals the mysteries of starry space — nay, it goes beyond the bounds of space and time to the very throne of the eternal and the infinite. It is the finite reflection of God's infinite intelligence; the created image of God's increate wisdom.

Nor is man's soul dowered only with an intellect to know, but also with a will to accomplish. Man has not only the ability to discern right and wrong, but also the power to choose the one and to eschew the other. He is possessed of a will that is as free in its actions as it is dominating in its force. Fetters may weigh down man's body; prison bars may confine his limbs; yet his will no power on earth can bend. It is free, subject indeed to law, but unamenable to physical force. It was made to love the good, even

as the intellect was made to know the truth, and in its possession alone can it find enjoyment and peace. It soars aloft on the wings of thought; it reaches out to all that the intellect can grasp, and rests satisfied only when it leans upon the bosom of infinite love. It is a reflex of God's own omnipotent will, limited indeed in being and in power, yet unshackled in freedom and unbending in force.

This is man as God made him in the natural order — not the final resultant of nature's conspiring forces, but the foreordained ruler of God's visible creation. The world was made for him, and not he for the world. He claims kinship indeed with the earth; for the dust thereof supplied a vesture for his soul; but his lineage is divine, because his soul is the breath of his God. That soul is the foundation of man's true greatness; that his patent of nobility. It is a spirit of beauty; a spirit like unto the spirit of God. No human eye ever saw its beauteous lustre; no mind of man ever conceived the perfection of its being — God alone conceived and made it; He made it to His own image and likeness. Nothingness was its beginning; but nothingness shall not be its end. Of the body it was

said: "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return;" but in reference to the soul: "Thou wast made a little less than the angels." The body may be wasted by disease; it may be disfigured by an accident; it may become an object of disgust in squalor of poverty; yet there always remains enshrined within it that beautiful soul compared with which all the manifold beauties of the material world are as nothing. It is the outpouring of God's bounteous love; the mirror that reflects the Creator's infinite perfections.

Surely the Creator did not dole out His gifts with a niggardly hand when He crowned His creative work with the production of man. He made him a "dim miniature of greatness infinite." Compare this origin of man and his God-given dowry, as revealed to us in the pages of the Bible, with that which our materialistic friends have to offer as the result of their excogitations. As they profess to understand the matter, man began his career as a mineral substance æons and æons ago; how, they cannot tell. Then by some mysterious transformation, the very nature of which is shrouded in Egyptian darkness, he somehow evolved into a speck

of protoplasm, devoid indeed of sense and reason, yet endowed with the principle of life. Whence that principle of life may have come, they know not; yet it must have come from somewhere, because man is living to-day and therefore he must at some time and somehow have begun to live. Next that speck of living protoplasm by some occult process evolved into a cell; that cell gave rise to other cells, and thus after the lapse of many ages, no one can tell when and how, potential man appeared upon the scene as a full-grown vegetable, covering the naked earth with a mantle of softest green. Soon one or another of the many vegetable forms, apparently more venturesome than its fellows, took a notion to leap the chasm that separates the vegetable from the animal world, and after due measure of time the future lord of the universe floated as a jelly-fish in the briny depths of the ocean or crawled as a wriggling worm upon its rock-bound coast. Thus happily started on his upward journey, it was only a matter of some few hundred million years and of some few hundred thousand metamorphic leaps to land him as a chattering monkey upon the topmost rung of the evolu-

tionary ladder. Of course, he was still a monkey, but the difference between monkey and man, as these high priests of modern materialism tell us in all seriousness, is only a difference in degree, not in kind. Man's body is indeed a vision of beauty; the monkey's a horror of ugliness; man expresses ideas and judgments in articulate speech; monkeys can but indicate their subjective experiences by discordant sounds—the difference between the two seems to be unbridgeable; but be that as it may, man, as they will have it, can only be a higher development of some monkey form, possessed neither of a spiritual soul nor of a free will, and fated to return entirely to the mineral world, out of which he somehow found his way to his present condition of complex organization. Such is the origin and destiny of man according to these apostles of materialism. How does this compare with the sublimely simple account of the Bible that God made man to His own image and likeness? As I take it, there is no need of indicating the result of such a comparison.

Hence, if God had left man in the condition in which He created him, His work would

have been sufficient in itself to shadow forth the infinite goodness of His being. He showed himself so lavish of His gifts that even selfish man could find no cause for complaint. But He did not leave man in that condition; He bestowed upon him something immeasurably greater than the dignity which resulted from his natural likeness to the God-head. Magnificently endowed though he be with gifts of soul and body, man is by nature and in virtue of God's creative act but a servant. His very origin places between him and his Creator an infinite gulf of separation. It must be so in the very nature of things. For all that man is and all that he possesses he has received from his Maker's bounty. Of himself he is nothing and he can have nothing. He is in every respect the dependent of his Creator, and as such his condition is by its very nature one of servitude. God might have left him in that condition, but He did not. He was not looking merely for servants who would call Him Master. He is a God of love, and love alone was the motive of His creative act. Of this love He wished to give a further proof—a proof so striking that man's heart should leap up to Him

spontaneously and utterly forgetful of human nothingness should cry out: Abba, Father! He the God of infinite perfections, who fills the heavens with His glory and the earth with the greatness of His power, would take the servant, whom He had drawn out of nothingness, and make him His own child. He was not satisfied with bestowing His gifts upon man by making him the ruler of the earth and of all things contained therein; no, He wished to make him a sharer in His own divine nature, and thus give him a right and title to heaven. This He did by adding to man's natural perfections the divine gift of sanctifying grace — a gift so exalted that its mere possession raises man above his natural station and makes him in a manner divine.

By the reception of this gift, man entered into God's own family circle, taking his place side by side with the Heir of the house and sharing with Him, although in a subordinate degree, all family rights and prerogatives. He became God's adopted child, with acknowledged rights to a child's love and heritage. It is to this gift that St. Peter refers, when he says: "God hath given us most great and precious gifts, that by these we may be

made partakers of the divine nature;" it was this that St. John had in mind when he so boldly stated: "We are called and are the children of God;" we are the children of God; not indeed by generation, but by adoption, yet having a full share in all the rights and prerogatives of divine sonship.

In what this divine gift of sanctifying grace precisely consists, we need not investigate for the present, as we are just now concerned only with facts, not with their explanation. Suffice it, therefore, to state in a general way, that it is a created quality which of its own nature permanently inheres in the soul, and makes that soul holy and pleasing in the sight of God. Although finite in itself, it is nevertheless in some manner a link between the finite and the infinite. It places in the soul a supernatural likeness to the Godhead, somewhat after the manner that human generation produces in the child a natural likeness to its parents. It lifts up human nature to a divine plane of being and imparts to the soul a beauty and perfection, of which the beauties and perfections of nature do not even afford us an inadequate concept. Nor does it merely beautify our souls and make them god-

like in appearance; it elevates them to a divine sphere of activity, enabling us to perform actions that will lead us to the eternal possession of God's very being. By reason of his natural intellect, man can sound, if not fathom, the mysteries of nature; by reason of faith, which springs from sanctifying grace as a flower springs from its stem, man reaches up to the very mysteries of nature's God. By a right use of his natural will, man can practice the most heroic of human virtues; aided by grace, he can perform actions that bear upon them the impress of the divine. By sanctifying grace, he becomes a new man; not indeed essentially changed, for he always remains truly and merely human, but he receives within himself a supernatural likeness to the Godhead, which obliterates the marks of his servitude and adorns him with the countersign of divine adoption. For we are called, and are in very truth, the sons of God.

This is man as God made him — by nature a little less than the angels, by grace their equal in station and dignity. And what was the God-appointed destiny of this creature of God's love? One which of its very nature

is but another proof of the Creator's boundless goodness. Even whilst still living here on earth man was to rule, not to serve. He was indeed required to obey his Maker, but his was to be the obedience of a child, not of a slave. "The Lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning: wherein he placed man whom He had formed." In that paradise man was happy and without any experience of sorrow. For him each fleeting moment brought new blessings; each stirring leaf revealed new beauties; each opening flower showed forth new glories of God's beautiful creation. There was peace and harmony in nature, and peace and harmony in the human heart. It was a life of pure enjoyment, though not a life of idleness; for the Lord God "put man into the paradise of pleasure to dress it and to keep it." In that happy existence sickness and death were things unknown, whilst temptation and sin had no power over man's free will, except in so far as he freely chose to submit himself to their dominating force.

By nature man was indeed mortal; his body by reason of its material condition lay open to the noxious influences of earth and

sky; hence in the ordinary and natural course of events, he should have been subject to sickness and suffering and final dissolution; but by the act of divine adoption, God elevated man's entire nature to a higher plane of being — He bestowed upon his body qualities and perfections that placed him beyond the reach of sickness and death. He had created the earth for man's service and enjoyment, and all things contained therein were made to conspire in promoting his bodily well-being. It is true, man's earthly existence was destined to be only of a finite duration; it was to have its allotted span of time and then come to an end; but that end was not to be brought about by death and dissolution — it was to be simply a transference from paradise to heaven. God would take him body and soul and place him in His eternal home. For death and its painful concomitants are not spoken of in Holy Scripture, as existing realities, until after paradise had been closed by sin.

Again, by nature man's soul was subject to the influence of passion; in a certain sense there had been implanted in his compound being the concupiscence of the eyes, the

concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life. These are dispositions that belong necessarily to human nature; but by a gratuitous gift God had made them so perfectly subject to man's free will that they would help him indeed in the practice of virtue, but could not tempt him to sin. In us there is a constant struggle between the flesh and the spirit, between our leanings to virtue and our inclinations to vice; in our first parents, as long as they remained in the state of original justice this struggle was entirely wanting. They could indeed sin, because they were free; but their sin could not be the outcome of passion; it must result from a deliberate choice of their unhampered free will. Suggestions to evil might come from without, as in fact they did; but they could not come from within. God had bestowed upon them the preternatural gift of integrity, which gave them an undisputed mastery over their own hearts. They had been appointed rulers not only in the physical but also in the moral order.

Still more exalted was the destiny that awaited man after his life of earthly enjoyment had run its course. Then he was to

enter into the inheritance to which he had received a right and title in virtue of his divine adoption:— he was to enter heaven, there to see God face to face, to possess Him as his very own, and in that possession to receive a measure of happiness which no mind of man has power to conceive nor human tongue has words to tell. He was to be happy with God's own happiness and that for all eternity. It was to this happiness that the apostle ultimately referred, when he said: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." I Cor. ii, 9.

Such was man's God-appointed destiny for time and for eternity. Is there in it even a suggestion of evil, even a shadow of sorrow? If this world is a vale of tears, it was not God who made it such; for He "had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning: wherein He placed man whom He had formed." If man is inclined to evil from his youth, it was not God who made him such; for He "made man right," creating him "to His own image and likeness." If man is so immersed in things of sense that

he seems unable to reach a state of spiritual happiness, it was not God who made him such; for He adopted man as His own child, lifted him into a sphere of divine activity, and gave him a right and title to heaven. Hence if there is evil in the world, that evil must have its source outside of God; for God is goodness infinite and all His works are good. Whence that evil comes, and who is responsible for its universal domination, we shall endeavor to show in the next chapter, which will have for its subject, "MAN AS HE MADE HIMSELF."

CHAPTER III

MAN AS HE MADE HIMSELF

FROM what was said in the preceding chapter, it appears to evidence that God in creating man acted truly a father's part. No human father ever gave his children such a fair start in life as God gave our first parents. In their own persons richly dowered with every gift of the natural and supernatural order, they were placed as rulers over a world that was subject to them even as they were subject to their Creator. Their life on earth was to be one neither of constant labor and toil nor of listless idleness, but it was to afford such healthful exercise to all their faculties that they would thence derive the highest degree of reasonable enjoyment. They were to live in a paradise of pleasure and keep it. Their earthly existence, therefore, resembled that of a wealthy lord, who has laid out on his vast estates an exten-

sive garden, wherein he works more for recreation and pleasure than for the increase of his revenues. Their bodies were by reason of a preternatural gift so constituted that they would forever remain immune from the ravages of sickness and the decrepitude of old age. The faculties of their souls and the senses of their bodies were by reason of a similar gift so nicely balanced that there could be no conflict between the inclinations and tendencies of their lower and higher nature. They were masters of themselves and masters of the world which they had been appointed to rule. God's servants by nature, they had been made His children by adoption, and as such they held hereditary rights to all His possessions; so that when their life of enjoyment here on earth should come to an end, they would forthwith begin an existence of eternal happiness in heaven. And what they themselves thus actually possessed, that also every one of their descendants would possess in ages to come, provided they, as the ancestors of the human race, would remain true to themselves and faithful to the Author of their being. Could even our self-constituted

critics of God and His ways have asked for more?

Such, then, was man as God made him. Such were the conditions of human existence for which God Himself was directly responsible. If in subsequent ages men did not remain what our first parents were in paradise; if the conditions of their existence in time and eternity were changed for the worse, that change must not be laid to the charge of God, but of man himself. Man as we know him from the records of history and from our own daily experience; man subject to sickness and sufferings and misery and death; man prone to evil from his youth; man at war with himself and with his fellow-man, is not man as God made him, but as he made himself by a perverse act of his free will. He had it in his power to perfect his being by a right use of his God-given faculties, and this right use of his faculties would have been in itself a source of increased happiness; but against his Maker's express prohibition and against his own better judgment, he abused his freedom, and thus brought about the unhappy condition of things for which he now presumes to blame

his Creator. "Man when he was in honor did not understand; he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them."

Perhaps you will say, "Why did God bestow upon man the perilous gift of free will? Why did He not constitute human nature in such wise as to make the avoidance of evil a physical rather than a moral necessity?" You might as well ask why did not God make of man a stick or a stone or an irresponsible brute, whose actions are neither tainted by vice nor ennobled by virtue? It is precisely in this freedom of will that his true nobility consists. It is precisely this that makes him a "dim miniature of greatness infinite." Without this freedom of action man would not be a man, but only a reasoning animal, incapable alike of performing a virtuous act and of reaping virtue's sweet reward. It is true, God could have made man free and yet so dispose things as to keep sin forever out of his life; but was there any need of this? If He made it not only possible, but easy for man to maintain his high estate, will you blame Him for man's failure to use the means placed so abundantly at his disposal? If a father supplies his son with all the luxu-

ries that wealth can buy, and at the same time promises him all his possessions as the reward of a life of ease, and yet that son freely chooses to starve himself to death rather than accept and use his father's gifts, would you accuse that father of a want of love or interest in his son's welfare? Would you not rather call his son a fool, who showed to evidence that he did not deserve to have such a father? Well, how then can anyone presume to blame God for giving man a free will, when the abuse of that free will is entirely the result of man's own folly? It is but right that we should be just to God as well as to men.

Now, as a free agent, man must have his trial. He must give evidence of his voluntary subjection to His Maker's inalienable authority as dictated by right reason. In virtue of the creative act man was God's servant; in virtue of the divine adoption he was God's own child; in either case he owed God obedience, and of this obedience he must give proof by executing a divine command upon the fulfillment of which his future happiness was to depend. As long as the execution of the commandment placed upon him by his

Maker was within his reach, he could have no cause for complaint, because neither master nor father is ever reasonably blamed for exacting a like obedience. As a matter of fact, in the case of our first parents God was satisfied with their submission in a matter that was almost trivial in its nature. Aside from the observance of the moral law, to which they were bound even as we are, God only required of them that, in the abundance of the blessings with which they were surrounded, they should, out of obedience to Him, abstain from eating of the fruit of one tree in paradise. "Of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death." Gen. ii, 16, 17. An easier commandment He could not well have given them, and the little good will that sufficed for its execution shows how anxious God was that man should stand his trial, and thus secure for himself and his descendants a life of unending happiness.

It is not to our purpose to enter into any speculation concerning the exact significance of this commandment; whether its wording is to

be taken literally or whether there is underlying it a figurative sense. The Catholic Church has thus far not definitely decided the point at issue, although the literal meaning has been generally accepted by theologians and commentators, and in consequence must be accepted by the faithful until an authoritative declaration shall justify another interpretation. But whatever be the precise meaning of the commandment in question, its purport is quite plain — it was meant to try man's fidelity to his Maker, and that in a matter which made man's trial most easy. Yet easy though the trial was, Adam and Eve failed to stand it — of their own free will, with no interior temptation to drag them down, with no passions to blind their understanding and to weaken their will; at the mere suggestion of the evil spirit they transgressed the law of their Creator, disobeyed the command of their father, and thereby forfeited both their own and their children's happiness for time and for eternity.

With that act of disobedience, evil made its entrance into the world and all but wrecked God's beautiful creation. The fault lay not with God, because He had forewarned and

forearmed man in every possible way; it was entirely man's own doing, the outcome of his vaulting ambition to be like God. How applicable are here the words of Holy Scripture spoken on another occasion: "And man when he was in honor did not understand." He possessed all that his heart could reasonably desire; yet at the tempter's suggestion he stretched out his hand to that which in the very nature of things could never be his. The fatal temptation, "You shall be as gods," was the most colossal lie ever spoken, and when man gave ear to it he placed himself in direct opposition to God's eternal truth. God had said: "What day soever thou shalt eat of the fruit of this tree, thou shalt die the death" (Gen. ii, 17); that is, thou shalt die the death of the soul by losing sanctifying grace, the rights of divine sonship and the title to heaven, and thou shalt die the death of the body by becoming subject to sickness and sufferings, which according to nature's laws must finally end in dissolution. In opposition to this the devil said: "If you eat of the fruit of this tree, you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. iii, 5); that is, you shall become omniscient even as the God

to whom you owe your being. It meant for man a choice between the eternal truth of God and the palpable falsehood of the devil; a choice between good and evil, between life and death — man made his choice; he was untrue to himself, unfaithful to his God, and in consequence became subject to evil in all its different forms.

It was then that man's life of woe began. A traitor to his God, he forfeited all the rights and prerogatives of divine sonship; he was deprived of every supernatural gift and reduced to the condition of servitude, which was naturally his by reason of his origin. Before his fall into sin his abode had been a paradise of pleasure, the keeping of which was but a matter of healthful recreation; now he was exiled to a world that brought forth thorns and thistles, and from which he could wring the means of subsistence only by much labor and toil. Before he had been immune from sickness and sufferings and bodily death; now he must submit to the inexorable laws of his compound being, which of its own nature is constantly exposed to injuries from without and to slow but certain dissolution from within. In his fall he had turned against his

own Creator, and now all creation turned against him, making his life a constant warfare until all should end in death. Nay, his own being became the scene of strife and contention. The perfect harmony, established in the human heart as in all visible creation by the Author of nature, gave place to a discord that was most painful in its every manifestation. By his act of deliberate disobedience man changed paradise into a desert accursed of its Maker, and branded with the stigma of treason his own fair spirit, which had been fashioned after God's image and likeness. God had made man right, but man undid the work of God, and universal disorder was the necessary result.

Holy Scripture records these terrible consequences of that first sin in the form of a sentence, which the Creator passed upon His disobedient creatures. To the woman He said: "I will multiply thy sorrows, and thy conceptions; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children and thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee." And to Adam He said: "Thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that

thou shouldst not eat, cursed be the earth in thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return." Gen. iii, 16-19.

Now that Adam and Eve should be thus punished for their willful transgression of God's law, cannot appear strange to anyone who admits the necessity of due subordination of human beings to a higher authority. That subordination presupposes the binding force of laws, and where such laws exist, there must necessarily be attached to them a sanction that makes them effective in their operation. Now a sanction is of its very nature a punishment inflicted upon the transgressor. It is so in the case of human laws, and it cannot be otherwise when there is a question of divine laws. When in human society a man is convicted of a crime, he is made to suffer the penalty of the law and where the punishment inflicted is in proportion to the crime committed, every reasonable person will say that it is just. No

right minded person blames the government for attaining traitors, hanging murderers, or imprisoning thieves and robbers. Common sense makes it quite plain even to the dullest that this is as it ought to be. Who then will blame God for punishing Adam and Eve as He did? There was certainly due proportion between their sin and its punishment as inflicted by God. God had without any claim on their part made them His adopted children, and when they proved unfaithful, He justly cancelled that adoption. He had through an entirely gratuitous act of love made their earthly life a continuous round of pleasure; consequently when through a deliberate act of disobedience they forfeited their rights of divine sonship, He was certainly within His rights in condemning them to a life of labor and toil, which is naturally the lot of servants. He had without any obligation on His part preserved them from sickness and suffering and death, and hence when they withdrew from His obedience, He was in nowise bound to interfere with nature's laws, to which man's compound being is subject by reason of its intrinsic constitution. The one and only reason why there might possibly seem to be undue

severity in His action would arise from the fact that He threatened eternal punishment; but as through an act of mercy He made it possible for His disobedient creatures to escape that, this apparent severity need not be considered on the present occasion. Hence as far as Adam and Eve alone were involved in the misfortune that resulted from their fall, no right-minded person can with any show of reason find fault with God for acting as He did. Human justice would have been far more severe under a similar condition of things.

Nor is it precisely in this that God's critics find cause for blame. What they principally presume to censure is that the whole human race should have been involved in this primal misfortune. That Adam and Eve were justly punished for their misdeed, they are more or less willing to admit; but that all future generations should be accounted guilty of sin and be made to bear sin's terrible retribution, goes entirely beyond their comprehension. How is it possible, they ask indignantly, that a child should inherit the sin of its parents, and that the innocent should be made to suffer with the guilty? Two human beings sin, and count-

less multitudes, who bore no part in that sinful act, are condemned to suffer sin's awful punishment. Again, the sinful act was only of 'a few moments' duration, and its punishment has lasted for thousands of years, and in one form or another will continue for all eternity. Does such a condition of things point to a good and loving God? To a Creator who has at heart the best interests of His creatures? Does it not rather indicate that such a God is devoid even of that sense of common justice and equity, which the modern world has accustomed itself to look for in man? Thus argue God's critics, and thus unfortunately sometimes even Christians and Catholics presume to argue, when life's many trials hedge them in and the darkness of great sorrows gather about them in their ceaseless struggles. They have tried their best to keep sin out of their lives, and still they are made to bear sin's heavy burden. What is, what can be the meaning of it all?

That there is something appalling in this reaching out of evil to every human being, no one can deny. That there hangs over it a certain mystery, we all may readily grant. But that there is in it even a shadow of injustice

on God's part, or that it argues in Him a want of love and interest in His reasonable creatures, no well instructed person should have the hardihood to assert. In a certain sense we all suffer for the sin of our first parents; in a certain sense that sin has been imputed to us all and has been made our very own, yet only in such wise that no right of ours has been violated and that no attribute of God has been in the least obscured. Complaint of the one and the other has its source in false subjective views concerning this matter, not in the objective reality of things. That such is really the case, an impartial examination of the point at issue will make sufficiently clear.

First, then, what did we lose through our first parents' sin? We lost the divine adoption as children of God and all implied rights and prerogatives for time and for eternity. All this, but nothing more. Only the transmission of these supernatural gifts had been made dependent upon Adam's fidelity, and only these were lost to the human race through Adam's sin. Man's natural gifts, that is, those to which he had a certain right by reason of his nature, all remained to him after the fall as well as the oppor-

tunity and means to use them to his own advantage. He still retained his intellect and his free will, his memory and all his bodily senses : — every perfection, in fact, that was requisite to make him naturally speaking a perfect man. The earth was still his and all the creatures that lived therein, although instead of simply reaping the harvest, he must now also sow the seed. If it so pleased him, he could still lead a life of reasonable enjoyment, although to do so, he must be willing to labor and toil. He was indeed no longer immune from sickness and suffering, yet with ordinary care and prudent foresight they would be of rare occurrence and then only such as are necessarily incident to mortal nature. Death would at some time put an end to his earthly existence, but it had no power to annihilate his soul ; for that was still immortal. His greatness, if you will, was but a shadow of its former self ; yet it comprised all the elements of greatness to which he could naturally lay claim. Compared to what he had been as God had made him, he was indeed but a wreck — a dismantled hull set adrift on a sea of trouble ; but viewed in reference to his own natural perfections, he was wholly untouched by sin's

deadly work and remained fully equipped to outride life's many storms. He was despoiled of all that had been bestowed upon him in consequence of God's gratuitous adoption; he retained whatever had been his through the act of creation.

Secondly, what positive harm came to us from Adam's sin? Did we inherit the guilt of that sin, although we bore no personal part in its actual commission? In one sense we did, and in another sense we did not. The sinful act which Adam committed, in so far as it was a personal act, remained entirely his own; that he could not transmit to his descendants, and in that sense we did not inherit Adam's sin. But from that same sinful act there resulted a state of fallen nature — of a nature that had been despoiled of sanctifying grace by the free act of a human will and that in consequence was displeasing to God — this we inherited even as it was in Adam himself after the sinful act had ceased to exist. Hence we inherited Adam's sin only in so far as we were born deprived of sanctifying grace; in so far as our common nature was by Adam's transgression despoiled of the countersign of divine adoption. It is in this privation of sanctify-

ing grace, which according to God's merciful designs should have adorned each human soul at the moment of its union with the body, that original or inherited sin essentially consists. In itself it is simply the state of fallen nature, not a condition of personal iniquity, such as would result from an abuse of our own individual free wills. It is in us indeed from the very first moment of our existence, because our nature is derived from the fallen Adam, who in the supernatural as well as in the natural order had been constituted the head of the human race; but it is not imputed to us as a personal act, for which we are responsible in the same sense that we are responsible for our own actual sins. It is indeed a true sin, because through it our nature is at variance with God's all-holy will; but it is not a personal sin, for which God calls us to account precisely as if we ourselves had committed the sinful act.

But, you will object, are we not punished for this sin? Are not those who die in original sin lost for all eternity? Yes, they are lost for all eternity, but only in this sense, that they are excluded from the happiness of heaven; not that they are condemned to the

torments of hell. It is true, the loss of heaven is an incalculable misfortune, but it is a misfortune in the same sense that original sin is a moral evil. It presupposes the gratuitous elevation of human nature to the supernatural state, and in consequence it is a punishment only where the rights of that state have been forfeited by sin. Had not God originally adopted us as His own children, no one could ever have entered heaven, whether the ancestors of our race committed sin or not. Man's title to heaven was an entirely free gift of God, and its continuation must necessarily depend upon conditions placed by God Himself. As He was under no obligation to adopt us as His children, so was He under no obligation to admit us to our inheritance, when the right of that adoption had been forfeited by sin, although that sin was no personal act of our own. If you will, this withholding of our inheritance is a punishment, but only in reference to rights that resulted from God's gratuitous adoption—it leaves all our natural rights untouched.

But even this sort of punishment, although most just and reasonable, is too much for our modern critics. According to their view of

the matter, God is not only to be blamed for withholding what nature demands, but also for not bestowing what nature has no right to expect. How very unreasonable they are, will perhaps appear more clearly, if we take an illustration from what happens or may happen in human affairs. Let us suppose the case of an immensely wealthy person, who has a servant whom he loves very dearly. Through an act of purest love and goodness, he adopts that servant as his own son, not only giving him a father's love and affection, but also making him the heir of all his possessions, in such wise that these possessions shall be transmitted from generation to generation without reversion of hereditary rights. However he makes this inheritance dependent on a condition the fulfillment of which is entirely within the power of the servant whom he freely adopted as his son. He ordains that if this adopted son remains faithful to him, he and his descendants shall retain the full possession of their inheritance; but if in years to come he prove unfaithful, that inheritance shall be taken from them, and they shall be reduced to the same condition in which they were before that servant's adoption. Now after some time, this

adopted son does prove unfaithful; he attempts his benefactor's life, and is legally convicted of the crime. In consequence of this, the adoption is cancelled; the unfaithful servant is punished as the law requires, and his children are again reduced to the condition of servitude in which they were before their father's adoption. No positive punishment is inflicted upon them on account of their father's crime. They share indeed in his shame and must ever regret the loss of an inheritance, but for the rest they are not affected by the sin of their father. Is any injustice done them? Have they reasonable cause for complaint? Is the master, who adopted their father, in any way to be censured for his course of action? You will say, no. He was entirely within his right, and no charge of any kind can be brought against him. Well, then, how can anyone blame God for the course of action He adopted in regard to Adam's descendants? He acted exactly as we supposed this human master to act. If this latter did what was right, so did God.

Here, however, we meet with a difficulty, which seems to bring us back to the point from which we started. The world as we know it

appears to be steeped in evil. Both the physical and the moral order are so pervaded by it that no human being can wholly escape its deadly grasp. Whence did this evil come? In the preceding chapter it was pointed out that this evil did not have its source in God. He made man right, and he saw that all things which He had called into being were good. From what has been said in this present chapter it appears to evidence that the sin of our first parents was not productive of any change in the purely natural order of things. Yet somehow a most far-reaching change has been wrought. What was the cause of that change? Who must be held responsible for it? This we shall investigate in the next chapter, the subject of which will be, The Genesis of the World's Shame.

CHAPTER IV

GENESIS OF THE WORLD'S SHAME

“By one man,” writes St. Paul, “sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.” There is nothing sadder in the world’s history than the fearful degradation to which the human race was reduced during the ages that followed Adam’s fall. To the thoughtful mind there is something shocking in the accumulation of evil, which we find recorded in the history of all primitive nations. Those were days when moral darkness lay like a heavy pall upon the face of the earth; days when the evil one seemed to have built his throne in the midst of God’s fair creation, and established his reign of error and violence and sin throughout every land. Sin, sin, everywhere the dread spectre of sin! Everywhere suffering and distress and injustice and bloodshed! Truly, all flesh had corrupted its way,

and the ways of men were evil from their youth.

In this sad condition of things a far-reaching change was wrought by the advent of God's Eternal Word in human form, who in His own divine person walked the way of human sorrows. He brought us the light of truth and the strength of virtue, and taught us in word and deed how to make our lives divine. He took the sting out of our sufferings by consecrating them in His own life of sorrow, and thus making them for all men of good will a source of truest blessing. And yet, although a vast change for the better has thus been effected, in its main features the world is still what it has ever been: a vale of tears, where sufferings and sin flit forever across the vision of human happiness. It is even now as it was in the days of the patient Job, who summéd up his life's experience in the pithy sentence: "Man born of woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries; who cometh forth like a flower, and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state."

Now this prevalence of evil both in the physical and in the moral order, say the ene-

mies of Christianity, must in the last instance be laid to the charge of God Himself. For if the teaching of Christianity concerning the beginning of things has any foundation in fact, God must either have created the world as we now find it, or He must have made it what it is by way of punishment for Adam's sin; in either case He is the responsible party, and to Him, must be referred the genesis of the world's shame. How absolutely unfounded this charge is, I think appears partly from what was said in the chapter on "Man as God Made Him," and partly from the arguments advanced in the foregoing chapter on "Man as He Made Himself"; however, to make assurance doubly sure, it seems advisable to investigate this matter a little further, so as to determine definitely where the responsibility for the world's shame must be placed. This we shall endeavor to do in the present chapter.

The fundamental error into which the adversaries of the Christian religion usually fall, and which makes it almost impossible for them to see the reasonableness of the Catholic position in regard to the point at issue, lies mainly in their false supposition that the human race

began its career in a state of barbarism and then gradually fought its way to a more or less perfect condition of civilization. They take it for granted that in the beginning man was little more than an animal, whose reason, if he had any, was wholly undeveloped, and whose instincts were all of a purely material order. Now this assumption is not only wholly gratuitous, but radically false. From all we know of barbarous people, it appears quite safe to state, that once a barbarian, always a barbarian, as far as individual initiative is concerned. In theory it is indeed possible that a savage may become civilized through his own efforts, but in practice this is not the case. The beginnings of civilization must come to barbarous nations from without; they will not spring forth spontaneously from within. How long have we not tried to civilize our own Indians, and yet how little has been effected. Now suppose that they had been left entirely to themselves, would they during the last three hundred years have advanced even one step towards civilization? They had been in possession of this fair land for ages before a white man set foot on their shores, yet when that inevitable moment finally

came, they were found to be still in as degraded a condition as human beings can well be. If they began their career as savages, they certainly remained such as long as they were left to their own initiative; nor is there any apparent reason for asserting that they would not have continued as such till the end of time. Suppose then that the entire human race had started its career under similar conditions, is there any likelihood, think you, that even the most favored tribes of the great human family would ever have risen to the heights of civilization, which we know that many primitive peoples actually attained? It is much more probable that we ourselves would at the present time be ranging as savages through the virgin forests, feeding upon nuts and roots as did our supposed ancestors in the prehistoric past.

Nor is this merely a matter of theory. History points with unerring finger to the same conclusion. Side by side with the lowest forms of barbarism, there always existed in one form or another varying degrees of civilization, even as is the case in our own day. Thus, for instance, whilst the aborigines of the North American forests led a mere ani-

mal existence, their neighbors on the Mexican peninsula enjoyed most of the comforts of civilized life; whilst the Teutonic tribes of Northern Europe were mere savages, the inhabitants of the South achieved their greatest triumphs in literature and art; whilst nearly the whole of Africa was the stronghold of the lowest forms of savagery, Egypt was world-renowned for the wisdom of her philosophers, the cunning of her artists, and the power of her rulers. The same contrast was observed in Asiatic countries, where the civilization of the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Chinese had grown hoary with age, before the chosen people of God had as yet set foot in the promised land. All the findings of modern archæologists point to this certain conclusion, that the trend of the human race has not been upwards, but downwards. Where at first sight the contrary seems to be the case, there a closer investigation shows that the uplifting from barbaric conditions was effected by powerful influences from without, not by a gradual and spontaneous development from within. Usually it was the influx of more civilized people from the neighboring countries, who supplanted the savage aborigines and then

built up their own empire. This we know was the case on the entire American continent, which now indeed ranks high in the scale of civilization, not because the original inhabitants have worked their way upwards, but because the people already civilized have driven them from their forest fastnesses and have changed their desert lands into homes of plenty. In other cases it was brought about by a moral uplifting, whose immediate cause was of a supernatural character. It was thus that Christianity by slow degrees transformed the savage nations of Northern Europe and made them the most highly civilized people on the face of the earth. Man already more or less civilized is indeed progressive; but if he is once engulfed in barbarism, he has no power of self-regeneration. If left to himself, he will remain to the end what he was in the beginning: potentially a civilized being, but actually a savage.

Again, it is precisely this downward trend of the human race that we find clearly recorded in the traditions of all nations. Study what historic records you will, the one point that strikes you most forcibly in all of them is the underlying firm conviction that in the

beginning mankind lived under much happier conditions than was the case in later ages. Thus, for instance, Plato calls the first period of human existence the golden age; the Greek and Latin poets have celebrated it as the reign of Saturn, when men lived in peace and plenty and when bloodshed and war were things unknown. We learn from Plutarch the tradition of the Persians, from Strabo that of the Indians, from the Kings, or sacred books of China, that of the Chinese: all of which give expression to the same idea. This universal tradition of the nations is thus beautifully summed up by the Latin poet Ovid:

“ First rose the glories of the Age of Gold,
When faith and justice flourished uncom-
pelled;
No threatening law on brazen tablets spelled,
Nor judge’s frown the timorous throngs
controlled:
But each, in virtue sure, his blameless path
could hold.”

All this is in substantial accord with the statements of Holy Scripture. Of our first parents we find it recorded by the sacred

writer, that God "gave them counsel, and a tongue and eyes and ears, and a heart to devise; and he filled them with the knowledge of understanding. He created in them the science of the spirit, he filled their hearts with wisdom, and showed them both good and evil. He set his eyes upon their hearts to show them the greatness of his works: that they might praise the name which he hath sanctified; and glory in his wondrous acts, that they might declare the glorious things of his works. Moreover he gave them instructions, and the law of life for an inheritance." (Eccli. xvii, 6 sqq.) Now these gifts our first parents did not lose in their fall; they retained their knowledge of God and of God's works even after they had committed sin. They were and remained civilized in the best sense of the word, and that civilization they imparted to their children. They may not have been adepts in scientific acquirements, but they had a very thorough knowledge of the moral order of things, and it is in this that civilization primarily consists. Given a community whereof every member has a true knowledge of God and of the purpose of human existence, together with the means of attaining his God-

appointed end, and you have a society that is more truly civilized than the most scientific nation on the face of the earth, whose members are ignorant of their God and forgetful of their own eternal destiny. Neither learning nor refined manners are essential constituents of civilization, although they usually accompany it to a greater or less extent. True civilization consists in a just appreciation of things in reference to the end of man's existence and in a proper regard for the rights of God and the neighbor. And these we find recorded as present in human society at its beginning. The very first reference to the children of Adam and Eve, which we find in the sacred pages, represents them in the act of offering sacrifice to the true God. Gen. iv, 3, 4. Nor are other indications of civilized conditions wanting. The same sacred writer speaks of Adam's immediate descendants as tillers of the fields and owners of the flocks; as builders of cities; as inventors of musical instruments, and as artificers in every work in brass and iron. Gen. iv, 20 sqq. Surely such occupations we do not look for in a people that is held fast in barbarism. Wherever we find conditions of this nature, we recognize at

once that we are in the presence of true civilization, and that man is in a position to remain true to his God.

From all this, then, together with what was said in the preceding chapter, we may safely conclude that the manifold evils both in the moral and in the physical order, which are recorded on the pages of history and of which we ourselves have a daily experience, cannot be referred to God as their Author, nor can they be laid to the charge of Adam and Eve as their sole and principal causes. They are not purely and simply a punishment of original sin: a punishment which is visited upon the children on account of the sin of their parents. To this point we may apply, at least in part, the words of Holy Writ: "The soul that sinneth, the same shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, and the father shall not bear the iniquity of the son: the justice of the just shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." (Ezech. xviii, 29.) It is true enough, God does at times allow the innocent to suffer on account of the wicked, but that is not by way of punishment. We must always bear in mind

that God views time only in reference to eternity, and frequently what appears to us as the most terrible of misfortunes whilst we are still tarrying here on earth, will one day become manifest to us as the greatest of blessings. Of this, however, we shall speak in another chapter. For the present it will be sufficient to have pointed out that the world's sin and shame and suffering must not be laid to the charge of God—He made man right and placed him in a garden of pleasure. Nor, as we have seen, must they be placed on the shoulders of our first parents: they, if you will, prepared the way by causing the loss of original justice; but the responsibility for the actual existence of present and past disorders must be placed somewhere else.

And who then must bear this terrible responsibility? Who, but the men and women who made the world's history? The men and women who have done and are doing evil in their day. It was in the past as it is in the present: the world is what the men and women who live therein choose to make it. Were everyone, even now, after all the ruin that has been wrought in the past, to follow

the dictate of conscience and use the moral power for good which human nature assisted by God's grace most certainly possesses, sin and crime would be practically unknown, and ninety-nine per cent of all the world's sufferings would vanish on the instant. There would be no such thing as want and poverty and starvation; for God has provided so abundantly for all the needs of His reasonable creatures, that the world's population might be increased to ten times its present number and yet all would have their fill. Why, not one-half of the present yearly produce is employed for useful purposes. The greater part is simply wasted, and that, too, by men and women who have not so much as turned their hand to earn their daily bread. You complain of hard times, and in many respects your complaint is just. Times are hard enough, and there are places where poverty is appalling. But who causes these hard times? Who brings about this poverty? God? Why, how can He, when He bids the earth to bring forth such an abundance of good things that if it were but rightly used everyone could live in luxury. No, not God; but men — men who grind and grasp and

suck the very life blood out of the hearts of their fellow-men until they have amassed wealth enough to buy an empire. Men who spend a fortune just to satisfy the whim of a moment, but who would not give the value of a dollar to enable a poor man to make a decent living. What the good God intended for the common benefit of all, is by hook or by crook brought into the possession of the few, and then the story of Dives and Lazarus is re-enacted upon the world's stage until the heart sickens at the mere sight of it.

Nor is the modern Dives the only one to blame in this matter ; there is many a modern Lazarus who must shoulder his share of responsibility for the distress and misery that make this world in very truth a vale of tears. More than one-half of the very persons who are actually starving could be living in reasonable comfort if they would but use a little thrift and foresight in providing for themselves and for those who depend on their efforts. But men of this sort know not the meaning of thrift and foresight, nor do they care to consult their own best interests. When they are young they spend their money as they earn it ; they lead lives that would shat-

ter the constitutions of giants, and then when sickness or old age creeps in upon them they are physical wrecks and penniless paupers. And who is to blame for their misery? Who, but their own folly?

Is this an unjust estimate of the present condition of things? Is this a case of special pleading, where a clever juggling with facts and figures leads to a one-sided conclusion? You may think so, but if you will investigate the matter thoughtfully and dispassionately, I am quite prepared to abide by the result of your findings. Most of our young men have splendid opportunities; as a general rule they receive good wages or fair salaries; but in all too many instances they live only for the day. As they earn their money so they spend it, and spend it not for any good purpose, but most frequently to acquire habits that will be a drag on them for the rest of their lives. Hence when after a dissipated youth, they finally assume the responsibility of husband and father, they have made little or no provision for the future. Nay, not only that, but the spendthrift habits which they have acquired still cling to them, and so they live from hand to mouth, driven each morning to

work by the dire necessity of providing for the day's need. Then, when hard times set in; when sickness visits the family, as it usually does, they are reduced to abject poverty. Nor are they likely to learn wisdom from their self-caused misfortunes. Instead of repenting of their folly and mending their ways, they begin to complain of their hard lot and not rarely call in question the providence of God. The providence of God! Why, if God would provide for such men, He would have to work miracles every day and change the very stones into bread.

And what is thus said of our young men may also with proper modifications be applied to many of our young women. Some of them lack both industry and economy, and very many are deficient in either the one or the other. Not a few seem to forget that they were intended to be useful as well as ornamental. Were St. Paul to honor them with a visit, he would most likely tell them in rather plain language: "If you will not work, neither shall you eat." Others again do not lack industry, but they are woefully deficient in economy. They may receive wages or salaries that would be sufficient to keep a

large family, yet at the end of the year they have nothing to show for it but a varied assortment of fineries. Many more there are who, though both industrious and economical, yet fail to fit themselves for the duties that are awaiting them in after life. The best dowry which any girl can present to her husband on her wedding day is her ability and willingness to direct domestic affairs; to preside as guardian angel over the hearthstone after the manner of that valiant woman so highly spoken of in Holy Writ. Yet how many of our modern girls are fashioned after that God-approved pattern? How many of them, when they cross the threshold of their new homes are justly conscious that they are qualified to be its mistress? During their maidenhood they were so engrossed in amusements of all sorts that they never found time to devote themselves to so uninteresting a matter as housekeeping, and as a consequence, when they are put into a home of their own, they waste more than they use. If love were not blind it would require heroic courage in a young man to venture upon the turbulent sea of matrimony with a companion of such sort.

Of course, I do not mean to say that this

condition of things is universal. I do not mean to say that all our poor are in want and distress through their own fault, or even through the injustice of the rich. We have many excellent young men and excellent young women, and a considerable number of our wealthy citizens are thoroughly good and charitable; but there are enough of the other sort, both among the poor and the rich, to account in large measure for the want and distress that fill the homes of our poor. Correct these abuses, and many others of a similar kind, and there will be little reason to complain of poverty. Some poverty indeed will remain, but that will be a legitimate object of Christian charity, the dispensing of which is a duty of all and a privilege of none. God has made the human race one large family, and He ordained that the different members thereof assist one another according to their several needs and means. The poor, says our blessed Saviour, you have always with you: so indeed we have, but if we act as reason and faith teaches us, the poor need never be in want. If their poverty results from circumstances over which they have no control, it constitutes for them a God-given title to a share in

the abundance of their more fortunate brethren, and that title may not be ignored without offending the common Father of us all. Hence if there is much evil in the world that results from want and poverty, that evil is of man's making, not of God's.

And what is thus true of poverty, and the evils resulting therefrom, is in a great measure also true of sickness and other physical sufferings. Any experienced physician will tell you that most of the ills the flesh is heir to are simply the outcome of self-indulgence or of want of care in our way of living. How many physical wrecks are now tottering along our streets who would be healthy and strong had they exercised that prudent self-restraint which right reason demands! The festive board, the poisoned cup, the forbidden haunts of pleasure, send more patients to our hospitals and lunatic asylums than any other source of human sickness. Were everyone to live as his own good sense dictates, most of our physicians would have to close their offices. It is true, indeed, that many ailments come to us without any fault of ours. Sometimes they are congenital, sometimes they result from accidents, sometimes from the con-

ditions under which we are compelled to live or work; but with all this the greater part is in the last instance the outcome of our own folly. And where this is not the case; where we are the victims of circumstances over which we have no control, can we justly blame God for our sufferings? No, indeed! He permits them indeed, but only with the intention of making them a source of future blessings. It may be that He sends us at times sickness as a punishment for our own personal sins; but if He does so, He only intends to chastise the body in order to save the soul, and for that we owe Him thanks. Or He may allow sufferings to come upon us when we have done no wrong of any kind, but then it is only for a higher purpose, which will make our very misfortunes so many blessings in disguise. Of this, however, I shall speak in another chapter, where we shall view the sufferings of time as they must needs appear in the light of eternity.

So much for our physical evils. And what of the evils that belong to the moral order? Who is responsible for them? There is so much sin and crime in the world that the mere sight of it is sickening. It infests

the hovels of the poor and the palaces of the rich. It blasts the lives of the young and crushes the hearts of those hoary with age. It sits enthroned in high places and flaunts its shame in the very light of day. And who is the cause of it all? Who, but the men and women who prostitute their free will in committing the sinful act? Adam's sin, if you will, supplied the seed from which this evil tree has sprung, but the tree is of men's own planting and to them belongs its deadly fruit. In consequence of Adam's sin we are deprived of the preternatural gifts of original justice, but not of the moral power to lead naturally good lives. He transmitted to his descendants a nature that was still free from vicious inclinations. They inherited from him a will that was naturally upright, and if that will fell under the power of evil it was because they freely allowed it to become the slave of passion. It is stated indeed in our catechism that the consequences of original sin were a blinding of the understanding and a weakening of the will, but that is said only in reference to the supernatural gifts, which made sin all but impossible in the state of original justice. If we regard merely the immediate

consequences of original sin, our wills are as strong as was that of our first parents, if they had not been gifted with integrity, and similarly with regard to the understanding. The main difference between us and them lies in the fact that they had certain supernatural gifts which we do not possess. Not that we are altogether deprived of supernatural helps, for the grace of God is always with us and gives us power to overcome any and every temptation; but we do not possess that antecedent subordination of the passions to reason, and that fullness of infused knowledge, which was the special prerogative of the state of original justice. It is only in this sense that our understanding has been blinded and our will weakened in consequence of original sin. Whatever other blinding and weakening there has been must be attributed to men's free indulgence in their evil passions. Men and women have led and are leading evil lives because against their own better judgment, and in spite of their power to resist the promptings of their lower nature, they freely allow themselves to be dragged down to a state of moral degradation, where they almost lose the very consciousness of sin. They

were pleased to sow the whirlwind, and now they must be content to reap the storm.

Of course, here God's self-appointed critics find matter for another complaint. Why, they ask, did God implant in our nature those strong passions that make sin almost a necessity? Why did He not give us such a powerful inclination towards good that the commission of sin would become a moral impossibility? That question only shows how little thought these men have given to the matter under consideration. It only shows how consistent they are in judging of things concerning which they have not even taken the trouble to form a clear and correct idea. It is true, God has planted certain passions in our nature, but these passions in themselves are neither evil nor the source of evil. They are simply certain dispositions of our complex being, ultimately intended as helps to our will and intellect in the attainment of their own proper objects. As long as they are subject to reason and directed towards the attainment of lawful ends, they are of the greatest help to us and not rarely inspire deeds of heroic virtue. As an instance, take that ineradicable inclination of the human heart, which finds expres-

sion in the various forms of love. If perverted to evil ends, it has power to change earth into hell; but if guided by reason, it fills the world with heroes and heaven with saints. Who can count the heroic deeds to which it has given rise since it first began to throb in the human heart? What is it that sustains the laborer day after day in his toilsome task? It is love—love of wife and child, who look to him for their support. What is it that prompts the mother to watch whole nights at the bedside of her sick child? It is the love of her little one, whose life is dearer to her than her own. What is it that nerves the arm of the patriot whilst he fights his country's battles? It is the love of home and fireside; love of his country that appeals to him in the hour of her need. What is it that prompts the youth and maiden, to whom life appeals in all its young seductive force, to spurn the homage of a flattering world and seek the silence of the cloister, or to wear out their young lives in the service of God's sick and poor? It is love—love of God and of the neighbor, whom for God's sake they hold dear as their own souls. Oh, a thing divine is love! Born

of God, and godlike in its noble deeds of virtue. Who would despoil the human heart of a gift so divine? Yet love is but a passion, and when indulged in without guidance of discretion it will drag down man's soul to the level of a brute.

And so it is with every other passion, be its nature what it may. As given by God, these passions perfect man in his being and in his work. If they ever become to him a hindrance and reproach, it is only because he renounces the mastery of reason, and then makes himself their willing slave. It is not their innate strength and tendency that makes them a fatal source of evil, but their indiscreet indulgence against the warning voice of conscience. If from early childhood we were careful to direct them in their proper course, they would cause us little trouble in maturer years. But careless of the morrow, we allow negligence to creep in; dangerous tendencies are encouraged rather than checked; evil habits are formed, and thus in a few years our nature is tainted with evil and brings forth such a luxuriant growth of unruly passions that its nobler qualities and higher aspirations are completely overshadowed. Repeated in-

dulgence causes them to strike their roots so deep, and to twine around the will so close that they become in a manner a second nature. Then they assert their ascendancy over our higher being, lay our souls in bondage, and rule us with a tyranny that is galling beyond endurance — and then goaded by our wounded pride we rise up and ask with blasphemous effrontery: Why did God make me thus? Why did God make you thus? Why, it is yourself who did that evil deed. He made you right, but you undid His work, and now you are what you made yourself — a smoldering heap of ruins burnt out by self-enkindled passions.

If you will, a certain allowance must be made for inheritance and early surroundings. A long line of vicious ancestors may engender evil predispositions in their children. An irreligious and criminal home atmosphere may poison the minds and hearts of the young. External influences for evil may place men and women at a disadvantage in their struggles to make their lives divine. All this may diminish their accountability to God and place a part of their responsibility upon the shoul-

ders of their fellow-men; but after this allowance has been made, if their lives are wrecked for time and eternity, the wreckage has been caused in the end by their own perverse will. Even under the most unfavorable circumstances God's help is still sufficient to keep sin out of men's lives, and if it does enter it must necessarily enter through the open door of their own free will. Hence look at the matter from what viewpoint you please, the genesis of the world's shame rests with the men and women who do evil in their day.

And what are we to do under these circumstances? Are we to sit down with folded hands and bewail the world's wickedness? No, not sit down and wail, but be up and doing. If our sins have been the cause of the world's ruin, let our virtue be the source of its salvation. Fallen man can indeed not redeem himself, but our redemption has been wrought by the Saviour's death. From the fountain of life that was opened on Calvary's heights there flow in upon our bruised hearts streams of graces that will give us the strength of giants. With the help of these graces we can reform ourselves, and thus reform the

world. The passions that have grown unruly by reckless indulgence can be reduced to subjection by prudent restraint. We can put off the old man of sin and put on Christ, and in Him restore all things.

CHAPTER V

THE EVIL OF SIN AND ITS DIVINE REMEDY

THERE is an old proverb which says that familiarity breeds contempt. In its direct and usual application it means, that the men and women whom we admire as heroes and heroines or as patterns of virtue, whilst we view them as it were at a distance, are on nearer acquaintance frequently found to be made of very ordinary clay. Constant association with them reveals to us their many shortcomings, their human frailties and faults and foibles, and so the greatness of their genius or the brightness of their virtue appears more or less marred by the limitations and imperfections which had altogether escaped our notice in the more distant view. This is quite a common experience, and its very commonness has given rise to the proverb which

in one form or another has found a home in every language.

There is another application of this same proverb, which is not less true, although for very different reasons and in an altogether opposite sense. It is its application to moral evil, to sin in all its endless varieties and widespread ramifications. When met with at rare intervals, sin is apt to impress us as a dreadful monster, as something that is almost satanic in its malice; but when we live in daily contact with it, and especially when it finds a home in our own hearts, it loses much of its impressiveness, and thus familiarity with it breeds contempt — not a contempt that leads to its avoidance, but a contempt that makes us draw nearer and causes us to look upon it as something that is of little importance, as something that has been much overrated in its hideousness and malice. We persuade ourselves that sin is after all something very human; something which for one reason or another must necessarily belong to the sum total of human experiences, and that, therefore, it must be a weakness rather than a crime. We have familiarized ourselves with sin, and so we condemn it; not because of its

meanness, but because of its insignificance.

I believe it is this principle, this law of contradictories, as we may call it, that lies at the root of the modern estimate of sin. With the exception of the pagan past, when the commission of sinful acts not rarely formed a part of religious worship, there has perhaps never been a time when the judgments of men went so far astray in regard to the real nature of sin as in these our days of so-called intellectual enlightenment. Men never will and never can altogether lose the consciousness of guilt when they go against the warning voice of conscience; they never can wholly silence that voice as regards the immorality of certain acts; but they succeed only too well in transforming guilt into weakness and interpreting the troublesome admonitions of conscience as the regrettable aftermath of inherited prejudice. They will tell you that "sinful acts are but human weaknesses, which one may indeed regret, but is unable to avoid"; that "they are necessary occurrences in the full and free expansion of men's appetitive faculties"; "intermediate stages in the development of the race and the individual, and as such they are evil only

in so far as they wantonly disregard the prescriptive rights of other human beings." That they may be bad in themselves and an offense against the Author of man's being, these men seem wholly unable to understand. Nay, matters have come to such a pass that the professors of some of our universities teach openly that "there is nothing fundamentally true or sacred"; that "no commandments came from God," and that "society by its approval can constitute any action right, or by its censure decree it to be wrong." (Cf. *Blasting the Rock of Ages: Cosmopolitan*, 1909, pp. 674, spp.) For them the Decalogue has ceased to exist, and sin is at most an offense against the rules of social etiquette. Let us hope that their practice is better than their preaching, but even if so, God help the nation whose young men and young women are trained by such masters.

What, then, is sin? Unless we are willing to put ourselves on record as outright materialists, who deny the existence of a personal God and Creator, we must necessarily answer this question in the words of the Catechism, which are to the effect that sin is of its very nature a willful transgression of a divine law,

the observance of which is fully within the power of the transgressor, and is recognized by him as a moral obligation. Hence three conditions must occur in every sin. First, there must be a law ultimately enacted by God which forbids the sinful act. Secondly, the person who sins must be aware of the existence of such a law and of its binding force. Thirdly, he must freely transgress the law when it is in his power to keep it. There is indeed a wide difference between venial sin and mortal sin, either on account of the gravity of the matter in question or because of the greater or less deliberation with which the sin is committed; but this difference we may pass by for the present, as it does not change the fundamental nature of sin. So again is there a difference between the laws of which the sinful act is a willful transgression; for some of them come directly from God, as do the commandments of the Decalogue; whilst others come from God only indirectly, as, for instance, the precepts of the Church. But this again need not be considered in the present discussion; because ultimately every law derives its binding force from the authority of God. Hence each and every sin

that has ever been committed, or ever can be committed, is a sin precisely because it is a willful transgression of a divine law. The sinful act derives its moral deformity wholly and solely from its opposition to the infinitely holy will of God. And therefore its intrinsic malice must be measured by the unchangeable standard of God's holiness, not by the fickle fancies of human society.

Now, with these principles before us, what judgment must we necessarily pass upon every sin? Can we, without stultifying our common sense, call it a merely human weakness? Something that one may regret, yet cannot avoid? Surely men are not hung for a mere weakness; they are not condemned to the penitentiary for life for something they could not help — yet the transgression of human laws entails these punishments, and that, too, with the full approval of all right-minded persons. Why, at times men are so shocked at the heinousness of certain crimes that they will not wait for the slow operation of the courts to mete out a just retribution to the criminal, but will take the law into their own hands and inflict the severest punishment within their reach. The method of procedure

which they adopt is indeed wrong, but are they wrong in their estimate of the deed committed by the criminal? Whatever university professors may say about human weaknesses and about necessary occurrences in the full and free expansion of man's appetitive faculties, common sense announces in no uncertain terms that such deeds are intrinsically wrong, and that the perpetrators thereof are justly made to bear the penalties of human laws.

Now, if the transgression of human laws cannot be put down as mere weakness, is there any consistency in considering the matter in that light when divine laws are transgressed, as is the case in every sin? The greater the majesty of the law the more serious must necessarily be the offense committed against that law. Now, the majesty of the law is in proportion to the dignity of the lawgiver, since the law is but an outward expression of his will, and this dignity in the case of divine laws is that of the infinitely holy and perfect God. Consequently, whoever commits a sin, by that very fact slights and spurns, not the authority of man, but of God Himself. Hence Holy Scripture, speaking of the sin of our first parents, calls it an act of apostacy, a

falling off from God, inspired by pride. Think for a moment what this means. By the very fact that man is a creature, he owes his God an undivided allegiance, such as can never obtain between man and man. All that he is and all that he has he holds as a fief from God his Maker, and right reason itself demands that in recognition of this he yield an absolute submission to the divine will. Yet in every sinful act, at least when it is of a serious nature, he withdraws from that allegiance and refuses that submission and thereby raises the standard of revolt against his God. And what makes this all the more shocking is the fact that he flings his defiance into the very face of God. When human laws are transgressed, no direct insult is offered to the lawgiver; because, although his authority is defied, it is usually done in his absence and without any reference to his personal dignity. Not so in the transgression of divine laws; for we must remember that whenever we sin, we sin necessarily in the presence of God. He perceives our every thought, hears our every word, sees our every action. The moment our free will opposes itself to the will of God, we are in open rebellion against our sovereign Lord.

This aspect of the matter finds its full verification in every mortal sin, whatever may be said about venial transgressions. For when a man sins mortally he sins with his eyes wide open and in a matter which he knows to be of a serious nature. He rebels against his God as truly as ever subject rebelled against his sovereign. Like Lucifer of old, he tells God to His face: I will not serve Thee! I know that Thou art my rightful sovereign; for I know that Thou hast created me. I know that all I have is Thy gift; I know that I belong entirely to Thee; I know, too, that Thy laws are just, that Thy commandments are reasonable; for Thou art justice and wisdom itself; yet I will not serve Thee. Nay, I will take Thy very gifts, the tokens of Thy love and use them to offend Thee.

Such is the language of sin, at least where the sin in question is mortal; and can such sin be merely a human weakness? Perhaps you will say that this is an exaggeration. That human beings are not guilty of such language. No, they are not as far as mere language is concerned. The generality of men and women, although they may profess to be unbelievers, would shrink from such open defiance

of the Almighty, whom somehow they cannot wholly eliminate from their inner consciousness. But what language fails to formulate, that is expressed in action, and actions, as an old adage has it, speak louder than words. Call sin by whatever name you please, you can no more change its intrinsic malice than you can wash away the leopard's spots. It is conceived in iniquity and born of evil, and its issue is death.

The first constituent, therefore, of every sin is a more or less complete turning away from God. Where the sin is venial, this turning away is only partial, or as theologians are wont to express it, a loitering on man's Godward journey; but where the sin is mortal, there it is complete, and as long as the sinner remains in his sin-stained condition, he lives as a rebel against his Maker. Correlative with this turning away from God is man's turning to himself. In the same proportion that he rejects the authority of his Maker, he asserts his own. Acting in defiance of his Creator's law, he becomes a law unto himself, and if his sinful acts are of frequent occurrence, he may finally come to banish God entirely from his life and from the world wherein his life

is cast. It is to this that a sinful life usually tends, and when this final term is reached, the sinner has made himself his own master, his own sovereign, his own God.

It is this self-apotheosis that has ever been the bane of human society. It was so in the days of old, and it is so in our own day. Paganism, with its hundreds of gods and goddesses, what was it but a world wherein man had made himself the supreme god? It is true, he paid the tribute of worship to a whole army of nominally higher beings, but these beings were in reality only the offspring of his own foolish fancy. He created his gods to satisfy the cravings of his passions, and in worshipping them he only worshiped himself. And practically the same is again becoming the fashion in our own times. What are these men doing who are trying to replace the God of heaven and earth by the dumb forces of nature? They are simply asserting their own divinity. Do they not tell us again and again that nature is all, and that nature has reached its highest development in man? Do they not point with pride to the fact that they have harnessed nature's forces and made them do their personal bidding? They pro-

claim to all the world that nature is their god and they themselves are nature's masters, and that therefore they themselves are the bearers of the supreme Godhead. It is precisely this that is implied in their statements that sin is but a human weakness, a necessary occurrence in the full and free expansion of man's appetitive faculties, an intermediate stage in the development of the individual and of society. In any other sense such statements are simply unintelligible.

As a necessary sequel of this self-apotheosis, follows the third constituent of sin, namely, the abuse of creatures and the total perversion of their God-appointed end. As long as there is a God in heaven, to whom man on earth owes fealty and submission, all earthly things must necessarily be used as determined by God's sovereign and holy will. They are His by right of creation and absolute ownership, and He alone can assign them their destiny. It is true, He made man the ruler of the earth and all that is contained therein, but only with the understanding that man observe the conditions on which his right to rule depends. Man's first inquiry must always be: What is God's will concerning the

use of my own faculties and the gifts of nature placed at my disposal? In the abstract he knows that God created all for His own glory, and in the concrete he must render God this tribute of glory in his every action. He may not think as he pleases, nor will as he pleases, nor make his own pleasure the standard of right and wrong in the enjoyment of wealth and honor and worldly power. Ruler though he be in reference to the material creation, he is still but an underling as regards the use of his ruling power. By reason of his finite nature he must needs acknowledge God as his Overlord, and to Him he is ultimately accountable for his temporal administration.

Now, in sin, this God-appointed order is fundamentally subverted. As the sinner, practically at least, makes himself the source of authority, so does he also in consequence make his own personal advantage the end of all things. He plans and schemes and labors and toils, not to promote the interests of his Creator, but solely to make all creation subservient to his own whims and fancies. His thoughts are concentrated upon himself, and the forces of his will ever revert to his own selfish ends. Whatever power he may have

he directs to his personal aggrandizement, and the means given to him for the service of God he misuses in pandering to his perverse appetites. He acts precisely as a fraudulent administrator does, who, instead of making the estate bear revenue for the lawful heirs, embezzles whatever comes within his reach. He is a dishonest servant, who wastes and squanders his Master's goods, and as far as in him lies, puts himself into his Master's place. It is from this sinful abuse of God's gifts that the lamentable economic conditions of modern society flow as their prime source. Whence comes that constant friction between capital and labor that amounts almost to a state of petty warfare? It is the necessary outcome of man's usurpation of his Creator's rights in the disposition of worldly goods. He arrogates to himself an absolute ownership, with recognized powers to use and abuse as his own fancy may dictate, and then by a most logical inference he judges that he should surround himself with as much creature comfort as possible, if not by fair means, then by foul. It is not so much the necessaries of life that men are now looking for, as their Creator intended; they hanker after luxuries

that make them Sybarites in their indulgence and earthy in their aspirations. This was at the root of the sensual horrors of the old paganism, and this is fast introducing similar conditions in the new paganism of our own day. Eat and drink and make merry; for to-morrow we die.

Hence there is in sin a threefold evil: the rising up of the creature against the Creator; the supplanting of the Creator by the creature; the abuse of creatures for selfish ends. The first is rebellion; the second is treason; the third is robbery. And this three-headed monster is merely a human weakness; merely a necessary occurrence in the full and free expansion of man's appetitive faculties; merely an intermediate stage in the development of the individual and of society! For shame, ye men of academic lore! Hath much learning made you mad? To you, I fear, the Apostle of the Gentiles would apply what he once said of the philosophers of old: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

To realize the awful meaning of sin and the terrible havoc it wrought in God's beautiful creation, we must look at this matter not

through our own eyes, but through the eyes of God. It was through the overflowing of His boundless love that He called man into being; that He prepared for him a dwelling place fit for kings; that He conferred upon him the rights of divine sonship; that He made him heir to all His possessions. It was for man that He bade the sun to rise, the rain to fall, the earth to bring forth its verdure and flowers and golden fruitage. It was man whom He loved even as the apple of His eye, and whose happiness He identified with His own glory. Surely He had reason to look for a return of love! Surely He had a right to expect a grateful acknowledgment of favors so great! Did a mother ever do for her child what God did for His reasonable creatures? And what was the recompense? He was, so to speak, turned out of His own home, driven from His own possessions, robbed of the fruit of His own labor, and that by the slave whom he had pressed to His heart as the child of His love. Have you ever seen father or mother driven from their home by the children for whom they had labored and suffered until their strength gave way, although their love was not yet satisfied? Can you imagine the

desolation of their broken hearts, the disappointment of their unrequited love, when the sons and daughters whom they loved more than life itself, and for whose sake they had made a willing sacrifice of all that was most dear to them, bade them be gone from the home which they had built, and which they had sanctified by their prayers and labor and love? Such things happen at times in human society, incredible though they may appear. They are terrible manifestations of human ingratitude; yet they are not more terrible than what takes place in every mortal sin. God, it is true, cannot be deprived of His own essential happiness; He cannot be reduced to want and starvation; and yet, after our human way of phrasing things, He can be sent forth as an exile from the home which He had built for Himself and for His children. It was this that made Him cry out through Isaiah the prophet: "Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have brought up children and exalted them; but they have despised me." Yes, they have despised Him; not once, not a thousand times, but continuously, uninterruptedly; from the beginning of the world even until now, and they will do so

until He shall summon the nations before His great white throne and render to everyone according to their works.

Now, if such be the nature of sin, and if these sins have multiplied above the stars of heaven and beyond the grains of sand by the seashore, is there any possibility of finding a remedy for an evil so boundless? Can an adequate reparation be made to the outraged majesty of God? Is there any balm in Gilead to heal the wounds of the bleeding human heart? Can the image of the Godhead, which has been utterly disfigured in men's immortal souls, be restored to its original beauty and perfection? If such remedy there be, it must be divine; for divine was the work that has been ruined, divine the person who has been offended, divine is the work of reparation that must be effected. Man can kill, but man cannot restore life; he can drag himself down below his natural dignity, but he cannot raise himself above it; he can outrage the majesty of his Maker, but he cannot repair that outrage. Left to his own resources, he must remain in the abyss into which he has fallen; he must continue forever such as he has made himself by his sin — a rebel, a traitor, a rob-

ber, an ingrate who has raised his hand against his father.

It is this very inability on the part of man to make reparation for the evil he has caused by his sin, that appeals most strongly to God's boundless goodness and that forces Him in a manner to complete the work of love which He began in the creation and adoption of man. He is ever mindful of the fact that the sinner, though insubordinate and ungrateful, is still His own child. He once loved him with a father's love, and that love cannot be torn from His heart. Human fathers may banish their disobedient children from their hearts and homes, without leaving them any hope of being allowed to return. Nay, even human mothers may so harden their hearts against their own flesh and blood that they will cast them off as if they were strangers and suffer them to die in misery and sin — but the good God, who raised man from his lowly condition and made him His own child, has not the heart to be angry with him forever. I have loved thee, He says, with an everlasting love, and therefore have I drawn thee — drawn thee from thy own evil self to My great heart of love. "Can a woman

forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee in my hands." God hates sin — hates it with all the power of His omnipotent being; with a hatred that is infinite even as the love of His own perfections; yet this hatred of sin does not weaken His love for the sinner. Nay, in a manner it intensifies that love, not indeed of the sinner for what he is by his own iniquitous deed, but for what he has lost beyond all possibility of recovery through his own power. It is a love that melts into pity and compassion, even as does the love of a mother for her sick child, whose very helplessness makes her forget all else except the little one's misery and distress.

It is only when we take this view of the matter that we can at all understand God's dealings with the sinful world. One of the greatest mysteries that confronts us in God's government of the world is precisely His seeming inexhaustible patience with sinful man. There is not an hour of the day or night, or rather not a single instant from the beginning of the year to the year's end, but some human being is offending Him by mortal sin.

Nay, many there are whose lives are one tissue of sins the most abominable, and yet He bears with it all and even continues to bestow upon them His favors and blessings as if they were His dutiful children. He maketh His sun to shine upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust, as our blessed Saviour so touchingly expresses it in His sermon on the mount. It is a mystery of patience that baffles human understanding. And what is the ultimate reason underlying this mystery? The love of a father's heart, which may be grieved unto death, yet delays to strike the fatal blow that will cut off His child from Him forever. As He Himself so forcibly expresses it in the words of the inspired writer: "I will not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live." The day of reckoning must indeed come, and come it will unless the sinner repent of his sin and do penance; but meanwhile God waits and waits, hoping it may be against hope, if perchance the son that was dead return to life, and become once again the joy of His heart.

It is in this mercy alone that a remedy can be found for human sins. If this mercy be withheld, then the soul that sins must die.

In human nature there is no principle of self-regeneration. Sinful man cannot repair the ruin he has wrought. God Himself must stoop down and gather up the dead from their tombs and breathe anew into their face the breath of life, that they may become once again living souls. He alone can be the good Samaritan who binds up the wounds of him that fell among robbers, and nurses him back to health and strength. How this was effected in God's own wise ways, we shall consider in the next chapter, which will treat of the Mystery of the Atonement.

CHAPTER VI

THE MYSTERY OF THE ATONEMENT

SANCTIFYING grace is the supernatural life of the soul; its loss is the soul's death in the same order. Man may be in the full vigor of his youth; he may be at the very height of life's enjoyment; yet if he has lost sanctifying grace, his soul is as dead as his body will be when it shall rot in the grave. As no created power can restore life to the body from which the soul has departed, so neither can any power under God give life to the soul that has been deprived of sanctifying grace. Such a soul is not only lifeless, as are the stones that lie scattered by the wayside, but it is the dead remnant of a being that was broken up by sin; it is a wreck strewn along the highway of life. Possessed of sanctifying grace, that soul was beautiful as the angels of heaven, instinct with supernatural life and pulsating with spiritual energy; despoiled of

that grace by the suicidal act of sin, it is repulsive as the spirit of evil, paralyzed in every fibre, and essentially incapable of all supernatural merit. It is an eyesore on God's beautiful creation; a noxious weed that poisons the pure air of the Creator's garden of beauty. Like the barren fig tree, it cumpers the ground, and where its sad condition is self-caused, its inevitable destiny, if left to itself, will be to serve as fuel for the fires of hell.

But that soul, as we saw in the preceding chapter, is still dear to God. It is to Him what the lifeless body of her dead child is to the sorrowing mother. Had she the power to recall the spirit that has flown, she would not rest until it were again united to that stiffened form — until it should send the blood coursing through the clogged veins, paint the blanched cheeks with the flush of health, flash from the glazed eyes in looks of love, and form upon the drawn lips that sweetest of all names, mother. For wise reasons God has withheld such power from human mothers, but He Himself possesses it in all its fullness. He is life itself and the source of all life. He can gather together the scattered atoms that once formed a human body, and breathe again into

them the breath of life, so that the handful of dust becomes once more the earthly vesture of a living soul. He can take the soul that is dead in sin, and infuse into it the principle of supernatural life, so that it shall again be endowed with the same youth and vigor and beauty that were its crown and its glory before the suicidal act of willful sin. And as He has the power, so does He also have the will to perform this miracle of mercy and love. I will not the death of the sinner, He says, but that he be converted and live. It was this merciful love of the Heavenly Father, slighted and scorned by the children of His adoption, that gave hope to our first parents in Paradise; it was this love which devised a plan of reparation so far-reaching and perfect, that the fall itself has become a source of blessings. This reparation is contained in the great Atonement, the meaning and bearing of which we shall consider in the present chapter.

The Atonement is a general term to designate the complexus of divine workings, which have for their object the raising up of mankind fallen through sin. In order to grasp its real significance, and to appreciate the benefits conferred through it upon our fallen race, we

must bear in mind two facts, which are not rarely lost sight of even by those who give the matter serious thought. The first fact is the most certain truth, that God might have left man in the state of misery in which he had placed himself by his own willful sin. By consenting to sin, man made his choice between life and death, and that choice of its very nature was irrevocable. There was no obligation on the part of God to give man a second chance. If He did so, it was purely gratuitous — the prompting of His boundless goodness, not the dictate of His infinite justice. The second fact, which is not less certain, is this, that God might have restored man to his original condition of justice without any atonement whatever. For in sin, His own rights alone were violated, and for this He might have granted a free pardon. He could, without His justice thereby suffering in the least, have made the sacrifice of His honor and have given man the benefit of His mercy. Again, He might, if He had so chosen, have been content with such reparation as man had it in his power to make, although that reparation would necessarily fall short of the demands of infinite justice. Hence if He required an

atonement for man's transgressions, and if He chose one method of effecting it rather than another, it was because He deemed it the most apt to manifest at once His justice and His mercy, and also the most likely to excite in man the love of God and the fear of sin. He chose a method that made of the atonement a labor of love, and in that labor of love, which placed upon infinite holiness the burden of sin, He made less account of His rights than of our needs; He satisfied the demands of justice, yet so as to incline to mercy. It is in this mystery of divine love that infinite justice and infinite mercy meet in the kiss of peace.

The Catholic doctrine of the Atonement, which is in fact the burden of the whole New Testament and which was clearly foreshadowed in the Old, is thus neatly expressed in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans: "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (v, 10). Here three facts are pointed out as entering into the fundamental concept of the Atonement. We were the enemies of God, and as such we stood in need of a reconciliation. God Himself, who was the offended party, brought about that reconciliation; and He brought it about by the

death of His own Son. It was not man who took the first step, but God. It was not man who paid the price of redemption, but God. This fundamental idea of reconciliation to God by the sacrifice of God's own Son, the Apostle develops more fully in his Letter to the Colossians, where he says: "In him (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, both as to the things on earth and the things that are in heaven. And you, whereas you were sometimes alienated, and enemies in mind in evil works, yet now he hath reconciled in the body of his flesh through death to present you holy and unspotted and blameless before him" (i, 19-23). . . . "You, when you were dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of the flesh, he (the Father) hath quickened together with him (Christ), forgiving you all offenses, blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross" (II, 13, 14).

Hence what we must first of all take note of

in this doctrine of the Atonement is the fact that the Atonement wrought by Christ is essentially an act of reconciliation. It is the bringing together of two parties that were at variance with one another, and hence it supposes a state of enmity between God and man as the result of man's sin. This is precisely what we would infer from the nature of sin, as explained in the preceding chapter. As we there saw, by sin man turns away from his God, usurps God's authority, and subverts the order which God established in His own creation. His sinful act, as considered in its moral tendency, not only attacks God's possessions, but His very person, since it is essentially opposed to His infinite holiness. On his part, therefore, man is as truly God's enemy through sin as any nation is said to be the enemy of the country which it attacks in warfare; as truly as any son is the enemy of his father whose life he attempts. It is very important to bear this in mind in order to come to a clear understanding of the nature of Christ's Atonement. It implies not merely forgiveness on the part of God, but a change of heart on the part of man. God's enemy is made God's friend, not merely in name, but in deed; the

heart that was centered upon self goes out to its Maker; the will that asserted its independence submits to the will of its rightful Sovereign; the unfaithful servant who appropriated what was not his own becomes duly devoted to his Master's interests. The reconciliation implied in the Atonement is, therefore, a new creation, which undoes the work of sin even as sin undid the work of God. How this interior change is actually effected in each individual soul, we shall see on another occasion, but for the present we must keep its objective reality before our minds, else we fail to grasp the real meaning of the Atonement.

Here the question necessarily suggests itself, if the Atonement is essentially a reconciliation, and if reconciliation presupposes a state of enmity between the parties to be reconciled, must it be said that God was the enemy of sinful man? Naturally speaking, this would appear to be the case; because all unjust aggression calls for just retribution, and therefore of its very nature gives rise to the spirit of revenge in the offended party. Moreover, Holy Scripture would seem to lend color to this view, since it repeatedly speaks of God's anger against the sinful world; nay, St. Paul goes

so far as to say that we are all born children of wrath. But, on the other hand, how is it possible that God should be man's enemy and yet at the same time endeavor to bring about a reconciliation by the sacrifice of His own Son in behalf of sinful man? Here we seem to be face to face with a mystery the full significance of which goes beyond the reach of shortsighted human reason. Man withdraws from the obedience of his Creator, usurps the authority of his Sovereign, abuses the gifts of God, and yet that same Creator, that same Sovereign, that same God, sacrifices His only Son in order to save sinful man from the terrible consequences of his iniquitous deeds — how is it possible that Infinite Wisdom should find such a course of action consistent with Infinite Justice?

The real nature of this mystery we cannot hope to understand until that happy day shall come, when, leaning on the bosom of God's infinite love, we shall read in the light of our Father's countenance the hidden counsels of His heart; but meanwhile we may gather a partial explanation of it all from the nature of God's anger, which is essentially different from the anger of human beings. God is not angry

as we are angry ; He is not actuated by passion which looks for revenge. His anger is but an expression of His perfect holiness, which is outraged by sin. This outraged holiness of God calls indeed for a righteous chastisement of the sinner, but it is not forgetful of the sinner's needs and the sinner's interests, and hence it may assume the highest form of love, which finds expression in self-sacrifice for the very person by whom the outrage was committed. We have a distant analogy of this in a mother's love for her disobedient child. She may be very much offended at the disrespect of one from whom she has a right to expect only love and appreciation ; her heart may bleed on account of the insults coming from her own flesh and blood ; yet deep down in that same bruised and bleeding heart still throbs a mother's love, which would gladly sacrifice life itself, if thereby she could save her misguided child. She is but human ; still her love is in a manner divine — it rises above the littleness of passion and the meanness of revenge ; it grows in tenderness and intensity in the same proportion as its object is reduced to greater want and misery. Her anger is but the outcome of her love, and as long as she remains

true to the promptings of her heart, that anger will look only to the saving of her child. It is somewhat after this manner that we must conceive of God's anger against sinful man; it is not the flaring up of passion, not the desire of revenge; but a manifestation of His holiness, which finds expression in His hatred of sin and in His pity for the sinner. Sinful man was the enemy of God, but God was not the enemy of sinful man; had He been, He would never have sent His own Son to redeem the world from sin. It was this that the Apostle had in mind when he wrote to the Christians at Rome: "God commendeth his charity towards us; because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us" (v, 8, 9).

This view of the Atonement, which makes it from beginning to end a work of love rather than of avenging justice, commends itself especially to our acceptance when the Atonement is considered in regard to Christ by whom it was accomplished. Through the Incarnation Christ was constituted the moral head of the human race, as Adam had been before the fall. He became our representative before God, and upon His shoulders was placed the

burden of our sins. "Him who knew no sin for us he (the Father) hath made sin, that we might be made the justice of God in him," writes St. Paul to the Corinthians. God made the sinless sin for us, that is, a sin-offering, whereby our sins should be blotted out. Now in the very nature of things it is inconceivable that God should be angry with Christ; for Christ Himself is God. Christ not only satisfied for our sins, but together with the Father and the Holy Spirit demanded that satisfaction. Holy Scripture testifies indeed that Christ our Lord was delivered up by the Father, but it testifies not less clearly that He was delivered up also by Himself. As a modern writer on the subject so well expresses it: "Sin is displeasing to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, and to the Father and the Holy Spirit as much as to the Son belongs the love which by the mystery of the redemption devised a way of bringing God's banished children home. The Father sent the Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by the Eternal Spirit was He conceived in Mary's womb and offered on the cross. The justice which required satisfaction and the mercy which provided it, are the justice and the mercy of the

Triune God. Hence the Atonement, although offered through the Incarnate Word, is the work of the whole Trinity, and the sacrifice of the cross, like the sacrifice of the altar, is offered to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit." God sacrificed His Son; but not through anger. He placed upon His Son's shoulders the burden of the world's sin; but He did not withdraw from Him his heart's affection. The Atonement is indeed a mystery, but it is a mystery of love. It is God's own inscrutable way of bringing His banished children home.

The Atonement is, therefore, from beginning to end, the work of God, the concrete expression of His compassionate love for our sinful race; yet it is also in a true sense the work of man, because it was effected by God through human nature. God Himself became man so as to enable human nature to blot out the dark stain of guilt of which itself had been the willful author. It is this intermingling of the human and the divine in this mystery of love that makes it so irresistibly attractive to the human heart — God Himself repairing the damage caused by our sins, but in such wise that we should share in that divine work. As

St. Paul so beautifully expresses it in his Epistle to the Philippians: "He emptied himself, taking upon himself the form of a servant, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross." Mark well what this implies. Before any reconciliation whatever had been effected, whilst man was still acting the part of an enemy, God gave Himself entirely to human nature, allowed Himself to be possessed by man, so that through His infinite holiness human actions might have the efficacy of satisfying the demands of eternal justice. He gave to man the purchase money of redemption, and that purchase money was His own divine personality. A right understanding of this will save us from falling into the fatal error of attributing our redemption to human nature itself — an error unfortunately all too common in these days of human self-sufficiency. It was Christ's human nature, they tell us, that became obedient, Christ's human nature that suffered and died — not His divinity, not His divine personality — and therefore it was human nature itself that wrought our redemption. This, our rationalistic friends will have it, is a logical inference

from the Catholic doctrine that Christ was true man.

Well, they may call this an inference, but it is certainly not logical; it is as false as it is fatal. It was indeed in the power of Christ's human nature to obey and to suffer, but neither its obedience nor its sufferings could satisfy for man's sins except in so far as both the one and the other proceeded from the human nature of God. Catholics teach indeed that Christ was true man, but also that His human nature was linked in a personal union to the Godhead—it was God's own human nature. All its dignity, all its power of satisfying for sin, all its capability of meriting the graces of salvation, had their source in this personal union, and therefore all its redeeming power was the result of God's generosity, manifested in making that nature His very own; so much so that it is literally true to say, God became obedient, God humbled Himself, God died upon the cross. If He associated human nature with Himself in the work of reconciliation, it was not because of any moral value which that nature could give to His work, but because it enabled Him to walk the way of

human sorrows and to bestow something upon that nature, which without such a union it would have been impossible to bestow. He made that nature the bearer of His divinity, and through that divinity the sharer in His work of satisfying for man's sins.

The intensity of God's love, and its touching tenderness, as it thus finds expression in the work of the Atonement, can be understood only if it be borne in mind what its accomplishment cost Him. When St. Peter told the first Christians that they had been bought at a great price, he expressed a truth that is sometimes but little appreciated. If we were told that a human father had delivered his only son to be put to death in order to save the life of a condemned slave, we would without hesitation form one of these two conclusions: Either that father did not love his son as he ought to have loved him, or he loved his slave inordinately. There would seem to be no other reasonable explanation of so strange a conduct. Yet this is precisely what God did. Christ in His human nature is God's own Son, not by adoption, but by generation. That human nature was at the moment of its conception substantially united to the second person

of the Most Holy Trinity, owing to which union there is in Christ only one person, and that person is the natural Son of God. On the other hand, sinful man, man deprived of sanctifying grace, is but a slave — he becomes an adopted child only through sanctifying grace, which would not have been his except for the Atonement of Christ. Hence it is literally true to say that God gave up His own Son to be crucified in order to give life to His condemned slave. And did He not love that Son? Why, He loved Him with all the intensity of which His own infinite love is capable. Did He then love us inordinately? In God there can be nothing inordinate. One attribute of His infinitely perfect being cannot come in conflict with another. He is as just as He is merciful; as wise as He is generous. He loved us indeed beyond our deserts, but not beyond the limits of His wisdom and prudence. How then can this action of God in our behalf be explained? Why, my friends, it cannot be explained. This is the heart and core of the mystery of the Atonement. This is the mystery of God's love for man — that He spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. For God so loved

the world, as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but have life everlasting.

There is nothing analogous to this in the whole range of human experiences. We hear sometimes of human mothers sacrificing their lives for their own children; of friends dying in the service of their friends; of soldiers bravely facing death in the defense of their country — of such sacrifices even human nature is capable, heroic though they be; but in all this there is nothing that can even be compared to the sacrifice involved in the mystery of the Atonement. In all these cases there is simply a question of sacrificing a human life for a human life; there is always a due proportion between the end to be obtained and the means employed; but in the Atonement such proportion seems to be entirely wanting. The life to be sacrificed is the life of God — a human life, if you will, but truly the life of God; the life to be saved is the life of a creature; the two are so far apart in their moral values that the gulf between them is simply impassable. And still God made that sacrifice — made it wisely and prudently, with as much justice as mercy; but how He did it, that is

His own secret — the secret of his Fatherly love for the children of His adoption.

This fact, however, that Christ's atoning death for the sinful world implies a mystery which passes man's comprehension, must not make us doubt its reality. For its objective truth is established by arguments so incontrovertible, that man must deny the very existence of God before he can shake the foundation upon which this doctrine is based. We accept it, as we accept every other mystery of our holy religion, on the authority of God's own word. This mystery of God's love forms the burden of the whole New Testament and of a large portion of the Old, and for its absolute certainty God has pledged the eternal truth of His infinite being. Modern Rationalists endeavor indeed to reason it away, but so do they try to reason away the existence of a personal God. They affect to see in this doctrine of the Atonement not a miracle of God's boundless love, but only an evident proof of His glaring injustice. For how, say they, can God sacrifice an innocent being in order to save the guilty? How can He punish His own Son so that He may set free His guilty slave? The whole proceeding is one glaring

contradiction, and to believe it one must first surrender one's reason.

To this eternal "how" of these skeptics it would be quite sufficient to oppose the undeniable fact that God Himself has revealed the truth in question. It was precisely this answer that Christ gave the skeptics of His own day, when they presumed to argue, "how can this man give us his flesh to eat?" He did not enter into any discussion with them, as to "how" He might accomplish what He then and there promised, but merely pointed to His own divine authority as the all-sufficient reason for believing His word. "Amen, amen I say unto you: Except you eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you." And so when the skeptics of our day presume to argue, "how can God sacrifice His own Son in order to redeem sinful man?" this same Eternal Truth answers them: "Amen, amen I say unto you: Except you believe in the Son of God dying for the sins of the world, you shall not have life in you; for he that believeth not, shall be condemned." This answer would be all-sufficient; because when Eternal Wisdom deigns to speak, short-sighted human reason must be silent. It

is not for man to set limits to the power of his God.

However, the principal difficulty that is brought against this mystery admits of quite a reasonable solution, and so the very ground is taken from under the feet of those who attack the Catholic doctrine of the Atonement. They say that God could not punish His innocent Son to redeem guilty man. That statement is quite true. God cannot punish except where there is personal guilt. But who told these critics of God's inscrutable ways, that Christ was punished for the sins of the world? He bore indeed in his own flesh sin's terrible penalty; He was made the victim of that one sin-offering which alone had power to blot out sin's guilt; but this was only in consequence of His own free choice; there was no compulsion on the part of God. His own human will, through a deliberate and free action, set aside joy and endured the cross, despising the shame. The sufferings of Christ were not a punishment inflicted by His angry Father; they were a free love-offering of His own to the infinite majesty of the Triune God. It was precisely this voluntary endurance of His sufferings that gave to Christ's sacrifice its

atonement value. It was not His life of poverty and toil, not the mental anguish of His death-agony in the garden, not the physical tortures of the crucifixion, considered merely in themselves, that were acceptable in the sight of God; but only the generous will and perfect love which reached out to the extreme shame and suffering in order to show forth in deed what He felt in affection; these and these only, as dignified by His divine personality, gave moral value to Christ's life of labor and to His painful death. For wise reasons God decreed that the fallen race of man should not be redeemed except by the sacrifice of a God-Man, but that sacrifice was not to be consummated except by the free will of the nature thus chosen, and then only as an expression of self-sacrificing love.

Of course, these men insist still further that neither had Christ's human nature the right to sacrifice itself for the sinful race, nor had God the right to accept that sacrifice. For, say they, suppose that a father, whose son had been condemned to death, were to offer himself to take his son's place, would he have a right to make that offer, or would the judge have a right to accept it? Common sense

would answer, no, in both cases. Well, then, is not this a parallel case? No, it is not. This human father simply takes his life in his own hands and disposes of it without reference to God's will; whereas Christ offered His life only in so far as He was authorized by the known will of God. Again no human judge has absolute power over the lives of his fellow-men, but can pass the sentence of death only upon persons whose evil deeds have made them guilty of death according to the laws of the land. God, on the other hand, has absolute power over the lives of all men; for as He gave them life so can He deprive them of the same; and therefore He could not only allow Christ's human nature to offer itself as an expiatory victim for a fallen race, but He could also accept that offer without doing violence to His own infinite justice or to the rights of His creatures. Any difficulty on this point can arise only from an imperfect understanding of God's sovereign power.

Setting aside, therefore, as altogether without foundation, these and similar objections raised by human skepticism, we need but open our eyes to the light of wisdom and love, which radiates from this mystery, to give it our un-

hesitating assent and to find in it our sweetest consolation. There is something ravishing in the thought of God assuming our nature, of God becoming our intimate associate, one of our own family, our Elder Brother — bone of our bone, blood of our blood, flesh of our flesh; yet even this thought, with all the glorious light of God's infinite love gathered about it as a source of endless wonder, almost fades from view the moment we turn our hearts and minds to the greater mystery of the Atonement. For from this mystery we learn that God not only became man, but a suffering man — a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity, who gathered up into His own being our distress and our humiliations, our sadness and our disappointments, our trials and our temptations, and bearing them all from the crib to the cross, made amends in His sinless flesh for our many offenses against His own divine person. God born in a stable, God living in want and misery, God dying on the cross; and all for love of us; for love of us, His enemies! The thought is overwhelming! It is to this thought that the Church gives expression, when on Holy Saturday morning she sings in her ritual service: "O felix culpa,

quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!" O happy fall, which did deserve to have so worthy and so great a Redeemer! Sin is the greatest of all evils, yet out of this evil of evils God's love has found a way of drawing the greatest of blessings. O felix culpa! O happy fall!

CHAPTER VII

WORK OF THE ATONEMENT

ST. PAUL in his Epistle to the Romans (v, 17-19), draws this comparison between our fall in Adam and our redemption through Christ: "If by one man's offense death reigned through one; much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift, and of justice, shall reign in life through one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offense of one, unto all men to condemnation; so also by the justice of one, unto all men to justification of life. For as by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners; so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just." According to these statements of the Apostle, which in one form or another are also made by other sacred writers, Christ was constituted the moral head of the human race in a somewhat similar way as Adam had been before the fall, but with entirely opposite re-

sults. Through Adam sin and death came into the world; through Christ justification and life. Adam ruined the race of which he was the head by disobeying the laws of his Maker; Christ restored that same race to its lost dignity by obeying the will of His Father. The two occupied the same relative position in reference to the human race, in as much as its supernatural state was made dependent upon their actions; but the effects of their respective moral headships ran contrariwise; for what Adam had ruined, that Christ repaired.

From this juxtaposition of Christ and Adam, as indicated by the sacred writers, we gain an insight into the work that developed upon the Redeemer of our fallen race. The lines along which He was to direct that work had been marked out by Adam's sin and by the sins of Adam's descendants. As the Redeemer of mankind, Christ was to undo the work of sin, and to effect this He must meet sin in all its devious ways; He must, so to speak, hunt it down and destroy it, and then to prevent its re-occurrence, He must establish in its place sin's divine counterpoise, virtue. Now in sin, as we saw in a previous chapter, there is contained a threefold disorder: First, it is an

open refusal of obedience to the Creator, and therefore an act of rebellion; secondly, it is an undue exaltation of the creature, and therefore constructive treason; thirdly, it is a perverse use of God's gifts to man, and therefore an act of robbery. Hence if Christ was to undo the work of sin, He must overcome man's rebellion by His own absolute submission to God's will; He must blot out man's treason by His own perfect loyalty to God's interests; He must counteract man's selfishness by His own unbounded generosity. Absolutely submissive to God's will, wholly devoted to God's interests, entirely forgetful of self, He must renew all things in His own most perfect life, and thus offer to God a new creation in place of the one that had been ruined by man's sin — this was to be His life work; the accomplishment of this alone could justify His dying declaration, "It is consummated!"

And did Christ accomplish this work? Did His dying exclamation proclaim to the expectant world that its regeneration had been wrought? Or was it only significant of the fact that the sufferer's course had been run? These questions we may answer in the Saviour's own words: "Come and see!" Come

to the crib in the stable at Bethlehem; come to the little home at Nazareth; come to the villages and cities of the Holy Land; come to the blood-stained heights of Calvary, and see how the one perfect man of all our sinful race has served His God! Upon His entrance into the world He made a morning-offering, which bound Him as a victim of love upon the altar of sacrifice, and that morning-offering He reduced to act at every moment of His earthly life, until the victim had been consumed as a holocaust in the fire of divine charity on the wood of the cross. He was human in His life and human in His death, but the manner in which He lived the one and sustained the other was divine. He showed sinful man what human nature is capable of when it surrenders itself unconditionally into the hands of its Maker. He had His human aspirations, His human longings, His human preferences as we have; for although He was True God, He was at the same time true man: but these aspirations, these longings, and these preferences were made subservient in all things and at all times to God's holy will, and through this He wrought the work which has renewed the face of the earth.

First, then, come and see how this second Adam was submissive to the will of God His Father. When the Apostle tells us that Christ, "being in the form of God, emptied himself, taking the form of a servant," he puts into words a thought that is simply appalling in the reach of its consequences for the God-Man. He means to emphasize that Christ's human life was hedged in with all the restrictions that result from the operation of laws both human and divine. God though He was, and therefore naturally above every law, He of His own free choice embraced all the conditions of servitude that are incident to the life of the lowest human being. He deliberately put aside all the prerogatives that were His by reason of His divinity, and bore the galling yoke of subjection as it should be borne by mortal man. The Son of God is made a servant, and as a servant He must be submissive to His own creatures. When He made His morning-offering in the words of the prophet: "Sacrifice and obligation thou wouldst not; but a body thou hast fitted to me: holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then said I: Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of me: that I should

do thy will, O God." He vowed submission not only to His Father in heaven, but also to His own creatures on earth; not only to the will of His holy mother and of His foster father, but even to the laws of the inanimate nature in their inexorable operation upon human beings. His oblation was absolute and complete, and so was its actual accomplishment at every instant of His life.

This is the ultimate explanation of that spectacle almost shocking in its apparent inconsistency, of a God wrapped in swaddling clothes, of a God cradled in a manger, of a God helpless as any child of man. He came unto His own and His own received Him not; yet He spoke no word of complaint, but only shed a tear of sorrow and uttered a cry of distress as the world's sufferings found Him out even at the moment of His birth. Like any other child, He was simply passive in the hands of those to whose keeping He had been entrusted. With them He shared the cold and desolation of the stable; with them He fled from His enemies into a strange land; with them He lingered in exile, depending on them for His daily sustenance and for the safety of His life. And all this time He

was fully conscious of His privations, of His sufferings and humiliations; for He had the full use of his reason even from the first moment of His existence. In appearance but a child, He was in thought and feeling a man. He was affected not only externally by the hard conditions of His lot, as is the case with other children whilst reason is held in abeyance; but He experienced all the interior anguish and distress which makes pain and suffering really what they are, and which a merciful Providence keeps out of the life of early childhood. In this respect the helplessness of His childhood years was more like the decrepitude of old age, which in addition to its physical sufferings feels most keenly the humiliation of its dependent condition.

And here the wonder is — the marvel and the mystery of it all — that this anomalous condition of things was entirely the result of His own free choice. He had not only the physical but the moral power to throw off this heavy and awkward burden at any moment. One word from His lips, one act of His human will, would have as effectively

changed that stable into a palace as it in after years called Lazarus from the grave. He could even then as easily have hurled Herod from his throne and frustrated all his evil designs as at the end of His life He dashed to the ground the mob that had come to take Him by force. He was free not only to choose what manner of life He would lead, but also to alter that choice at any given instant according to His own good pleasure. And yet He submitted to the conditions of life as He found them. Why? Because it was His Father's will. God had expressed His will that the redemption of mankind should be wrought along the lines of submission and self-denial, and this expression of the divine will, although it left Him entirely free, He took for Himself as a law to which He would yield an unqualified and absolute obedience. By the disobedience of the first Adam sin and death had come into the world, by the obedience of the second Adam should come justification and life. Man by an abuse of his free will had rebelled against his Maker, the God-Man by an entire abnegation of His own will would

quell that rebellion. What had been the instrument of man's ruin, that also should be the instrument of his salvation.

Closely connected with this absolute submission to God's will, and in fact flowing from it as a necessary consequence, was that unswerving loyalty to God's interests which constitutes the second feature of Christ's work of reparation. Man's treasonable self-exaltation had deprived God of the glory, which in the very nature of things is His inalienable property; Christ's voluntary self-annihilation gave back to God that glory in all its fullness. The angel's birthday anthem, "Glory to God in the highest," was a prophecy that received its fulfillment at every instant of the Saviour's earthly life. When in after years He said: "I seek not my own glory; there is one who seeketh and findeth," He only put into words what He had expressed in deed ever since His birth in the stable. Of all the striking traits of His perfect character, none stand out more prominently than that sublime forgetfulness of His own interests, which made His whole life one uninterrupted series of self-effacements in the service of His Father. Naturally entitled to all the distinctions that

may arise from wealth and social position and moral power, He generously sacrificed them all that thereby He might the better promote the interests of God. To Him God was all in all. His own humanity, considered without reference to God, was nothing. Not that He failed to value the God-given dignity of human nature — no, He loved His human nature as only God can love it; He valued its interests as no man has ever done; but that love and that appreciation was entirely subordinated to His greater love and higher appreciation of the Godhead. Love and serve God for His own sake; but love and serve man for the sake of God — that was His rule of life from which He never deviated by a hair's breadth.

And did this constant effacement of self, this invariable exaltation of God, cost Him nothing? Why, it meant for Him the sacrifice of all that is naturally dear to men — it meant the sacrifice of ease and comfort and reputation and honor; it meant a life of want and humiliation and apparent uselessness; it meant pain and suffering and the pangs or bitter disappointment. He had His human longings, His human aspirations, His

human interests, even as we have. He yearned for the consolation of human friendship, for the sweetness of human love, for the tenderness of human sympathy. The most perfect of human beings, His heart responded to all human affections with an intensity that must ever remain unparalleled among the sons of men. Yet that heart throbbing with human affections, pulsating with human love, was forever held in the iron grasp of His indomitable will, which directed its every movement along the lines marked out by His father's interests. Not as I will, Father, but as Thou wilt — this was the soul of His soul, the life of His life, the beginning and the middle and the end of His every act and aspiration.

Consider for a moment the concrete bearing of all this in His life of labor and humiliation. Have you ever been struck by the apparent incongruity that stares us in the face, when we read that the Son of God drove a carpenter's trade? That the very same person, who by a mere act of His all-powerful will called into being millions of worlds, and even now guides them on their way through space in a manner so harmonious that it

passes the understanding of man, should spend His youth and early manhood years in so unprofitable and lowly a task as patching sheds and mending ploughs? Does it not seem that there was reason for the contempt that inspired the Jews to ask the question, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Why, it is an incongruity that is almost shocking! At the age of twelve He excused His stay in Jerusalem by stating that He must be about His Father's business; why did He not continue to be about His Father's business? On that occasion He took His place among the doctors of the law, and spoke with such wisdom and unction that all were astonished at His questions and answers; and then for years to come He must be shown how to handle hammer and saw, and must humbly submit to the censure of fault-finding employers? A few years hence, He would by a mere blessing of His sacred hands multiply five barley loaves and a few fishes to such an extent that five thousand men besides a vast multitude of women and children should have their fill — nay, that the very remnants which remained after the meal should exceed in quantity the food that had been there before the

blessing; and now He labors and toils for a mere pittance, so that He and those most dear to Him must eat their bread in the sweat of their brow? Whence this apparent inconsistency? Why did He not by His omnipotent power supply His mother and His foster-father with all the comforts of life, and then go out into the world and teach the nations that were dwelling in darkness and in the shadow of death? Yes, why not?

Why not? Because He wished to be loyal to His heavenly Father, who had ordained that He should first teach by example and then by word. He had been sent to sanctify labor and to consecrate poverty, and to that mission He would be faithful at all costs. True, He might easily have made a name for Himself as a great teacher, as a most influential leader of men; He might have gone to Alexandria, to Athens, to Rome, and by the wisdom of His words and the force of His character gathered around Him the first nations of the world; He might have forced them to worship at His feet; but that would have been seeking His own glory, whereas He had been sent to redeem the world by seeking exclusively the glory of God. His

Father had mercifully decreed that He should teach men and women the sacred duty of earning their bread by honest labor; that He should convince the proud and selfish human heart that poverty may be a greater blessing than wealth, and how could He have done so more effectively than by sanctifying the one and consecrating the other in His own divine person? Joseph's worship at Nazareth afforded a better field for promoting God's glory than the Greek Areopagus and the Roman Forum, and for that reason He spent in it the greater part of His earthly life. Man had ruined the world by stretching out his hand to the glory of God; He must redeem the world by sacrificing His own glory. Man had usurped the authority of God and thereby proved himself a traitor; He must prove Himself loyal to that authority and thereby blot out the dark stain of man's treason.

Again, this same unswerving fidelity to the plan of redemption outlined by His Father, the same unvarying loyalty to His Father's interests, marked every one of His actions, when at the close of His hidden life in the little town of Nazareth, He went forth into

the world to proclaim Himself openly as the divinely promised Messiah. In that first great battle with the powers of darkness, which He fought in the loneliness of the desert after His forty days' fast, He raised the standard of loyal disinterestedness which was never to be lowered until He had poured out the last drop of His blood in the service of His God. Tortured by the pangs of hunger and conscious of His power to supply all His wants by a mere act of His will, He nevertheless met the tempter's suggestion to change the stones into bread with the significant answer: "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." He might indeed have wrought a miracle in His own behalf as He so often did in behalf of others, but such was not His Father's will, and therefore He rejected the mere suggestion of it with scorn. "All these will I give thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me," again suggested the tempter, pointing out to Him the riches of the world and glory thereof, but like a lightning flash came the crushing answer, "Begone, Satan: for it is written, The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him

only shalt thou serve." Neither present sufferings nor future glory caused in Him so much as a moment's hesitation in following the narrow path, whose final goal was the full measure of God's undivided glory. I seek not my own glory; there is one who seeketh and findeth.

It is this insistence upon procuring God's greater glory in all things that explains many of our blessed Saviour's actions, which otherwise would seem to be little in harmony with the scope of the great work He had come to accomplish. Why, for instance, did He by preference associate with the poor and the forsaken, when He might so easily have found recognition among the rich and powerful and have thereby impressed the world with a sense of His own personal importance? Why did He confine His public activity to the narrow limits of His native land, when He might without any difficulty have made the whole world the beneficiary of His personal presence? Why did He allow His saving mission to end in the darkness of Calvary's ninth hour, when He might have set upon it the seal of divine approbation by frustrating His enemies' nefarious designs, as

He had so often done on occasions of minor importance? Yes, why this constant throwing away of opportunities which, humanly speaking, alone were calculated to lead His work to a successful issue? Why? Because His mission was to redeem the world by accomplishing His Father's will in all things, and to that mission He would be loyal even though a senseless world should fling into His face the charge of stupidity and imposture. Sinful man had sought His own exaltation by usurping the place of God; He, the Sinless One, would restore to God His rightful place by a deliberate and absolute disregard of all His own personal interests.

As He thus by His perfect submission to God's will, and by His absolute loyalty to God's interests, repaired the damage done by man's open refusal of obedience and unjust usurpation of authority, so did He also by a most generous self-abnegation make all amends for man's selfish abuse of creatures. Man sought creature comforts and worldly enjoyments in defiance of God's solemn prohibition; He the God-Man set aside these comforts and enjoyments when he might lawfully have used them for His personal advan-

tage. Of this there is little need to speak, as it is written in characters so large across His whole life, from the crib to the cross, that he who runs may read. It was not enough for Him to be born in poverty, but He would add to it the shame of utter abjection. Where stood of old the palace of His royal ancestor, David, who sang of Him in sublimest psalmody, there He, the noblest scion of that noble race, chose a stable as His birthplace — the very same stable, as a probable tradition has it, in which David kept his horses. Nor did this fill the measure of sorrows that hung over His childhood years. At His birth there was no room for Him in the inn; after His birth there was no room for Him in His native land. He must flee as an exile into a strange country, and dwell there until they who sought His life had been summoned to appear before the judgment seat of God. And then, when His boyhood glided into youth, when His young life should have been surrounded with all the comforts of a well-provided home, He must bend to the task of doing His share in supporting the family as any child of poverty. His hands grew callous from hard labor, His youthful frame felt the

stress and strain of constant toil, His delicate body tingled with the smart of exhaustion and fatigue. How well the prophet had said of Him: "He shall spring up as a root out of a thirsty ground." He was in labor from His youth, and in the sweat of His face did He eat bread.

And this entire rejection of all creature comfort, this complete denial of self, continued uninterruptedly till the very end of His life. During His public career, when He so compassionately alleviated the sufferings and afflictions of others, when He solaced the sorrowful, healed the sick, and fed the hungry, He Himself lived in constant want and privation, depending for His subsistence upon the chance gifts of a few compassionate souls. How pathetically He gave expression to this when He said: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." And how touching the picture which St. John has bequeathed to posterity in his record of the incident at the well of Jacob. Weary from His journey across the country of the Samaritans, Jesus sat down by Jacob's well, thirsty and exhausted, humbly asking a drink of

water from the Samaritan outcast. Yet travel-spent though He was, He would not refresh Himself until He had led that poor outcast back to the paths of virtue. It was but a repetition of His daily experiences — utterly forgetful of self, He was wholly intent upon doing the work His Father had given Him to do. No better summing up of His public life could have been given than that which the Evangelist puts into the terse statement, "He went about doing good to all." Always for others, always for God, never for self.

This life of labor and toil, this life of constant self-denial, all endured in reparation for man's sin and for the increase of God's glory, one would think ought to have been sufficient to satisfy eternal justice and to redeem a thousand worlds. Yes, so it was, as far as its moral value was concerned. Why, even one free act of the God-Man gives greater glory to God than He was or ever could be deprived of by the sins of men. And yet all this was not sufficient to carry out the plan of redemption as agreed to by the Saviour of the world. God's offended majesty called for a satisfaction that involved the death of the

God-Man, and therefore the Saviour's life of sacrifice must end in the sacrifice of life itself. There was need of an object lesson to bring home to thoughtless men and women the gravity of sin and the inexorable justice of God. It is true, Christ's thirty-three years of obedience and poverty and self-abnegation contain that lesson in all its fullness; but it can be read there only by those who think. It does not force itself upon those who have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, as is the case with the majority of men and women who stand most in need of that all-important lesson. Their vacant minds and shriveled hearts can be roused to action only by a peal of thunder that causes the very earth to reel beneath their feet. Christ must take His stand before the sensual world as a God in misery, or His work of love would bear but little fruit. It is to this that we must look for the final explanation of those scenes of blood, which ended in the slaying of God's own Son.

A God in misery! What a terrible thought! And yet that thought expresses most accurately the sum and substance of the world's one great tragedy. For Christ was

God, and Christ was reduced to a misery which mind of man cannot conceive nor human tongue can tell. Cast but a glance at Him as He lies there prostrate in the garden on the eve of His death. It is close upon nine o'clock in the evening; the turmoil of the city is hushed, the quiet of the great Sabbath seems to rest upon the earth, and yet upon that sacred silence ever and anon break the sobs and groans of one whose mere presence was wont to bring peace to every troubled heart. It is the strong one of Israel, the lion of the tribe of Judah; it is the Christ before whom the very demons trembled in craven fear. When the wind and the waves roared in wildest fury, He but spoke, and there was a great calm; and now, when the peace of God seems to have descended upon the troubled earth, He, the Prince of Peace, is writhing in a death agony. He is alone in His sorrow — alone with sin and sin's just judge. His body trembles in uncontrollable fear; every muscle is rigid in the throes of a death-struggle. Upon His face, pale as death, gathers in heavy drops a perspiration of blood, and from His lips, drawn and parched and blue, comes a sigh of unutterable sadness:

My soul is sorrowful, sorrowful even unto death. O My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt. It is a sigh of unutterable sadness, a groan of boundless woe — the sigh of a God-Man in His agony, the groan of a God in misery. And why? Why? Because He is clothed in the leprous garb of the world's sin — of your sins and of my sins, and for them He must satisfy the justice of God in His own sinless flesh. Why? Because He has deliberately placed before His human soul the awful scenes that will be enacted on the morrow — the awful scenes that will have their tragic end on the blood-stained heights of Calvary. He is making atonement for the vile lusts of sinful man; He is offering satisfaction to the infinite justice of God.

And was that ordeal so terrible that the God-Man should shrink from it in horror? Oh, there is no need of rehearsing those harrowing scenes. They have been familiar to us from our childhood years, and will remain engraven on our hearts until our dying day. We need but call to mind how under the

mask of friendship His own disciple sold Him for the contemptible price of a slave; how His best friends surrendered Him into the hands of His sworn enemies; how the prince of the Apostles denied Him with an oath, and we feel with shame and confusion that we see before us a God in misery. We need but think of the fearful scourging at the pillar, of the awful crowning with thorns, the wearisome carrying of the cross, the ghastly scenes on Calvary, and every fiber of our being echoes that terrible cry: A God in misery! There is no need of human eloquence to set forth the significance of that fearful tragedy enacted in Jerusalem on the first Good Friday morning. Read but the simple narrative of the four Evangelists, there you will find the most eloquent sermon that can ever be preached on the consummation of the great sin-offering that reconciled man to His Maker. Look at the crucifix, listen to the voice of God's grace speaking in your hearts, and you will grasp more fully the import of that sacred drama than you can ever hope to do by listening to the most powerful sermon preached by mortal man. Think

of your deeds of sin; think of your immortal souls; think of the tortured Christ, and with the grace of God you will understand the meaning of the Saviour's dying words, "It is consummated."

CHAPTER VIII

THE CROSS AND THE CROWN

IN a previous chapter an attempt was made to trace the world's sufferings to their true source. A dispassionate investigation of facts led to the rather startling conclusion that at least nine-tenths of the world's sorrows are of man's own making. Insatiable avarice on the one hand and criminal thriftlessness on the other have created conditions of poverty that are simply appalling, whilst indiscreet indulgence in life's pleasures, together with an unreasonable disregard of sanitary precautions have given rise to bodily and mental diseases that are truly shocking. This world is in very truth a vale of tears, but these tears for the most part only indicate the extent of men's folly. In spite of the fact that Paradise was closed by our first parents' sin, the sunshine of God's love and goodness still floods the earth with its light and warmth, and where all is darkness and desolation there

happiness and joy should even now reign supreme. Man was indeed born to weep, but that is only because he freely chooses to sin. Eliminate sin from the lives of men and the burden of the world's sorrows will lose nearly all its weight.

Yet whilst this is most certainly true, it does not follow that there are not many and great sufferings in the world, for which the individuals who endure them are in no wise responsible. It is indeed sometimes said that there are no innocent sufferers in this world, inasmuch as sin has a part in all of us; still this is true only when innocence is taken in an absolute sense, excluding not only all deliberate offenses against the moral law, but also every unconscious deviation from the moral and physical arrangements under which we live. When we take the term in its relative sense, that is, in reference to sufferings that would seem to be the just retribution of moral iniquity, it may well be said that the world is full of innocent sufferers — of persons who, humanly speaking, comply with all or nearly all the conditions of a happy life, and who nevertheless are made to feel sorrow's inevitable sting. It is the *via dolorosa*

of this class of persons that we must be able to account for if we would effectually answer the charges, which modern infidels advance against the goodness of God. That the improvident should want bread, or that evil doers should be made to bear the penalty of their iniquitous deeds, gives them after all little cause for complaint, because nature has her own laws, and the transgression of these laws carries with it nature's slow but terrible retribution. This must be admitted in any and every system of religious belief and unbelief. But that man should do good and yet receive the recompense of evil, that he should sow wheat and only reap cockle, admits, according to their view of the matter, of but one explanation, namely, that the good God, whom Christianity has been preaching to the world, is merely a fiction—the creation of man's innate longing for happiness. How, say they, can there be a good God in heaven, when on earth even they, who strive to render Him faithful service, are forever wrapt in a mantle of sorrows? Does a father give a stone to his son who cries to him for bread? Does a mother turn a deaf ear to her daughter who comes to her for help and sympathy?

Can God be less sympathetic and loving than the creatures of His hands? Surely there is no kindly spirit watching over us, to whom we may look up in our sorrows and cry, "Abba, Father!" If there were, He would never allow the earth to be enshrouded by the dark clouds of sorrow, but would pour into every nook and cranny the gladsome sunshine of His great love, and fill with peace and joy the hearts that long for happiness.

Before answering the difficulties that arise from these innocent human sufferings, it may be well to premise that they must be reckoned with whether one admits the existence of a personal God or not. It is indeed easy to say that nature is all in all, and that these sufferings are the necessary results of the operation of nature's inexorable laws, but this is neither more nor less than to dispose of one mystery by putting in its place another, and that, too, a mystery which is of all others the most impenetrable. If God cannot allow innocent sufferings, then neither can nature; for nature as well as God must provide for her own. Men may look upon the earth as the father who begot them and upon the sea as the mother who carried them in her womb,

yet if these alleged progenitors did not provide for their offspring a blissful existence, the question must still be asked, "Why did they fail to make such provision?" To say that nature is at war with herself, and Cronos-like, devours her own offspring, is at best but a makeshift that will not bear scientific investigation. Hence regard these so-called innocent sufferings from what viewpoint you please, make what suppositions you like, you are forced in spite of yourselves to end with the query, "Why do the guiltless suffer?"

The fact is that this question cannot be fully answered by reason alone, but must in the last instance be referred to faith, or rather to reason enlightened by faith. Reason can show, and does show, that there is a God who made the world and all that is contained therein; reason can show, and does show, that this God is good and kind and merciful — that He loves every creature made by His hands; but reason alone cannot, with any degree of satisfaction, give the final answer to the question why even a single human being should be subject to so much as a moment's suffering, unless it be the outcome of a deliberate abuse of man's free will. A world in which

there are no innocent sufferings of any kind is certainly possible, and if God is good and loving, why should He not have provided such a world? Or if He once did provide it, why should He not have preserved it as such till the very end of time? These are questions to which unaided human reason can find no satisfactory answer. It is only when this present life is viewed in its relation to eternity, as known to us through the teaching of faith, that a ray of light pierces through the darkness of our minds and that these innocent human sufferings appear in their true perspective — only then are we enabled to detect the ultimate purpose which these sufferings were meant to subserve.

The most fatal mistake of our modern infidels, and for that matter also of many well-meaning Christians, lies in the fact that they regard life here on earth as having its own distinct entity, separate and independent of the life beyond the grave. To them it seems that the ills of life must necessarily find their compensation in earthly enjoyments. That the sorrows of time may have been intended to receive their recompense in eternity, they either do not believe or entirely overlook.

Yet this is the most certain teaching of faith, and in this alone can the difficulties that arise from innocent human sufferings find a satisfactory solution. Our existence in time is of necessity a preparation for our existence in eternity, and if it be overhung by the dark clouds of suffering, it will be succeeded by a glory that is all the brighter and by a happiness that is all the greater. This is the seed time, when we must till the fields of our hearts and plant therein the seeds of virtue, which usually best grows and blossoms and brings forth fruit when it is watered with the tears of many sorrows. The trials of life may indeed at times lead the human heart away from its God, but that is the case only where an evil will turns them from their God-appointed end. In the plans of divine Providence they were intended to draw us closer to the heart of our suffering Saviour, and through Him to lead us to the very throne of God. The life of Christ our Redeemer, as set forth in the preceding chapter, makes this clear beyond all dispute. As Saviour of mankind, He died indeed as a sin-offering upon the altar of the cross, but this was not the sole object of His saving mission. He came not only to blot out

the guilt of sin, but also to teach us how to bear sin's punishment even where we ourselves are not stained by its guilt. He wished to live life for us and to show us by His own living example how to make our lives divine. He is at once our leader and our model; yet He is a crucified leader, an immolated model. He goes before us with a heavy cross upon his shoulders, and what is more, He plainly tells us that we cannot follow Him except we also carry a cross upon our shoulders. "If any man will come after me," He says, "let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Viewed in this light, our sufferings, however undeserved they may be, are in some sense an integral part of the redemptive sufferings of Christ. God permits them as He permitted the persecutions and tortures of His own well-beloved Son. They are our share in the great work of the Atonement. Not as if these sufferings had in themselves any redemptive value, for our redemption was wrought exclusively by the life and death of Christ; but they make that redemption fruitful in our own individual person, and in the persons of those by whom they are generously endured.

It was in this sense that St. Paul wrote to the Colossians: "Who now 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." Christ has indeed blotted out the "handwriting of the decree that stood against us"; He has merited all the graces necessary for our salvation; but in the actual attainment of that salvation we must bear an active part, and this implies that our way to heaven lies along the royal road of the cross — not that the cross is intended for its own sake, but that it may entitle us to receive a crown. No truer words were ever spoken than those which our blessed Saviour addressed to His disciples on the way to Emmaus: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?" And no truer inference was ever drawn from these same words than this: "Ought not we to suffer these things, that is, life's many sorrows, and so to enter into our glory?" We are all on our way to heaven, and the way to heaven lies across the hill of crucifixion.

Of course, here it is usually objected, if God restored man's title to heaven, why did

He not also reinstate him in that earthly blessedness which had been forfeited by sin? It is all well enough to make present sufferings an earnest of future glory, but that glory could be obtained through a life of joy as well as through a life of sorrow. If before the fall Paradise was deemed to be a fit place of preparation for heaven, why not also after the fall? If the Redeemer opened the gates of heaven, why did He allow the gates of Paradise to remain shut? If He did what was more, why did He not also do what was less? Why? Well, first of all, He did not see fit to do so. To this He was not constrained either by His love or by His goodness. Had he refused to redeem us, no one could have blamed Him; nor, when He graciously offered Himself for our redemption had anyone the right to dictate to Him how far that redemption should extend. When a son receives from his father a rich inheritance and then squanders it by living riotously, can he demand, or even expect, a second inheritance, which, in all likelihood, he would squander again as he had done the first? Love and goodness and mercy of their very nature incline a person to forgive and condone, but

they do not exclude certain well-defined limits, suggested and enforced by prudence and justice. Hence when our blessed Saviour, always acting in accordance with the will of His Father, did not see fit to remove the secondary consequences of sin, it is not for us to complain, and much less to call in question God's goodness and love.

Furthermore, although God did not take away, through His merciful redemption, the sorrows and sufferings that are, in the last instance, the heritage of sin, He nevertheless changed them from a curse into a blessing, and thereby gave additional proof of His fatherly affection. Because of the Incarnation human sufferings are not merely a manifestation of God's justice, but also a concrete expression of His mercy. He has poured the sunshine of joy over every tear of sorrow, and breathed the consolation of hope into every sigh of anguish. "Blessed are they that mourn," says our compassionate Redeemer, "for they shall be comforted." "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The fact that God allows afflictions and trials to come upon us is no sign whatever that His

love of us has grown cold. He loves us as intensely in all our misery and wretchedness as He loved our first parents in their blissful existence in Paradise. This we find at times hard to realize, yet it is most certainly true. Can we ever doubt that He loved His own Son more than He loved Adam and Eve in the state of innocence? Yet He did not place upon that Son's shoulders a cross that crushed Him beneath its heavy weight? And next to His Only Begotten Son, did He not love the Virgin Mother with an intensity and tenderness that must ever remain unequaled? Yet how truly she could say, "All ye that pass by the way, stay, and see if there be a sorrow like unto my sorrow!" And therefore when our good Father in heaven lays the cross of sufferings upon our shoulders, why should we think or say that we are no longer the objects of His tenderest love? Why should we grieve and fret and grow discouraged? Should we not rather, like the Apostle of old, count it all joy? For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also by Christ doth our comfort abound. As it was through sufferings that Christ and His Blessed Mother entered

into their glory, can we ever lose heart when the same God of goodness and love invites us to follow this hallowed road to unending happiness?

Nor must we lose sight of the important fact, as consoling as it is true, that God's help accompanies every cross He sends. God is faithful, says the Apostle, and will not allow us to be tried above what we are able to bear. Our crosses are at times very heavy, but God's help is always great in proportion. Christ, our master and model, does not bid us simply to take up our cross daily, but to take it up and to follow Him. He goes ever before us, not merely pointing the way, but compassionately allowing our crosses to lean upon His own wounded shoulder, and thus Himself bearing their greatest weight. It was the realization of this important truth that made the Apostle say so confidently: "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." It is the practical experience of this truth that gives peace of heart and joy of spirit, even in the midst of our intensest sufferings. The more sorely we are afflicted the more closely are we drawn to the cross-laden Christ, and

the more forsaken we may seem to be, the more abundant is the divine virtue that flows in upon us from His wounded heart.

And this great love of our God, which has thus found a way of changing our undeserved sufferings into a source of truest blessings, looks up to us even from those afflictions that must needs be accounted sin's just retribution. Even there His justice is touched with mercy, and the hand that strikes intends but to heal. It may, indeed, well be that God sends us sufferings because of our own personal sins; it may well be that these sufferings are a real punishment inflicted by an infinitely just God; yet even in this case they are primarily meant as blessings in disguise. For if we are still in sin, they are intended to lead us back to the path of virtue; or if we have already repented of our past transgressions, they enable us to render here on earth the satisfaction which would otherwise have been demanded of us after death. Nay, not only this, but if we bear them patiently, as with God's grace we always can, they will add to our future reward a sweetness and joy that could not have sprung from any other source. Well, therefore, may we say

that whenever the hand of the Lord touches us, it is always filled with blessings — blessings which we shall appreciate at their true value only on that happy day, when our good Father in heaven will press us to His great heart of love, and whisper into our ears the consoling words: “Child, it was good for you to suffer a little whilst on earth, that now you may be happy with me forever in heaven.”

Possibly it may be objected that this way of reconciling the fact of the world's innocent sufferings with our concept of a good and loving God can be satisfactory only to such as admit the Christian belief in a future retribution, and that therefore it cannot serve as an answer to those who reject that belief. Well, it cannot serve as a direct answer, but for all that it is an answer the weight of which even unbelievers are forced to admit. It shows that the Christian system is consistent throughout, which cannot be said of any other system, be it what it may. Rationalists may disdain to examine the arguments which we advance for our belief, but when it comes to account for conditions of human existence, which every reasonable man must try to account for, we need but follow up our sys-

tem to its logical conclusion in order to arrive at a satisfactory solution, whereas they are invariably driven from their position of scientific cocksureness and are forced to end with the lame reply that these conditions are facts, and that is all that can be said about them. They spare no effort to banish God from the world wherein they live, but somehow the result of their labor is most disappointing; for a world without God is from beginning to end the most impenetrable of all mysteries. Neither its existence nor its nature can be accounted for, and what is worse still, it is a veritable hell for men to live in. On the other hand, admit that this world is the handiwork of a beneficent Creator, which was marred indeed by man's sin, yet is still the object of God's tenderest love, and both heart and mind at once agree that all is well. There may be a mystery in it all, but it is a mystery that rests upon a solid foundation.

What we stand most in need of, therefore, is the spirit of faith, which enables us to view the world's sorrows in their true relation to God, to ourselves, and to the life beyond the grave. To the unbeliever, in-

deed, the universal law of suffering is a riddle that sets all his philosophy at nought. He can but look upon it as a hard fact, that has its explanation, if it has one at all, in blind and cruel fate, and his greatest heroism does not go beyond a stoical submission to that fate. That these sufferings may be made a source of peace and joyous hope, he neither understands nor believes. To him the trials of life are an unmixed evil—an evil that finds no compensation in future happiness. Hence when escape from them becomes impossible, they bury him in the dismal depths of hopeless despair. To the believing Christian, on the contrary, life's many sorrows can never become a source of lasting discouragement and real unhappiness. He understands the nature and purpose of human sufferings as no one else can, and in that understanding he finds his strength and comfort. Be his sufferings what they may, he knows that there is watching over him the best of fathers, who has both the will and the power to draw good out of every evil.

Hence the true philosophy of life does not consist in a ceaseless struggle to avoid sufferings; for in that struggle we must needs

meet our greatest disappointment: but it consists in the courageous effort to bear these sufferings in a truly Christian spirit, and to make them the source of a happiness that lies beyond the reach of earthly vicissitudes. A truly happy life, as far as that is possible here on earth, is not one that is free from present sorrows; but one whose sorrows, great and small, are the certain harbingers of coming joy. It is the life of one who can say in all confidence with the Apostle: "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the weight of glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." It is the life of one who can count all his sorrows joy, because, enlightened by faith, he sees in them but so many stepping-stones to a throne of glory, whose dazzling splendors are never dimmed by the darkling clouds of earthly sorrows.

Most of us take an altogether too gloomy view of the trials of life. It is true enough, here on earth every rose has its thorns and every cup of joy its drop of gall; but it is not less true that the thorns have lost their sting in the Redeemer's wounded brow, and that the bitterness of gall has been sweet-

ened in its contact with the dying Saviour's lips. We are now, indeed, sitting in the shadow of the cross, but does not that cross point to the glory of the risen Saviour? And if we suffer with Christ, shall we not also be glorified with Christ? The darkness of Calvary may be thick upon us, but is there no rift in that darkness to show us the glorified heights of Tabor beyond? As the darkest clouds have still their silver lining, so the greatest sorrows never want their golden ray of hope. Hope is a talisman that changes all to gold, and this talisman we must guard with jealous care. Friends may prove unfaithful; our nearest kin may abandon us; nay, God Himself may at times seem to have forgotten us: yet never must we cease to hope for the dawn of a brighter day. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" cried our dying Saviour, whilst He hung upon the cross; yet even then was His Father preparing for Him the glory of His triumphant resurrection; and so in our case, when all seems lost, that loss itself foreshadows but a greater gain.

