

~~Trappist~~, A Raymond, Father, 1903 -
A Trappist does a startling thing...
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A Trappist

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STARTLING

THING

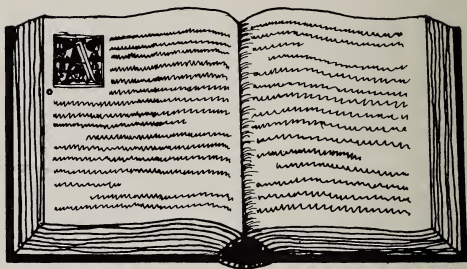
FOR YOU

by

Finding the Value of 'X'



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FOREWORD

Too many of you are finding SELF, LIFE and LOVE mysteries.

Too many of you are bewildered by the swirl of the times.

Too many of you are looking for solutions in the wrong place.

Here is your SOLUTION for every mystery. It is all done by

FINDING THE VALUE OF "X"

Follow the reasoning closely and you will see that you have every reason to smile, sing and cheer.

Work out your every problem along these lines and life will be lovable; fail to take the value found herein and you will find life a mess.

May I especially invite the married and those contemplating marriage to read the passage on VIGIL LIGHTS FOR MARRIED PEOPLE? It will pay.

HERE IS THE SOLUTION

You have presented me your many problems. Did you know that you also presented me with their ONE solution? You did. And it is as sure as it is simple.

For months now you have had me walking around saying to myself: "Oh, if they would only drop their buckets into the sea! — If they would only drop their buckets into the sea!" I would have written to you about it sooner, but I was afraid that you would not understand. It does sound so meaningless a phrase. But now I do write. Now I must write. And now I do say: "Drop your buckets into the sea," for when I say: "Find the value of 'X,'" I am only using a paraphrase.

Let me explain.

Your difficulties are many and they are proving most perplexing. Economics are unstable. Ethics are muddled. The world is in a ferment. Mankind has taken the turn in the road and it is proving the sharpest of sharp bends. It begins to look like a "switch-back," and we seem to be taking giant strides towards barbarity. The international realm is torn to tatters; the national situation is far from settled; and even in the tiny world of your own mind and heart and conscience you find trouble, turmoil and tumult.

You seek a remedy. You desire something steadfast and stable. You ask for a way out. And I give you all you want in a sentence. I say: "Drop your buckets into the sea by finding the value of 'X'."

Yes, find the value of "X" and you have found the solution for your every difficulty, the one stabilizer for your most unsettled world, the light you long for, the hope you need and the courage you lack. That is the prescription I write for you, a prescription of six words: "Drop your buckets into the

sea"; and I tell you how to have them filled when I add: "Find the value of 'X'."

I sound cryptic, I know, I mean to. But I will clarify by telling you that in the days of the sailing vessel one was becalmed beneath a blazing sky on a glassy and seemingly shoreless sea. Hours dragged into days and monotonous days went into weary weeks and still that ship lay motionless beneath that scorching sky on that glaring and glassy sea. Water grew scarce. As judiciously as possible it was portioned out, but the hour finally came when not a drop was left. Then, from out blood-shot eyes, the crew looked at one another with that fierce, mad look that thirst-crazed men take on. The relentless day darkened into a merciless night. There was no relief from without. There was a mounting, maddening fever within. The night was just lifting and frenzy and despair was almost upon them, when out of the morning's mist there lazily loomed a vessel. With a haste that was frantic the thirst-crazed crew broke out their signal flags and shot a message up that mast calling for "Water!" Then to the rail they went and every bulging eye was fixed with a wild intent on that vessel that lolled in the distance. After what seemed like an eternity flags slowly mounted the mast and a message was read that left the crew speechless and wild-eyed in unbelief. It said: "Drop your buckets into the sea!" Down came their own flags only to be shot up again with greater force, as if they would shout: "Water! Water!" And again that message that seemed like a taunt from Hell came back — "Drop your buckets into the sea!"

Curses broke from thirst-parched throats. Insanity was imminent. But one of the crew did drop his bucket into the sea. Cackling like one insane he drew that bucket up hand over hand, then flinging a look that was half defiance and half despair at his fellow companions, he lifted that bucket to

his lips and drank. He gulped and gulped again, then throwing bucket and both arms in the air he shouted, "It's fresh! It's fresh! It's fresh! Drink it!"

He was right. The water was fresh. It was perfectly drinkable. A miracle? No; the fact is that they had been becalmed on what looked like a shoreless ocean, but was actually the mouth of the Amazon River; and mariners will tell you that that stream sweeps perfectly potable water great distances into the sea.

Do you see the point? The crew was going mad for want of water. Death was almost upon them. Yet all they had to do was drop their buckets into the sea.

I say the same thing to you. I say: "Drop your buckets into the sea!" for I see a perfect parallel in your position and that of the thirst-mad crew. You flash me message after message of distress. You say that madness is upon you; that desperation is in every eye you meet; that the world is going smash. I believe you. I think that the world is going smash, too. And yet my only reply seems like a taunt. I simply say: "Drop your buckets into the sea by finding the value of 'X'!"

YOU FURNISHED THIS SOLUTION

Here is the situation: For years now your problems have been mounting. With every new letter you tell me of some new difficulty. Some years back you begged my prayers because of the economic stress. Wall Street had crashed. Banks failed. Bread lines lengthened. Work could not be found. This came on top of your sad picture of a world gone morally berserk. A world in which marriage was a mockery; birth-prevention had actually become race suicide; and the nation a nation of drunkards. Youth, you said, was rioting in promiscuity, and nothing at all was sacred. You put your finger on

one of these contributing causes when you wrote of our stupid educational system, a system in which every passing fad was welcomed, crass materialism the only philosophy taught, and free-will and personal responsibility held up for ridicule.

With the years your pictures have grown progressively worse. Now, on the Birthday of the Prince of Peace, you present me with a picture that is but the logical climax of all that preceded: a picture of the world being blitzkrieged into barbarism.

In what looks like a frenzy of despair you ask, "What is to be done?" And my only answer is: You yourself have furnished the solution. Find the value of "X."

Yes, you not only presented the problems, you actually gave me the solution; for before me is a modest mound of mail. It is all from you. It contains your Christmas greetings and your tales of woe. In it I read much more than you meant to write; so I am going to give you much more than you petitioned.

You asked for prayers and penance. You shall have both; for that is my life. To both have I been consecrated. My life is nothing but a life of prayer and penance, a life spent for a world that will not pray and has forgotten how to do penance. And, in passing, let me say that your letters gave me fresh stimuli, spurring me on to more prayer and greater penance; for I see that the world does less and less of both. My prayers and penances go to God, to you goes this answer to what you may have meant as a purely rhetorical question, but which I am taking as real.

You ask, "What is to be done?" I give the answer you furnished me, I say: "Find the value of 'X'." And lest I annoy you too much with my mysterious way of writing, I ask: Do you recall your Christmas cards? They make a motley collection. They are of

all shapes and sizes, of every shade and hue. Some are holy and breathe of Bethlehem; some are pagan and redolent of Hollywood. I know the thought that was behind them all, and for that thought I am grateful. It contributed much to making my Christmas what it actually was — very merry. But the messages on the face of some of those cards make my blood boil, send burning stabs of thought shooting through my brain and set my pencil racing across these pages. The cause of my angry indignation contains the solution for all your difficulties. It is in the letter "X."

You remember a little of your mathematics, don't you? Do you remember what "X" stands for? The unknown quantity! In Algebra we often allowed it to equal zero! Hold those two facts before your eyes, then add that Emmanuel Kant took that letter "X" from mathematics and transferred it to philosophy, talking quite glibly about "ignotum X" — the unknown and the unknowable. Finally, modern man has taken it from both mathematics and philosophy and brought it into History, past and present. He has taken past history's most important Individual and present history's one center of universal attack, and allows Him to equal "X."

That is the sad story told by many of your bright and cheerful cards. They read, "Merry Xmas" and in so doing paint a very accurate picture of the modern mind, the mind of the Twentieth Century; the mind to which Jesus Christ is the **Great Unknown**; the mind to which He who fills all life and all literature equals **zero**; the mind to which He who is Truth is **unknowable**, who is Light is **unseen**, who is the Way **cannot be found**.

At least the card-makers were honest. More honest than they knew! To our day and age Jesus Christ is the Unknown Quantity. The first century called Him Blasphemer, Wine-bibber and Beelzebub's Friend.

The fourth said that He was man, but not the God-Man. The sixteenth and seventeenth resurrected all the old errors about Him and added a few of their own. But it remained for the highly enlightened and greatly advanced Twentieth Century to climax all error by allowing Jesus Christ to equal "X." Making Him the Great Unknown!

Do you see now what I mean when I say: "Find the value of 'X' "? Find it and your every problem is solved. Find out what Christ equals and life ceases to be a riddle and the world a colossal mess. Find it and you have found the cure for every ill, because the cause of them is in allowing Christ to equal zero.

IT IS THE ONLY AMERICAN THING TO DO

I am most optimistic as I give you this solution, for I know it is the only American thing to do. Americans are the world's greatest experimenters, a race of optimists. That is what makes them say, "Try, try again." Americans are daredevils who will always say, "I'll try anything once." Americans have a determined will-to-win, a spirit of never-say-die; that is why "Nothing like trying" is a national slogan.

I have great hope for you as I tell you to find the value of "X," for as yet you cannot say, "There is nothing that we have not tried." Since you cannot say that, the only American thing to do is go on trying. Try the Great Untried! Try "X."

Americans have tried free-love, free-life and free-lancing; they have tried free-thought, free-speech and free-verse; they have tried free-trade, free-soil and free-booting. And the result of all this free trying is this free-for-all, this mess of modernity which is certainly a potpourri. Look at it! A hash of half-truths and untruths passes for modern thought; a conglomeration

of false and unethical principles is known as present-day morality; a set of sly and shifty practices is called a set political policy; and I look for words to describe our modern literature and our ethics of love and life.

Freedom is a God-given gift. And America followed God's plan when she wrote it large in the very preamble to her Constitution; but the word, the idea, the very gift itself can be, has been and is being abused. There is a false freedom, and no one knows it better than freedom-loving Americans. We have tried it. We have tried every sort of freedom except one. We have never tried the freedom of being the children of God. That is why the card-makers write "Merry Xmas." That is why Bruce Barton could write "The Man That Nobody Knows" and make it a Life of Jesus Christ.

So as Americans, lovers of freedom and the world's greatest experimenters, I bank on you to find the value of "X." We have never limited ourselves to chemistry and physics. Never. We have experimented with money, marriage and morality. We even tried the "Noble Experiment." Do you remember? It only cost us the loss of international and national respect, made us the laughingstock of the world and gave us a generation or two of drunkards. Experimentation does come high. Sometimes altogether too high. The "Noble Experiment" did. But we must learn from it. Let us learn that we must go higher. Let us learn that it is time for us to try the Noblest Experiment. It is time for us to try Jesus Christ in our individual, social, economic, national and international life. It is time to try the Great Untried if we wish to be the nation God meant us to be, and to be the men and women that our souls want to be.

Yes, it is time. It is high time. In fact, it is almost too late. One page at least we have taken from Christ's Gospel. But it is

not the best page. We have followed that dictum: "The last shall be first and the first shall be last." What should have been tried last — if at all — we have already tried and found wanting; then the only American thing to do now is to try Him who should have been and who is **FIRST!** It is time to try Jesus Christ, for He, and He alone, can give us what we want. And when I say "want," I mean what we **long for** and what we **lack**.

IS DEMENTIA PRAECOX CONTAGIOUS?

That is a startling question to insert here. But I have my reasons. You gave them to me. To date, from the pictures you sent me, I conclude that modern man's ultimate answers to every major problem of life are infinitely wrong. The cause of their error is to be found in the fact that they have allowed Jesus Christ, who is Infinite, to equal zero. Now, you know that you cannot get truth from error, nor right from wrong. If I sail in the wrong direction, I will never reach my appointed port. If I do not allow one and one to equal two, and two and two to equal four, I'll never be able to multiply. If I do not allow twelve inches to equal a foot, how can I measure any man? All of which is only saying that modern man is wrong from the start.

However, I am glad that he has used mathematical terms, for now I can demand that he use mathematical method. And that, you know, demands the finest, fiercest, closest, most intimately linked reasoning possible. Let modern man be mathematical. He has allowed Christ to equal "X." Now let him find the value of "X." I tell you that it is not zero. I tell you that it is what "X" stands for in Higher Mathematics — It is **INFINITY!**

But at the moment Christ equals zero for most moderns, and you have detailed for me

the awful results. So I ask: Is dementia praecox contagious? I begin to suspect that it is.

You tell me that Europe is a madhouse. Did you mean that literally? Or were you only thinking of the war? I wonder if you have been penetrating enough to realize that Europe is a madhouse, an asylum for the insane; and from what you tell me, I see that it is a house for the violently insane.

No man in his right senses sets himself up as a god. No individual who is rational arrogates to himself the right to dictate to a whole people telling them what they are to do, to say and even to think. No being in his right mind makes the State an object of worship. So I say that Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini are demented; but I must immediately add that it is "dementia praecox." Crazy they undoubtedly are, but clever beyond dispute. Still, what frightens me is to see how contagious that dementia praecox is. I mean it. It seems to me that it is highly contagious and my reason for saying so is Europe. Look at it. Millions and hundreds of millions are following these mad men. It is not only this country and that that has been infected by the virus, it is the entire continent. An epidemic has swept from end to end of that land. In very truth Europe with its Communism, Fascism and Nazism is an insane asylum.

But sad to say, we are not immune. Your letters very clearly tell me that dementia praecox has touched our shores. When I see the wealthiest land in the world lead all others in poverty and destitution; when I see the land of surprising surpluses abounding in misery, hunger and want; when I learn that the land of limitless opportunity is the land where a man cannot find work; then I know that the epidemic that has swept Europe has reached America.

But why should I belabor the obvious? What you want to know is the antidote. Let me tell you that it is not war. Never! It is Jesus Christ. Find the full value of Him whom you have allowed to equal "X" and you have the serum that will kill the germ and cure the patient. Put Jesus Christ into the minds, the hearts, the wills and the lives of the peoples, and mankind is saved. Shoot this saving serum into the blood-stream of nations, and our staggering civilization will right itself, stand up straight and become strong. Put Jesus Christ into international relations and the light of sanity will come back into eyes that are now blazing with the insane blaze of hate; hearts that are now beating that mad tattoo of destruction and death will slow down and throb in a unison of uplift and regeneration. Find the full value of "X" and you have found Utopia.

Optimism, isn't it? And in this day when the world is black with pessimism, when men and women have lost all hope, when they are not only disillusioned, disheartened and discouraged, but actually on the brink of despair, for a cloistered monk to send such a message to mankind, sounds as if he were the madman rather than those in the world.

I know that. But that is only another proof that you do not know the value of "X"; that is only another proof that you know not the transformation that took place when a little maid, hardly more than a girl, said "Fiat" and God took flesh. Find the value of Christ and you will learn that what sounds like airy optimism is the only true fact and the realest of realism. With you who are Catholics I plead: Test my optimism, for you have not realized Christ's full value; to non-Catholics I proffer a perfect solution and say: Try it.

**IF "X" = 0, WHAT DO YOU AND I
EQUAL?**

This is the one equation that must be worked out to the end. This is the one equation that merits our strictest attention. This is the only equation that can be called personal and pertinent.

I could write much about Hitler and Stalin and Mussolini; but to what purpose? I hardly think that that trinity will find time to read the writings of a Trappist. I doubt very much that they will be interested. But I want you to make time to read what I have written. I want you to become intensely interested; for I am intensely interested in you. This is of paramount importance. It is important for you. It is important for me. It is important for Christ.

I could find the value of "X" for the nations; I could show you the tremendous importance the finding of the value of "X" plays in the realm of international relations. But by so doing I would interest you, engage your attention and for the space of this booklet entertain you. But that is not my purpose. I want to do all those things; but I want to do much more. I want your attention and interest; but most especially do I want your introspection. This is a personal matter.

I am going to write about nations and things international, but I am going to do so by writing about you and me. For you see, you and I make the nations. Absolutely. For a nation is only a group of united individuals. Hence, to find the value of "X" for America, I've got to find the value of "X" for you and me.

I start with a perfect equation. I say: If "X" = 0, you and I equal the same. Now let me prove it.

Ours is a day of startling individuals; and yet, a day in which individuals do not count.

We have our dictators, and they are striking individuals; but we also have their movements, and these are demolishers of individualism. But lest I wander, let me be most pointed and practical. Let me ask what you or I, as individuals, amount to in the estimation of the world's leading individuals. And let me answer for you — We amount to nothing!

Were we in Russia, we would be looked upon as a pair of hands; that is all, just a pair of hands for a factory or a farm. Is not that a dignifying estimation and an uplifting evaluation? And know well that if those hands did not produce what the USSR stipulated that they should produce, we would be shot. That is Stalin's evaluation of the individual: a pair of hands to produce for the Soviet Union or else to be destroyed. The callousness of that individual regarding individuals makes the flesh creep. It is appalling. When Lady Astor asked him how long he would continue murdering people, he coldly answered, "As long as it is necessary." The years since have proved that he meant it.

To the Russian, then, we would be a pair of hands; what would we be to the German? If you think that you or I would amount to any more in that mad realm, let me inform you that Hitler has said that he will sacrifice seven million men to win this war. Think of it! Seven million men! And there are people in Germany who call this wholesale murderer the savior of their country. Why, to Hitler, the individual does not exist. He is just a number to be goose-stepped to death; just a body to be bulleted and cast into that yawning moat that separates Hitler from world domination. Is not that a comforting evaluation of an individual's worth?

And what does the other great individual of the world think of the individual? Let me tell you. In Italy an individual is as individualistic as any wave on the Medi-

terranean Sea or any grain of sand on the shore of the Bay of Sicily. Yes, that is the value that Mussolini would place on you or me. To him a man is nothing more than a grain of sand to be compounded and compacted with other such grains for the building of his temple of the Fascist State; and a woman is only a womb to bring forth more building material.

Is not all that elevating? Is it not most heartening to know that we amount to nothing? Is it not inspiring to learn that by the leading individuals of the world, the individual is valued as a pair of hands, a body to be bulletted, or a grain of sand? In other words, you and I equal zero!

Now, why? Why this dwarfing, dwindling, annihilating of individuality? Why this wholesale lowering of value? Why have we reached the vanishing point of personal worth? Why? I'll tell you why. Because you and I are equated with Christ, and Christ equals "X" and "X" equals zero. That is why.

And Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini are right! For if $"X" = 0$, then you and I are utterly worthless. Yes, Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini are very right! For if $"X" = 0$, then you and I have no higher destiny than to produce for Russia, fill the moat for Germany, or build the temple for Italy. Yes, indeed, Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini are most right! For if Jesus Christ merits no attention, then you and I merit no more; because, strange as it may seem, Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini have rightly equated; we are equated with Jesus Christ. That is absolute truth! Hence, if $Christ = 0$; we equal the same.

But why go abroad? What do you or I amount to in our own land? Is it not practically zero?

I have to smile as I read that last line, and I will have to change it. What do I, a Trappist, amount to in Twentieth Century

America? — Don't laugh! I know — absolutely zero!

But why? Why is it that the individual is not more highly valued in this land of individualism? Why is it that you and I amount to no more in America, the land of the free, than we would in the slave realms of Stalin, Hitler or Mussolini? We are not Fascists, Communists or Nazis. No, thank God, we are not; but we have here the same unsound, materialistic philosophies. We have not Marx and Engels to the same intense degree; but we have the Huxleys and Hobbes and Locke, we have Hume and John Stuart Mill, we have William James and a host of his ilk; and we have not nearly enough of Aquinas, Augustine and Aristotle Christianized. In short, we amount to no more in the United States than we would in any of the Totalitarian States simply because Jesus Christ equals no more in America than He does across the seas. Here, as there, He equals "X"; hence, you and I equal zero. And again let me say that the equating is right, but the equation is infinitely wrong. We are equated with Christ; but "X" does not equal zero!

Now all this goes against the grain. We resent it. We know an instinctive rebellion against being lost in the crowd. We want to be someone. We want to do something. It is in our very vitals. We know that we are individuals and we burn to express our individuality. "Agere sequitur esse" is the scholastic philosopher's analysis of it; and the scholastic philosopher is right. Nature will out. A duck will swim. A bird will fly. And a human individual will be an individual human. We can't help it. Nature will out. Actions partake of the essence. So, despite dictators with their disregard and practical denial of individuality; despite collectivism with its myriad groupings, assigning us to a "wage-group," an "age-group"

or some other such "group," we know that we are separate, autonomous, integral beings; we know that we are individuals endowed with our own personal, distinct individuality; we know that we equal much more than zero. Hence, we know that the world is wrong; and the world's leaders are wrong. Their equating is right; but their equation is infinitely awry.

THEIR ANSWERS ENGENDER DESPAIR

We want to be someone and to do something. But what can we be or what can we do if we equal only zero? That is the desperation bred by the false equation. We want to be more than a pair of hands, a body or a breeder. We want to do something more than destroy for a Hitler, produce for a Stalin or beget for a Mussolini. We want to build. We want to create. We want to achieve some immortality. Happiness is our ultimate goal; but we will never reach it as long as we are nobodies and can do nothing. Yet the leaders of the day say that you and I equal zero.

They are wrong. I know it, and you feel it. But what I want you to know is why they are wrong. It is not because they have made themselves great; it is because they have made themselves very small. It is not because they have exalted themselves; it is because they have degraded themselves. It is not because they have become dictators; it is because they have ceased to be men. The trouble with this triumvirate and with the vast majority of men is that they do not know Christ, and hence cannot know themselves. They cannot answer that tremendous trinity of life's interrogations. They cannot tell **whence?** nor **whither?** nor **why?** They have been and are being most consistent in their materialistic philosophy; but the trouble is that materialistic philosophy is all wrong! It does not make sense.

I have got to be philosophical as I write to you; for I want to be logical and true; but I will do my utmost to avoid the abstract and the purely metaphysical. I say that materialism makes a mess out of life. I say that it breeds ugly despair. And here are my proofs:

Stop any of those who have celebrated their thirtieth birthday and ask them what is life from a purely materialistic viewpoint; and do not be too shocked at their answers. They will tell you that life is not a mystery; that it is a mess. They will tell you that life is very long on promises, but very short on fulfillments. They will tell you that golden dawns glimmer out into gray skies and rain; that Springs are rich with fragrant blossoms but Falls are not mellow with fruit. They will tell you that life, materialistically looked at, is a promising prelude, but there is no play; that it is nothing but a brilliant overture to nothing!

But why ask others? Why not ask ourselves? Staying on the purely material plane, what has life been to us? Can we not call it a "Swindler," one who tricks and cheats with a ready flow of brilliant talk and a dazzling display of attractive samples; one who takes our order and our money, but who never delivers the goods? Is it not all empty if we look only at the material?

The sands in the hourglass of life are running through, yet countless schemes lie shattered at our feet, numberless dreams have been rudely broken, and the best of our plans are as yet unfulfilled. Down from the zenith drops the sun of our day and still our painting is only in outline, our statue is only in clay, our epic, only in the bud. We feel that we have not achieved or accomplished. We feel that we have been badly cheated. We sum up life as a succession of nights and days spent in a land of shifting shadows and perpetual mirage. Oases are always shim-

mering on distant horizons and towards them we have staggered and groped. We want water, rest and shade. And yet, at this moment, the sands still burn our feet, the sun still blazes our backs as we still stagger and grope towards distant horizons.

Lest I seem fanciful, let me turn factual. For most of us life is made up of a multiplicity of trifles. A woman cleans a house, gets a few meals, rears a few children, then dies. And the world goes on. Whether her days were agony and her nights cruel hours, sleepless with heart-break, matters not to that world. Whether she suffered and slaved and sacrificed as only mothers can slave and suffer and sacrifice makes no impression whatsoever on the vast majority of men. She came; she is gone; and the waters of life close over her wake just as if she never had been. In retrospect, her life seems utterly meaningless and excruciatingly empty.

Look at her husband's life and you will see that from a purely materialistic viewpoint it is no more meaningful. For the greater part of his day he works; the few hours off in the evening find him too tired to enjoy real rest or relaxation. And what is true of his day is true of all his years. He dies. Immediately his place is filled at work. The waters close over his wake. And the world goes on. Seemingly it matters not that he ever existed.

And the children of this couple go through the same meaningless motions of empty living. They marry, they breed, they work, they die. The waters close over their wakes and the world still goes on.

Is not that factual? And is not that maddeningly empty? That is materialistic philosophy in the concrete; the philosophy that is being lived by many in America. They don't know whence they come. They don't know why they are here. And they don't

know where they go. Hence, to the thinking materialist, life is totally meaningless.

They speak of accomplishment, and they make me laugh. I tell all such materialists to go to Gizeh. There they will see the concrete embodiment of material man's immortal accomplishments. There they can gaze upon the everlasting Pyramids and the quizzically smiling Sphinx. These are man's achievements. These things have lasted. Centuries on centuries have rolled away into the dust, but the Sphinx still smiles her quizzical smile and the Pyramids still point to the skies. Monuments of material man's immortal accomplishments. There they stand, seemingly indestructible; but will anyone tell me what in the world these things are good for? Will anyone tell me anything more useless? I can think of many useless things; but I cannot conceive of anything quite as useless as the smiling Sphinx and the proud Pyramids that stand at Gizeh!

SO WHAT?

Perhaps not so tangible, but certainly as terrible, is the proof of the emptiness of purely human accomplishment contained in the records of the professional historian. Of all the billions who have lived and loved and struggled and died, of all the billions on billions who have sweated and strained over what they meant to be undying works of genius, of all the billions on billions of billions who have labored to achieve immortality, a scant five thousand names remain. And to climax it all, the present generation reads that record with lifted eyebrows and that paralyzingly scornful question: "So what?"

"So what?" is right! If that is the only immortality that can be achieved, why strive for it? If I can't tell whence or whither or why, why go on? If I, as an individual, amount to no more than what the world's

leading individuals account me; and if I can accomplish no more than what material man has accomplished in a material way, why live?

If the waters of life are only waiting to close over my wake and the tide of Time to flow on as if I never had been, why not follow Schopenhauer? He is consistent and perfectly logical. He has forced materialistic philosophy to its final logical conclusion. Life is a struggle. He saw that. But he looked to see what would be the outcome of all this struggling; and all materialistic philosophy could do was point to Gizeh and the grave. Schopenhauer frowns at such an answer and questions, "We die. Is that the end?" Materialistic philosophy says, "That's the end." So Schopenhauer laughs his sardonic laugh and asks, "Why live?" And to this day no answer has come from materialistic philosophy. Schopenhauer recommended universal suicide; and his recommendation is perfectly sound if materialistic philosophy is right and we equal zero.

That is the despair that follows from letting Jesus Christ equal "X." I say that it is the only logical consequence; for if as an individual I amount to nothing, and if I can do nothing of more lasting and practical value than build Pyramids or the Sphinx, why should I go on? Obviously, the game is not worth the candle. Schopenhauer is right. I do not want to become a dive-bomber for some Hitler, or a breeder for some Mussolini, or a worker for some Stalin. Let the fittest survive if they want to; if Christ equals "X" and "X" equals zero, surviving holds nothing for me.

Now that is the way any individual who is more than a follower of a bellwether or a "brindle-boss" must think. To any individual who is more than a member of a herd or a flock; to any individual who will use that almost atrophied faculty we have for rationalizing; to any individual who will be

logical, the despair of Schopenhauer is the only goal that will ever be reached by staying in materialistic philosophy. Life, as I said, becomes not a mystery but a mess. Its multiplicity of trifles looks like the crazy-cuts of some jigsaw puzzle. Its pieces of pleasure and pain, accomplishment, and failure, trouble and triumph, comfort and strain, heart-break and joy seem to be without pattern or picture; hence, nothing seems to fit.

Thus the equation is worked out: If "X" = 0, you and I ought to be suicides!

So what? So let us change the equation.

IF "X" = INFINITY, YOU AND I ARE PARTLY DIVINE!

The equating is the same, but I have changed the equation by changing the value of "X." I have assigned Him the value that He claimed for Himself and the value that He proved Himself to have by a life that was more than human, a death that was obviously divine and a resurrection that stamps Him as God. What He says, then, is true; for He is Truth Incarnate. No myth. No mere man, but the Son of God, the Word Divine, Eternal Truth articulate. And He says much about you and me.

Now watch the crazy-cuts in the puzzle of life fall into place.

Jesus Christ says that the man and woman, whom we saw meant nothing to the reeling world, mean much to the God of that world. He says that the stupidity of work and wage, eat and sleep, suffer and sacrifice has meaning. He says that the inanity of obtaining and maintaining a roof over our heads, clothes on our backs and a meal for the table, is pregnant with purpose. He clearly says that life's term is not suicide but sanctity.

He points to the sparrows of the air, the lilies of the field, the hairs of our head and says that they all count with God. He tells

us that the hand that spins the world, stirs the sea and sets the stars in motion, the hand that lifts the nightfall and ladens the clouds with showers, the hand that turns spring into summer and autumn into snow, is the hand that keeps your heart and my heart beating, and the hand that will one day bring them to rest; for it is the hand that first fashioned them and gave them their steady pulse. Jesus Christ says that we **are** somebody. He says that we are the children of God.

That puts lyricism into life. That crowds romance and high adventure into dull monotony and deadening routine. That makes an harmonious symphony out of the world's ceaseless roar. That makes sense. I begin to understand myself and to understand all others when I hear from Jesus Christ that you and I are more than bone and muscle, flesh and blood, that we are very much more than idle numbers or useless pawns for some dictator to shunt about triflingly in the interests of his totalitarian state, that we belong to more than a "wage-group," an "age-group" or some other such "group." I begin to understand life when I learn that you and I **are** individuals and that we belong to God. I begin to see that if "X" = Infinity, then you and I are partly divine.

Yes, indeed, this makes sense. It answers that first tremendous question. It tells us **whence**. Not from blind fate or haphazard chance; not from some hidden process of selection or survival of the fittest; not from matter alone but from God. Christ tells me that you and I have been created. That we are breaths of God going about in bodies of clay.

That explains our ceaseless yearnings and those restless cravings of ours for more than this world can offer; that explains the hunger that gnaws and gnaws and continually gnaws, that hunger to be someone and to do some-

thing, that hunger to achieve an immortality. That explains our gropings for the infinite. Water seeks its own level; so do we. But ours is up, high up, away up beyond the stars. We are not "sod-born and sod-bent"; we are sons of God walking towards home.

Yes, that is what Christ tells us. He tells us **whence** and He tells us **whither**. He is ever talking about a "kingdom not of this world," of "mansions prepared from all eternity," Jesus Christ is ceaselessly talking about "our Father" who is in heaven.

That is the **whence** and the **whither** of life: from God and back to God. That is the only answer that explains me to myself and you to yourself. That is the only answer that makes sense. That is the only answer that gives pattern and picture to the jigsaw puzzle of human existence. For in telling us whence and whither, He also tells us **why**. Schopenhauer asked, "Why?" and for answer was shown Gizeh and the grave. We ask, "Why?" Why this awful struggle? Why this suffering, sickness and pain? Why is there failure, disappointment, disease and death? Why do hearts break and heads grow gray? "Why?" And Jesus Christ answers clearly, boldly, convincingly. He points to heaven. He says, "For God and for men." He says, "Because of sin." He gives the real reason; it is because you and I and all of us are nothing but prodigals limping along a hot, dusty, stony road that leads to our Father's house.

That makes sense and that inspires. We are prodigal sons and daughters of a patiently waiting, generous and loving God. He is looking down the road that leads Home; looking for you and me. That explains life to me. Prodigals know what it is to be weary; prodigals know what it is to be lonely, heart-sick and sore; prodigals well know what it is to stagger, stumble and fall on the road that leads Home. But a song is singing in their hearts and hope flames high; despite

their weariness, heartsickness and loneliness they are heavenly happy, because they know they are on the road that leads to LOVE!

Man has got to be explained to man; and Christ alone can do the explaining. He, and He alone, translates those urges, impulses and importunate longings to be someone and to do something that ceaselessly harry the soul of the individual. He does it by telling us **whence, whither and why.**

For you see, Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. He, and He alone, can pierce the jet blackness that enshrouds mankind. Without Him there is nothing left to the logical but despair; but with Him every gloom is golden and no horizon ever perfectly black. Unaided reason often leaves us in a twilight thick with fog; sometimes even in a dark; but to the aid of human reason comes Jesus Christ with His revelation and every darkness is illumined, every fog dispersed.

Where this Light burns fully, there is never slightest shadow. The individual knows himself for what he is, why he is, and where he is going; he knows the reason for sighs, tears and heart-breaks; he knows the reason for life. He knows why it is that his head stays high, his will does not bend, and his eyes hold fire in the face of a pessimism and despair, which, bred of materialistic philosophy and spread by its false ethics and politics, threaten to engulf the world.

He has dauntless courage, for he has invincible hope. He knows that he is somebody. He knows that he is more than animal, more than man; he knows that he is partly divine. God the Father made him; God the Son became Bethlehem's Babe, Nazareth's Boy and Calvary's Crucified Man all for him; God the Holy Ghost came down as Fire once and with grace many times since, all for him. He is triply related to the Triune God; hence, the value placed upon him by the leading trinity of the world stirs him to indignation

even as it moves him to pity. Materialism is nonsense and its followers blind and deluded fools.

But as yet we have not found the full value of "X." He is the Truth and He is the Light; and from His truth and light we have learned our dignity and our destiny. But Christ is more than Truth and Light. He Himself has said so; He said, "I am the WAY." And that is tremendously important for you and for me.

We are breaths of God going about in bodies of clay. We are prodigal children of God heading towards Home. But we were lost; and we would have remained lost had not Christ become our WAY.

It is a terrifying thing to be lost. It is life's most horror-filled fright. If you have ever seen a child who was completely lost, you have seen bewilderment incarnate; and if you have listened to that child, you have heard a broken heart. Ours is a broken-hearted, bewildered world, because ours is a world that is lost. It has wandered from the WAY. You have seen the results.

But for you and me, Christ has provided. He does not wish us to be lost again. He is the Way; He has put us on the Way; He means to keep us in the Way. He does it not by holding our hands or guiding our feet, but by being our Head. Jesus Christ does not want you or me to wander again. He is most anxious that you and I arrive Home; so He does a marvelous thing for you and me. He does more than stay at our side; He does more than carry us in His arms; He makes us part of His Body. Thus our heaven is assured, and our happiness guaranteed if we but live as we are supposed to live, if we but live as members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Now my equation is complete. If "X" = Infinity, you and I are partly divine. We are from God and for God; but we could

never get to God except by God, with God and in God. That is why Jesus Christ means life to us. He is God and He unites us to Himself, so that by Him, with Him and in Him we walk our way to Heaven and to Love. He not only tells us whence, whither and why; He very expressly tells us **how**. By Him, with Him and in Him. He is not only the Way, the Truth and the Light; He is very especially the Life. He is not only our Lord, our God, our elder Brother; He is our very Head! Hence, my equation is perfect. Christ is Infinity, and you are a member of His Mystical Body; so when I touch you, I touch divinity; when I reverence you, I worship God; when I serve you, I honor the Omnipotent.

Do you now see why I wanted you to find the value of "X"? Knowing Him, you know yourself; finding Him, you find yourself; learning of Him, you learn first that you **are** someone, then that

YOU CAN DO SOMETHING WORTH WHILE

Did you know why Calvary's Death meant man's salvation? It was not because a Man died. No! It was because a Man-God died. It was not humanity that saved humanity; it was humanity united with Divinity. Now get this concept clearly; it means everything to you and to me. A Man was nailed to a cross; that Man died on that cross and His Heart was split wide open; but all that would have meant nothing had not that Man been so united to God that He was the God-Man. To be of any worth His action had to be theandric; that is, the action belonging to the God-Man. Had not Calvary's awful suffering and Death been a theandric act, it would have been more empty and more meaningless than Gizeh's Pyramids and Sphinx. There had to be an infinity about it all; there had to be a divinity conjoined to the hu-

manity to make it valuable; it had to be theandric.

I repeat and repeat that word and explain it fully, for I want it to dominate your life. You can make, and, if you are wise, you will make, your every action theandric. Yes, I mean it, a divinely-human act, an act that has infinity and immortality about it, an act that will live long after all our suns are burnt to cinders and our weary world has spun its final spin and rolled on its side like a spun-out top. You can do it. You can make every act eternal by living as a member of the Mystical Body of Christ.

I know that most people are frightened by the very name "Mystical Body." I know that they are mystified and think it all most mysterious; hence, what I have just said about your actions will be beyond their mental grasp. It's a phobia. The doctrine of the Mystical Body is not mysterious, and the fact of your action becoming theandric is not mystifying. I think that I can clarify it all and simplify it very much if you will allow me to talk about myself for a little. I want this truth to be as tangible as fact for you; so let me talk about myself.

You may feel small and may be made to feel smaller; you may consider that all your works are worthless, thinking that you have done nothing, and can do nothing; you may consider yourself as useless in the great game of life, feeling that fate has assigned you a place on the side-lines, in the dugout and on the bench; you may feel handcuffed, hamstrung and completely shackled because of environment, lack of opportunity and dearth of abilities; you may find life a burden and living a bore as you look out on the whirling world and the teeming millions; you may even feel disheartened, discouraged and ready to despair; so I say: Look at me! Look at me and learn!

Yes, look at me! I am buried alive. Hidden from men. Exiled from life. I am walled away in a very secluded spot that is securely tucked away behind Kentucky hills. Judged by any of the usual standards of material production, social uplift or civic improvement, I am perhaps the most useless being in all creation.

The world does not know that I exist. If it does happen to know, it does not care; for I do not count. To some few I furnish a target for ridicule and a subject for abuse. By many I am laughed at and called a "lazy monk," a "do-nothing," a "drone in the human beehive," one of "humanity's idlers." Nor can you blame such people for such talk. In fact, they are most right if there is but one standard for measurement. Why, look! For almost a hundred years now men have lived and died in this monastery of mine, and what can we show to the material-minded for our almost a century of existence? They have every right to lift the eyebrows and ask, "What substantial good has come to the county, never mind the country; what material benefit has accrued to the State of Kentucky, never mind the United States, from this monastery during the past long hundred years?"

The answer, of course, is: "Nothing!" But here precisely, is where the value of "X" comes in, not only for me and my fellow-monks, but also for you. Here is where our equation makes life worth living and dreams come true. Here is where we, being on the opposite side of our mathematical seesaw, soar. For remember, If "X" = Infinity, you and I are partly divine. Now, watch!

It is absolutely true that I and my fellow-monks do nothing, are useless, and actually worthless as the world values worth. We can show practically nothing for our almost a century of existence. And yet, by one of those marvelous paradoxes of Christianity,

we, who do nothing, actually **save mankind!** We are the world's redeemers! And you can be one, too.

Do you think that an idle boast, a bit of whistling in the dark? Does that strike you as a weird fancy? Let me show you how it is actual fact.

I am incorporated in Jesus Christ, He is my Head. I am one of His members. My actions, then, are His actions; they are, therefore, divine. Being done through Him, with Him and in Him they are **theandric actions**, the actions of the God-Man. Their value, therefore, is infinite. They can and they do satisfy an outraged God for some of the sins of a very sinning and terribly sinful world. They can and they do win mercy from God for men. They can and they do save the world. For everything that I do in Gethsemani is joined to what was done on Calvary, and Calvary, you know, saved mankind. You see, Jesus Christ was the first and the great Redeemer; incorporated in Him, being a member of His Mystical Body, I am a second and a little redeemer, and so are you if you are wise.

Does not that completely change the color of the world? To you mothers, weary from the maddening round of children, house, meals and clothes; to you fathers, dulled and drooping from that killing grind of work, work and still more work; to you older brothers and sisters who have sacrificed individual lives and personal happiness that younger brothers and sisters might grow up with greater advantages; to all you who are entrapped in the fiercely tangled meshes of this sad world's stupid economics; to all you who feel small and utterly worthless, I say: Look at me! Learn of me! Learn from me! Learn the full value of "X."

Your trifles can be made of infinite value. Your worthless works can save a lost race of men. Your nothingness can please God the

Almighty. How? By living in, with and through Jesus Christ; by living up to your dignity, your destiny and your duty as members of the Mystical Body of Christ; by making your every action theandric.

I promised you optimism. I have given you some. I say lift up your minds; lift up your hearts and your heads; lift up your hands to praise, reverence and adore "X" who for you, as an individual, equals Infinity and by so doing makes you partly divine.

You have seen two equations and two sharp contrasts.

Without Christ you are nothing. You are enmeshed in the tangles of a world that knows not whence, whither or why; without Him you are tightly gripped and are being rushed along by a world that is taking giant strides towards Communism and consequent barbarism; without Him you are lost in the crowd, a madding milling crowd that knows not why it is restless nor towards what it is working; without Christ life is meaningless and human endeavor a waste of time. Let me be brutally frank. Without Jesus Christ you can only be a beast of burden, a beast for slaughter or a beast of prey. If Jesus Christ equals zero, why live?

Reverse the picture. With Christ, what a difference! You are not only great, you are godlike. With Jesus Christ you have a dignity, duty, destiny divine. With Jesus Christ you have been lifted up above the muck and mire of this sordid world and can walk with your head in the stars.

With Jesus Christ you can do something. With Jesus Christ your unimportant life and utterly inconsequential works, your completely valueless sweepings, dustings and washings, your workings and restings, your headaches and heartaches, your very breathing takes on a tinge of the infinite and can be used to win mercy for men, give glory to God and help save the world. With Jesus

Christ your every action is theandric, your life has a purpose and you have a goal. With Jesus Christ earth is but a stepping-stone to heaven. Use it.

**SINCE "X" EQUALS INFINITY, VIGIL
LIGHTS SHOULD BURN BEFORE
MARRIED PEOPLE**

Now that the foundations have been well laid, the superstructure can rise with rapidity.

Man, we know, is a social animal. He does not live alone. He cannot live alone. By a necessity of his nature he is drawn to others, and that is why we have conjugal society, then domestic and finally civil. It is the plan of the all-wise God. But even this, modern man has muddled. He seems to believe that he can have civil society without domestic; that the race can go on without procreation; that men and women can hold their respective dignities and command mutual esteem whilst making of marriage a mockery.

I am not going to take you to Russia or Germany where Christ is openly insulted and outraged in the Sacrament so near and dear to Him. I am not going to tell you of Communist and Nazist propaganda for the promotion of promiscuity, birth-prevention and companionate-marriage. You have heard and read more about these things than I, and you know that even the most conservative writers have had to label both countries "sties." Yes, the animal is in the ascendancy and will always conquer when Christ is an unknown quantity. And that tells you why we have our American Gretna Greens, seven hundred thousand abortions reported annually, Reno, divorce-courts and an estimated sale of over a million contraceptive devices weekly.

I could cry. I could say, "I wish Christ could equal zero," for then He would not be

so outraged by modern men and women. But he cannot equal zero. He is the Head of the human race, and that is why these things hurt so much. Oh, if men would only work out the equation rightly and see that Christ equals Infinity, then they would see why I say that vigil lights should burn before married people. They would see that married couples are sacred sanctuaries, that God is more intimately present to them than He is to any of His other natural works and wonders.

Come. Let us look at life with wide-open eyes. We have found the true value of the individual by letting "X" equal Infinity; let us do the same for married couples. Let us peer into that special sanctuary of God Almighty, the sanctuary built by love, consisting of two human hearts, the heart of a man and the heart of a maid. Let us look at the home of holiness.

I say vigil lights should burn before husband and wife because the Holy Trinity works in them as It does in no other work of nature. God the Father creates, God the Son incarnates, and God the Holy Ghost can inflame and sanctify; for marriage is God's special workshop.

Moderns who are materialistic will not understand me. They think that marriage belongs to man; they have never known that it is God's particular sanctuary. They think that love means "a craving to possess"; they have never known that it only means "give." In fact, they have never known love at all; they have only known love's counterfeit — lust.

Love is a sacred word. It does not belong to earth. It came from heaven. Strictly speaking, love can be predicated only of God, for it means "give," and He alone can give since He alone truly possesses. That is why true lovers are godlike and openly manifest the divine; they give.

Love gives. You will pardon my pounding the obvious, but I must; for the obvious has become obscure. When I say "Love gives," I am saying nothing deeper or more original than were I to say, "Fire burns" or "Water is wet." But how many moderns know it? For decades now, if we are to judge from literature and life, love has meant "get." And that is why modern men and women are so unmanly and unwomanly; that is why humans are so unhuman; that is why many married couples are not like God.

You may never have studied Theology, but you know as well as any theologian that God gives and that God is Love. I have always admired the theologian and the artist in St. John the Evangelist. And I think that he touched the heights of art and theology when he described God. He was looking for something adequate and apt. He coursed through God's attributes. He thought of His omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence; but he shook his head. He thought of God's infinity, simplicity and eternity; but still he shook his head. He thought of God's wisdom, knowledge and sanctity, of His mercy, justice and fidelity; and yet, his pen never sought paper; neither the theologian nor the artist was satisfied. He wanted something simple, but something beautiful and true. He finally found it and with zest he energetically wrote, "God is Love!"

Yes, God is Love, and that is why we have life, both natural and supernatural; for Love gives. God is Love, and that is why we have life's sustenance, both natural and supernatural; for Love gives. The sun, the earth, the air and the rain produce for us. The Bread, the Wine, the Oil and the Water produce in us; so we live by God and in God and for God. Love gives. That is why I say Creation is Love's overflow; the Incarnation is Love's downflow; and Redemption is Love's inflow. I use the present because Creation

still goes on, the Incarnation is prolonged and Redemption is now being worked out. God, you see, is the Eternal NOW, and His actions partake of His nature. Hence, God is always giving; for God is Eternal Love!

But God knew most of us to be poor metaphysicians, so He gave us a Model. Man was badly muddled, so God the Son became "Love Incarnate." He came to show us how to live and He did so by showing us how to love. That is why we have an ox and an ass breathing over a Baby in straw; that is why we have the Village Carpenter sweating amidst His sawdust and His shavings; that is why the Wonder-worker sat weary at the well; and finally, that is why the grass of Gethsemane was one night crimsoned and the heights of Calvary the following day incarnadined. Love gives. "God so loved the world that He GAVE His only-begotten Son." And with St. Paul we say of Christ, "He loved me, and He GAVE Himself up for me."

That is the lesson that God and the God-Man teach. They say that the art of living consists in the art of giving; for the art of giving is the perfection of the art of love. Now, you and I are sons of God, but "Like Father, like sons" will never be said of you and me unless we live like God, love like God and give like God.

Which brings me to Marriage; for that is the **Sacrament of giving**. Marriage is very dear to Christ; to the Mystical as well as the Physical Jesus. I see special significance in the fact that He worked His first miracle at a wedding-feast; for in marriage life begins. I see very special significance in the fact that He spoke so many parables about wedding-feasts, wedding-guests and wedding-garments, and that He was so often heard to speak of brides and the bridegroom. Can you not see special significance in the fact that His Church is called His Bride and His union with a soul, nuptials? It could not

be otherwise; for marriage speaks of life, union and fecundity, and Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Life Itself, wedded to humanity that all men might live and have life more abundantly. Yes, Christ and Marriage are perfectly analogous. He made Marriage a Sacrament and He still makes many marriages sacred. Dear to the Physical Christ, Marriage is specially dear to the Mystical Christ, for through it He prolongs His Incarnation by having His Mystical members multiply and His Mystical Body grow.

Do you begin to see why vigil lights should burn before married people? — Love is sacred. Marriage is a Sacrament. Lovers are very like God.

But for most people the sanctity and the sacredness of the Sacrament seem to end when the organist plays the recessional and the married pair march from the church. They never seem to grasp the fact that this Sacrament is not administered by God's priest. He is only an official witness. The ministers of this Sacrament are the man and the maid who give themselves to one another until death. How few of them realize that the sanctity and the sacredness of this Sacrament last as long as life! There is a permanency about Matrimony similar to that about Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders. Not exactly the same, but very similar. It is a contract that cannot be broken until the body and soul of one of the contracting parties are separated. It is a contract so sacred that it should be made only in the sanctuary, and end only when the God of that sanctuary calls one of the parties home.

Marriage is so sacred that I almost tremble to write about it. There is no duality about Matrimony. Never. In its every phase and aspect it manifests a trinity and the Trinity. Man and maid make a vow before God, under God, to God and, in a very certain sense, for God. So it is man and maid and God;

then husband and wife and God; and finally, mother and father and God.

At the marriage ceremony it is not difficult to discern more than man and maid and priest. I can see clearly the Father who is substantial Love, the Son who is incarnate Love, and the Holy Ghost who is the Spirit of Love.

And when man and maid become husband and wife, then vigil lights should brightly burn; for there are present, not only the two who become one, but the Three who are One. The Father who is the Creator is more intimately present in this hallowed embrace than He is anywhere else in the purely natural order. He is here ready to create again, to cooperate with His co-creators, to breathe again the breath of life into another and a new being. And God the Son is particularly present, for there can be here another incarnation of a breath of God; here another member of His Mystical Body can be brought forth; this can be another Bethlehem where another redeemer of men is born; here another Christian, another Christ can be conceived. And that is why the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Love, hovers over the married pair; for without Him no Christ has ever been conceived. He overshadowed Mary, and the Physical Christ knew being. He overshadowed the Apostles, and the Mystical Christ was born. He must overshadow husband and wife as another Christ takes flesh. Do you not see, then, that a bridal chamber is the special sanctuary of the Omnipotent, the particular workshop of the Triune God? No wonder that I order vigil lights for it! And tell me, would it not be sacrilege to do anything wrong in such sacred surroundings, surroundings that are permeated with the presence of the God One and Three?

Once you have found the value of "X," once you have learned that Christ equals Infinity and that you are partly divine, once

you have firmly grasped the fact that you and Jesus are not two, but one, then the intimacy of the Divine Trinity in Marriage and in the marriage act is recognized as a sacred actuality. Father, Son and Holy Ghost are in you, beside you and above you; and, responsibility of all responsibilities, God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost **depend on you!** Frightening, isn't it? And yet, thrilling! The Omnipotent God depends upon you! Without your faithful cooperation He cannot people His heaven. Without your faithful cooperation He cannot make His Mystical Body grow. Without your faithful cooperation He cannot sanctify the race of men.

Often have I heard pleas for purity, chastity and the recognition of the sanctity of marriage based on the dependence of the city, state and nation upon the married pairs. Often have I heard entreaties for decency, dignity and dutifulness addressed to married couples because upon them depended the future of the human race. Both addresses are true. Mankind does depend upon fruitful marriages. National, State and Civic Society are all dependent upon domestic and conjugal society. Ah, but the plea of pleas to husband and wife for snow-white purity, flame-red generosity and sapphire-blue fidelity is found in the fact that upon them depend God the Father for continuing His Creation, God the Son for prolonging His Incarnation, and God the Holy Ghost for widening the sphere of His sanctification.

Yes, indeed. Give me vigil lights for married people. They are the sanctuaries and the sacred workshops of God Omnipotent.

Do I have to draw the practical conclusions? Do you not see them? — Self-control, never birth-control. Complete abandonment when everything is right; absolute repression and utter restraint when the least little thing is wrong. The legitimate never refused; the illegitimate never requested. Soft as velvet

when God's ways and God's works are being done; unyielding as steel if not. SELFLESSNESS is the one word; for "love" means "give," not "get" and marriage belongs to God even more than it does to man.

Moderns are selfish; that is why their marriages are mockeries of God and man.

To selflessness add a mutual reverence and a holy respect. The reason? — God dwells in one and in the other. Jesus Christ is the Head of you both. Each is a member of that very sacred Mystical Body. Christ has united you to Himself and He has made your union with one another His Sacrament. From your union He awaits that cooperation necessary for the prolongation of His Incarnation and the increase of His holy Church.

Make the practical conclusions triune by adding to selflessness and mutual reverence that which really makes the three, one. Develop in yourselves the cognizance and the consciousness of the special presence of God in Matrimony and in Matrimony's act. Remember how intimate God is in love's embrace. Remember that He is present, ready to act more intimately and more immediately than in any other wondrous work of His truly wondrous natural world. Remember that He awaits your perfect cooperation so that He can breathe forth a new life, another image of Himself. Remember these truths and sanctity, not sin, will be love's fruition.

Do you see where moderns are muddled? They take no cognizance of God's ways, God's works, God's presence. There is ecstasy and rapture in marriage. There is intoxicating pleasure and heady thrill. God wants them there. God put them there. He put them there for you and for Himself. He knew that in asking you to cooperate with Him in carrying on the human race, He was asking of you sacrifice heroic. He was asking the mother to face death. He was asking the father to face a life of perpetual responsibil-

ity. So before He burdened you, He would reward you. It is usually His way. He wants you to enjoy that reward. But right here is where moderns are most muddled. They take all the pleasure and dodge the pain. They greedily grasp all that God holds out to them in His wide-open arms; but they return to Him empty-handed. That is tragic. That is sin. That is race suicide. That means death eternal.

Tragedy, eternal tragedy; tragedy for self, tragedy for society and, in a certain sense, tragedy for God is written large by moderns, just because they will not take the practical trinity of selflessness, mutual reverence and consciousness of God's special presence into their lives and make of marriage a little bit of heaven.

But now that you have worked out the equation with me, now that you have found the value of "X," you know why vigil lights should burn in bridal chambers and why marriage is so preeminently sacred.

Make this unity out of the trinity that I have given you: I have spoken of self, of Christ and of God; but you know that Christ is God and that you are parts of the Mystical Christ; so everything is founded in Jesus. He dominates, penetrates, permeates marriage. He is in husband, wife and child. He made Matrimony a Sacrament, and He wants you to make of its every act a sacramental. Yes, everything about marriage can bring you more grace; and grace, you know, makes you more like God. That is why vigil lights should burn, and that is why there is a holy hush in every rightly sung lullaby; not because baby is sleeping, but because baby is sacred. Every child is but a broken syllable of the Word Divine; every child is meant to be a prolongation of Jesus Christ.

Need I say more? Can any two who have found the value of "X" dare look on Matrimony for mutual gratification? Can any such

two fail to see that marriage is for mutual sanctification, mutual divinization, mutual making one another like unto God? Can any such two fail to tell their friends all about it?

What a renovation and immediate restoration takes place when married people learn that they are sacred. Love regains its proper meaning, speaking of God and "give," not "get"; and lust is recognized for what it is — sin! With this as an opening wedge, the whole horror that modern man has made is split asunder and the awful inner rottenness of all his words and ways laid bare. Divorce is seen in its true colors. It is recognized as a disgusting betrayal of one's sworn word, an open admission of one's defeat by lower nature; a sad acknowledgment that he or she is not man or woman, but only an animal, a thrill-questing body. Divorce is an open profession that the individual has not intelligence enough to recognize truth, nor will enough to be faithful to self, society and God. Divorce is nothing but a public confession of dry-rot in the soul.

Let lovers learn that they are sacred; let Jesus Christ assume His proper place in marriage, and the unity and indissolubility of this Sacrament changes the face of our land. Divorce-courts are closed, for divorce-laws are struck from the statutes. Reno becomes a city instead of a center for animal exchange. And our nation becomes civilized, dignified and strong.

Find the full value of "X" for American married couples and our frightful statistics on race suicide are blotted out. Think of it! 700,000 abortions annually in this land of ours that prides itself on its humanity, progress and respect for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Think of this: sixty out of every hundred marriages in our country are childless, and of the remaining forty, only ten have more than two children. Animals never live like that! And humanity

cannot go on living like that. Ten per cent cannot carry the load!

I do not mean to shout, but I do plead and pray: Find the value of "X"! Let educators bend to their task. It is not to banish illiteracy; it is to banish immorality! And that can never be done by teaching youth it is nothing but a conglomeration of atoms; that can never be done by a Psychology that denies soul, free-will and consequent responsibility. That can never be done by a Biology that teaches hypothesis as proved fact, and mere theory as absolute truth. That can never be done by a Sociology that preaches promiscuity, the legitimacy of pre-marital relations, companionate-marriage and free-love. That can never be done but by bringing Jesus Christ into the classroom and teaching Him fully; for He is the Way, the Truth and the Life!

They tell me that the flair for Freudian Psychology is ended. Good! But what of the modes of thought and the conduct consequent to a knowledge of his foul principles; have they ended, too? They tell me that there is less and less talk about trial-marriage, free-love and biological urges. Again I say, "Good!" But have the practices of the same ceased with the preachments? They tell me that the League for the Promotion of Birth Control is less militant than it was in former years. Very good. BUT — birth-prevention grows! So I say, WATCH OUT! When the fuse has ceased to sputter an explosion is near.

That is just about how I feel concerning civilization. For decades now the spark has sputtered along the fuse. The physical and the sexual side of men and women has been bas-relieved for everybody in school and out of school. The stage, screen and radio played it up; the newspaper, magazine and tabloid reeked with it; even the street-car and highway advertised it. Smart, but not very wise

or learned professors made the headlines by lecturing on it; and some writers made a fortune scribbling about it. The material side of the universe is the only side that the vast majority of men looks at; and that is the result of their education and environment. I think that the fuse is just about burned out. It is having its last final flarings across the waters. An explosion, a cataclysm for civilization is imminent, unless mankind finds the full value of "X."

LET US FIND THE VALUE OF "X" FOR SOCIETY

Professedly, I have always refrained from writing for the world, the nation or society at large. Life is too short for me to be wrestling with "straw men"; and the Trappist life is altogether too sacred and too crowded for me to waste a single moment. Furthermore, I have too much respect for myself and my readers to spin out loud-sounding glittering generalities.

Reading my last few pages, you might suspect that, for once, I had departed from my usual intimate, direct and personal manner of address. But know well that my reasons are personal, direct and intimate. I am writing of **your** environment. I am telling you the atmosphere in which **you** live. For I know that atmosphere and environment affect every living being, even **you!**

You have a free-will, and it is a tremendously strong faculty; with God's grace it can become absolutely inflexible. But know well that it can be influenced, often bent and sometimes broken by the pressure of atmosphere and environment.

That was my reason for my apparent departure; but now I make a real departure. I am going to talk about the nation and society at large; and yet, it is not a departure; for I am going to go on talking about you. I have found the value of "X" for you as an

individual. I have found the value of "X" for you as a member of conjugal society. I would be inadequate and incomplete if I did not find the value of "X" for you as a member of civil society, a citizen of these United States and of the world. So you see that when I talk about the nation and society at large I am talking about **you**.

I am going to be brief, pointed, and, I hope, very clear. I am going to touch, only touch, politics, ethics, economics and education. Then I am going to end where I began: with you as an individual, looking for life and love. But before I plunge I want to say:

THIS IS PIETY THAT IS PRACTICAL!

I know that many will look upon the solution I offer and the prescription I write as so much "piety." They are right. Could anything else be expected, or could anything else be published from a Trappist Monastery? It is piety that I preach; but piety in its root meaning: a filial reverence for God, self and neighbor. And that makes it the only practical solution.

We have had impiety long enough. Look at the results. We have worshiped and idolized humanity as humanity and find now that its cult leads only to irreverence, irreligion and the dehumanizing of the human. Let us become practical again. Let us become truly pious. Let us take humanity, not as it is in itself, but as it is when assumed by the Word, and then let us worship Divinity in humanity. It is highly impractical and absolutely purposeless to talk of the human family, unless we make that talk pious by remembering the Father of that family. It is utterly stupid to talk about the solidarity of the human race, unless we recognize the One who unifies the world's billions and gives the race its solidarity. It is arrant nonsense to tell any man to have respect and reverence for every other man,

unless you show him what is worthy of respect and reverence in those other men, unless you show him Jesus Christ, the Head of the whole Mystical Body.

Yes, it is piety that I present, and it takes faith to accept it. But let no man say anything about "blind" faith; for with the years I have come to see that Faith is wide-eyed and keenly intelligent, while only the unbelievers are dull-witted and blind. It takes a **mind** to believe. A will is necessary, of course; but much more, a mind, a mind sharp enough to pierce surfaces and semblances and get down to realities; a mind that is persistently and consistently logical; a mind that knows that when the velvet voice of a silver-toned tenor comes out of the mahogany face of a radio receiving-set, there must be a silver-toned tenor singing in some broadcasting studio; a mind that knows that since there is moonlight there must be a sun; that when there is shadow, there must be light; that when there is smoke, there must be a fire. It is only a mind that is as doggedly logical as that that is capable of deep belief. A mind that goes from effect to cause steadily; a mind that recognizes relations because it looks fixedly at the Absolute. That is the kind of mind that believes. A mind that sees the necessity for the continuation of creation, since it sees something of the nature of God; a mind that sees the necessity for a Mystical Body, since there was a Physical one; the necessity for the incorporation of all in Christ, since there was a recapitulation of all by Christ. You see, Faith is only for the simple and the profound; shallow minds and skin-deep hearts have not the depth to contain it.

So to moderns I say: Be faithful! Be pious! And if that has too foreign a ring, then let me beg you to have **respect for yourself!** Realize what you are — a breath of God enclosed in a vessel of clay. Respect the divinity in your humanity, and respect the

divinity in the rest of mankind. God made you, God redeemed you. God adopted you. God incorporated you. God holds you in the hollow of His hand. God gives beat to your heart and breath to your lungs. God gave you life. God keeps you living. God is IN you! So respect and reverence yourself — not because you are flesh and blood, but because you are body and soul; not because you are human, but because you are partly divine; not because you are a man of the world, but because you are a child of eternity; not because you are a member of the great human race, but because you are a member of the wondrous Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.

With that as prelude, let me start on **Politics** and **Economics** by saying:

ROOSEVELT WAS ALMOST RIGHT

Very early in his first term, Roosevelt made us mindful of the “forgotten man” and introduced us to his National Recovery Act. He was almost right. Almost. He missed perfection and complete success because instead of the “forgotten man” he should have made us discover “The Man That Nobody Knows”; and his National Recovery Act should have been ethical rather than economical. Had he made us conscious of Christ; had he made us find the value of “X”; had he made us all realize that we are members of divinity rather than of humanity, he would have written a National Recovery Act that would have brought **recovery** and an Act that no five to four decision could declare unconstitutional.

I give you an “**N. and I. R. A.**” a national and an international recovery act. You want international amity, don’t you; you want national reconstruction and social regeneration, don’t you? I give you all three in my “**N. and I. R. A.**” It calls for the national and international revaluation of all existing

values, basing everything on the value of "X." This act will not regulate the scale of wages and the hours of work; but it will detail the amount of our worship and the extent of our reverence. It will not set prices and control production; but it will put the proper price on glory, both here and hereafter, and lead to the mass-production of eternal merits by the masses. Its standard will not be the Blue Eagle, whose wings were so soon clipped; its standard will be the Standard of the Cross, the only Standard that has never and can never know defeat; because it is the Standard of Him who conquered the world, Satan and death.

Yes, and it is an International Recovery Act. We all want world readjustment and we all know that we must have international union. We can have it if the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ is known, accepted, loved and lived. Mankind wants to unite. It is a necessity of our nature. Just as man cannot live alone but must seek society, so the nations can no longer remain isolated and aloof, they must seek a unification and a consolidation. The innate tendency is most manifest in this our day and age. Bolshevism, Fascism, Nazism are only very false externalizations of a very true tendency. The movement itself is right; but the auspices are all wrong. We cannot have dictators; we can have only one Dictator, Him who said, "Come, follow Me. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." The International Recovery Act is not to be found in Communism; that is destructive. It can be found only in the Creator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

My "N. and I. R. A." is the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ. It means world peace, for He is the Prince of Peace.

Now do not miss my point. YOU have got to accept and live this "N. and I. R. A." for you are a constituent part of national and

international society. Nations are made up of individuals, and hence, the program for the nation is the program for the individual. The United States is not some entity outside you and me and the rest of us. No. We are the United States. And if the United States is to have a readjustment, a national recovery, a nation-wide revaluation of all existing values on the basis of the value of "X," YOU and I must do the revaluing.

Never forget that the world is made up of individuals; hence, if there is to be a world-wide reformation, it will have to be the reformation of the individual. Salvation is not from without. It is entirely from within. It is Jesus Christ loved and lived that means national and international recovery. He, and He alone, spells the regeneration and the exaltation of the world.

BALANCING MORE THAN THE BUDGET

The Physical Christ, you know, was the world's greatest bridge-builder. He was the unique Pontifex. He was the only One who could, and He was the One who did, throw a span across the infinite chasm that yawned between God and man. The Mystical Christ is as great a Wonder-worker. He bridges all gorges, balances all that is unbalanced and establishes perfect equilibrium.

Do I need to point out to you all the wonders that would be worked if all men knew the full value of "X"? Do you not see the harmony that would be immediately established between Capital and Labor, Proletariat and Bourgeoisie, between the governing and the governed, if each could see in each Jesus Christ?

It is no matter for profound study. It does not call for deep research and penetrating reflection. No. The consequences leap at you. Justice rules the world again when "X" is properly valued. Equity brings amity and amity brings peace. The worker

gets not only a living wage and a share in the profits; he gets a share in the company. A Corporation is formed, not of the Board of Directors, the men who furnish the money; but of the Board of Directors and the Workers, the men who make the money. We have our federation of labor; what we need is a confederation of capital and labor. When Capital can see in Labor the Carpenter of Nazareth and the Worker of Galilee, and Labor can see in Capital the image of the ever provident God, then the two hands of the one body will work together for the good of the whole.

The same holds true for government. Let Christ live in the governing and the pans of the balance, as they now stand, will be completely reversed. Instead of a swarm of politicians and no statesmen, we shall have statesmen and no politicians. The difference, you know, is this: a statesman is one who looks to the next generation; a politician looks only to the next election. Let Christ enter the governing and every measure introduced will be weighed and looked at to see what good it will do the people and not to see what good it will do the politician. Let Christ enter the governing and not only will the seven capital sins be held in check, but the eighth will be completely abolished. When Christ enters, GRAFT will exit. Yes, let Christ enter the governing and history will never again tell of repudiated debts, treaties looked upon as scraps of paper, and promises made only to be broken.

But more important than the effect on the governing will be the effect on the governed. Let Christ enter, and AUTHORITY comes back to life again. How we need it! Our saintly Pius XI, of blessed memory, when instituting the feast of Christ the King, saw fit to say, "They have driven Jesus Christ out of laws and public affairs. Authority suddenly appears to be something derived not from God but from man and consequent-

ly, its foundations totter. Forgotten the First Cause, there is no reason why one should command and the other obey. From this error indeed come those widespread disturbances in society when it rests no longer on its natural foundation."

Yes, we need Christ, for we need authority. We have much despotism, anarchy and very much tyranny today, but very little real authority. Russia, Italy, Germany have a unity, it is true; but it is not true unity, it is not a unity of the multiplicity. And that is why, strictly speaking, they cannot be called societies, nor can Stalin, Hitler or Mussolini be said to have real authority. Oh, they command and others obey, it is true; but that does not constitute true authority. No! Authority comes from God. You know, a hold-up man with a gun can command me, and I'll obey; but that does not prove that he has real authority. Modern dictators are the hold-up men of the modern world. They have the guns; their victims obey; but that is not real authority. They have the might but not the right. They win submission but not obedience; and their victims are slaves, not citizens.

But why talk? What the whole world needs is RELIGION. And that means Jesus Christ, for He is Religion Incarnate. He is the One who binds us to God; and that is what religion means: a binding to God. How we need it! For without religion there is no true morality; without true morality there can be no real authority; without real authority there can be no law and order; and without law and order there will be social suicide. That is the imminent danger of the day. Separate the soul from the body and you have a corpse. Separate religion from civil society and you must prepare for the burial of civilization.

If we find that our civilization is dying, we need no expert diagnostician to name the

cause. Christ said, "I am the LIFE." There is your disease. Christ equals zero, and so we die. Look! Morality is the lifeblood of the whole social body, and religion is the heart. Circulation stops when the heart ceases to beat; and the heart is at a standstill when Jesus Christ equals "X," the unknown quantity. If we would live, find the value of "X"!

THE WATCH AND WARD SOCIETY IS WRONG

I have touched education as I rapidly wrote these paragraphs, for in education lies salvation. Bismarck said: "If you want a thing in the nation, get it into the schools." He was right. Even the devil can tell the truth occasionally. But, as I said, we must educate not to eliminate illiteracy, but to eliminate immorality.

Let me now return to that subject and say that we must have true education, a development of the whole man; hence it is not the head, nor the heart, so much as the conscience that must be educated. If that sounds like a strange concept, let me tell you that to date we have developed only the memories of most of our students, for we give information rather than formation; we give facts and facts and more facts, forgetting all the time about acts. A graduate from any of our public high schools can tell you much about Physics, Biology, Chemistry and even a little about Astronomy. Some of the specially apt and interested students can name every bone in the body and give a talk on Anatomy that astounds. But ask one question about the soul; ask one question about the conscience; ask one question about morality, and there is silence!

Do you see my point? We have taught our pupils that they have bodies but have not told them about their souls; we have proved that they are animals, but we have never

proved to them that they are **responsible** animals. And that is our greatest mistake!

I have to smile when a Watch and Ward Society, or some such organization, stirs up the police of a city and has them close the houses of ill-repute, smash gambling-dens, and raid various sections of the city in what they call a "clean-up campaign." I have to smile, but it is a smile of pity rather than of amusement. These people are locking the barn-door **after** the horse has been stolen! It is not the people of ill-fame that the Watch and Ward Society should pursue and prosecute; it is the people of very fair repute; the Superintendent of Schools, the members of the School Committee, the headmasters, submasters and the teachers! It is not the "red-light district" that needs to be raided; it is the little red schoolhouse of the district. Public enemy number one is not the gangster, the gambler or the grafter. No. Public enemy number one is, has been, and, until we find the full value of "X" will be — the Educator!

A godless education is hardly calculated to graduate a class of saints. And yet, sanctity is the one end of man's existence. Nor can universal godless education ever produce a God-fearing, let alone a God-loving, people. And yet, people who neither fear nor love God have never been known to love and respect their fellow-man. That is why we had to coin that nice-sounding but terrible-meaning term "the socially unfit." They were bred in our schools, never forget it! We have axioms in our language about "the child of today being the citizen of tomorrow" and "the boy being the father to the man" and yet we expect respectable and respectful citizens from boys and girls who have never been taught the fundamentals of respect!

Look at our schools! We teach every 'ology' but one; yet on that one every other

'ology' is ultimately based, and without that one every other is like a ship without a rudder or a kite without a tail. They are dangerous. Sociology without Theology is like a man without a mind. He can function, but not as a rational being; so too Sociology, it can investigate evils, apply remedies and give temporary relief; but it cannot effect a permanent cure. Sociology without Christ is like Psychology without a soul and Logic without a mind. It is a shell without the kernel, the rind without the pulp, the cover without the book.

I select Sociology, for that seems to be the crown of all our other 'ologies.' For some years now, educators have been more and more conscious of the social organism and have rightly looked to the welfare of the individual through the proper action of that organism. In a certain sense they have made the end of education the same as that of Sociology, namely, the material and intellectual well-being of each and all as members of society. They, as educators and sociologists, have been pointing to social regeneration. The aim is good. They have their eye on the heart of the target. Their hands are steady. But they will not even hit the target; for their guns are empty! Why, look! This thing has been going on for years; yet we grow socially worse! Why? — Because educators and sociologists know not the value of "X." Social regeneration is nothing more than the introduction of Christian virtues into society. I say "introduction," for if I said "restoration" I would lie. You cannot restore what has never been possessed.

But lest I be barking up the wrong tree, let me remind you that sociology and education, like charity, begin at HOME!

Mother's knee is the first and the most important schoolroom, and father's example the lectures and the lessons best retained.

I say this because I know that when I talk of Education you dissociate it from yourself and conjure up some non-existing entity — the Educational System — and think that I am talking about and to it. Just as when I talk of the State you never seem to realize that I am talking about YOU. You are the State, and, to an extent, you are the Educational System. So you see I have not wandered from my original proposition: If the world is to be saved, **you** must do the saving! And the only way that you can do that is by finding the full value of "X." Yes, it is an individual proposition and a proposition for individuals.

It's YOU! YOU! YOU!

You ask me what is wrong with the world, and I say: YOU. You ask me what is wrong with Government, and I say: YOU. You ask me what is wrong with Society, and again I say: YOU. You ask me what is wrong with people, and I say: The home. And when you ask me what is wrong with the home, I say: YOU!

That may sound like a merciless condemnation, but you have admitted that the world is shaking. Economics are a mess. Politics are worse. The social world is filthy. The domestic world as bad. That is your summation. But I say that you omitted the last step in your graduation. There is one more category. How about the individual? You know that conjugal society is made up of two individuals; domestic society of only a few more; civil society is only an increase of numbers; and what is national or international society but a union of a multiplicity of individuals? That is why the individual is the prime concern. When a whole building shakes, don't look at the towers and the top-stories; look at the foundation. When the world is all out of joint, see if the individual is straight.

I can paint a pretty picture for you of all that Jesus Christ, known, loved and lived, would mean to mankind. But my picture will lack proportion and perspective if I do not have the individual as its very center. Here is the picture: Christ alone bases society on rock by showing its origin and its end. He alone teaches that society is from God and for man. Hence to undermine it, to render null its purpose and mission, is to resist the ordinance of God and to harm self. He alone lays supreme stress on obedience to authority, insisting on law and order, without which society cannot be. He alone obliges men in conscience, teaching that to disobey the law is to sin against God. He thus gives a lesson in fundamental morality, which is the mortar which holds together the whole social structure.

But Christ goes deeper than this. He, and He alone, teaches the sanctity and the indissolubility of marriage, setting all His force in opposition to that plague of divorce, so ruinous of the family, the fundamental unit of the whole social organism.

And as yet He has not finished. No. He goes deeper still. He teaches imperiously those principles of moral righteousness that are to rule the individual. He insists that the individual repress passion and restrain self-interest, those two fatal foes to the social body. But He is not merely negative. In fact, when fully analyzed, He is found to be always positive; for He holds out to the individual as the final outcome of earth's struggles the inspiring doctrine of hope in another life; which alone can dispel despair and all the ferocious thoughts and acts to which despair gives birth.

So you see my pretty picture ends with the individual, for there is where Christ really begins. Find the full value of "X" for the individual and you have saved the world. So let us have done with talk about

international, national, civic and even conjugal society; let us have done with talk about Sociology, Education and Morality; let us have done with talk about muddled modern man and let us talk about YOU. It is you who wants the cure. It is you who longs for the solution. It is you who interests me.

To YOU I say: Find the full value of "X," and that means: Drop your buckets into the sea. Yes, it is as simple and as sublime as all that. The cure for all your troubles is all around you; is at your very elbow; more! is actually within you. You do not have to drop your buckets into an immense sea. Drop them into Immensity! Try Jesus Christ. Know that He does not equal zero; He equals Infinity.

All this calls for the use of a faculty that is little used. All this demands the use of the almost atrophied intellect. All this means that you must act as so few do act, as a rational animal.

I know you are willing to make the effort, but I must tell you that your environment is much against you; for with nice sounding synonyms and rather flattering euphemisms the radio, press and platform insist that you are nothing but animal. Look at or listen to the high-pressured, national campaign of advertising; it pictures and preaches nothing but the body, the body, the body. Listening and looking, you would think that man was only a body. All you see or hear is how to clothe it, how to feed it, how to keep it warm, clean or healthy. How often do you see or hear anything about the soul? And yet, it is the soul that is paramount. We must feed and clothe and clean the body; but it is much more important that we do not starve, strip or sully the soul. Animals we are, and animals we shall ever be; for God made us such; but we can be, and we should be, rational animals.

BE RATIONAL!

My closing words are "Be rational!" I had almost used the slang phrase, "BE yourself!" for that is exactly what I mean. Be your real self. And what is that? — A breath of God going about in a vessel of clay. An image of the Infinite walking the earth. A masterpiece of Omnipotence that has been partly defaced, first by original sin, then by actual sin; but a masterpiece that can be retouched and restored by the pigments left us by the Artist-Divine who painted His masterpiece in blood-red and died while doing it. Be yourself! your real self, not only an animal but a rational animal; not only human but partly divine; not only a member of mankind but a member of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Live up to your dignity and you shall achieve your destiny. You were made to become like unto God. Life has no other meaning. But God is accessible only through the Humanity of Jesus Christ. Hence, all life consists in clinging close to the God-Man. You know where He is found: in the Eucharist and in your neighbor.

You crave life. I say: Develop it! Develop it by the frequent reception of Holy Communion and by a heart-deep affection for your fellow man; an affection that is not sterile sentiment, but a real love that gives birth to act; a love that is theologically known as "Charity" and ascetically called "Zeal for souls"; a love that is made manifest, not in words, but in works, works that are technically known as the "Works of Mercy."

The prescription that I have written for you can be aptly translated in one word. I have said: Find the value of "X," and you have found that "X" equals Infinity. Let me change that word into a more welcome one and one that is equally true, "X" = LOVE!

That is what you need. That is what the world needs. Our age talks glibly, but quite wrongly, about love. I say wrongly, because to our age Love = X. And if anyone doubt it, let him account for the lives around us that go crashing down into pitiable ruins, lives that had been founded on the shifting sands of lust, though the builders called it love. If anyone doubt it, let him account for the nations that have broken out into a burning, devouring hate. If anyone doubt it, let him account for the fact that civilization is corroding and steadily slipping back into barbarism. If there is anyone who doubts that our age is ignorant of love, let him account for whole countries making marriage a mockery, ridiculing restraint, teaching youth to give heed to all its passions, indulging in all forms of unnatural lusts and calling the whole frenzied mess — love.

We Want LOVE!

Indeed, we need a rebirth of love. But we never shall have it, for we never can have it, until Jesus Christ, the greatest Lover of all times, takes His rightful place as the center of all hearts and becomes the one inspiration and the one aspiration of all men.

What you want and what I want and what the whole world wants is love. We were made out of love by Love Itself; we were redeemed by Love Incarnate; we are destined for Love Eternal. Hence, the mystery of life is the mystery of love. But the mystery has ceased to be a mystery. It was solved twenty centuries ago when a Babe was born and laid on straw, then grew to be the Man who was laid on wood. The mystery ceased to be a mystery when it became the Mystical Body; that was when our Head was crowned with thorns and fell in death, but rose again, glorious and immortal, to join you and me and all the world to Himself in love.

Love, you know, means happiness. And were I to ask you how to insure your happiness in the hereafter, you would promptly reply, "By loving God. By keeping the Ten Commandments, and the Six Precepts; by frequenting the two Sacraments and the one Sacrifice; by performing the works of mercy, the seven corporal and the seven spiritual. By following Christ." Let me shock you into sensibility by telling you that that is the answer to the question, "How can I be happy here?" Let me tell you that happiness, here and hereafter, is purchased by clinging close to Jesus Christ.

A member disjoined from the head does not live. A branch broken from the vine withers and dies. A human being not incorporated in Christ Jesus, a human being whose veins do not run red with Blood Divine, whose heart does not pulse with the Sacred Heart, whose soul does not breathe in union with the Incarnate Word is DEAD!

If you want life and happiness and love, both here and hereafter — LIVE THE VALUE OF "X"! LIVE JESUS CHRIST!



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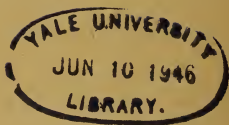
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