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Schuyler, Joseph B.
"Indeed... the Son..."
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Indeed...
the SON
of GOD"

by Joseph B. Schuyler, S.J.

A QUEEN'S WORK
PAMPHLET

"Indeed . . .

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of
GOD

by

JOSEPH B. SCHUYLER, S.J.

THE QUEEN'S WORK

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THE QUEEN'S WORK

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DEDICATION

TO THE YOUNG MEN

whom I was privileged to teach.

TO THE SODALISTS

with whom I was privileged to work

“Ad Jesum per Mariam.”



This pamphlet is closely related to another Queen's Work pamphlet by the same author, *Four Writers and God's Word.*

"Indeed . . . the Son of God"

By Joseph B. Schuyler, S.J.

THE TWELVE o'clock bell rang at Stockwood Seminary, and Father Bernard returned from the morning theology class to his room on the second floor. A letter lay at his door. Absent-mindedly he picked it up, strode into the room, set his books on the shelf. His mind, occupied with the course on the sacraments, was seeking to catch the exalted significance of the channels of Christ's grace to us.

"Lord," he asked, "why is man so slow to take, to learn to use what you've given us?"

Gazing out the window now, across the cornfield and Stockwood's homemade golf course, he slowly, still reflecting, opened the letter. A sparkle of pleasure lighted his eyes and a smile touched the corners of his mouth as he recognized the scrawl of his former Sodalist-student, George Leddy. Sitting on the window sill, he read:

The Letter

DEAR FATHER BERNARD,

"We're accepting your invitation (hoping you did not forget it!) to visit Stockwood again. If we can glue John's car together, we want to come the third week end in September. That okay with you? Six or seven want to come.

"Here's something to think about. Remember our meeting with you after your first Mass here in Brooklyn? Well, our discussion with our non-Catholic friends

turned out very well—thanks to Bob's notes from our meeting with you. Since we satisfied them on the genuinity of the Gospel, now a couple of them are after us to show them Christ was really God. Some of them are tossing the old chestnuts about Our Lord's not claiming divinity, that we don't understand the Gospel, and so on.

“While some of these fellows are only immature hecklers, a couple of them seem to be quite willing to see the light. It's for their sake that we're going to have another meeting between our group and them. And it's for the sake of that meeting that we want to talk over the divinity of Christ with you sometime during our visit.

“We'll make arrangements to stay at the Cabins again. Carver and Clyne said to remind you of the golf challenge. And we'd all like to beat you again in softball!

“Hoping for a quick and favorable reply,

“Respectfully yours,

GEORGE LEDDY

“P.S. No fair practicing before we get there!”

Genuine and Authentic

Father Bernard hastily reread the page, his face registered both interest and amusement, then jotted the date on his desk date-pad. Of course, he'd be glad to see the lads again, he knew, and he'd be interested in helping them in their apostolic project. Just before entering the theologate he had taught them in high school and had been moderator of their Sodality. Since then he had remained in close touch with them, and only three months previously he had been with them shortly after celebrating his first solemn Mass. On that occasion the boys had him

explain the reasons why we are sure of the genuinity and authenticity of the fourfold Gospel as written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.*

Not only were they interested in the subject themselves, but some non-Catholic friends had questioned them about it. Anxious to help some of the latter into the Church, possibly, they were glad of the chance to check their facts with their old moderator before discussing the subject with their friends in their occasional informal meetings.

Having arranged for the visit with the seminary officials, Father Bernard wrote to George assuring him that all would be well on the requested date. Meanwhile he resumed his study of the sacraments.

* * *

Some two weeks later, on one of those lovely late-September days when Maryland's deep blue sky rests on foliage just turning to gold, George and half a dozen of his friends sat with Father Bernard near the quarry swimming hole on the seminary grounds. Their picnic lunch was over, and the bright rays of the sun danced through the trees as they sat comfortably resting and gaily chatting. John McCormack's aged car, justly groaning in protest under its load of seven collegians, had coughed its way across the Patapsco Bridge to the seminary several hours earlier. After joyful greetings between the priest and his young friends, the ball field beckoned. With Father Bernard and another priest

*The reader is referred to the pamphlet, *Four Writers and God's Word* (St. Louis: The Queen's Work, 1951).

playing with them against a team of seminarians, who graciously gave of their time to supply some opposition, the boys rallied for five runs in the ninth inning for a sweet-tasting 11-10 victory. Then while the others walked slowly over the hills to the quarry-pool for a pre-lunch swim, Phil Clyne challenged Father Bernard to a quick round on the golf course. Within a stroke of his long-anticipated win, luckless Phil saw the priest, admittedly a poor golfer, chip a shot from off the ninth green right into the hole for a par four—and the match. Of such pleasant events was the talk of the priest with his seven young friends.

Golf and Softball

“I’m thinking,” Phil was saying, “maybe Carver was lucky in staying home. He’d have felt worse than I did at losing that golf match. Honestly, now, Father, did you ever chip one in from off the green before?”

“Yes, once,” Father replied with an amused smile. “It gave me a six on a par-three hole. But you ought to be glad I won. You couldn’t very well chew Carver’s ear off while boasting of a victory, but he’ll have to listen to you describe the painful details of losing.”

“That’s all right, Phil,” said Tom Dowling. “Just remember that one-handed catch you made in center field. That was about as lucky as Father’s chip—and it saved the ball game for us.”

Bill Moran, as redheaded as Tom and his roommate in junior year at Georgetown, drew his pipe from his lips. “Well,” he observed, “since you beat Clyne, Father, at

least *he* should be quiet on the way home. Now, if only Bob Higgins hadn't knocked in the winning run . . ."

"That's all right, Bill," cracked Al Middlemiss. "Just let him mention that lone hit of his, and we'll compose songs about his two errors at short."

"Say, Phil," Bob asked, feigning wounded pride, "were you aware that we were such pests? You'd think these fellows were shrinking violets—they're so quiet."

"Or sheer intellects," Phil agreed. "Their speech is so brainy. That reminds me, Father, have you done any thinking on that subject George wrote to you about?"

"Three guesses, Phil," replied Father Bernard.

The Teacher's Role

George winked. "Thinking about it?" he asked. "Can't you see he's just dying to play the teacher's role again?"

"We've had plenty worse," commented Bill. "Go ahead, Father."

"Thanks, Bill. If George'll dig into the bottom of that lunch basket he's leaning against, he'll find a package with a few copies of the New Testament we can use."

George handed one to the priest, gave the rest to the others, and sat down again.

"Thanks, George. You really think some of these friends of yours are sincere, eh? You think some of these discussions on Catholic truths will really help them?"

Bob settled himself more comfortably against the makeshift fireplace. "As a matter of fact," he said, "some of them just like to put on an act. But three or four of them look like good bets—with God's grace of course. We do think that

we'll have them wanting to go to the parish priest for instructions soon."

Books and Pamphlets

"Well, why haven't you got them reading books and pamphlets? Those of you who had apologetics in first-year college know about the writings on Our Lord by Fillion, Grandmaison, Felder, and others. And there's that new book by Father Saunders, *Reason to Revelation*. And if they don't go for books, there must be over a half-dozen publishers of pamphlets who could give them what they need."

"You know how it is," Phil answered. "You had to assign us book reports and term papers before we'd read a history book. Well, these fellows are interested in the right answers, but they don't want to work too hard to get them."

"That seems to hit the nail on the head, Phil. But I want you fellows to realize that we can't be anything but brief, and Our Lord's own teaching about His coming is tremendously important and worth all the study and prayer we can give it.

General Approach

"Another thing. The question you want us to discuss now is whether Our Lord really claimed to be divine. But keep in the back of your minds also that the Old Testament indicated that the Messiah would be divine, and that the Evangelists and Apostles both understood Our Lord to claim divinity and believed in Him. That was the basis of their faith, and for that they died. If we have time, maybe we can discuss that later."

"You mean, Father," John suggested, "that we ought to use a more general ap-

proach rather than argue on specific questions?"

"To some extent, John, yes. Every element in our faith must and certainly can be defended when there is need. But some people can't see the forest because of the trees. Many people argue about religious subjects, about elements of the Christian faith, without having the slightest appreciation of the total meaning of Christianity. By all means, answer your friends' question—and that's what we'll work on now. But don't be forced to write to me later that, although your friends concede your point, you've brought them no closer to the Faith."

"Winning the argument, and losing the debate," said George.

"Precisely, George. As a debater you've probably seen that happen. Now, just so we know exactly where we're going, suppose one of you states accurately the question you want to answer for your friends. What do you say, Bill?"

The Objections

"Well, these fellows have already admitted that they accept the Gospels as genuine history. Then we started to work on the divinity of Christ and His founding the one true Church. But a couple of them objected that Our Lord Himself didn't claim to be God, that His followers misunderstood Him, and that the divinity of Christ was a legend invented by the early Church. So we promised to show them at our next meeting that Christ did claim to be God according to His very own words in the Gospel."

"That's it, Bill," said Tom. "Of course, Father, most of us have covered this before, and we have our notes and books

somewhere around. But we just wanted to go over the whole thing with you to get freshened up on it."

"All right, let's go. We'll review Our Lord's own words about Himself, and we'll look at the incontrovertible ways whereby He proved His claims. What do you say, Bob? You willing to act as secretary again?" Father Bernard drew a pencil and pad from his jacket pocket.

As the others agreed vigorously, Bob took the pad and pencil from the priest and sat himself at the weather-beaten picnic table. "I might have known," he moaned cheerily, "I'd get stuck with a job even on a holiday."

Al kidded him, "That's what you get for doing so well the last time. Cheer up, boy, we'll all love you for it!"

Why Condemned?

The priest thumbed the pages of his Archconfraternity Edition of the New Testament.

"Tom," he asked, "why did the Jewish Sanhedrin condemn Christ to death?"

"When He admitted He was the Son of the living God, they knew He was claiming divinity. To them, that was blasphemy. As a council of judges they condemned Him to death."

"Perfect. And since He accepted that death penalty, He showed that they had understood Him correctly. Otherwise He would have claimed that they had misunderstood Him. No one willingly accepts a death-sentence based on a misunderstanding."

"That make sense," Phil commented.

Time and Time Again

“For all practical purposes then, there’s your answer,” the priest went on. “Not only that once, however, but time and time again throughout His public life Our Lord testified, implicitly or explicitly, to who and what He was. And remember that, if sometimes His claims seem to be veiled with ambiguity, He had to make His revelation gradual to people who saw in Him only a man.

Evidence of the Gospel

“Now, let’s turn the pages of the Gospel together, and we’ll see that Christ constantly made these claims about Himself: first, that God had sent Him as His legate and prophet to give a divine message to the world; second that He was really the Messiah, not in the corrupted, materialistic meaning of the Jews of His day, but in the sense of the Old Testament prophecies, that is, the Christ, the Son of David, the King of Israel, the ‘one who was to come’ (in Latin, *venturus*; in Greek, *ho erchomenos*); and finally, that He had the power of God and was, in fact, the only Son of the eternal Father, true God.

“We can’t look at all the texts—just the more obvious ones. Of course, if Our Lord’s words have an obvious meaning, and if His listeners understood that meaning, and if His own way of acting conforms to that meaning, then Our Lord must have intended that meaning.”

Sent by God

Father checked a couple of pages, then went on: “Suppose I point out a number of texts, and see if you recognize Our Lord’s obvious meaning. Turn first to Mark’s

Gospel, near the beginning of Christ's public life—right after He healed Peter's mother-in-law (1:38):

“Let us go into the neighboring villages and towns, that there also I may preach. *For this is why I have come.*”

“Later, when Our Lord sends the twelve on their first apostolic mission—look at Matthew 10:40—He tells them very frankly:

“He who receives you, receives me; and he who receives me, receives *him who sent me.*”

“You have practically the same thought in Mark 9:36 and again in Luke 10:16:

“He who hears you, hears me; and he who rejects you, rejects me; and he who rejects me, rejects *him who sent me.*”

“Now turn to John 5:36-37, and we have something even more definite:

“For the works which the Father has given me to accomplish, these very works that I do, bear witness to me, *that the Father has sent me.* And the Father himself, *who has sent me,* has borne witness to me.”

“And while we're still with John, turn to Our Lord's last talk to the multitude, when He says (12:49):

“For I have not spoken on my own authority, but *he who sent me, the Father,* has given me commandment what I should say. . . .”

“Then, after Our Lord's last talk with His Apostles, on the night before He died—turn to John 17:3—He prayed to His Father:

“Now this is everlasting life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and him *whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ.*”

“Finally, turn over a page or two to John 20:21. Here Jesus, after He had arisen from the dead and appeared to the Apostles, just before giving them the power to forgive sin, said this:

“*‘As the Father has sent me, I also send you’.*”

The priest closed his New Testament, looked at his friends, and asked: “What do you think Our Lord was saying in those texts?”

“Seems pretty clear, Father,” Tom offered. “He certainly claimed that God had sent Him as a messenger to preach.”

Bob tapped the pad with his pencil. “Not only that,” he added, “but that’s true from the beginning right to the end of His public life. You went from the beginning as given in Mark, Father, to the end as given in John.”

Recognized by the People

“Excellent observation, Bob,” Father Bernard said, obviously pleased. “And if you just want to take a glance at John 6:14 or 7:40, and at Luke 7:16 or 24:19, and at Matthew 21:11, you’ll see that the people recognized this, for they frequently referred to Our Lord as a prophet, that is, a spokesman for God and in His name.”

“This sounds pretty good,” Al said. “Go ahead, Father, what’s next?”

“Turn back to St. Mark,” the priest directed. “Look at 1:21:

“*‘And immediately on the Sabbath he went into the synagogue and began to teach them. And they were astonished at his teaching; for he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.’*

“And a couple of pages farther, at the beginning of Chapter 4:

“‘And again he began to teach by the water’s edge. . . . And he taught them many things in parables. . . .’

“Let’s look at Matthew for a minute, beginning of Chapter 5:

“‘And seeing the crowds, he went up the mountain. And when he was seated, his disciples came to him. And opening his mouth he taught them, saying. . . .’

“Do you recognize this passage?” Father asked.

“Sure. Sermon on the Mount,” several replied.

“That’s right, through three chapters,” Father Bernard pointed out. “Do you remember what I told you previously about Matthew’s Gospel?”

After a pause, John asked: “Isn’t he the one who gives about three-fifths of his whole Gospel to Our Lord’s teachings?”

“Right, John. Let’s look at the beginning of his eleventh chapter:

“‘Now it came to pass when Jesus had finished giving instructions to his twelve disciples, that he passed on from there to teach and preach in their towns.’

“If you flip through the pages of Luke and John, you’ll see repeated reference to Christ’s teaching both in the temple and throughout the Holy Land.”

Obviously a Teacher

“It’s obvious, Father, that Our Lord was a teacher,” John interrupted. “Why do you emphasize that?”

“There are different kinds of teachers, John,” the priest answered. “Christ claimed the teacher’s prerogatives, and the people

recognized them. But above that, He claimed to teach in God's name, and in His own name. That's important. Let's see the build-up.

"First, the reaction of the people. Turn to Matthew 8:19; there a Scribe calls Our Lord 'Master,' and promises to follow wherever Christ leads. In the next chapter, verse 11, the Pharisees acknowledge His title. Turn to John 1:49; here Nathanael calls him 'Rabbi,' as does Nicodemus in 3:2. So does the blind man in Mark 10:51, and so do the Apostles quite frequently.

"His followers were recognized as 'disciples,' that is, students of a teacher, even by the Pharisees. In Matthew 15:2 they ask Our Lord:

"'Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the ancients?'

"Also in Luke 19:39 they tell Him to check His disciples during the triumph of Palm Sunday. And turn to Matthew again—27:64—where they ask Pontius Pilate to guard Christ's tomb lest His disciples come and steal him away.

"Of course you remember how Christ officially chose His disciples and later named them Apostles. In Matthew 4:19 He says He will make them 'fishers of men.' In Mark 3:13 (or Matthew 10:14; Luke 6:12-16) He chooses twelve especially to be His Apostles, to be with Him, and to carry His message abroad. Turn a few pages to Mark 7:17 where He gives them special instruction, and back to Matthew, Chapter 10, where He prepares them for their first missionary journey. In John 13-17 He leaves them His last message before He dies."

“Then there was His command to them to teach all nations,” Tom put in.

“That brings us to Christ’s preparing His successors as teachers in the Church,” Bill added.

“Master and Lord”

“True enough, fellows,” Father Bernard said, “but let’s not get off the point, which is that Christ saw Himself as a teacher sent from God. He refers to Himself often and plainly as teacher of divine truth for the whole world. Look at Matthew 23:10. He tells His followers not to be called masters ‘for one only is your Master, the Christ.’ In Mark 14:12 we find Our Lord sending two disciples to prepare for the paschal feast, and telling them to say to the owner of the house:

“‘The *Master* says, “Where is my guest chamber, that I may eat the passover there with my disciples?”’

“He is most clear in John 13:13, when He tells the disciples they are right in calling Him ‘Master and Lord,’ for that is what He is.”

George, not usually given to soliloquizing, repeated reverently the phrase, “Master and Lord,” then added: “I’ll bet you could make a wonderful study just of Our Lord’s words and His meaning. Go on, Father, what’s our next step?”

“That seems to be an obvious remark, George,” Father answered. “After all, Christ is God Incarnate, whose words should live in the mind and heart of every Christian. For many of us, they are just part of the biblical story. When someone spontaneously makes the remark you did, it’s

a sign that he's caught a glimpse of their sacred fire. Something for us all to think about—and pray over!”

God's Authority

The priest reopened the book which he had closed for a moment. “Tell me what you think of these texts. Look at John 5:24:

“‘Amen, amen, I say to you, he who hears my word, and believes him who sent me, has life everlasting.’

“And in the seventh chapter, verse 16:

“‘My teaching is not my own, but his who sent me. If anyone desires to do his will, he will know of the teaching whether it is from God, or whether I speak on my own authority.’

“Still in the fourth Gospel, look at 12:44:

“‘He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And he who sees me, sees him who sent me. . . . For I have not spoken on my own authority, but he who sent me, the Father, has given me commandment what I should say, and what I should declare.’

“Now turn back to Luke 4:16. Reading in the synagogue at Nazareth, Our Lord chooses this text from Isaias:

“‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;
because he has anointed me;

To bring good news to the poor he has
sent me,

to proclaim to the captives release,
and sight to the blind;

To set at liberty the oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of
the Lord,

and the day of recompense.’

“Then He says to the people in the

synagogue that that Scripture text has been fulfilled in their hearing. Can there be any doubt about Christ's meaning?"

Al Middlemiss spoke up: "No one can deny that Christ was claiming divine authority for His teaching. In fact that one text about seeing in Him the one who sent Him comes close to claiming divinity itself right there, doesn't it?"

"Right, Al. But let's go a little further. Pay attention to these next texts now. We're making a real advance, and I want to see if you recognize it. We've seen Christ speaking pretty *authoritatively*, promising eternal life to those who hear His word. Does any mere man presume to promise that?"

His Own Authority

"But let's look again at the Sermon on the Mount, starting with the middle of Matthew 5. In verse 11 He speaks of suffering for *His* sake; note how all through here He uses the expression, 'I say to you.' Now, starting with verse 21, Our Lord delivers a series of admonitions which begin with, 'You have heard that it was said,' thus referring to the Old Law. Then, speaking *in His own name*, He perfects the Old Law with His own. For example, look at verse 43:

"'You have heard that it was said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and shalt hate thy enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. . . .'

"Turn to John 8:12. Our Lord tells the crowd He is the light of the world, and His followers will have the light of life, whereas (verse 21) His enemies will die in their sin.

“Do you remember those most encouraging and consoling words which the Church includes in the Gospel of a funeral Mass? In John 11:25 Our Lord tells Martha:

“‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, even if he die, shall live; and whoever lives and believes in me, shall never die.’

“To the Apostles, He says (John 14:6):

“‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.’

“In Matthew 24:35 He assures them that heaven and earth shall pass away, ‘but my word will not pass away.’ And when He gave them their final commission to teach all nations, in Matthew 28:20, He told them to teach the observance of ‘all that I have commanded you.’”

Father Bernard closed his text, which he set on the ground beside him, and looked around at his friends. He asked simply, “What do you think?”

Bob was first to answer: “First of all, it’s clear that Christ not only referred to the Father as His authority, but also spoke on His own authority.”

“Then, too,” Tom added, “in that Sermon on the Mount, He expressed Himself as a lawgiver. Since the Old Law came from God, by adding to it Christ made Himself equal with the divine Lawgiver.”

“Excellent, Tom, excellent!” the priest agreed.

“How can anyone,” John asked without looking for an answer, “promise eternal life, pronounce himself to be the light of life and life itself, and still think himself merely a man?”

The Jewish People

"Certainly no one with any common sense," Bill added, "could read the Gospel and doubt for an instant that at least Christ *claimed* to teach authoritatively—both in the name of His Father and His own name."

"Pretty good, fellows. That's what the Jewish people thought, too. Look at Mark 1:22 and Luke 4:32 to see how the crowds marveled at Christ's teaching, for He taught them 'as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.' When the servants of the Pharisees and high priests went to capture Jesus but returned empty-handed, they gave as the reason for their failure: 'Never has man spoken as this man.'

"Look through the Gospel and see how often the crowds flocked to hear Him, honored Him, would even make Him their king. Certainly this required belief in a leader with authority."

"You know," Al observed quietly as Father Bernard paused, "our discussing this subject almost makes you think that Palestine were just over that hill back there, and that Our Lord's life were going on today."

"That's right, Al," Bob agreed, while Phil nodded assent. "I feel the same way myself."

"That's the way it should be, fellows. We couldn't want a more enjoyable experience. That's what prayer on Our Lord's life could give us, too."

For the Whole World

"You know," Father Bernard thumbed his book again, "while on the subject of Christ as authoritative teacher, I was going to run through the various texts showing

that He aimed His teaching not only at the chosen people, but at the whole world. But that would take too long for our purpose now. Suppose I just mention a few instances: there's the curing of the Roman centurion's servant in Matthew 8, when He told the Jews that foreigners would enter the kingdom of heaven which they would lose. The crowds of Tyre and Sidon, and the Samaritans accepted His preaching. You remember the Samaritan woman in John 4, and the Gentiles who came to Jesus in the temple in John 12.

“Very important in this respect are Our Lord's parables in Matthew 13, 21, and 22, about the mustard seed, the sower and his seed, the net and fishes, the marriage feast, the harvest, and so on; for they show that Christ intended the kingdom of heaven to embrace the whole world. He promised in Matthew 25:31 that when He came at the end of the world all nations would gather before Him. And in the next chapter He prophesied that His Gospel would be preached over the whole world. His final commission to the Apostles was to preach the Gospel *to all nations*. The Good Shepherd, He tells us there will be one fold and one shepherd (John 10:16).

“But to get back to our point of Christ's claims, how far have we gone? What do you say, Phil?”

“Well, so far we've seen that He claimed to be a teacher sent by God to teach in God's name, and that He claimed authority hardly due to a mere man.”

The Messiah

"All right, Phil, good enough. Now let's look at His claims to be the Messiah. As you might know, the Messiah had many titles given him by the prophets, for example, 'the Christ,' that is, 'the anointed one'; and also the 'son of David,' 'the king of Israel,' 'he who was to come,' and 'the son of man.' These titles were recognized, for the most part, by the Jewish people. Christ used and accepted these titles as circumstances required, though he made it clear that His Messiasship was the one really foretold by the Old Testament—not that expected by many of His materialistic contemporaries who looked for a king of earthly glory instead of a Savior from sin.

"The Christ"

"Let's take first the title of Messiah itself—or Christ, the anointed one. Got your books ready? Look at John 1:40. Andrew tells Peter that he and John have found the Messiah. Peter comes to Jesus, who implicitly accepts the homage and foretells the change of Peter's name from Simon. Three chapters later Our Lord very plainly tells the Samaritan woman that He Himself is the Messiah: 'I who speak with thee am he [the Messiah].' A couple of minutes ago we saw Him in the Nazareth synagogue telling the people that the Messianic prophecy was fulfilled in Himself (Luke 4). In that same chapter of Luke devils confess His Messiasship, nor does He deny it, but only bids them be silent.

"Now look at Matthew 16:16. On a trip near Caesarea Philippi, Peter professes his faith in Our Lord: 'Thou art the Christ,

the Son of the living God.' Our Lord's answer is to promise to build the Church on Peter, and He tells the disciples not to disclose His Messianic identity.

"Then there was the time, in John 10:24, when the Jews, their consciences stricken with doubt, bade Our Lord to say plainly whether He was the Christ. He tells them:

"'I tell you and you do not believe. The works that I do in the name of my Father, these bear witness concerning me.'

"We read before, in John 11, Our Lord's words to Martha. Then when He asks for her faith in Him, we see her simple but glowing answer:

"'Yes, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who hast come into the world.'

"Shortly before His death, in Matthew 24:5, Jesus warns His Apostles that others will come *in His name* saying, 'I am the Christ.' And in His prayer on the night before He died, in John 17:3, He sums up His entire teaching for His Apostles:

"'Now this is everlasting life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and him whom *thou hast sent, Jesus Christ.*'

"And finally, there was of course the most sensational occasion of all. What was that, Bob?"

"You mean at His trial, when the high priest officially commanded Our Lord to say whether He was the Christ?" Bob asked.

"Certainly, Bob. Look at Matthew 26:63:

"'I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God.'" Jesus said to him, "Thou hast said it".'

“Again, after Jesus rose from the dead—look at Luke 24—he explains first to the disciples going to Emmaus, and later to the gathered Apostles, why it was necessary that He, *the Christ* (verses 26 and 46), should have suffered and then been glorified.”

Drama of Christ's Life

Silence reigned for a few seconds, as the gripping power of Christ's repeated words held the group in prayerful thought.

“You know,” said George with a reverent tone that for him was not usual, “I never realized the tremendous drama connected with so many aspects of Christ's life. It makes you wish there were a really true-to-life movie available that would unfold His life as it was.”

“You have something there,” put in John McCormack. “I haven't seen one that satisfied me.”

“I agree with you, John. Well, maybe you fellows will help to provide such a picture some day. Meanwhile, get in the habit of running such a movie in your own mind, your own prayer. If we all did that, Christ's life would become more evident in our own lives.”

“Say, Father,” Tom Dowling broke in, “we still haven't touched the heart of the question yet—Christ's claim to being really and truly divine, God Himself.”

“That's right, Tom. We're working up to that. Perhaps much of this study so far you won't be able to use with your friends—it would take too long. But I wanted us all to realize the value of developing Our Lord's claims systematically. Don't you think it's worth it?”

“You bet!” Bill answered quickly. “I’ve never enjoyed using my brains so much in my life. Let’s keep right on going, Father.”

Other Messianic Titles

“All right, Bill, I’m glad to hear you say that. As a matter of fact, it’s starting to get a little late, so we’ll have to skip over the other Messianic titles rather quickly.

“Maybe when you get together yourselves sometime, you can finish up the study of Our Lord’s use and acceptance of those titles. For example, you find the title ‘Son of David’ used by the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15, by the blind in Matthew 9 and 20, and by the Jewish people and children during the triumph of Palm Sunday, in Matthew 21. On each occasion Christ accepts the title, and in that last instance even defends its use against the criticism of the chief priests and Scribes.

“There’s an interesting point about that title. Though Our Lord accepts it, since it is a real Messianic title, He doesn’t use it Himself. The reason is that the people associated with that title too many false, materialistic notions of the Messiah. This, of course, Our Lord did not want to encourage.”

A thought struck Al Middlemiss. “Is the reason Christ used the title ‘Son of Man’ so often just the opposite?” he asked.

“Very good, Al,” Father Bernard applauded. “He does use that title very frequently. As a matter of fact, the other day, when I was preparing for you fellows, I looked up Father Felder’s excellent book, *Christ and the Critics*, on this very point.

He says Our Lord used this title in preference to all others—some 82 times in the four Gospel accounts. He shows that ‘Son of Man’ was really a Messianic title, and that it was popularly recognized as such. Christ preferred it, both because it was least connected with some of the people’s fantastic notions of the Messiah, and because it enabled Him to reveal Himself and His missions more gradually and less sensationally—which was what He wanted to do.

“That was an excellent observation, Al.”

“What about ‘king’ and ‘the one who was to come?’” Bob asked.

“As to ‘king,’ Christ both accepted that title and claimed it. Look at John 1:49, where He accepts it from Nathanael; and at Luke 23:42, where He implicitly accepts it from the ‘good thief’ on the cross. Of course He was constantly preaching the *kingdom* of heaven.

“But when did Christ affirm that He was a king most clearly?”

Phil, George, and Al seemed ready to answer that question. It was Al who said simply, “When Pilate asked Him if He was a king, and He replied that He was.”

“That’s right. Here it is in John 18:37. You’ll find that Our Lord answered to that other title, ‘the one who was to come,’ very plainly, too. In Luke 7:18 John the Baptist sends two messengers to ask Jesus, ‘Art thou he who is to come?’ The answer John’s messengers bring back to him is affirmative, as he expected. Then, too, the crowds on Palm Sunday use that title (Luke 19:38).

Application of Prophecies

"But here's a question for you. Look at John 5:39. Jesus is speaking very plainly to His Jewish enemies:

"'You search the Scriptures, because in them you think that you have life everlasting. And it is they that bear witness to me. . . .'

"And verse 46:

"'For if you believed Moses you would believe me also, for he wrote of me.'

"Now look at Matthew 13:17:

"'For amen I say to you, many prophets and just men have longed to see what you see, and they have not seen it; and to hear what you hear, and they have not heard it.'

"In John 8:56 He tells them, 'Abraham your father rejoiced that he was to see my day. He saw it and was glad.' Then as the end of His public ministry is approaching, in Luke 18:31 He tells His Apostles:

"'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that have been written through the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished . . . delivered . . . mocked . . . scourged . . . spit upon . . . put to death . . . rise again.'

"All right now, what do you think Our Lord is doing in those texts?"

The boys were quiet for a moment as they thought. Finally George spoke up: "It seems that Christ is applying to Himself the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament."

"That means," Tom added, "He's using that way to say that He is the Messiah."

Father Bernard pursed his lips in a soundless whistle. "You fellows are really clicking, aren't you? You're right again. And

Christ did the same thing with regard to certain prerogatives that were to belong to the Messiah. For example, in Matthew 11:10 He refers to John the Baptist as the prophesied precursor of the Messiah—John of course being His own precursor. In Matthew 16:19 He promises the keys of His kingdom to Peter—another Messianic prerogative. As we saw in Matthew 5, He assumed the power to make laws in His own name—which He does also in Chapter 19 with regard to divorce. And so on.

“Now, I think we can skip the repeated indications of the people’s and Evangelists’ own belief in Christ as Messiah, prophet, king, and savior. On almost every page of the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles, you’ll find abundant proof. Perhaps the clearest proof that the Jews understood what Christ was claiming is in John 19:21, the chief priests’ complaining to Pilate:

“‘Do not write, “the King of the Jews,” but, “He said, I am the King of the Jews”.’”

Profession of Divinity

“So, let’s come to the heart of your question—or should I say, your friends’ question? Did Our Lord really profess to be divine? Did He, a man among men in all things except sin, actually claim to be the real Son of God, the equal of the Father, very God Himself?

“For you and me the answer is simply: yes. Now let us put our finger on the proof of that answer for your friends. One little reminder. Don’t forget that Our Lord was, and claimed to be, a real man. For example, speaking as man, He said: ‘The Father is greater than I.’ He was born of woman, He suffered our infirmities, He

called Himself the Son of Man. But while evidencing His humanity, He frequently professed *also His divinity*.

“Christ did this in two ways: by claiming and exercising exclusively divine powers and prerogatives; and by claiming to be the eternal only-begotten Son of the Father in forthright speech.

Divine Prerogatives

“First, let’s look at some of the prerogatives Christ claimed and exercised. He referred to Himself as *great*—greater than Solomon and Jonas, in Matthew 12:41-42; than John the Baptist, in the preceding chapter, verse 11; than the magnificent Jewish temple, in 12:6. In verse 8 He claims to be ‘Lord even of the Sabbath’—the day dedicated to God. In the next chapter, verse 41, He says He has angels at His command. And in Matthew 25:31 He says that when He comes in His glory, all nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the good from the bad.”

“You wonder,” said George, “how some persons could be blind in the face of that evidence.”

“None so blind, my mother always said,” Phil put in, “as those who will not see.”

Miracles

“That’s about it,” the priest commented. “But hold on, we’re just beginning to pick up speed. Of more meaning to most of His hearers, Our Lord claimed the power to perform miracles—and performed them. To lepers He said, in the beginning of Matthew 8: ‘I will; be thou made clean.’ And they were. To the centurion, a few verses below, begging for his sick servant’s life:

'I will come and cure him.' The servant was cured. In the next chapter He tells the dead daughter of Jairus to arise—and she arises. In 14:29 He bids Peter to walk upon the water—and Peter does so. He foretells the same Peter's denial in 26:34 while Peter protests his undying loyalty—and Peter denies Him.

"He casts out devils as a proof of the coming of God's kingdom—look at Matthew 12:28—and gives this and other powers to the Apostles in Mark 3:15, thus showing further that the power was really His own.

"Why do you suppose Christ claimed and used this power? Does it have any connection with his claim to a divine mission and divinity itself? What do you say, John? You've been quiet for a long time."

John considered for a few seconds. "Well, only God can work a miracle," he said.

"What follows after that?" Father pressed.

"Either Christ Himself was performing a divine work in His own name," John answered, "or God was working the miracle through Him . . . as He does through some of the saints. In the first case, Christ would be proving his divinity right there, because as I said, only God Himself can work miracles which are interventions in His own laws of nature."

John paused a moment to clear his mind.

"Keep at it, John," the others encouraged, "you're right on the beam."

"In the second case," he continued, "well, we have an impossibility. Because although God can and does work miracles through creatures, He can't do it in support of a blasphemous deceit. As an infinitely just

and merciful God, He does not deceive. But if Christ were an impostor, and God helped Him to perform miracles in proof of His blasphemy, we couldn't possibly protect ourselves from being deceived. So, since Christ did perform miracles, and since miracles are a divine work, and since He claimed to be God—then He must be God Himself in performing the miracles.”

“That, John, was a superb explanation,” Father Bernard said with a ring of sincere praise in his voice. “If you look at John 5:36 and 10:25, you'll see that Our Lord reasoned with the Jews in just that way. You ended by saying ‘since He claimed to be God.’ Well, we'll get there in a minute. But first, there's one miracle in particular which makes this reasoning of yours, John, very clear.

Forgiveness of Sin

“Turn to the second chapter of Mark, where you have the story of Christ's curing the bed-ridden paralytic. He looks at the stricken man and says: ‘Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.’

“Now, what's the connection between forgiving this poor cripple's sins and freeing him from his malady? Read what happens. The Scribes there immediately recognized that Jesus was claiming a power possessed by only God Himself:

“‘Why does this man speak thus? He blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins, but God only?’

“Note well Our Lord's answer:

“‘Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee,’ or to say, ‘Arise and take up thy pallet, and walk’?”

But that you may know that the *Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins*'—he said to the paralytic—'I say to thee, arise, take up thy pallet, and go to thy house.'

"It was just as clear to everyone as if Our Lord had said: 'Scribes, you are right: only God can forgive sin. But only God can work a miracle. But you see that I both forgive sin and work miracles. Therefore you should see that I am God'."

"And they refused to believe that evidence!" Phil marveled.

"Blasphemy"

"Yes, but they certainly knew that He was claiming divinity. That's why they finally accused Him of blasphemy and condemned Him to death. But several times before He at last submitted to trial, Our Lord faced violent death for what people considered to be His blasphemous speech.

"Look at John 8:58, where He says in the temple: 'Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, *I am.*' The Jews seek to stone Him, realizing that He is claiming for Himself divine eternity. Two chapters later, verse 30, in the temple for the feast of the Dedication, He frankly and categorically answers them, 'I and the Father are one.' Again the Jews try to stone Him, giving as their reason: '... because thou, being a man, makest thyself God.'

"Finally, as we saw, at the trial itself in Matthew 26:63, Christ's answer that He was the Son of God was judged to be blasphemous by the Sanhedrin. The Jews, then, sentenced Christ to death because they

knew He claimed to be God; and Christ accepted the sentence, knowing that His claim was *precisely that*.

“Say, Phil,” Father Bernard paused for a second, “you tempted me to run ahead of myself. We were on Christ’s exercise of the divine prerogative of working miracles.

“Now, it’s only in view of His claim to divinity that we can understand His assumption of that and other divine prerogatives. We saw Him as a divine lawgiver establishing *religious laws in His own name*—in the Sermon on the Mount, in changing the Old Testament’s toleration of divorce, and in proclaiming Himself Lord of the Sabbath (God’s day). We saw Him as divine judge forgiving sins, just as He will judge the good and bad at the end of the world. As we know from John 20:22, He gave to His priests the divine power of forgiving sin.

Center of Religious Life

“Furthermore, He makes Himself the very center of religious life, a place reserved of course to God alone. In John 8:51 He says that no one who keeps His word will see death. We’ve seen Him as the resurrection and the life, belief in whom will mean salvation. He tells us in John 12:26 that the Father will glorify whoever serves the Son; in 14:6 that He’s the way, the truth, and the life, through whom alone we can come to the Father; in 15:5 that without Him we can do nothing.

“He accepts adoration, due only to God: from lepers in Matthew 8:2, from a Jewish official in the next chapter, and from the Apostles after He had calmed the storm at sea in Chapter 14. And many times he

demands faith in Himself—for example, in Mark 5:35 and 9:22; and also heroic love of Himself. Look at Matthew 10:37: ‘He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.’ And Luke 7:47: ‘. . . her sins, many as they are, shall be forgiven her, because she has loved much.’

“No mere man ever set himself up as the inspiration, the model, and the reward for a good life. Our Lord did—since He was no mere man. In Matthew 5:11 He tells men they are blessed if they suffer *for Him*, for their reward will be great in heaven. In Luke 14:26 He tells us we’re not worthy to be His disciples if we’re not willing to give up father and mother, even our own lives. He also says, in Luke 9:26, that if we’re ashamed to acknowledge Him and His words, He will be ashamed to acknowledge us in the glory of heaven. And in Matthew 25 He tells us that heaven and hell will mean either company with Him or separation from Him forever.”

Father Bernard looked at his friends, and marveled at the rapt interest that had absorbed them so far during the discussion.

Equal to the Father

“So,” he continued, “being God, Our Lord didn’t hesitate to say that He was equal with God the Father. We saw that the Jews recognized” this claim of Christ in John 5:18:

“‘This, then, is why the Jews were seeking the more to put him to death; because he was not only breaking the Sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God.’

“And in the next verses Jesus says that

the Son does what the Father does, that as the Father gives life to the dead, so does the Son; as the Father has given all judgment into the hands of the Son, so the reverence of men should be the same for the Son as for the Father; both Father and Son have within themselves the gift of life.

“And since He is God, Christ doesn’t hesitate to say that He is united with God. Let’s look at St. John’s Gospel again. First at 10:30: ‘I and the Father are one’; next at 16:15: ‘All things that the Father has are mine.’ In 17:10 He prays to the Father: ‘. . . and all things that are mine are thine, and thine are mine.’ Back in 10:38 He pleads for faith from the Jews: ‘. . . if you are not willing to believe me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in the Father’.”

“ . . . in the Father . . . ”

Pausing, Father Bernard took from his pocket a folded, typed sheet of paper. “We recall,” he said, “Our Lord’s message to the Apostles the night before He died. Look at John 14:7. I’ll read from Monsignor Knox’s translation of the New Testament; I like his way of putting things in this section so much that I typed it out for today. Christ says:

“‘If you had learned to recognize me, you would have learned to recognize my Father too. From now onwards you are to recognize him; you have seen him.’

“And then Philip requests:

“‘Lord, let us see the Father; that is all we ask.’

“Jesus says to him:

“‘What, Philip, here am I, who have been all this while in your company; hast thou

not learned to recognize me yet? Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father; what dost thou mean by saying, Let us see the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you are not spoken of my own impulse; and the Father, who dwells continually in me, achieves in me his own acts of power. If you cannot trust my word, when I tell you that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me, let these powerful acts themselves be my warrant.'

"Do you think, fellows, that anyone could ask for more patent testimony of Christ's claims?"

"Makes it pretty obvious, doesn't it?" George said. "And say, Knox makes you feel as though you were actually listening to Christ."

"It must have been both sublime and solemn—and awfully but simply majestic—Christ's speaking that way." Usually prosaic Bill Moran seemed quite taken by what he had heard.

"I'm beginning to see, Father," said Bob thoughtfully, "why you used to tell us to take brief messages from the Gospel for our mental prayer in the Sodality. You could go for a month on that, couldn't you?"

Prayer for Unity

"Try it, Bob. It's worth it," the priest encouraged. "Now turn over a couple of pages to John 17:5. I'll read from Knox again. You remember from before that Christ claimed that His life was from before Abraham: 'Before Abraham came to be,

I am.' Well, here in His prayer to His Father, His priestly prayer for unity, He prays:

"Now, Father, do thou exalt me at thy own side, in that glory which I had with thee before the world began. . . . This, Father, is my desire, that all those whom thou hast entrusted to me may be with me where I am, so as to see my glory, thy gift made to me, in that love which thou didst bestow upon me before the foundation of the world.'

"So, Christ claims eternity; and eternal life—that is, life without beginning or end—is a possession of God alone."

"If we can remember most of this, we ought to have an easy time of it in our meeting," Phil said.

"Even if we don't," John answered, "this couple of hours has been as beautiful—and valuable—as any I have ever spent."

"I hoped, and thought, you'd feel that way," said Father Bernard, rising to his feet. "Sometimes we study religion too much for the purpose of answering our adversaries; we don't work at it enough for our own spiritual growth.

No Degrees of Divinity

"As to your friends, you should be able to help them. But don't be surprised if you get some questions that you won't be able to answer *just because your friends can't understand the answers*. For example, they might ask you about the Son being less than the Father. As some of you will learn in philosophy this year, anything having its origin from the substance of God, as the Son does, must share the divine

substance, must be fully divine. You can't have degrees of divinity. Your friends might not grasp that easily. Just see if you can stay close to the question.

"If Christ's words have any obvious meaning, and if His listeners—friends and enemies—understood that meaning, and both He and they acted accordingly, why, He must have intended that meaning. Christ said and meant that He was the Son of God.

Trinity

"By the way, on the point I just mentioned, you yourselves might think over sometime that when Our Lord told us that He was the Son of God, He told us far more than if He only said He was divine. For, coming from God, He had to be divine. But in revealing Himself as the Son, He teaches us about the Trinity of Persons in God."

"That is a good thought, Father," said Bob, adding some final jottings on his pad. "I had often wondered about that."

"We hope you have everything there, Bob," George called as he helped prepare to leave the picnic-site. "We'd be lost without it."

Carrying the remains of their lunch and other holiday regalia, Father Bernard and his friends started walking back to the seminary.

"You know," said the priest, "you might just turn the pages of the Gospel sometime and see how often Christ refers to Himself as the Son of God. I noted about twenty different occasions in the four Gospels. Some I didn't mention today. Another fifty times or so Jesus refers to God as *His*

Father. It's interesting to see that when He speaks of God as the Father of all creatures, He never includes Himself. For He is the uncreated, natural, eternal Son. So the only time He speaks of 'Our Father' is when teaching the disciples to pray."

"Father," asked John candidly, "did you just speak today from what you know—or did you have to study for it?"

The others grinned. So did Father Bernard.

"What do you think?" he asked. "Yes, we study that in our theology course, but to get ready for you fellows I looked it over for several hours. It was worth it, though. I think I got as much out of it as you did."

"That must have been plenty," said Bill, "because we surely did."

"Well, maybe God will help you to help your friends—after you've explained the Gospel to them—to say what the centurion on Calvary said of Our Lord: 'Indeed this man was the Son of God' (Mark 15:39)."

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THE QUEEN'S WORK

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