

HIGHLIGHTS

Treacy, Gerald C.  
Religion, prayer, sacrifice, irreligion.  
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Religion  
Prayer  
Sacrifice

By Rev. Gerald C. Treacy, S.J.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMA

# Religion, Prayer, Sacrifice, Irreligion

*By*  
REV. GERALD C. TREACY, S.J.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMA is a simplified and abbreviated translation of Aquinas' work. It is intended for classroom, discussion clubs or private study. Only one chapter should be taken at a time. For St. Thomas packs a great deal of thought into a few sentences.

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REV. THOMAS E. HENNEBERRY, S.J.,  
*Provincial.*

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# RELIGION, PRAYER, SACRIFICE, IRRELIGION

## CHAPTER I

### THE MEANING OF RELIGION

THE service and honor due to God by man, because God is man's Beginning and End, are fulfilled by the virtue of religion. The act of honoring and serving God brings no added happiness to God but it makes man happy, for it puts him in his right place in regard to his Creator. Man speaks for the universe in adoring God as the Creator and End of all creation, and as this is his destiny, it is his real happiness.

By religion man worships God in his mind and heart. The essence of religion is interior, not in external acts. However, external actions are necessary as man owes God the service of his body as well as of his mind and heart. Besides man needs the help of his body to contemplate God. So when a man loves God and serves Him he will express his love and service which spring from his soul by external acts.

### Externals in Religion

The actions of the body express the soul's actions, and this is the reason for the externals of religion. While they are not primary in religion they do aid man to reach God more easily.

As religion is of the soul its first act is devotion, which means the will to do everything that concerns God's service. Devotion is the fruit of meditation for in meditation man learns of God's goodness to him, and begins to love God more and more. This love develops devotion. In meditation man learns his weakness and the need of trusting in God's power. Realizing God's power inspires joy, so the truly religious man is always joyful no matter what troubles or problems may be his.

Real devotion prompts man to honor God and be grateful to Him for all that He has given his creature. These acts are prayers. Besides these prayers there is the prayer of petition wherein we ask God for what we need. When God, however, answers our prayers He does not change His Mind. God governs the world and everything that happens in it is the result of Providence. Providence is God's plan, and when we pray we ask God to give us what He has planned to give us in answer to prayer.

### **God's Answer to Prayer**

God in His love and wisdom answers our prayers in always giving us what we need for our salvation. He will always give us spiritual treasures first and then temporal favors if they will aid us in saving our souls.

Our Lord has taught us how to pray in teaching us the *Our Father*. In this prayer man asks for all that he needs and in the order in which he needs. In the first petition we ask that God may be honored, and in the second that we may win happiness in His kingdom. In the following petitions we ask for those things that will bring us into God's Kingdom. First grace to do His will, then for the temporal needs of life and the Heavenly Bread that will bring us to our destiny. We ask for our sins' forgiveness, for strength in temptation and finally for freedom from all evil.

### **Different Kinds of Prayer**

Prayer is either mental or vocal. Yet in a sense all prayer is mental for to be true prayer we must think of what we are saying.

There is no unanswered prayer. God always gives us what we need even if He may deny us what we want.

In addition to interior prayer there are exterior prayers. These prayerful acts are adoration, sacrifice, oblation, our priest's support, vows, oaths, adjuration and the proper use of God's Name.

Adoration means to pay tribute to a person's excellence. *Latria* is the adoration we pay to God alone as infinitely perfect Creator and Ruler of the universe. We call the adoration or honor we pay the saints, relics and images, *dulia*. We honor them because by God's grace they have attained to unending union with Him in the Beatific Vision. As Mary is God's Mother and the Saint above all saints we give to her the worship of *hyperdulia*. We really honor God when we honor Mary and the saints, because we pay tribute to the divine life which they have received from God.

### **The Meaning of Sacrifice**

Sacrifice is offering to God something visible and sensible. There are two elements in sacrifice, the inward submission of man to God and the outward sign of that submission. The Sacrifice on Calvary shows us these two elements. On Calvary Christ was offering His life to God in acknowledging God's mastery over all life, and in shedding His Blood He showed by outward sign His inward submission to God.

An oblation is an offering to God. If the thing offered is destroyed then it is a sacrifice. If it is not destroyed but used in divine worship then it is an offering.

### **The Significance of Offerings**

In making offerings to God we admit that whatever we have comes from God. Men may offer things to be used in God's worship, or for the upkeep of a church or for the support of God's priests. Men not only worship God as individuals but as members of society. So there are priests who mediate between God and men, bringing men's prayers to God and God's graces to men. As priests give their lives to serve other men, it is only fitting that they should get support from other men. True love for God is shown by men worshiping God worthily and by men providing for all that is necessary for divine worship, in the support of churches and priests since priests act for men in the worship of God.



Worship of God finds an expression also in vows, oaths, adjurations and by praising God. A vow binds a man to do something for God over and above what he is called on to do by Divine Law. It is an expression of love. By an oath we call God as witness to the truth of what we are saying. In an adjuration a superior or an inferior is asked to do something in God's name.

In oaths and adjurations we ask God to share in our human activities. We should not ask this of God unless there is question of something very serious. Of course it is sinful to ask God to witness to a lie or to help a man to commit an evil act. A religious man is always a reverent man, praising and honoring God always.

### **Sins Against Religion**

The sins against religion are superstition and irreligion. Superstition means worshiping a creature or worshiping God in a wrong way. Irreligion means contemning God or the things of God.

The pagan worshiper showed superstition by committing sinful acts in carrying out his worship. In the same way it is superstitious to worship idols or any creatures, to indulge in divination which means attributing to any creature a knowledge of the future known to God alone. Belief in magic or charms or fortune-tellers is superstition.

Irreligion means despising God and sacred things. It can mean tempting God or challenging God to use His power for a trifling reason. It may mean perjury or calling God to bear witness to a lie. It may mean sacrilege or treating anything sacred with disrespect. It may mean simony or selling sacred things. All these acts are disrespectful to God and to sacred things.

The sins of superstition and irreligion bring disorder to man's world, while religion brings order and peace to man's world. As peace and order among men is the work of Justice so peace and order between man and God is Religion's work.



## CHAPTER II

### THE VIRTUES

#### The Virtue of Piety

After God man owes his life and the chance to seek happiness to his parents and his country. So he owes honor, reverence and service to his parents and his country. He fulfills this duty by the virtue of piety. Even in his mature years a man must serve his parents or his country if they are in need of his service.

In a community there must be rulers. The authority that is theirs and the good they do for the community entitles them to honor, respect and gratitude. This duty is fulfilled by the virtue of observance.

#### The Meaning of Observance

Observance includes the virtues of veneration and obedience. In asking the saints to do us favors we venerate their dignity as God's friends. Among the saints Our Lady is entitled to supreme veneration.

In obedience man submits his will to a superior. Without obedience there can never be order in society and so the common good will not be realized, and there will not be happiness. And unless God is obeyed there will be no happiness in life.

In obedience there are two exceptions. If a command is unjust it must be disobeyed. If a higher authority changes the orders of a lower authority, the higher authority is to be obeyed.

Benefactors are entitled to gratitude and when the chance comes they should receive something in return. The truly grateful man will endeavor to surpass the generosity of his benefactor.

Ingratitude is a sin. There are grades of ingratitude. The first is to fail in doing a favor in return. The second is to neglect to thank the benefactor. **The** last grade is to deny to oneself that a favor has been received.

Truthfulness is a virtue necessary for social living. Men cannot dwell and labor together without revealing their thoughts to one another. They must trust each other. Without truth there can be no trust.

### **The Evil of Lying**

Lying therefore is a sin. Its seriousness varies with the circumstances in which the lie is told and according to the gravity of the matter that is lied about. But all lies are evil as they develop a spirit of mistrust and so destroy the co-operative spirit.

Liars fall into different classes. The hypocrite is a pest in social life. He poses as a virtuous man and he is evil. So to put up a front of virtue he will lie about his fellow men or commit the sin of detraction. The boaster is also harmful to healthy social living. He is trying to make people credit him with qualities that are not his. The man who underestimates himself is telling a lie and by this is depriving his community of the help he could give it.

### **Virtues Needed for Social Life**

There are virtues that make social life click. The first of these is friendliness. Friendliness puts the spark of Christ's charity into social life. That is why flattery is a threat to healthy social life because it poses as friendliness and is nothing but an act of self-seeking. The quarrelsome spirit is also a threat against friendliness.

Liberality is a virtue beneficial to social living. The liberal man has a true sense of values and uses his wealth for the good of others. He aids both himself and others.

### **Covetousness and Prodigality**

Opposed to liberality are covetousness and prodigality. Covetousness is a mad urge for wealth. To gain its object it will be cruel and pitiless, respecting no man's right or dignity. It is a capital sin leading its victims to other sins.

Prodigality is false generosity for it urges a man to give

away what he really needs. In consequence he will waste his goods until he has nothing left and society will have to care for him.

The virtue of equity also is catalogued under justice. It is a virtue that prompts man to safeguard justice and the common good beyond the demands of law.

### **The Gift of Piety**

God has given man through grace a gift of the Holy Spirit to perfect justice. This is piety and by it man is prompted by the Holy Spirit to worship God as his Father. Man's social life is rightly ordered by justice and its allied virtues. From piety man gets the most perfect element of order, total submission to God.

Justice will secure man in his ownership of things. Religion will order man aright toward God. Piety will show him how to honor and serve his parents and his country. Society will function properly through veneration and obedience. And life will run smoothly when gratitude, truthfulness, friendliness, liberality and equity prevail.

Justice and its allied virtues enable men to keep God's Commandments which guide men by divine Wisdom. Justice under wisdom will mean peace and order. In peace and order happiness is found.

### **The Virtue of Fortitude**

Fortitude gives man the power to conquer difficulties. It balances the powers of man's irascible appetite. In struggling for a good that is difficult to gain, fortitude controls especially the passions of fear and daring. The will is perfected by fortitude. It gets rid of the hindrances that spring from fear and daring, in the search for some good.

Fortitude concerns itself with striving for good despite the presence of danger. As man's greatest danger is death, fortitude faces up to the danger of death. If a man is willing to die for his Faith, he will not be unwilling to endure a lesser danger for the same cause.



## **The Guide of Fortitude**

As fortitude is a moral virtue, prudence must guide it. It is reason or prudence that teaches a man that rather than lose his soul he must be ready to endure any suffering, even death. Man is shown by reason that when his bravery is excessive it will be unlikely to achieve its purpose.

Fortitude like every virtue follows the dictates of reason. It strikes the mean between extreme fear and extreme daring. It gives man strength to endure any danger that is unavoidable and to conquer danger when this is possible.

## **The Fortitude of Martyrdom**

Martyrdom is fortitude's most perfect act, enduring pain and death for belief in God. It is the last word in love for God. "Greater love than this no man has that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv, 13).

Cowardice, fearlessness and daring are opposed to fortitude. Cowardice is an extreme fear of death leading a man to deny his religion rather than forfeit his life.

Fearlessness means recklessly underestimating danger. It springs from a lack of appreciating the danger, from ignorance of one's ability to conquer the danger, or from pride.

A man rushing into danger without full knowledge of the danger acts from ignorance not from courage. The man who in his pride thinks there is no danger that he cannot conquer, is motivated by vainglory not by bravery. These are all false pictures of fortitude; they are not true fortitude.

Excessive daring is rushing into danger without calculation, without acting under the direction of reason. This is not fortitude but it is acting against reason and so sinful.

## **Virtues that Meet Life's Lesser Dangers**

There are other dangers in life besides the fear of death. And there are virtues that embolden men to meet those dangers. To meet these lesser dangers man has the virtues of magnanimity, magnificence, patience and perseverance.

By magnanimity men can do great things. An action may be great in itself or great in relation to some particular person. The man who forgives his enemy and becomes his benefactor does a great deed in itself. The widow's mite was a great thing because of the poverty of the widow. As great deeds usually bring great honors the magnanimous man inclines to deeds that deserve honors.

The magnanimous soul is gifted with assurance, confidence, and fortitude. While wealth is not necessary for the magnanimous soul, it is helpful.

### **The Opposites of Magnanimity**

Presumption, ambition, vainglory, and pusillanimity run counter to magnanimity. When a man presumes he tries to do things that are beyond him. It is evil for it is against reason. Ambition seeks honors solely for honors' sake, or clamors for recognition which is undeserved. Vainglory looks for honor for something that does not deserve honor, or seeks it only from men. As a capital sin vainglory leads to other sins. A man who will not do what is within his power to do is pusillanimous.

When a man does something great he is said to have magnificence. Great expenditure of money in a worthy cause is magnificence. Because it is associated with difficulty it is connected with fortitude. It is a lesser virtue than fortitude for its concern is the loss of material things while fortitude faces the fear of death.

The opposite of magnificence is meanness. It really tries to do a big thing with skimpy means.

Man is able to undergo hardship through the virtue of patience. Hardship depresses a man and can make him fall from virtue unless he employs patience.

To endure delays in seeking a good is the virtue of perseverance.

Softness runs counter to perseverance. The soft man will abandon all his good intentions as soon as difficulties appear.

Pertinacity is against perseverance for it holds to a wrong opinion or attitude, long after reason shows that it is wrong.

Perseverance in seeking God is the noblest perseverance.



That is why man receives through grace the gift of fortitude. By this gift of the Holy Spirit man will persevere in good works till he wins the Beatific Vision.

As life is a battle men need the virtue of fortitude and its allied virtues. The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to heroes, and fortitude develops heroes. It depends on love. A great love for good spurs a man on to seek and find that good bravely.

### **The Virtue of Temperance**

Self-control is the key to individual happiness and to the happiness of society. Reason must control all our desires if we are not to wreck our own lives and others' lives as well.

Temperance and its allied virtues bring our desires under reason's control. Man as a rational animal must control all his animal instincts by his reason. If he does not he will sink lower than the brute and betray his destiny, which is to enjoy God's love eternally. Temperance and its allied virtues teach man self-control and through this he gains true happiness.

### **The Role of Temperance**

Man has many desires which can lead him away from God. It is temperance that controls these desires. His bodily needs are natural but unless they are controlled they work ruin here and hereafter. By temperance a man rules his desires and orders them for his own good and the good of society.

Like all moral virtues temperance excludes defect and excess. It guides man in the proper use of his desires. It keeps all desires within the bounds of reason.

There are two necessary qualities for temperance, shamefacedness and honesty. Shamefacedness means the fear of doing an evil action: It is not a very high motive but it aids the virtue of temperance.

Honesty means spiritual beauty. What is honest is good and man by nature tends toward the good. Honesty is the opposite of what is disgraceful. It is an aid to temperance.

Temperance governs man's sense desires. It has to do with



food, drink and sex. So it is exercised by the virtues of abstinence, chastity and virginity. Abstinence teaches a man moderation in the use of food and drink, with reason as the guide.

### **The Meaning of Fasting**

Abstinence is expressed by fasting. A man is fasting when he does not eat all that he could. Fasting has good effects. For example it restrains a man's sensual tendencies, it enables him to think better and to pray better, and gives an opportunity to do penance for sin.

Temperance in drinking is attained by abstinence which develops the virtue of sobriety. This virtue makes a man able to enjoy drinking or to do without it.

### **Chastity and Virginity**

Chastity is the virtue that regulates the use of sexual acts. The common good of the race calls upon men to have children so the race may not die out. To the marital act is attached an intense pleasure. This pleasure is not for itself but to attract men to fulfill their marital duties. The sex urge must be under reason's rule, or it will master man. Chastity enables man to use his sex urge rightly.

The virtue of virginity excludes all sexual pleasure from the life of a man or a woman. It makes human actions good and means sexual control that is perfect. The virtue of chastity is practiced for a greater good, namely a more perfect love of God. As the virgin seeks God himself, virginity is more perfect than marriage. All the time that man and woman in marriage spend on each other and on their children the virgin can give to God.

The virgin merits blessings for others as well as for herself. She teaches the possibility of completely controlling the sex urge, showing that self-control is not an impossibility. As all who love God also love men, so the virgin by her sacrifice shows this two-fold love. As the woman who is married takes care of the bodily good of the race, so the virgin looks out for the spiritual good of the race. Through her sacrifice and prayer she brings God's blessings upon mankind.

## **Sins Against Chastity**

Lust violates chastity and virginity. It means seeking sexual pleasure uncontrolled by reason. Since these pleasures are ordained by God and nature for the procreation of children, they are sinful unless this is their object. Only in marriage are they lawful.

Lust is a capital sin leading to other sins. It blinds a man to everything worth while in life, increases his self-love and leads him finally to hatred of God and all that pertains to God. He sinks by lust to the level of the brute, he who is called to be God's child.

## **The Passions and Continenence**

Continenence is a virtue that moderates the urge for food, drink and sexual enjoyment. In the temperate man the passions are under the control of his will and reason and cannot resist these higher faculties. The passions however of the continent man may resist his will but his will conquers them. The incontinent surrender to their passions and fall into sin.

Anger is moderated by meekness and clemency. Meekness prevents anger while clemency keeps a man from treating harshly those who have injured him.

Modesty is the virtue that guides man's desire for his own excellence and for knowledge. It means propriety in behavior and dress.

## **The Need for Humility**

As men tend toward great things they need a virtue to keep their high aims within reason. That is the virtue of humility. By humility a man recognizes his limitations. It is rooted in true self-knowledge. Humility teaches a man that he cannot gain happiness without the help of God's grace and love. So the humble man submits to God, honors Him and begs His help.

Pride is the opposite of humility. It is an uncontrolled self-love. The proud man thinks he can do anything by his own power. He thinks everything he has is his own, forgetting that God has given him all things. He despises others and boasts of ability that he has not got. Pride at last leads man to defy



God. Ignorance or weakness may lead to other sins, but by pride man deliberately rises up in rebellion against his Maker.

### **The Sin of Adam and Eve**

Pride was the sin of Adam and Eve. By the special gifts they received from God they were free from all temptations of the flesh. They could only sin by their intellects and wills. Satan appealed to their pride. If they ate of the fruit that God had forbidden them to eat they would become as gods. Through pride our first parents lost Paradise for themselves and for their children, and became with their children victims of concupisence, sickness and death.

As pride lost Paradise so does it loose happiness for man. Humility, acknowledging our complete dependence on God expressed by our total submission to God, is the answer to pride.

### **Studiousness and Curiosity**

Man naturally seeks knowledge. Studiousness is the guide for man in his search for knowledge. Curiosity on the other hand impels man to seek knowledge that he is not entitled to. For example to try and find out one's future by superstitious practices is sinful curiosity.

Modesty regulates our external actions and dress under the dictate of reason. To be modest is to act with the decency that is fitting for a human person. Good sense and good taste should govern modesty in dress. From modesty self-control derives.

Temperance then, gives a man mastery over himself and over his world. Material forces are ruled by the temperate man and he uses the things of this world to help him reach God. Self-control gives man happiness.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **GOD'S AIDS TO FAITH**

The existence of God as well as His power and love are made known to man by God Himself. Prophecy, speech and miracles are the conveyors of this knowledge.

Things known only to God Himself are revealed by proph-



ecy. Prophecy has taught man God's nature by revealing the Trinity. Prophets have shown their divine commission by foretelling the future.

God speaks to His prophets by sending them sights and sounds that hold His message, or by acting immediately upon the prophet's intellect or imagination.

The prophet is a divine messenger, and needs no training or preparation for his task. He does not even have to understand the message that he is giving out from God to men.

At times the prophet is carried away from sense life and gazes on the Godhead Itself. Inspired by the vision of divinity, the prophet brings the message of God's truth and love to men with authority.

### **Public and Private Revelation**

Public revelation which Christ's Church is empowered to teach all men, ceased after the time of Christ and the Apostles. But from time to time God gives men private revelations because of His love for them.

If all men are to receive God's message it must be taught in all languages to all nations effectively. The Apostles for that reason had the gift of tongues. They received infused knowledge of all languages. God has likewise at times given His missionaries power to preach His message effectively. History shows God confirming His message again and again through miracles. In these ways God lets men see the Glory that is His, and the glory that men will enjoy at the end of a good life.

Virtue is the pathway to final happiness. The virtuous life is either active or contemplative. In the active life the moral virtues are stressed energetically. The contemplation of God is the chief aim of the contemplative. Of course there is some action for the contemplative and some contemplation for the man in the active life. There is no hard and fast line excluding contemplation in one life and action in another.

### **Contemplation and the Moral Virtues**

As the life of man is made up of intellectual activity in searching for truth, especially divine truth, and moral activity

guided by reason, there is a connection between the moral virtues and contemplation. Unless passion is dominated man cannot contemplate divine truth. So man is disposed for contemplation by the moral virtues.

Before man reaches the stage of contemplating truth he must take other intellectual steps. First man must accept what God has given man in Revelation. Then he must reason out the meaning of these truths. He then reaches the simple contemplation of truth. The subject of his contemplation will be God as the world He has made makes Him known, and God as He is in Himself.

Contemplation brings happiness to man because it is the perfect act of his highest power, the power to know the truth. As God is the contemplative's objective, he catches a glimpse of the happiness of the Beatific Vision.

Good works, the works of the moral virtues are the chief concern of the man in the active life.

The contemplative life is more perfect and meritorious, since the contemplative is directly preparing himself for his final destiny, seeing God face to face. The man in the active life is not making ready for Heaven so directly. However as the moral virtues make up the active life even the contemplative has to first lead the active life, so his passions will be dominated and not be a hindrance to contemplation. As all men are called to reach the Beatific Vision, some are called to gain it by the contemplative life, others by the active life. Temperament and virtue make some men more suitable to the contemplative life than others.

There are different states of life in which men labor for happiness. In the spiritual life relationship to perfection distinguishes different states of life. There is the slave state and the state of a free man. A man may be a slave to sin which means he lives in the habit of sin; a man may be justice's slave living habitually the just life. A man may be clear of all sin and this is the good man who has conquered himself, or a man may be lacking justice and he is the evil man.



## The Sway of Charity

The man who is in search of true happiness must be clear of sin and justice's slave. This freedom stems from charity and charity commands the other virtues to activity. The perfection of charity has three steps, the steps of the beginners, the proficient and the perfect. In all three freedom from sin is caused by charity.

The love of God and neighbor or the observance of the Commandments constitutes spiritual perfection. To violate the Commandments is to lose charity which is perfection's essence. Again perfection means observing the counsels, poverty, chastity and obedience. Marriage and money are not sinful but they may interfere with the life of charity. Those who are not observing the counsels cannot give as much time and energy to loving and serving God as the followers of the counsels.

However perfection is not only for priests and religious. God's grace can enable any one to live the life of charity or perfection. A man not observing the counsels may be more perfect than the man who has the three vows. But the man with vows is in the *state* of perfection for he has bound himself to a permanent and stable way of life, while the man without vows has not.

Bishops are in the state of perfection because their vocation is to lead their flocks to perfection, and to do this they themselves must possess perfection.

The essence of perfection is charity or love of God above all things. A man may fail in this because he loves wealth excessively or bodily pleasure excessively or his own will excessively. By his vows the religious gives up wealth, lawful bodily pleasures and his own will in order to love God better, to attain perfection. The vows give a stable state of life, and the religious is in a state of perfection because he has promised by his vows to always seek perfection.

The state of perfection is an example to all men showing them how to attain happiness. Happiness is the final objective of all men as they are all created to attain the Beatific Vision. The value of every human action is in its leading to the objective.



## **How Man Finds His Destiny**

Men must use all their powers in searching for God if they are to achieve their destiny. All man's natural and supernatural gifts must come into play to help in the finding of happiness. All the virtues, and above all charity keep man on the right path toward the Beatific Vision.

Man is God's image as long as grace and charity abide within him. By charity he is empowered to see and love God and finally reach his destiny, the Beatific Vision, seeing God face to face, loving God as God loves Himself. He will then be truly God's image and likeness.

### **PART 3**

#### **CHAPTER I**

### **THE WORD MADE FLESH**

The Incarnation is the mystery of God's love for man. St. John declares: "By this has the charity of God appeared toward us, because God has sent His only begotten Son into the world that we may live by Him. In this is charity, not as though we had loved God, but because He has first loved us and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins. (1 John iv, 9, 10)

The Incarnation means God becomes man. The Word, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity takes our human nature. Christ is one Person with two natures, the divine and the human. This is Christianity's great mystery revealed to man by Christ Himself. What He revealed His miracles endorsed. Christ as Man claimed to be God before the high court of Jewry, and went to His death rather than deny it. His resurrection clinched His claim to be divine.

The Incarnation makes God's goodness clear to us. He Who is almighty, infinitely perfect unites Himself with created, limited human nature. Surely this makes God's goodness evident. The mystery shows God's wisdom, for as God and Man our Lord can offer infinite satisfaction to God for our sins. It shows God's justice too, because it is man who offers satisfac-

tion to God for sin, as Jesus Christ is man. Lastly to assume human nature as His very own demonstrates God's power.

### **The Incarnation Was Not Necessary**

God did not have to become man to rescue man from his sins. He could have allowed man to make amends for sin, or He could have forgiven man outright without asking any reparation. In His love for man God took the best possible way of restoring man to grace. That was the Incarnation.

Man is drawn to good through the Incarnation. It is the foundation of the virtue of faith, for we hear the voice of God Himself in Christ. It is hope's foundation too for it proves how strong is God's love for us. It is charity's foundation for God in showing such great love moves us to love Him.

In the Incarnation we see the way we must live in order to gain the Beatific Vision, for Christ points the way in the perfect exercise of all the virtues. Man recovers the divine life of grace through the Incarnation, enabling him to live the Christ-life here and so inherit the Beatific Vision.

### **The Incarnation's Effects**

Man is led away from evil by the Incarnation first by making him see that he must choose God and himself in preference to Satan who wrecked human nature. Again it shows man his dignity since human nature is the only nature assumed by God. As man gains grace by the Incarnation and by no effort of his own, it saves man from presumption. It shows us too the folly of pride. For if God is so humble as to become man, surely man will not prefer pride to grace which will enable him to share in the divine Nature. Finally by becoming man Christ atoned for man's sins, and won their forgiveness.

Christ came to take away all sin, actual and original. As original sin stained the whole race, He came in particular to save man from original sin.

### **The Time of the Incarnation**

Christ chose the right time for His entrance into the world. Man would not have realized the value of redemption had



Christ come immediately after Adam's sin. Man had to live for a time on his own to see what sin had cost him. Then too the dignity of the Word demanded that a long line of patriarchs and prophets should precede Him, to make men ready for His coming. Finally had He delayed His coming until near the end of human history, men would have lost the memory of God and the Eternal Law.

The definition of the mystery was given by the Council of Chalcedon in these words: *We confess that in these latter times the only begotten Son of God appeared in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation,—the distinction of natures not having been taken away by the union.* Christ is one Person with two natures, the divine and the human. In Christ these two natures are united.

### **Nature and Person**

What is the difference between nature and person? "What is it?" gives the answer to the nature of anything, and "Who is it?" gives the answer as to the person. Is the object in front of me a man or a cat? The answer to that is the nature of the object. All men are alike in their human nature while all are different as persons.

Again, a nature may be common to many things but a person is always a rational, free individual in control of his own actions. Every person is himself and no one else.

When we think of Christ we see one Person with two natures, the divine and the human. This One Person is both God and Man. If I answer to "what is Christ," I say "He is God, and He is man." If I answer "Who is He?" I say "He is the Son of God." If I say He is Mary's Child, the Messias-King, I am using other names for One divine Person Who exists in two natures, the human and the divine.

### **The Union of Two Natures**

The divine and the human natures are united in Christ. This is the mystery. This union does not develop a third something distinct from the two natures. The two natures are not



mixed or confused forming a third thing, each nature is complete and perfect. The union is not a merely placing the two natures side by side, for if that were so there would be two persons in Christ. Nor is there a fusion of the two for that would call for a change in the divine nature which is impossible. Nor is the union like that of soul and body, for soul and body are incomplete natures finding completion in their union. Each nature in Christ is complete.

The union is a personal union for the divine and human natures are united in the Person of the Son of God. The two natures are indirectly united to one another in the Word, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Eternal God, pre-existing the union of the two natures, assumes to Himself a complete human nature. This human nature has existing in it a divine Person Who is responsible for all its actions.

All the actions of both natures must be attributed to the same divine Person. So we say that Christ created the universe and is eternal; and that He suffered, died and rose from the dead ascending into Heaven.

We accept this great mystery because God has revealed it to us and we are grateful for it though we cannot understand it completely. If God's love for us is so great that He gives us His own Son as man, surely He will lift us up in the end to the Beatific Vision.

### **The Incarnation Was Fitting**

It was fitting for God to assume human nature. It was fitting for the Son of God Who is divine Knowledge to assume a nature that is intellectual. While the angels are also intellectual it was more suitable for God to become man, for man could be saved while the angels could not be saved.

It was proper for God to take to Himself an individual nature of Adam's race as the Incarnation's purpose was the race's salvation. By this means the race that in Adam had offended God, could atone to God for sin and regain His grace.

That is why the Son of God took to Himself a complete and perfect human nature, for otherwise He could not have made satisfaction to God for sin as a true representative of Adam's race.

Christ's human nature is the most perfect of all human natures in the order of grace. Since Christ's human soul is united to the Person of the Word, it must be sanctified by divine grace to a perfect degree. Just as with men grace made Christ's soul holy and pleasing to God. As Christ's soul was to be the origin of the supernatural acts by which He would effect men's redemption, He was given the fullness of sanctifying grace, as this grace is necessary for supernatural acts. As He was to be the font of grace for other men He first had to have it Himself.

### **Christ's Grace**

Sanctifying grace brought to Christ's soul the supernatural virtues just as it does in men. But because of the perfection of Christ's grace some of these virtues were unnecessary for Christ. From its beginning Christ's soul enjoyed the Beatific Vision so it had no need for faith or hope. He already possessed God so He did not need hope. He saw God face to face so faith was unnecessary for Him. But in an all-perfect degree He had all the other supernatural gifts and virtues of the Holy Spirit.

As Christ was to be the perfect teacher of mankind God gave Him the gifts of prophecy, tongues, the gift of preaching sublimely and the power to work miracles. While Mary and the saints possessed the fullness of grace in the sense that they had all the grace necessary for fulfilling their vocation, Christ had an absolute fullness of grace since His vocation was to redeem the whole human family and bring back to it the life of grace.

While Christ's grace is finite and created, no other grace can equal it, nor can all the accumulated graces of angels and men equal it. However it was incapable of increase as no one can win more than the greatest degree of anything and Christ had the greatest degree of grace from the beginning. It was the greatest possible share in the divine life, and from that angle might be termed infinite.

Christ has this supreme grace because He was to be the spiritual Head of the race. Before his sin Adam was the spiritual



and natural head of the race. By his sin he lost grace and his spiritual headship, and all his children lost grace. God decided to restore grace to the race, and made Christ the spiritual Head. That is why the Fathers of the Church call our Lord the *second Adam*. From Adam's fall unto time's ending all men get grace through Christ. Christ's grace as the source of all grace is capital grace or the grace of headship.

### **The Head of the Mystical Body**

Christ is the Head of His Church and His Church is His Mystical Body. Now the head is the first part of the body and the noblest for therein are all the senses while in the rest of the body there is only the sense of touch. The head is also the ruler of the body for in it is the brain which directs all the other parts to their respective tasks for the body's good.

Christ is all these things to His Church. He is the first for He is through grace the first-born of all God's children. By His fullness of grace He is the noblest part of the Church. He is closest to God through His graces, and through His soul the wisdom and power of God act upon men. He is Teacher, Ruler and Sanctifier of all members of the human family. Finally as the body's members are directed by the head to the good of the whole, and as the body receives life and movement from the head, so does Christ give life and movement to His members directing them all to the good of the whole Church. He holds the grace of headship because He gives grace to all.

Christ's Headship is chiefly concerned with men's souls, but as the body is the soul's instrument, Christ influences bodies in as much as He sanctifies their souls with grace. The body is an instrument for good in a man whose soul holds Christ's grace. Both bodies and souls are sanctified by Christ in this manner. The risen bodies will be glorified by their souls at the resurrection of all men. The glory of the soul will infiltrate the risen body. Because of this Christ is Head of bodies as well as souls.

### **The Extent of Christ's Headship**

In different ways Christ is the Head of all men. He is the actual Head of the blessed in Heaven who are enjoying the



Beatific Vision. He is actual Head of all living on earth who are bound to Him by grace and charity. He is the actual Head of those who are united with Him by faith, even though mortal sin has deprived them of grace and charity. These however are less truly His members. Finally other men are potential members of the Mystical Body. While not actual members they can become members. In God's Providence some will so become and others will not. Those who die without becoming His members will no longer even be potential members.

The perfection of Christ's grace brings Him closer to God than the highest angel. He is Head of the angels, and makes use of them in working out man's salvation. By this He increases their accidental glory and happiness, and orders their activities to the good of His Mystical Body, His Church.

### **Christ Shares His Headship**

Christ is Head of His Church first because He is the fountain of grace whence flows life into His members, and secondly because the whole Church is governed by Him. But He has shared these powers with men. There are other Christs who carry out His duties as Head of the Church. Only Christ can pour grace directly into His members. This is because of the union between His soul and His divine nature. Only He can send the Holy Spirit to sanctify souls with divine grace. But His bishops and priests have received power from Him to sanctify men through the sacraments which He has established. He acts through the bishops and priests and the sacraments. It is He Who confirms, baptizes and gives grace. This is true for all the sacraments.

# QUESTIONS

## LESSON I

(Pages 3-4)

- What function does the virtue of religion fulfill?
- Why does this virtue add to man's happiness?
- Of what value are external religious acts?
- Are external religious acts primary?
- What does devotion mean?
- How does meditation affect devotion?
- What does meditation teach man?
- Why does the truly religious man always enjoy happiness?
- Why does man pray?
- Do our prayers change God's mind?

## LESSON II

(Pages 4-5)

- What is Providence?
- How does prayer affect God's Providence?
- How does God answer prayer?
- Why is *Our Father* the supreme prayer?
- Explain the meaning of each petition in the *Our Father*.
- In what sense is all prayer mental?
- There is no unanswered prayer. Explain.
- What are some exterior prayers?
- Enumerate the different kinds of adoration.
- What is sacrifice?

## LESSON III

(Pages 5-6)

- What are the two elements in sacrifice?
- How does Calvary's Sacrifice show these elements?
- What is an oblation?
- By making offerings to God what does man admit?
- Name the different kinds of offerings.
- What does the Christian community owe to its priests?
- How is true love for God shown by men?
- What are vows, oaths, adjurations?

What are the sins against religion?  
Enumerate some superstitious practices.  
What are some sins of irreligion?  
How does irreligion affect man's world?

#### LESSON IV

(Pages 7-8)

After God to whom is man indebted?  
What is the virtue of piety?  
What is the virtue of observance?  
What do we prove by asking help from the saints?  
There are two exceptions in obedience. Explain.  
How should we show gratitude to benefactors?  
What are the grades of ingratitude?  
Why is truthfulness necessary for social living?  
How is the seriousness of lying to be judged?  
Liars fall into different classes. Explain.

#### LESSON V

(Pages 8-9)

How necessary is friendliness to social living?  
How does flattery harm social life?  
Why does liberality benefit society?  
Define covetousness and prodigality.  
What is the virtue of equity?  
What gift perfects justice?  
How is man's social life rightly ordered?  
Where is the most perfect element of order found?  
What do justice and its allied virtues accomplish for man?  
Justice under wisdom will effect what?

#### LESSON VI

(Pages 9-11)

What are the effects of fortitude?  
What is fortitude's concern?  
What virtue must guide fortitude?  
What type of fortitude is martyrdom?



Define cowardice, fearlessness and daring.  
What are the virtues of magnanimity, magnificence, patience and perseverance?  
What are the opposites of these virtues?  
Why is magnificence a lesser virtue than fortitude?  
What is the opposite of magnificence?  
What are the virtues of patience and perseverance?  
Name the opposites of these virtues?  
What is the noblest form of perseverance?  
Why does man need these above-mentioned virtues?

## LESSON VII

(Pages 12-13)

On what does the happiness of the individual and of society depend?  
What effect has temperance on man's desires?  
Explain the nature of man.  
How does man gain true happiness?  
What are man's strongest desires?  
Why must they be ruled by reason?  
Temperance follows a mean between excess and defect. Explain.  
What two qualities necessary for temperance are found in most men?  
Define these two qualities.  
Give an explanation of the virtue of honesty.

## LESSON VIII

(Pages 13-14)

What is temperance concerned with?  
What virtues is it divided into?  
What is abstinence and what vice is opposed to it?  
Explain fasting and its value.  
What are the effects of gluttony?  
Explain sobriety.  
What is the virtue of chastity?  
Does sex pleasure exist for itself?  
How does chastity influence man's sex life?  
Explain the virtue of virginity.

Only a higher good makes voluntary virginity good. Explain.  
What makes virginity superior to marriage?  
Why is not the virgin's intention selfish?  
What does the virgin's sacrifice accomplish?  
What vice is opposed to virginity?  
When are sex pleasures lawful?  
Why is lust a capital sin?  
What happens to the man who surrenders to the sin of lust?  
What is the virtue of continence?  
Contrast the temperate and the continent man.

## LESSON IX

(Pages 14-15)

What passion do clemency and meekness moderate?  
In what different ways do they act?  
What is the virtue of modesty?  
Explain the virtue of humility.  
What must a man realize to be humble?  
On what is humility based?  
What does humility teach a man regarding happiness?  
Define pride.  
What are the characteristics of the proud man?  
What does pride lead to?  
What was the sin of Adam and Eve?  
What was the consequence of this sin?  
What is the remedy for pride?  
Has man the right and ability to know everything?  
How does the virtue of studiousness affect man?  
What is curiosity?  
What does modesty teach men and women?  
What does temperance do for man?  
Of what value are the things of this world to the temperate man?  
What virtue gives happiness to man.

## LESSON X

(Pages 15-16)

What does man learn from prophecy, speech and miracle?  
How is the prophet's message confirmed?  
In what ways does God speak to His prophets?

Does the prophet need preparation for his task?  
What effect has rapture on the prophet?  
When did public revelation cease?  
God has not left the preaching of His message to man's unaided efforts. Explain.  
How has God confirmed the preaching of His message?  
What is the difference between the active and contemplative life?  
What is the chief act of contemplation?

## LESSON XI

(Pages 16-17)

What does man's life consist of?  
What motivates contemplation?  
What bearing have the moral virtues on contemplation?  
What steps must be taken before we arrive at contemplating truth?  
How is contemplation the perfect act of man's highest faculty?  
The contemplative life is the more perfect. Explain.  
How does the contemplative prepare himself for contemplation?  
What is meant by a state of life?  
What are the two basic states of life in the moral order?  
In the spiritual order how are the different states of life distinguished?

## LESSON XII

(Pages 17-19)

How do we distinguish two freedoms and two slaveries?  
What is the root of spiritual freedom?  
Name the three stages in the perfection of charity?  
What does spiritual perfection consist in primarily?  
Is perfection possible only for priests or religious?  
What is meant by the observance of the Counsels?  
What is the essence of spiritual perfection?  
Bishops are in the state of perfection. Explain.  
Explain how religious are in the state of perfection.  
In what three ways may a man fail to love God above all things?



What does the religious give up by the three vows?  
What does the religious oblige himself to do?  
What is the perfection of Bishops and religious a sign of?  
In what do we find the value of every human act?  
How are men to fulfill their true destiny?  
What does man attain through the practice of the moral virtues?  
What do grace and charity effect in man?  
What powers do they give him?  
How is man to reach his final objective?  
What did God intend man to be?

### LESSON XIII

(Pages 19-20)

What does the Incarnation mean?  
Who has revealed the mystery of the Incarnation?  
What does God show to men by the Incarnation?  
Did God have to become man to save man from his sins?  
What other course could God have taken?  
How does God lead man to good through the Incarnation?  
Of what virtues is the Incarnation the foundation?  
What does the life of Christ teach us?  
How does the Incarnation prove man's great dignity.  
The Incarnation shatters human pride. Explain.

### LESSON XIV

(Pages 20-22)

From what sins did Christ save man?  
Christ came into the world just at the right time. Explain.  
Give the definition of the Council of Chalcedon on the Incarnation.  
How express the definition in your own words?  
What two questions show the difference between a nature and a person?  
Define a person.  
What is the heart of the mystery of the Incarnation?  
The union of the two natures in Christ is a personal union. Explain.  
The Person pre-exists the union of the two natures. Explain.  
The human nature in Christ has no human personality. Explain.

## LESSON XV

(Pages 22-23)

To whom are the actions of both natures attributed?  
In many ways it was fitting for God to assume human nature.  
Explain.

Why did the Son of God assume a complete and perfect human nature?

Why did Christ's soul possess sanctifying grace?

What virtues did Christ possess due to sanctifying grace?

Were faith and hope among these virtues?

Christ had the fullness of grace. Explain.

Was this grace finite or infinite?

Was Christ's grace capable of increasing?

Why is Christ called a second Adam?

## LESSON XVI

(Pages 23-25)

Why is Christ's grace called capital grace?

The head is the noblest part of the human body. Explain.

How explain Christ as Head of His Mystical Body, His Church?

Is Christ Head of men's bodies or souls?

Christ is Head of all men but in different ways. Explain.

Why is Christ Head of the angels?

Give two reasons why Christ is Head of the Church?

What power has Christ given to priests and bishops?





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