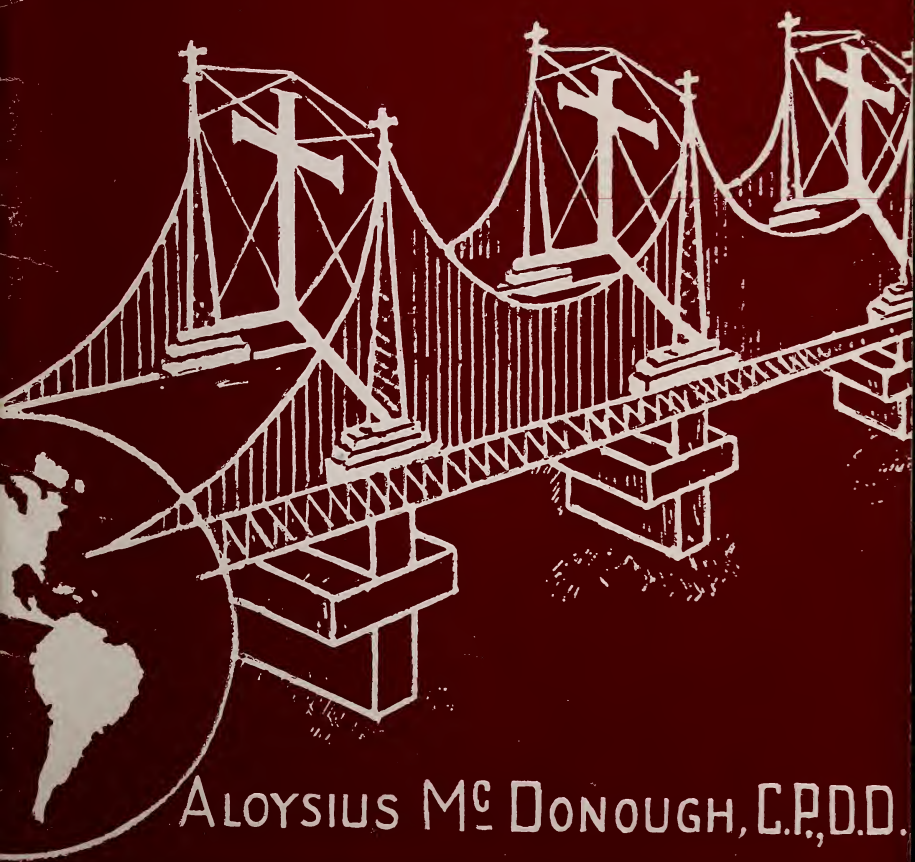


Mc Donough, Aloysius
Jesus Christ...
ADT 9582

JESUS CHRIST

The Divine Bridge Builder

THE INCARNATION + THE REDEMPTION



ALOYSIUS Mc DONOUGH, C.P., D.D.

“Beware of the pamphlet, for it fits in a man’s coat pocket and sells for a sou.” So runs a French proverb. The strategy of the pamphlet is manifest. A book in miniature—the pamphlet is within Everyman’s purse and time. It is so written that he who runs may read. It is a concentrated force for error and evil, or for truth and good, as the case may be. Few men are too poor to own a pamphlet library. No man is too busy to frequent such a library.

In any language, one cannot read or write well, with an incomplete alphabet. One does not enjoy half-cooked food. When a newspaper edits important news, we are not satisfied with a glance at the headlines. In any sphere, thoroughness begets success. In things religious, the human mind is immature, if its knowledge be limited to the childhood catechism. When religious information is sketchy, appreciation is dull, love is lukewarm, interest below par and enthusiasm at low ebb.

What do *you* know about the unique individual named Jesus Christ? What do you know about His abilities and methods? About His accomplished results?

A. McD.

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JESUS CHRIST
THE DIVINE BRIDGE BUILDER
THE INCARNATION :: THE REDEMPTION

*A Discussion Club Text
with Questionnaire*

By
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Passionist Monastery
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More so than ever before in the history of the human family, men are intent today upon girding this earth of ours with tunnel and skyway. We burrow through the bowels of the earth; the beauty and strength of steel are outlined against every horizon. It is the Age of Bridges and their builders. Constructions of this kind symbolize progress; thus the way is smoothed for commerce, for every sort of industrial activity, even for war. No matter where the bridge, or by whom erected, or how symbolic of material progress, it is only a Bridge of Sighs compared with the bridge from earth to heaven, built of crossbeams, by JESUS CHRIST, Pontiff of men with God.

THE DIVINE BRIDGE BUILDER

HIS INCARNATION

"WHAT'S IN A NAME?"

"WHAT'S in a name?"¹ Perhaps little or nothing at all, or a great deal. Sometimes, names are misnomers. But a name—whether applied to a thing or a person—ought to be a reliable sign. If a name be appropriate, it compresses a great deal of information within a word or two. Thus we speak of Bishop B——, of Doctor D——. Just mention Hitler to a Nazi, or Il Duce to a Blackshirt.

The set of books known as the Bible is, from cover to cover, packed with information of keen interest and high importance to us. By means of the data therein revealed, God has made known divine things in a human way. Throughout the Bible, we find that one individual is the center of attention—whether from the viewpoint of a God insisting upon His sovereign rights, or from that of man longing for help and peace. This central figure of interest and importance is indicated by a variety of names—each name appropriate and bestowed upon Him by divine choice. His titles are numerous, for no one human word alone suffices, to introduce to us so miraculous an individual as JESUS CHRIST.

The earlier books of the Bible are classified as the Old Testament; the later and final books, as the New Testament. Throughout the Old Testament, the prophets of God drew a word picture of the promised Savior of the human family. In the march of time, the years of expectation grew into centuries, and the prophetic picture became more detailed, more precise, as the Expected of the Nations drew nigh. The New Testament chronicle presents JESUS CHRIST as the One Who fits into the Old Testament picture as the fulfillment of prophecy, the One sighed for by desolate man and sent by the God Who is mercy personified.

¹ Shakespeare.

In Old Testament times, prophets and kings and other leaders of God's people, were anointed with holy oil, as a sign of their sacred position. Hence, they were known as the *Anointed*, or *Christi*. This title was a sort of professional surname, given to anyone who was chosen by God to represent Him with His people.

But each of these leaders and the people too, realized that the various prophets and kings and judges were only preparing the way, for One Who was yet to come. This long-awaited Leader would surpass all others in wisdom and power and holiness. He would be *the* Anointed. This particular Christus was called the *Messias*. "I know that the Messias cometh (Who is called Christ); therefore, when He is come, He will tell us all things."²

Jesus is a personal name added to the surname *Christ*, and was dictated to the Mother of the Christ by an angel. This name specifies the errand of the Messias. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."³

It was foretold that the Messias would come as a *King*. He Himself stressed His claim to this title, when interrogated by Pilate: "Art thou a king then?" And
KING the Christ responded: ". . . I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth."⁴ Christ is not only the King of all kings. He is Almighty in heaven as well as on earth, not only during time but also throughout eternity. "All power is given to Me, in heaven and on earth."⁵ The mightiest sovereigns of earth and time, are but vassal lieutenants to the King Whose royalty is divine. The Cæsars, Napoleon, the Czars—they had their brief hour in the time-table of this world, and were then shunted aside to make room for others. Each of them, even in his heyday, found his territory limited to north and south, east and west. His wealth was a master-god to which he became enslaved. His highly militarized man-power was often the very force

² John iv. 5.

⁴ John xviii. 37.

³ Matthew i. 21.

⁵ Matthew xviii. 18.

that overturned his throne. More often than not, he exacted from his subjects a reluctant fidelity—they obeyed because they dared not disobey. The genuine esteem of the human mind, the free fidelity of the human heart is the only tribute that constitutes a true compliment, whether from one man to another, or from a free creature to his God. Christ insisted upon His Kingship, but He hastened to add: "My kingdom is not of this world."⁶ And, Christ is King of Hearts. "Son, give Me thy *heart*."⁷

Since Christ is God, He is King by divine right, of everything and everybody. His sovereignty is inescapable. Angels and men, worms and pebbles—all come originally from one and the same First Maker. As for men in particular, it is the King of Kings Who planned us, Who decided upon our existence, brought us into the world of actuality, and keeps us here. None other than He has equipped us with abilities—including our capacity for joy. To this one and only Almighty King, we are indebted for our destiny. He made us for Himself, but in such a way that our service of Him is at the same time self-service, in the highest sense of self-betterment. And the enthusing part of it all is that, the more we come to *know* this Master, the more we esteem and love Him. We serve Him because we want to. The interests of this Divine King and our own are a commonweal. He and we are not, so to speak, in opposite camps. Hence, "to serve Him is indeed to reign."⁸

Among the royal titles of the Messias, there is one that appeals pathetically to the tired mind and the aching heart of man. Christ is *Prince of Peace*. Peace can be described as the tranquillity, the serenity which we enjoy, when we attain to what is good for us. Peace is so precious that no other treasure equals it, and so necessary to man that without it he goes mad.

Now, of all the abilities which we can boast of, our mind and our heart are the most important. These twin powers make us human. The mind equips us for the enjoyment of

⁶ John xviii. 36.

⁷ Proverbs xxiii. 26.

⁸ Mass for Peace.

what is true, just as the heart equips us for the enjoyment of what is good. The mind and heart are somewhat like a pair of arms, enabling us to reach out, to seize and take unto ourselves whatever is truly good. Hence, whatever is untrue, whatever is bad, is unworthy of us and bound to disappoint us. Anything bogus—no matter how well camouflaged—engenders only pain of mind and heart. Our best appetites are satisfied with nothing less than *real* good. The Prince of Peace offers us the Very Best, and so announced His advent under the title of *Peace*—"Not as the world giveth,"⁹ but a peace that "surpasseth all understanding,"¹⁰ a joy "that no man shall take from you."¹¹

It is not at all strange that the Prince of Peace confines His offer to men of good will, for in the pursuit of deep and enduring peace, man is often suicidal. Even from the beginning, many of "His own received Him not."¹² Later on, as Christ's work among men neared its completion, He still found reason to chide them for a want of discernment: "Seeing the city, He wept over it, saying: If thou hadst known, and that in this day, the things that are to thy peace!"¹³

The Christ is also a *prophet*. The work of a prophet is twofold—to foretell, and likewise to be a spokesman, a teacher. A prophecy is the prediction of a free event which, at the time of prediction, is still in the distant future. To measure up to the requirements for genuine prophecy, the free event must be foretold with accuracy, with infallible certainty, and so far in advance of the outcome as to eliminate even the cleverest conjecture as an explanation of the prophet's foresight. Such prediction is, of course, miraculous, and hence a sign of divine power and approval. "Lo, I have foretold it to you!"¹⁴

Miracles—whether prophetic or of other sorts—always occur in connection with some message from heaven, and are intended by God as a seal, or endorsement of the messenger and his words. "Though you will not believe Me, believe

⁹ John xiv. 27.

¹² John i. 11.

¹⁰ Philippians iv. 7.

¹³ Luke xix. 42.

¹¹ John xvi. 22.

¹⁴ Matthew xxviii. 7.

the works.”¹⁵ So, when everything is weighed and sifted, we see that the most important feature of a prophet’s work is his teaching, his message. The element of the miraculous furnishes his credentials, accrediting the prophet as a spokesman between God and men.

As a savior of intelligent and free beings, it was necessary that the Messiah function as a *teacher*. Entry can be made into the human heart only by way of the mind. No man’s will is persuaded to take a stand either pro or con, or neutral, unless his mind be first convinced one way or another. We like or dislike, we love or hate, we are indifferent, according as the mind reports: “good!” or “bad!” or “it doesn’t matter.” Having made us free, God **TEACHER** does not force us. For this reason, Christ would not save us in a mechanical way—as one in peril might be snatched from a danger zone. To save us in a way adapted to our human make-up, our Savior presents to our mind information and motives that appeal to men of good will. Any effective preacher must be a skillful teacher. “Now those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said: This is of a truth the prophet, that is come into the world.”¹⁶

Anyone who relieves distress has some claim or other to the title of *savior*. But, when we indicate Jesus Christ as *the* Savior of the human family, the title is unique. He rescued us from the worst possible fate. He rebuilt **SAVIOR** for us our highest hopes. He did so in a way that only divine wisdom could conceive, that only divine power could carry out, and that only divine love for men can explain. Christ saved us by acting as our Mediator, our Pontiff—our Bridge Builder.

A mediator, in the current sense of the term, is no more than a spokesman who arbitrates. In the religious and Catholic sense, however, the title of *mediator* implies much more. A mediator not only brings about a reconciliation between two parties who are at variance, but does so precisely by making reparation or expiation to the party wronged, in be-

¹⁵ John x. 38.

¹⁶ John vi. 14.

half of the party guilty of the wrong. Hence, a *mediator* pays an acceptable price—he *redeems*. Christ saved us by way of a redemption costly to Himself: "Making peace through the blood of His Cross."¹⁷ "By His bruises we are healed."¹⁸

Mediation, whether between individual men or nations, whether political or commercial, national or international, is after all, merely human in its character and dignity. But mediation between God and men is divine as well as human. Such mediation is therefore an *act of religion*, and sacred. In religious mediation, the mediator is divinely appointed and is designated a *priest*. The price that a priest pays in order to redeem is a sacrifice and is called precisely a sacred, *religious sacrifice*.

To pay a price of this sort to God, in behalf of men, is the characteristic function of a priest. A priest is called a *pontiff* (bridge builder), because by his special mediation, he bridges the gap—the rift between our Father in Heaven and us prodigal children. Once upon eternity, God made men. He intended all along that we be the favorite work of His hand—indeed, more than mere men—for He exalted us by adoption, as members of His own divine Family. Yet man was not satisfied. He succeeded in having "his own way," and in doing so failed God, his own self, and all his offspring. Until then, there had been an open avenue, built by God, between earth and heaven; from then on, that road was closed. Unless God built another, beginning on earth where the damage was wreaked, heaven would have remained inaccessible from earth. When God became man also, He became our *Bridge Builder*, our Pontiff. "Christ . . . a high priest of the good things to come."¹⁹

"Names make news. Last week, these names made this news." The caption just quoted, heads a human interest column in a news journal as clever as it is pagan. (Unless this journal is too pagan to be clever.) Names do make news. But *Time* has ignored news of eternal interest—"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people. For, this day, is born to you a Savior, Who

17 Colossians i. 20.

18 Isaiah liii. 5.

19 Hebrews ix. 11.

is Christ the Lord.”²⁰ Daily, newcomers arrive amid the human family. They should know that “there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby they must be saved.”²¹ Nothing succeeds like success: “for which cause God hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names: that in the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that the Lord JESUS CHRIST is in the glory of God the Father.”²²

²⁰ Luke ii. 10, 11.

²¹ Acts iv. 12.

²² Philippians ii. 9-11.

QUESTIONS

1. During the European War of 1939, how has the influence of pamphlet data been exemplified?
2. Why are the titles of our divine Savior so numerous?
3. Explain the significance of the names Christ, Messiah, Jesus.
4. Why is it unreservedly true that Christ is King of kings?
5. Define peace. What alone is conducive to peace? Explain why the title of Prince of Peace is appropriate to Christ.
6. What is a prophet? Explain the connection between the two functions of a prophet.
7. In the Catholic sense, what is implied by mediation? What type of mediator is a priest?
8. In what sense is a priest a pontiff, or bridge builder?

"WHAT MANNER OF MAN IS THIS?"

It is fundamentally important to have a justifiable conviction as to just who Christ is, to have the correct answer to the question: "What manner of man is this?"²³ Some Christians, so called, who allow their wishes to father their thoughts, have whittled not only the doctrine and the morals taught by Christ, but even His claim to divinity—for, admit His divinity, and they dare not whittle. Then, too, Christ has enemies. Whether ancient pagan or modern Communist, their deceit can be unmasked only by His own wisdom, their hatred of Him dissolved by His love, and their success undone by the triumph of His apparent failure. *Christ-ians* worthy of that name believe, and defend the belief that, Christ is both God and man, both divine and human.

But, one's very devotion to Christ prompts one to inquire sincerely and eagerly: "Since Christ is God, how could He suffer?" and, "If Christ could suffer—as in fact He did—how can He be divine?" "How can anyone be divine and likewise human?" We can answer these and other kindred questions, by presenting a reply to a threefold, leading question. *What* is a God-Man? *Why*, a God-Man? *How* does a God-Man function?

In dwelling upon the Incarnation of God, and our redemption by this God-Man, we must bear in mind that we deal with a mystery. By a mystery we mean any fact that has to do either with the personal life and activity of God, or with the share of the supernatural which God has planned for us. Since a mystery is profound to a divine extent, such a truth is more or less beyond *complete* grasp by the human mind. On the other hand, we are by no means entirely "in the dark," and in this particular case as to "what manner of man this is." Whoever patterns his life upon Christ as a divine Model, should be "ready always to satisfy everyone that asketh him a reason of that hope which is in him."²⁴ Now when God deals with us in a supernatural way—that is, according to the heaven which

²³ Matthew viii. 27.

²⁴ 1 Peter iii. 15.

He has planned for us, it is part and parcel of such a mystery that we find remarkable means and methods employed by God. Any thinking man would be surprised if such were not the case. "My ways are not your ways, saith the Lord."²⁵ The humanly remarkable is normal to God.

What, then is understood when we speak of the God-Man? The God-Man is a Divine Person Who has always had, and normally so, a divine nature, and Who took unto Himself, "miraculously" and as His very own, a human nature also. This taking on of a human nature by God, is known as the *Incarnation* of God. This does not mean that a man became God—an absurd impossibility! It does mean that God became man also, but without ceasing to be God. For example, when A's son B, becomes the father of his own son C, he does not cease to be A's son—he becomes a father *also*. Nor is Christ two persons—one divine and the other human. Christ is altogether a unique Being, "consisting" of three elements: one divine person, a divine nature, plus a human nature. Thus we have a God-Man, Who is both divine and human. Briefly for the moment, we know that Christ is both divine and human, because He acted divinely and humanly.

Why a God-Man? There are two reasons for so strange a Being as a God-Man—the call for *atonement*, and for atonement of *infinite worth*. If the human family were to be reinstated, there must be atonement. Hence, whoever would redeem the human family, must be "imperfect" enough to be susceptible to the suffering involved in expiation. But the divine nature is so perfect as to be beyond the reach of all suffering, whether by way of expiation or otherwise. We see herein one reason for the human element in the Redeemer. Added to this is another, still more obvious—it was precisely human nature that was to be represented, and redeemed.

But despite the propriety and even the necessity that the redeemer of men be human, a mere man was unequal to the task. Since man's offense had been committed against an infinite God, man's atonement, to be worthy of God and acceptable, must somehow or other be transmuted so as to have

an infinite value. Hence, no one less than a divine person would be capable of the required expiation. Now we are in a position to appreciate the master stroke of divine wisdom, power, and love. A divine person took unto Himself as His very own, a human nature, thus becoming human as well as being divine. And thus He could suffer atonement—in His human element—an element susceptible to suffering and representative of mankind. At the same time, just because that human element was His and no one else's, He dignified divinely all the actions done and all the sufferings undergone (by Him) in His human nature. Thus He was a fit "mediator of God and men." 26

How did the God-Man achieve His purpose? It is clear from the scriptures that, Christ our Savior is capable of both divine and human deeds, for He accomplished both kinds. This is how we know that one and the same person had two natures—a divine and a human. A nature is simply a definite make-up, with a corresponding set of abilities. Thus, for example, we characterize the nature of a bird by its ability to fly; we say it is of the nature of a fish to swim. Now the peculiar benefit of any one person having two natures is this—he can accomplish what ordinarily could be done only by two separate, different kinds of persons. And so it is that in the unique case of Christ, a single person has the strength of God and the weakness of man.

The President of the United States is only one person. But, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, he can direct operations that are characteristic of our land forces. At the same time, as head of the Navy, he can direct operations natural to our sea forces. Thus *his efficiency is multiplied in proportion to his abilities*. Another factor in this example is that such military or naval operations take on an *additional dignity* and importance from the very fact that he supervises them directly and personally.

Somewhat in this fashion, we may say that the Person Who is Christ, had "need" or use for *two* sets of abilities, for *two* natures. He had to have divine nature in order to be

God and to do divine things—to work miracles, to judge men, to forgive sins, and so on. He had to have an “extra,” human nature in order to be man—to represent men and to suffer atonement. But even the human actions, including the sufferings, were always His own, personally, and hence of divine dignity.

For this reason, any action whatever, any suffering however slight, of Christ’s human nature, had more than mere human worth. Even though the suffering were of short duration, and regardless of whether undergone in the human body or soul, it would be *His* and no one else’s, and hence divine in value. So true is this that, there is only one explanation for the enormity of suffering to which Christ submitted His human body and soul—His love for us is boundless. After all, did He not pay our debt of justice by an act of mercy? All the human mercy, all the human kindness that this world has ever known, is as mere mist wafted from the Torrent Who is love personified and divine.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it supremely important to realize that Christ is both divine and human?
2. Define a religious mystery. Why are mysteries a normal factor in religion?
3. What do you understand by the Incarnation of God? What does the God-man “consist of”?
4. Explain how a God-man is ideally adapted for mediation between God and men. What advantages flow from His humanity? From His divinity?
5. What is a nature? How do we know, from Holy Scripture, that Christ has two natures?
6. Give an example, illustrative of the advantage of one divine Person having two natures.
7. For what purposes did Christ employ His divine nature? His human nature?
8. In estimating the efficacy of our divine Savior’s expiation, what two features are to be considered? which is the higher basis for evaluation?

THE CHRISTOCRACY—DO YOU BELONG?

It is fascinating to realize how well adapted Christ's humanity was, as a *fit instrument* of divinity, in the furthering of our salvation. But, just as it is difficult to take in at one glance, the full beauty of a many-faceted gem, so it is not easy to appreciate at one brief mental glance, the many phases of Christ's humanity, as a *human instrument divinely* attuned.

Let us begin by resort to an illustration. Suppose we place a strong magnet upon a table. Then, bring a number of iron particles within the radius of this magnetic influence. What happens? By a law of natural attraction, the particles are drawn to the source of influence as to a goal. Lift the magnet from the table, move it here or there, and the particles cling fast, are lifted and moved with it.

Making due allowances in the application of our analogy, we may liken ourselves to the particles, the humanity of Christ to the magnet, the divinity of Christ to the one who made the magnet, and placed it on the table as an instrument of attraction.

In the example resorted to, we find the particles are drawn to the magnet irresistibly. We are brought under the magnetic influence of Christ—by His teaching, His example, the grace that He proffers—but we are free to resist. Though He "reacheth from end to end mightily," yet He "ordereth all things sweetly."²⁷ As long as we are on probation and in our "earning" capacity, we may refuse Him, even though to do so is to thwart ourselves. We may spurn His mercy, if we prefer to incur His justice. We may flaunt this independence of ours, as crazily as the suicide. Any human being who can boast of sanity, owes it to himself to choose not only freely, but *wisely*. To choose the eternal in preference to the temporal, the spiritual before the material, the supernatural rather than the natural, is dictated by well-ordered selfishness. An honest man admits this and is brave enough to face the issue. The

²⁷ Wisdom viii. 1.

sinful man is a dishonest fool—too mean to pay the price—even “the price of Him that was prized.”²⁸

We have likened the humanity of Christ to a magnet. How does this part of the comparison apply? The humanity of Christ is as a magnet in the mighty hand of God—that is to say, an attractive force that draws men of good will by means of wisdom, kindness, and power. This magnet was presented to men that they might adhere to it and cling fast, and finally be withdrawn together with it, from earth to heaven.

In the stupendous work of restoring man to his heavenly estate, God could have dealt with us in many ways. But He chose to deal with us in as “human” a way as possible, though without detriment to the divine success of His plans. And so “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”²⁹ God came among us in Person, but so to speak—clothed in humanity. In general, this was an ingenious accommodation on His part, whereby He deigned to “adapt His pace” to frail man, whose soul must falter through this life, leaning upon the five crutches of bodily sense. Thus, He Who is divine also, became visible to human eyes, audible to human ears, tangible to human contact—even vulnerable by man-made weapons! But this is not all.

Besides being a delicate instrument adapted to our frailty, the humanity of Christ was divinely attuned to the high purposes of God. We find this especial efficiency at work in two spheres. Later on we shall speak of the distribution of grace; for the moment, let us consider the sphere of nature.

To arrest the attention of men, to secure their recognition of His leadership, Christ did many miracles. He healed the dying, He recalled the dead to life, He expelled demons. Only divine power can work a miracle, but God can empower an agent as His instrument. When God does so, He bestows upon the agent a share in His own omnipotence. In all the miracles of Christ, God made use of His human nature as an instrument of divinity, transmitting divine power through the agency of His human body and soul, to the patients who were cured. “Virtue went out from Him, and healed all.”³⁰ Sometimes a

²⁸ Matthew xxvii. 9.

²⁹ John i. 14.

³⁰ Luke vi. 19.

human word, sometimes a gentle touch of His hand—and divine results followed. “And Jesus said: Somebody hath touched me, for I know that virtue is gone out from me.”³¹

Christ the God taught us, suffered and died for us, through the instrumentality of Christ the Man. During thirty-three years, Christ preached an uncompromising war in behalf of God and men, against the powers of darkness—a war of virtue against vice: He led the way, bidding others—as He still does—to come after Him. “Follow Me. I am the way, the truth, and the life.”³² His doctrine was attractive in itself, but with the endorsement of divine miracles, Christ’s influence over men was magnetic to the highest possible degree. The magnetism of Christ was athrob with divine power.

Of those who came under the influence of Christ, some clung steadfast: “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” Others shied away: “And (they) walked no more with Him.”³³ Christ the man was the magnetic instrument of Christ the God, Who would draw His adherents with Him through a struggle unto death, waged for heaven in the arena of this earth. Just as today, so on that Friday, some men thought only of the few hours of Christ’s weakness, forgetting the many years of His magnetic strength. Christ’s faithful believe firmly, hope bravely and serve lovingly, because they realize that when Christ emerged triumphant from the tomb of death, He justified the divine boast uttered beforehand. “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself!”³⁴

Realizing the function of Christ’s humanity, as God’s magnetic instrument, we would expect to find His humanity highly gifted with fitting qualities. Sacred history records that so it was. Even as early as childhood, His intellectual acumen was such that “they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers.”³⁵ Later, when His enemies were of set purpose to ensnare Him in His speech, He so skillfully parried their

³¹ Luke viii. 46.
³⁴ John xii. 32.

³² John xiv. 6.

³³ John vi. 67, 69.
³⁵ Luke ii. 46, 47.

thrusts that "no man was able to answer Him a word; neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions."⁸⁶ Christ's virtue was so flawless as to become a prominent target for temptation by devils and accusation by men, yet no one could meet His challenge: "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?"⁸⁷

Of all the endowments wherewith Christ's humanity was equipped, the most important is His plenitude of divine grace. Divine grace is a help which God alone can give, and which man must have in order to earn heaven. This divine help consists of light for the mind and strength for the heart. Grace may come to us—so to speak—in many envelopes. Its influence may be conveyed to us in the pages of a book, by a fellow-model of good example, or by the whispers of conscience. Grace invigorates the soul, in much the same way that energy stimulates the body. The soul that lacks grace is subnormal. To serve God properly, in such a way as to merit heaven, His grace is as necessary to a man as wings are to a bird in flight.

The human soul of Christ enjoyed an inexhaustible abundance of divine grace. This wealth of grace was called for, not only because Christ's humanity belongs to God personally, but for a further reason that concerns us directly. The humanity of Christ is the reservoir through which grace flows from God to all men: "Of His fullness, we all have received, and grace for grace."⁸⁸ The improvement upon human nature which we call grace, is the magnetic force of soul communicated to us by Christ the God, through Christ the Man. Without *our* share of *His* fullness, our eternal assets amount to zero: "It profiteth me nothing!"⁸⁹

Since the grace of Christ is the magnetic force that energizes our souls, progress in virtue is in ratio to our coöperation with this attractive force. The more we foster virtue, the more Christlike we become. When we become Christlike, we do not draw close to Christ, merely in the way that disjointed particles adhere to a material magnet. Rather—reborn and nourished by grace—we become *kindred* to Christ, after the

⁸⁶ Matthew xxii. 46.

⁸⁸ John i. 16.

⁸⁷ John viii. 46.

⁸⁹ 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

manner of living cells, all of which belong to one and the same body. As long as we can boast of the grace of Christ in common with Him, there is between Him and us a relationship just as real, just as intimate as between my head and my hand.⁴⁰

A branch cannot flourish unless it be unified with its root. Our Savior used this very example, to indicate clearly the kinship between Him and each of us. "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."⁴¹ As a stream of vitality flows from root to branch, as the bloodstream issues from the human heart to the extremities, so the current of grace is transmitted from Christ to us. "I am come that you may have life, and that you may have it more abundantly."⁴²

Think of it! God invites us to nourish our souls with the very same grace *upon which the soul of Christ so thrived!* When we realize this truth, we can better understand what is meant by our membership in Christ's Mystical Body. Together with us, Christ forms a unique Body, of which He is the head and we the members. When we speak of this Body as Mystical, we do not imply something vague, or unreal, or unintelligible. Christ's Mystical Body is just as real as He is, as real as we are—for it consists of Christ and ourselves. "So we being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another."⁴³ The result of this union between Christ and His members, is not merely a static sort of body, but a living organism which thrives upon the grace that we members derive from Christ our Head. With this in mind, St. Paul exhorts us: "In all things, grow up in Him Who is the Head (Christ), from Whom the whole Body maketh increase."⁴⁴ The physical body of Christ grew and developed through all the stages from infancy to maturity. So, too, His Mystical Body continues to grow, as His members increase in numbers and in holiness.

How pathetic that some "churchgoers" consider their posi-

⁴⁰ "God and Man, Incorporated," McDonough, C.P., *The Sign*, January, 1939.

⁴¹ John xv. 4, 5.

⁴³ Romans xii. 15.

⁴² John x. 10.

⁴⁴ Ephesians iv. 15.

tion in the Christian scheme of life, merely as membership in a highly organized and strict society. They fail to look beyond the scaffolding, to the gorgeous edifice within. Anemic members of the Mystical Body are below par spiritually, because—in the parlance of the day—they have failed to learn “what it is all about.” Centered upon God, the human mind and heart of Christ were gratified and attained to perfect, unbroken peace. Need we fear risk, or disappointment, in taking pattern from Christ our Head? By conformity with Him as a Model, by cooperation with His magnetic influence, by absorbing the tonic of His grace, we become Christlike, Godlike.⁴⁵ We become truly happy, as surely as God is happy. This is what it means to be a healthy, normal member of the Christocracy.

⁴⁵ *Grace—Divine Vitamin of the Human Soul*, McDonough, C.P., The Paulist Press.

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the reference to Christ's humanity as “a human instrument divinely attuned.” Illustrate your point by an apt example.
2. Discuss the function of Christ's humanity as an instrument of divine miracles.
3. How did Christ utilize His humanity for the religious education of men?
4. Enumerate some of the intellectual and moral qualities of Christ's human nature.
5. What is the most important endowment of Christ's human nature?
6. Explain our dependence upon Christ for the transmission of divine grace.
7. Describe the Mystical Body of Christ, or the Christocracy.
8. What benefits accrue to us, as a result of being kindred to Christ? How can we contribute to the supernatural health of Christ's Mystical Body?

THE DIVINE BRIDGE BUILDER

HIS REDEMPTION

ECLIPSE

About twelve years ago, keen interest was stimulated among men the world over, by the forecast of a solar eclipse. As the predicted time drew near, excitement ran high. Diligent preparations were made to observe the spectacle, and to record for posterity its influence upon this earth of ours. The moment before the eclipse began, we beheld a flare of extraordinary brilliance, which only emphasized the more a darkness that gradually became total. For a short time then, Nature seemed to fail us. The birds of the air flitted to and fro restlessly. Men gazed in silent awe upon the corona of light that edged the sphere of darkness. We were glad that the eclipse did not last long.

The eclipse of Christ had been foretold by the prophets of God. In the fullness of time, Christ came. He was "the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world."⁴⁶ No sooner had Christ impressed the minds and hearts of men by the splendor and pomp of Palm Sunday, than His eclipse began. Excitement became fanatical. Even the chosen people allowed this world to come between them and "the Light that shone in the darkness."⁴⁷ As the helpless Wonder Worker drooped upon the crossbeams, He appeared as "a worm and no man."⁴⁸ His corona was a helmet of thorns. After three eternal hours, His eclipse was complete, and a hush of death enveloped the desolate hill called Calvary. Then, with unearthly suddenness, all Nature voiced its protest. Lightning bolted from the heavens; dumb rocks gaped asunder; the sepulchers restored the dead to the living. Men whispered their acknowledgment: "Truly this Man was the Son of God!"⁴⁹ And how glad men were, when Easter

⁴⁶ John i. 9.

⁴⁸ Psalm xxi. 7.

⁴⁷ John i. 5.

⁴⁹ Mark xv. 39.

dawned, that the eclipse of Christ did not last, that from apparent defeat He had emerged victorious!

As divine wisdom had planned it, the work of our redemption extended over a period of thirty-three years. The mission of Christ consisted of many factors, as His many titles remind us. But all that Christ taught us, everything He did for us, was designed to meet our predominant need—that of *atonement*. In the mercy of God, Christ was sent to us as a *Mediator*. God became Man also that, He might be our *Pontiff*, and bridge the rift between earth and heaven. The Savior Who is both God and Man, the Pontiff Who is both Priest and Victim, climaxed His mission of salvation by the sacrifice of Self that He offered. Since that Friday and forever more, Calvary has been the focal point of this world. "In Christ, it hath well pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, making peace *through the blood of His Cross.*"⁵⁰ Is not the man incredibly ungrateful, who neglects to hail that holy cross as his only hope! What solid reason we have for hope and courage, when we realize that by the beams of His Cross, our Savior pried open again the gates of heaven! This He did "by blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us. And He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the Cross."⁵¹

But the eclipse of Christ did not last. The history of our Pontiff does not end upon a note of death, of tragedy, and sadness. After death, came His renewal of life and resurrection; the joy of Sunday replaced the sadness of Friday. After earth, came heaven. Atonement was transient, reconciliation is permanent. Tragedy is now limited to hell; romance is now renewed between God and men of good will.

Upon the altar of atonement, Jesus Christ was Bailsman for us. "*He was wounded for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, Who bore our sins in His Body upon the tree.*"⁵² In the harrowing task of expiation, our Pontiff did not spare Himself. He paid a redemptive price that was

⁵⁰ Colossians i. 19.

⁵¹ Colossians ii. 14.

⁵² 1 Peter ii. 24; also Isaias liii. 5.

not only adequate, but even superabundant. "Therefore, as by the offense of one (the First Adam), unto all men condemnation; so also by the justice of one (the Second Adam), 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. And where sin abounded, grace did more abound."⁵³

In undertaking the work of redemption, our Savior "made His own" our burdens of soul and body. We are no longer alone. His sacrifice in our behalf has been so generously undergone, so flawlessly successful that, our main obligation to God is now one of *gratitude*. We prove our gratitude by *co-operation*. After Calvary, coöperation should be instinctive to us, and comparatively easy. What shall we say, then, of the reassertion of Calvary, bequeathed to us in the sacrifice called the *Mass*?

From the viewpoint of God, gravely offended and to be appeased, the sacrifice of Calvary was more than sufficient. But from the viewpoint of God in love with men, Calvary was not enough. He would not permit the shadows of Good Friday night to curtain that altar, that Victim and Priest, from the eyes of posterity. He is the "Father of Mercies,"⁵⁴ and we—though prodigal—are His children. "For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation."⁵⁵ The kingdom of God on earth was still young, in the year of Our Lord 33; this kingdom was to extend far beyond the territory now known as the Holy Land. In His infinitely kind thoughtfulness, the Savior of all men provided for posterity, lest we should feel "out of touch" with Him and His accomplishment on the Hill of Reconciliation.

The following quotation echoes the mind of every one who appreciates the Cross as his only hope. "If the Incarnation be indeed the one divine event to which the whole creation moves, the miracle of the altar may well seem its restful shadow cast over a dry and thirsty land for the help of man, who is apt to be discouraged if perpetually told that everything really important

⁵³ Romans v. 18-20.

⁵⁴ 2 Cor. i. 3.

⁵⁵ Malachy i. 11.

and interesting happened, once and for all, long ago, in a chill historic past.”⁵⁶ Just as truly as the first Christians, we of today have obligations to God, our trials to bear, our crown to struggle for and to win. And upon the Mass-altar, we have the very treasury that was established by our Pontiff upon the altar of the Cross. We have, so to speak, within our own sight, within sound, within reach, the same Priest, the same Victim, the same infinite Sacrifice.

But, since our Savior was victimized unto death only once, since He “dieth now no more,”⁵⁷ how is it that the Mass is a *sacrifice* in the real and full sense of the word? During Holy Mass, Christ is present precisely as a sacrificial Victim. In order that a real sacrifice be had, it is sufficient that there be offered a victim—either *about to be* immolated, or *already* immolated. At the Last Supper, our High Priest offered Himself as a Victim about to be immolated. Today, He continues to offer Himself, as a Victim already immolated once and for all, on Calvary. According to the Law, a victim for sacrifice retains its worth as a victim, from the time of immolation onward, as long as it lasts incorrupt. Thus it is that Christ continues to be a Victim, really immolated, even though subsequently risen and glorified as to both soul and body. Thus it is that being Eucharistically present in Person during Holy Mass, He can continually “re-assert” the sacrifice of the Cross. Referring to the wounds that Christ retained even after His resurrection, St. Ambrose observes: “He refused to relinquish the wounds which He had received for us, but preferred to take them with Him to heaven, in order to exhibit them to His heavenly Father, as the purchase price of our liberty.” Hence, we may say that the sacrifice of the Mass is the earthly presence of what is going on in heaven, of what is being done for us there by our Divine Bridge-Builder “ever living to make intercession for us.”⁵⁸ How pathetically true that “neither is there any other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions.”⁵⁹ Thanks be to God that the eclipse of Christ did not last!⁶⁰

⁵⁶ A. Birrell.

⁵⁸ Hebrews vii. 25.

⁶⁰ “Even Unto Death,” McDonough, C.P., *The Sign*, March, 1938.

⁵⁷ Romans vi. 9.

⁵⁹ Deuteronomy iv. 7.

QUESTIONS

1. Why is it accurate to refer to the event of Crucifixion Friday, as the "eclipse of Christ"?
2. Explain Christ's Passion unto death as the culminating factor of His redemptive mission.
3. In what sense is Christ the "scapegoat" for sinful men?
4. Why is it appropriate to designate Christ as the "Second Adam"?
5. How many texts of Holy Scripture can you quote in support of the efficacy of Christ's self-sacrifice?
6. Explain the personal innocence of Christ, despite His atonement for sin.
7. Since the sacrifice of Calvary is all-sufficient, why did Christ provide the sacrifice called the Holy Mass?
8. Since Christ is now incapable of suffering, how is immolation still verified in the Sacrifice of the Mass?

RESULTS COUNT

In affairs of earth or heaven, we judge the effectiveness of a cause, by its effects. Results count—both as a norm for judging a cause, and also for their own worth. Unless the human mind realize the everlasting importance of the results of Calvary, the human heart will not palpitate with due gratitude toward the Heart of Christ, or share in the spoils of His victory. In general, the result of the atonement undergone by Christ, in our behalf and in our stead, is our reconciliation with God. Had this result not been achieved, we should have stayed crippled and orphaned, as to soul and body. In detail, the results attained for us by our Mediator are as follows: the erasure of eternal guilt; the lifting of eternal punishment; liberation from the unbridled sway of evil spirits; our restoration as adopted sons of God and hence, as heirs of heaven.

Were it not for the rescue effected by Christ, the stain of sinful guilt would have besmirched us indelibly. Our Maker had formed man from the dust of nothingness, and installed him in a garden of delights. The first Adam was father to the entire human family. Hence, all our heavenly prospects and not a little of our earthly welfare, were in his hands, to be preserved conscientiously for transmission to us. But the first man and woman were unfaithful, and bartered away the precious heritage that they held not for themselves alone, but in trust for posterity as well. As a result of this Original Sin, the human family was disinherited as a divine aristocracy; we lost even our privileged immunity from defects of mind and body. Only the mercy of God could provide a fit means of atonement, and restore to us the prospects that we had once spurned. This expiation and recovery were accomplished for us by the God-Man, "Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works."⁶¹ At the same time, our Mediator provided for the deletion of guilt incurred by our personal sins. "And the Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from *all* sin."⁶² Human repentance is no longer futile, the stain of

⁶¹ Titus ii. 14. .

⁶² 1 John i. 7.

guilt need not be indelible, for our spokesman and priest is Jesus Christ—a pontiff “holy, innocent, undefiled.”⁶³

Sin and its punishment are as closely related one to the other, as two sides of a medal. Sin accounts for punishment. When eternal guilt is erased, its corresponding punishment is cancelled. He Who “was bruised for our sins,”⁶⁴ at the same time freed us from the eternal penalties attached to sin.

The penal sufferings in this case, comprise several items. Most momentous of all is the eternal loss of God, which is now no longer inevitable. It is in this loss that the worst feature of hell consists; this loss of God is a living death for the soul. But thanks to the atonement of our innocent Pontiff, this punishment can now be commuted to some lesser, temporary expiation.

Sacred history records that human death, as well as the sufferings that culminate in bodily death, have their origin in sin. “By the envy of the devil,”⁶⁵ and “by one man sin entered this world, and by sin death.”⁶⁶ Together with the elimination of sin’s guilt and the commutation of sin’s worst punishment, bodily death likewise is no longer permanent. The day is hastening toward us when we shall be able to exult: “Death is swallowed up in victory! O death, where is thy victory! O death, where is thy sting!”⁶⁷ “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, . . . the dead shall rise again incorruptible.”⁶⁸ The magnetic influence of the risen Christ will impart life and immortal well-being to the members of His Mystical Body, to the branches who have clung fast to the Vine.

Even the wounds of sin that afflict us during our career of probation—whether suffering of body or mind—can be utilized to our advantage. “That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly, an eternal weight of glory.”⁶⁹ The pain that we undergo in a penitential spirit, is our share as members with the expiation of Christ our Head. “Joint heirs with Christ; yet so, if we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him.”⁷⁰

⁶³ Hebrews vii. 26.

⁶⁶ Romans v. 12.

⁶⁹ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

⁶⁴ Isaias liii. 5.

⁶⁷ 1 Cor. xv. 54, 55.

⁶⁵ Wisdom ii. 24.

⁶⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 52.

⁷⁰ Romans viii. 17.

“By the envy of the devil.”⁷¹ Whether we are aware of the fact and alert to the danger, or not, we have to contend with temptation instigated by evil spirits. “The serpent deceived me!”⁷² Whether an evil spirit grovel under the guise of a serpent, whether he coax man under the mask of human beauty, or decoy men to the banner of Communism,—whatever his approach, he has lost none of his angelic cunning. He is more than a match for us, if left to our own resources. “Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the spirits of wickedness.”⁷³ Is it any wonder the King of Kings insisted that His kingdom is not of this world? for the devil is “prince of this world.”⁷⁴

Hence, a highly important factor in the victory of Christ is the bridling of satanic influence over men. We still have to contend with this hostile and subtle agency, but our defeat is no longer inevitable, nor losses of the past irretrievable. Referring to His impending sacrifice of Self, our Pontiff declared: “Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”⁷⁵ Thus the Second Adam fulfilled a threat, thundered against Satan by the Almighty after the fall of the First Adam: “I will place enmities between thee and the woman and between her seed and thy seed; and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel and she shall crush thy head.”⁷⁶ The Second Eve—Mary—was the virginal Mother of the God-Man, our Redeemer.

In our favor, Christ has done all that even the mercy of God can do, to eradicate our guilt, to abolish penal death, to break the power of spirit enemies. He has “cleared the way” for man’s progress toward and entry into heaven. “And being consummated, He became to all that obey Him, the cause of eternal salvation.”⁷⁷ “And a path and a way there shall be, and it shall be called the holy way; the unclean shall not pass over it.”⁷⁸ This path is the bridge built by Christ our Pontiff. “Thanks be to God, Who hath given us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ.”⁷⁹

71 Wisdom ii. 24.

74 John xvi. 11.

77 Hebrews v. 9.

72 Genesis iii. 13.

75 John xii. 31.

78 Isaias xxxv. 8.

73 Ephesians vi. 12.

76 Genesis iii. 15.

79 1 Cor. xv. 57

QUESTIONS

1. How do you estimate the effectiveness of a cause?
2. Enumerate the principal results accomplished by the Passion of Christ.
3. Discuss the guilt of original sin and of personal sin.
4. What is the relation between sinfulness and punitive suffering?
5. To what extent is human punishment eliminated by the Passion of Christ?
6. Why is it appropriate that we suffer a "miniature passion unto death"?
7. Discuss diabolical influence as a source of human harm.
8. Is the success of Christ as a Redeemer nullified by the continuance of diabolical temptation?

SUPPOSE NOBODY CARED!

Some years ago, in the city of Scranton, a financial drive was in progress for the benefit of crippled orphans. Of all the propaganda circulated, the cleverest was a pin-button, picturing a crippled orphan supporting himself on crutches. Encircling the picture was a caption: "Suppose Nobody Cared!" How pathetic indeed, for those poor youngsters, if no one did care! So shockingly handicapped at the very outset of life, with no one to mother them, deprived even of their puny power to help themselves! Their plight suggests to us how dire our own condition would be, were it not for the results of our redemption, were it not for the mediation of Christ—if God had not cared, in our regard. Only for the salvation that is "in Christ Jesus,"⁸⁰ we would be orphaned from our Father and our kingdom in heaven, unable forever to help ourselves. But God *does* care. "For He so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting."⁸¹

Christ was indeed vibrant with the eagerness of love. Referring to His baptism of blood, He exclaimed: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished."⁸² Yet, despite the numerous and manifest and stupendous proofs of God's love for us, we are prone to lose courage. Oftentimes the reason for discouragement is traceable to a subtle suspicion that God's love for us "seems" too good to be true.

There are times in the life of each of us, when we become painfully conscious of our weakness and imperfection. The older we grow, the more we realize that we are physically decadent, and that morally we can become contemptible even in our own estimation. Coupled with this realization, and by force of contrast, we realize the more God's perfection and independence. And then the suspicion—is it likely, is it even possible that such a God could be interested in the like of us? There must be a proportion, a tally between God as a Lover and any object that He loves. But He is so perfect, so Self-

80 2 Timothy ii. 10.

81 John iii. 16.

82 Luke xii. 50.

sufficient, and we apparently so worthless! Are we not beneath His notice? In the pain and worry and conflicts of life, can we reasonably hope for divine help? Shall we conform ourselves to Christ as a saving exemplar? But if this be too good to be true, why not seek refuge in the anesthesia of pleasure? or in the cowardice of suicide?

A man does not turn coward, or resort to artificial courage, unless his hope in God be at low ebb. There is no reason for slumping into despair; there is every reason for maintaining intact an enthusiastic courage. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."⁸³ And "in this we have *known* the charity of God towards us, because He hath laid down *His* life for *us*."⁸⁴ God has proven His love for us, to a demonstration. Hence, we must infer that there is a something about us that makes us worth while, precious even to Him! Nor are we in doubt as to what that something is. He is fond of us because "we are called and *are* the sons of God!"⁸⁵ By the action of grace, He molds us more and more "to His own image and likeness."⁸⁶ This is God's reason for being fond of us, and our reason for the buoyancy of well-founded hope, for enthusiastic coöperation with the Priest Who is God. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing; that you may abound in hope, and in the power of the Holy Ghost."⁸⁷

"Pour forth, we beseech Thee,
O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts,
that we to whom the incarnation
of Christ Thy Son was made
known by the message of an angel,
may by His Passion and Cross, be
brought to the glory of His resur-
rection: through the same Christ
our Lord. Amen."⁸⁸

83 John xv. 13.

86 Genesis i. 26, 27.

84 1 John iii. 16.

87 Romans xv. 13.

85 1 John iii. 1.

88 Angelus Prayer.

QUESTIONS

1. Were it not for the rescue effected by Christ, what would be the plight of the human family?
2. What motives prompted God, in arranging the Incarnation, and so expensive a Redemption?
3. We are certain of God's regard for us—why?
4. What is it about us that appeals, even to God, as a basis for love?
5. What is the connection between a spirit of hope and courage on our part, and a realization of our supernatural dignity?
6. What feasible means do you recommend, for fostering a practical devotion to our divine Redeemer?
7. Why is the Divine Bridge Builder the ideal, and only Leader competent to direct men and nations?
8. Discuss the importance of an appreciation of the Incarnation and Redemption, as a motive-force for everyone engaged in Catholic Action.

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