first moment in which something existed where nothing had been, something which in that first moment had no past, though in the next moment it had one, one that has never ceased to lengthen?

Was there indeed such a first moment? Did the material universe have in any sense a beginning? As we look forward, we know that for the human soul at least there is no limit in the future; might our gaze backward through time similarly find no limit in the past? There are Catholic philosophers, though they are in the minority, who hold that reason alone cannot settle the question. Personally I feel that even if the mind had to make its decision without aid from God, it would opt for a beginning. A succession that did not begin bothers the mind as it is not bothered by a succession that will not end. But whatever the unaided mind might make of such a question, it is not left unaided.

God Himself has told us. We shall discuss later the question of the divine inspiration of Scripture. Here we need only remind ourselves that the human writers wrote what God willed them to write so that He is Himself the guarantor of the truths they set down. And the first book of Scripture in its first sentence tells us: “In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth.” The Church has amplified this. The Fourth Council of the Lateran defined that God “by His almighty power created together in the beginning of time both creatures, the Spiritual and the Corporeal, namely the Angelic and the earthly, and afterwards [deinde] the human, as it were a common creature, composed of spirit and body”.

So there was a first moment. But how long ago? Genesis does not say: nor does the Church.

Men have thought to get a scriptural statement as to the age of the world by taking the age at which each of the patriarchs, from Adam onwards, begot a son and have worked out something like four thousand years as lying between the creation of Adam and the birth of Our Lord. But we have no reason to think that

the writer of the first book of the Old Testament was any more concerned to give us all the intervening names in the genealogy of Abraham than was the writer of the first book of the New Testament to give us all the intervening names in the genealogy of Christ Our Lord. St. Matthew, as he tells us, makes a pattern of generations, fourteen from Abraham to David, four from David to the captivity in Babylon, four from the captivity to Christ. To keep the numbers equal he omits names. He knew, and his Jewish readers knew, and he knew that they knew, that his word “begot” occasionally jumps three or four generations. He was not giving a measure of time. His object was to establish a line of descent. There is no reason why the writer of Genesis should not likewise have omitted names, and some reason to think that he did. For he, too, has a pattern—ten generations from Adam to the Flood, ten generations from the Flood to Abraham. His object, too, was to establish a line of descent, not to give a measure of time. The truth is that Genesis is concerned with the things that matter vitally in God’s own nature and in His dealings with the human soul, and the “date” of creation is not one of them. That God is personal and distinct from His creation (as against pantheism), that there is one God (as against polytheism), that Evil is not a separate creative principle but arises in a misuse of will (as against dualism), that God created sun and stars and sky and earth (as against nature worship); that man is created by God, that there was a first man, that woman like man is made in God’s image, what God planned for man, how man reacted to God’s plan, the effect upon the whole human race of man’s reaction—these things are of towering importance. But how long ago did it all happen? It would be interesting to know, of course but it would be almost frivolous to think that it matters very much in comparison with the things that Genesis does tell us.
CHAPTER XII

ANGELS, MATTER, MEN

As we have seen, all things are God's workmanship and bear His imprint, but some things He made in His likeness, too. These are spirit: those that bear His imprint only are matter.

I

Highest in the created order come the angels, pure spirits as we call them, spirits with no material element in them. That such beings exist we might guess; indeed, as we shall see later, a consideration of so much of the created universe as we can discover for ourselves would lead us to feel that creation would be incomplete without them. Yet it remains that there is nothing in our experience which forces our reason to postulate angels as its cause: we know of their existence as a fact only by revelation, taught us by God through His Scriptures and through His Church.

The Church has told us, as we saw in the last Chapter, that angels exist, and that they are created by God. There is not a great deal actually defined by the Church about them, but the writings of the fathers, doctors, and theologians are rich in development of what Scripture has to tell us of them; and Scripture, both the Old Testament and the New, is so filled with their activities that it is difficult to see why in the religious awareness of so many Christian bodies they occupy so small a part—so small that many appear to have forgotten them altogether.

Probably this has something to do with a feeling that belief in angels is unscientific—it may have been all right for our ancestors, but modern science has made it just too difficult for us. This feeling is all but universal and all but meaningless. Science can no more disprove the existence of angels than it can prove it. If by some odd freak science offered to prove that angels exist, we should have to refuse so well-meant an offer; if science denies their existence, its denial is as irrelevant. If angels exist, they will be beyond the range or reach of the sciences which man has developed for the investigation of matter. To refuse to explore our universe by any but one set of methods is much as if our ancestors had refused to discover any more of the world than they could reach on horseback. Philosophy can discuss the possibility of pure spirits; theology can discuss whether the fact of their existence has been revealed to us. But what can science say? that it has never seen one? Naturally: they are immaterial and so beyond the reach of sight as of all other senses.

After all, men exist who know and will: there is nothing unscientific in believing that beings higher than men exist who know and will. What science does it offend? Or why should science in general be offended that the tests it has developed for things in space should not be applied to beings outside space?

Among men, there are good and bad: there is nothing unscientific in believing that among pure spirits there are good and bad.

Again, men intervene in the affairs of beings less than themselves, often enough without those lesser beings having the faintest notion of it—the cats and dogs of Hiroshima could hardly have known that their catastrophe was man-made: since men do thus intervene all the time, there is nothing unscientific in believing that angels do.

Perhaps the feeling that angels and science do not fit is merely a sense that angels would be too marvellous or mysterious an element in the sober prosaic world that science has analysed for us. But that will not do. Science has shown us a world at once fantastic and mysterious. Angels are no more incredible than atoms, and a great deal more comprehensible. Ah, you say, but atoms are not persons and angels are. Why this terror of persons? We are persons ourselves. As we have seen, there is no iron law that only one sort of person can exist in the universe. It is simply a question of fact: do angels exist or not? Science is not equipped to answer the question, but that does not keep it from being a question. The answer is not less important because science cannot provide it. The answer is not less certain because God has provided it. God has told us that angels exist.

Scripture, I say, is full of them. Actually their first two appearances in Scripture would seem to constitute rather a bleak beginning of their relations with us, for the first appearance is of a bad angel tricking man out of Paradise, and the second appearance is of good angels keeping him out. This Scriptural division of angels into good and bad we shall examine later. For the moment we may make some rough analysis of what Scripture has to tell us of the function of angels in God's plan.
The word angel itself is from a Greek word meaning messenger: that we should make this the name by which we habitually know them is perhaps evidence of man's tendency to think of himself as central: there are countless instances in which God has used these pure spirits as messengers to men, and theologians teach that God uses them to convey illumination from Him to one another; yet that is not the reason for their existence or their chief function. Their chief function, their proper life work is to glorify God. “Adore Him, all you His angels” (Psalm xcvi. 7) puts it with perfect succinctness, and in the great vision of Daniel (vii. 9-10) we have the same truth in resplendent detail: “I beheld till thrones were placed and the ancient of days sat: His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like clean wool: His throne like flames of fire: the wheels of it like a burning fire. A swift stream of fire issued forth from before Him: thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him.”

Besides the adoration and service of God, they have certain other functions, which can be understood only in the light of a certain vital truth about God's dealings with His creatures. All that any creature is, all that any creature has, is from God. There is no other possible source than Existence Itself from which even the tiniest scintilla of existence should come to any creature. But God has shown us with overwhelming evidence that He wills to give His gifts to creatures through other creatures, that we may learn, by the receiving of God's gifts from one another and the transmission of God's gifts to one another, our family relationship within the great household of God. Our human life comes from God, yet God chooses to give it to us through a father and mother; the bread that sustains our bodily life comes from God, but by way of the farmer and the miller and the baker; the truth that nourishes the soul comes to us from God, but through men—the men who wrote the Bible and the Bishops of His Church.

I have picked a few more spectacular instances of a rule which is the norm of God's dealings with His creatures. In the light of this rule we can understand the second great function of angels: God uses them to implement His will, in relation to one another, in relation to the physical universe: in relation to the whole functioning of the laws of nature and of grace. This is magnificently put by the Psalmist: “Bless the Lord, all ye His angels: You that are mighty in strength and execute His word, hearkening to the voice of His orders” (Ps. cii. 20). Thus angels are in charge under God of the universe as a whole, and of the various parts of it. They are responsible for the operation of the general laws by which God rules the universe, and for such special interventions as God chooses to make in the affairs of men: as when He sends an angel before the camp of Israel during the flight out of Egypt (Exod. xiv. 19), or when He sends an angel to strike Jerusalem with a pestilence as a punishment for the disobedience of David, the king (1 Par. xxii). At the Last Judgment “The angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire” (Mt. xiii. 4). They are responsible for individual countries: Daniel tells us of the angel of Persia, and the angel of Greece; they have a mission of guardianship to individual men. The angel Raphael tells Tobias: “I offered thy prayer to the Lord” (Tob. xii. 12). And the Epistle to the Hebrews says (i. 14): “What are they all of them, but spirits apt for service, whom He sends out when the destined heirs of eternal salvation have need of them.” It is not absolutely of faith that each one of us has a guardian angel, but it would be rash to deny it in face of the unanimous teaching of theologians, in face, above all, of the obvious suggestion of Our Lord: “See to it that you do not treat one of these little ones with contempt; I tell you they have angels of their own in Heaven, that behold the face of My Heavenly Father continually” (Mt. xviii. 10).

One further thing we learn from Scripture, with certainty as to the main fact though cloudily as to the detail. We learn that there is not one undifferentiated level of pure spirits, but that they are of different levels of excellence, according to the degree of His power that God has willed to make manifest in them. Scripture gives us nine names, and it is the general view of Catholic writers that these are the names of nine choirs in one or other of which all the countless myriads of angels come. Five of these names we owe to St. Paul. Writing to the Colossians with the purpose of correcting certain faulty and exaggerated notions about angels which had taken hold of them, he writes in the first chapter: “In Him [the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity] were all things created in Heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether Thrones or Dominations or Principalities or Powers.” Three of these four recur together with a fifth in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where he tells us that Christ is raised “above all Principality, and Power, and Virtue, and Dominion, and every
name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come (Eph. i. 21).

To these five names we may add the word angel which occurs throughout the Scriptures, "archangel" which occurs twice in the New Testament, together with the Cherubim with flaming sword who guarded Paradise against fallen Adam, and were in Ezekiel's vision (i. 14) like flashes of lightning; and the Seraphim (the name is from a Hebrew word meaning to burn or flame) who touched the mouth of Isaiah with a live coal (Is. vi. 6).

St. Thomas adopts a division of the nine choirs into three groups, according to their intellectual perfection and consequent nearness in being to God—Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones; Dominations, Virtues, Powers; Principalities, Archangels, Angels. Other writers suggest different arrangements; and there is a mass of magnificent theological speculation as to the difference of function between one choir and another. But the Church has defined nothing upon this matter.

II

Glorious as created spirit is, it has limitations, deficiencies in being, that God has not. As we have seen, it cannot account for its existence by itself, but needs to be brought into being and maintained in being by the absolute power of God. Mighty as are the angel's powers of knowing and loving, they are not infinite, and it can receive increase of both.

If created spirit lacks perfections of being that God has, matter lacks perfections of being that created spirit has. By comparison with God, we see the angel as diminished; by comparison with the angel, we see matter as diminished. Actually the gulf between God and the highest angel is immeasurably greater than the gulf between the highest angel and the lowest of material things; but owing to our familiarity with material things and our lack of familiarity with God, the lesser gulf impresses us more. And if we must correct our perspective in this matter for the sake of intellectual health, we must correct it by becoming more aware of the difference between finite and infinite, not by becoming less aware of the difference between created spirit and matter. For this lesser difference is still enormous.

Whereas spirit has—conditionally upon the will of God but no less certainly for that—unending permanence in being, matter has not even what we might call temporary permanence: any material object can at any moment be changed into some other, seems in fact almost avid for change, any change, seems so little in love with what it is at any moment that it would almost rather be something else.

Again whereas spirit has all its being at any given moment concentrated in one single simple reality, so that there is no element in a spirit that is not the whole of it, matter has its being dispersed in parts that occupy space; and partly as a consequence of this, partly as a consequence of a deeper deficiency still, a material being is limited in its power to individual material things with which it can make contact, whereas spirit can range over the whole universe and beyond by knowledge and love.

Yet matter has this resemblance to spirit that it is not one undifferentiated level: it, too, has different levels of excellence, according to the degree of His power that God has willed to make manifest in each.

The dominating division in the material order is between living and non-living. Animals are living and vegetables are living: stones are not living. So much we all see. But as to what life is, which is in animals and vegetables (to say nothing of angels and God) and not in stones, most of us feel rather as St. Augustine felt about the meaning of time: that we know what it means provided no one asks us. And to this point at least we are justified, that although there may be borderline cases where it is difficult to tell whether the thing belongs to the living or non-living order, there are vast fields in which we know, and without hesitation. We might find it hard to make a list of just what qualities in a thing mark it as living: the chances are that the reality of the distinction strikes us most violently when we see what happens when life goes out of a living body. It rots; and though again we might be hard put to it to analyse the difference between the rotting of what has once been living and the mere breaking up of what never has, the difficulty arises merely from our lack of skill in analysing a fact, not from any uncertainty about the fact. A rock may wear away from wind and weather, but we should never confuse this with the decay of vegetation caused by living on it, to say nothing of the decay of the animals that once lived on it.

This is not the place for any very close analysis of the fact called life. It is a fascinating inquiry, and even one who is neither scientist nor philosopher can gain immense profit from watching scientists and philosophers at work on it. Here we may take the
simplest and most fruitful definition: living being is one which has
within itself some principle by which it operates; and operates not
just anyhow but in fulfilment of its nature, in the development of
what it is and the achievement of its proper functions. Living
things act from some power or necessity within them, do really (in
subordination to God) initiate action; non-living things are only
acted upon (though they are, of course, not purely passive in face
of such action upon them: they have their own sort of energy and
in consequence their own sort of reaction).

What we have said of living being applies to all living beings,
fully and supremely to God, in the created order to angels, human
souls and all the material beings that have life. But naturally the
operations which thus find their source within the nature of each
being differ according to that nature. Here our concern is with
the operations of material living things—powers of movement
(anchored to a root in vegetables, unanchored in animals), nutrition
and growth (growth which does not simply mean being added to
but developing towards a total shape), reproduction of their kind.

The life principle in a material being is called its soul. It is the
soul of the vegetable, the soul of the dog, that accounts for the
activities of vegetable and dog while they are alive and for the decay
of vegetable and dog when they are dead.

Thus there are three divisions of the created universe;

Spirit
Living Matter
Non-living Matter.

Life reaches down from the beings made in God’s likeness to some
of the beings that only bear His imprint. At any level, life is a great
glory; but living matter is still very much matter. This is obvious if
we consider what the proper operations of spirit are—knowing, which
means having things present to the mind in their concept or meaning
and not simply in their look, or taste, or smell; and loving, which
means being attracted to things thus known. The plant may be
said to have some sort of rudimentary knowledge and love: it may
seem, for instance, to know where the sun is and to move towards
it: but all this is so rudimentary that we feel we are using a figure
of speech. When we speak of animals as knowing and loving, we
feel that we are straining language less—at least when we are talking
of the higher animals: we do not feel so sure about oysters, say, as
we do about dogs—especially our own dog. But even at the highest

we see that the knowledge of an animal (and therefore the love of
an animal, since there is always a proportion between love and
knowledge) is only a good imitation: it has not the ranging power
of spiritual knowledge: indeed animal knowledge is limited in
comparison with spirit knowledge very much as the animal’s
being is limited by comparison with the spirit’s being. The spirit
can know the universal and the abstract: the animal seems to know
only the individual and concrete, and this is so much less that it
can only by courtesy be called knowing at all. A very crude example
must suffice here instead of the longer discussion the question will
find in a book of philosophy. A man, having a spiritual soul, can be
aware not only of this or that dog, but of the general notion of dog
which is expressed in all the dogs that have been or will be or could
be. When he remarks that the dog is a useful animal, he is em-
ploying—and employing with the ease of an entirely natural
operation—a universal concept. He is not thinking of any individual
dog of a particular shape and size and colour; he is abstracting that
essence of dog which is common to all the numberless combinations
of size and shape and colour in which dogs are found. He can do
this precisely because his soul is a spirit. His body, which is
material, cannot make any sort of contact, enter into any sort of
relation, with that universal dog. His eyes can see only individual
dogs, each dog with its own shape and size and colour. That is
what we mean by saying that matter is limited in its contacts to the
individual and concrete.

If we examine all that we can of the animal’s awareness of things,
there is nothing to suggest that this awareness ever goes beyond the
individual and concrete to make any sort of abstraction of essence,
that it ever goes beyond the sight and the taste and the smell to
what the thing profoundly is. As someone has observed, if one
met a pig capable of knowing that it was a pig it might be safer
to baptize it, on the ground that it must have a spiritual soul to be
able to arrive at the general idea pig and apply it to itself as one
realization of that general idea. As I say, none of the animal
activities that we call knowing seem to go beyond awareness of the
individual and concrete, that is to say none of them seem to go
beyond the material order, for that is the material order. Nothing
that the animal’s psyche does takes us so obviously out of the range
of matter that we are forced to postulate a spiritual principle. The
animal’s soul does nothing that leads us to feel that some higher than
material principle must be in operation. Therefore there is no
reason to believe that it is not a material soul, “immersed” in the matter of the animal’s body, and ending with it.

Neither by permanence in being, nor by rational knowledge and love, do even the highest material beings, those that have life, transcend the sphere of matter. The gulf between matter and spirit remains. But if it is a real gulf, it is a bridged gulf, too, bridged at one point—man.

III

That man has at once a material and a spiritual element, and therefore belongs to both worlds, we might know merely by looking at him and thinking about what we see. But on the whole, though man is much given to looking at himself, he is not at all good at thinking about what he sees. Nothing in the world is more fantastic than the variety of answers man has proposed to the simple question: What is man? Fortunately we are not left to our own incompetent devices: God has told us, through the men whom He inspired to write His Scriptures.

The account of creation in the first two chapters of Genesis gives us two principal statements about man: “Let us make man to our image and likeness” (Gen. i. 26) “And the Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth: and breathed into his face the breath of life and man became a living soul” (Gen. ii. 7). There you have the two-fold element in man, the slime of the earth and the likeness of God. And both elements belong. The matter of our body is not simply an extra, something we should be without, something to be grown out of as the butterfly grows out of the grub, something in some happier future to be discarded as the butterfly discards the cocoon. Matter is part of the very nature of man, he would not be man without it; and he would not perform his function in the universe without it. For it is precisely his function to join the two worlds of matter and spirit into one universe, and he does it by belonging essentially to both of them. We are to think of creation not as two closed circles which nowhere meet, but as a kind of figure eight with man on both sides of the join.

Thus if man is not as he sometimes thinks the centre of the universe in the sense of that upon which all revolves, he is in this other sense at the centre of the universe, bestriding the lower world of matter and the upper world of spirit. In both worlds he has the closest and most vital contacts: it is a pity that he is so much more keenly aware of the lower one, and so sketchily and intermittently aware of the upper, for both are realities and realities that affect him profoundly. Angels can guard him, cows can nourish him and so can sunsets. Angels, again, can tempt him, insects can bite him. The trouble is that we are more concerned about insects than about devils, more concerned that cows should nourish us than that angels should bless. We must recover a total view of our universe if only in order to know where we are, and that in the interest of sanity. As to the question how did angels get to tempting, how did man become temptable and biteable—so very biteable that he bites himself more fatally than any insect can bite him—these things, too, we must get to know. They will begin to appear a little later in the story, when we come to see what man made of himself. Here we are concerned with man as God made him.

He is, we have seen, a union of spirit and matter. But what does this mean? The meaning at the first level may be set out simply enough. Man has a living body, therefore there is some principle in him which makes his body to be alive; and whether a body be vegetable or lower animal or man, that principle in it which makes it living is that we call its soul. Man, then, has a soul; so has a dog, so has a cabbage: and his soul does for his body what their souls do for theirs, makes it a living body. But whereas their souls are material, limited to matter, not producing any operation that goes beyond matter, man’s soul is spirit. It does not only the things that souls do, but the things that spirits do. By intellect and will it knows and loves as spirits know and love: in its thinking it handles the abstract and the universal. Man, having a body and soul is an animal; but he is a rational animal, for alone of the animals he has a soul which is a spirit.

But how are we to conceive a union of two beings one of them in space, the other not. And note that it is not just any kind of union, but a union so close that the two constitute one being. The soul, which is spirit, is in every part of the body, no smallest part of the body is outside the union. Now it is obvious that in all this the effort to give the soul some sort of shape in order to make the union seem easier to grasp is waste of time. There is no gain in trying to think of the body as thinly buttered all over with soul, or as a sponge interpenetrated with soul, or of the soul as shaped like the body so that it can have a point by point contact with each part of the body, only made of some spirit stuff more refined than matter.

A moment’s reflection will show us why imagination is driven to
such odd acrobatics. In its efforts to make the problem easier for itself, it is introducing a difficulty that is not there. It sees it as the problem of how a body so large that it occupies quite a lot of space can be totally occupied by a soul so small that it occupies no space whatever. But the soul is not outside space because it is too small to occupy even the smallest section of space, but because it lacks the limitations which would make space necessary for it.

If we are to think of a difference of largeness between soul and body, then we must think of the soul as larger: for it has more being in it, has fewer limitations to diminish it, is every way greater in being.

Thus for the intellect the question how can spirit totally occupy matter is simply the question how the greater can totally occupy the less and the answer is simple—by superiority of being and of energy. A spirit is not in space, but it can act upon a being that is in space. And this is the only kind of spatial presence that a spirit can have. It is where it acts. The soul acts upon every part of the body, and its action is to vivify, to make alive (indeed according to St. Thomas the soul not only makes the body alive, it makes it a body). In some ways the presence of the soul in every part of the body is comparable to the presence of God in every part of the universe.

There is in the purely material order a comparison which the mind may find helpful provided that it gets what is to be got from it and then resolutely throws it away. When a pot of water is boiling over a flame, there is a sense in which the flame is in every part of the water, although the flame itself occupies none of the space that the water occupies. It is the energies that come from the flame that set every part of the water bubbling and hissing. The casual onlooker might easily be deceived into thinking that the water is the energetic thing and might overlook altogether the flame with its utter stillness. If the flame happened to be invisible, there would be men to assert that all this talk of flame was superstitious nonsense. But all the movement of the water is due to the superior energy of the flame. And the water, if it could think about the matter at all, might easily think that the flame had no other business than to heat it. But the flame has a life of its own and can continue as a flame whether the water is there or not. All this can be applied easily enough to the relation of soul and body. The body is so very alive and clamorous that the soul can be overlooked altogether. But all the vitality of the body is due to the energizing upon it of the soul. One need not be told what happens to any part of the body, the finger, say, if it gets separated from the body and thus removed from the field of the soul's energies. Which reminds us that the union of soul and body has this double flower of intimacy, that the soul acts upon every part of the body, but only upon that particular body: with no other material thing can it make direct contact at all. My soul is meant for the vivifying of my body. It is the perfect specialist.

The illustration, I have said, must be used for what it has to give and then discarded. For it is only valid up to a point. The flame and the water are two separate realities brought into relation for a specific purpose, but each quite capable of existing fully as itself apart from the other. But soul and body are not thus casually brought together; they are united to form one complete individual reality; they would not come into existence without each other; if they are separated, they suffer loss—the body ceases to be a body and the spirit, although it survives, survives with a large part of its powers idle within it for lack of a body to use them on. You must never think of your soul simply as a more powerful thing which dominates your body: soul and body are partners in the business of being you.

So much, for the moment, for the nature of man. Let us return to the account of his creation. "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the earth," and "breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul." It would be difficult to conceive anything more compressed. The word "formed" for instance tells us of the fact but not of the process: there was an assembling of elements of the material universe, but was it instantaneous, or spread over a considerable space of time? Was it complete in one act or by stages? Were those elements, for instance, formed into an animal body which as one generation followed another gradually evolved—not, of course, by the ordinary laws of matter but under the special guidance of God—to a point where it was capable of union with a spiritual soul, which God then created and infused into it? The statement in Genesis does not seem actually to exclude this, but it certainly does not say it. Nor has the Church formally said that it is not so. What the Church would say if it ever felt called upon to make a statement on the matter, I do not know. So far She has made no explicit statement. On the surface, no specifically religious question seems to be involved. Whether God formed the body of man in one act or by an unfolding process, it was God who formed it. But man does not come into being until God creates
a human soul: if anyone should teach that that evolves from some lower form, he will not have to wait long for the Church’s comment.

What may have been happening to the elements of the human body before it was a human body is not of the first importance and Genesis does not tell us. What is of the first importance, it tells us: that man was made of the slime of the earth in the image and likeness of God; and it tells us one other thing that has never ceased to matter. In the first chapter of Genesis we read: “And God created man to His own image: to the image of God He created him: male and female He created them. And God blessed them saying: increase and multiply.” In the second chapter the origin of woman is given in more detail: “And the Lord God said: It is not good for man to be alone: let us make him a help like unto himself . . . then the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam: and when he was fast asleep He took one of his ribs, and filled up flesh for it. And the Lord God built the rib which He took from Adam into a woman: and brought her to Adam. And Adam said: this now is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she is taken out of man. Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall be two in one flesh.”

It would take a long time to unwrap all that is contained here. At a first glance we see certain obvious elements in it. We see, for example, that the first woman came from the first man. The mind shudders at the thought of all the jokes that have been made about this, largely perhaps because man has always found something comic in his ribs. Genesis seems to make it clear, anyhow, that woman was made from some element of the body of man: there is nothing particularly comic about this, nor indeed anything improbable, considering that every human being is made of elements taken from the body of other human beings. And there is an enormous importance in it, for it preserves the unity of the race: we are all from one.

The second truth that leaps to the eye is that God, in giving a wife to Adam, revealed His plan for the co-operation of the sexes in the continuance of the race. The moment man and wife exist Adam sees them as father and mother, and this by the revelation of God: it was from no experience of his own that he talked of a man leaving father and mother. Thus God made the production of all other human beings to depend upon the co-operation of man and woman. He did not so act with the angels. Angels have no progeny, they were not told to increase and multiply and fill the heavens. There is no race of angels. They are related to one another as children of one God, and so are we; but they are not, as we are, related to one another as children of one father of their own kind. The fatherhood of God is shadowed forth to us as it is not to them by a fatherhood of our own. And indeed our part in God’s creative act—what we call procreation—is man’s greatest glory in the natural order, it is the act in which he comes closest to the creative power of God. And it is a glory peculiar to man. For the angels do not procreate at all, and the animals reproduce their kind without rational choice or any awareness of the majesty of that in which they take part.

We must not exaggerate this procreative power into some fancied superiority of ourselves over the angels. Man’s body comes from his parents, but not his soul. That is still the direct creation of God. God still takes slime of the earth and breathes a soul into it, only that now He takes it not from the earth but from the children of Adam. The reason why we do not generate our children’s souls is the reason why angels do not generate at all: namely that the spirit, mightier in being than the body, has no parts, no constituent elements, one of which may be separated from it and set up in being on its own account. Thus our power to reproduce is bound up with the lesser perfection of our material bodies, and the angels do not envy us. It comes from our lowliness, but in our lowly way we can glory in it.

Meanwhile they remain our superiors and there is profit for us in their contact. It is a pity that any man should be so very conscious of the material beings below him, and altogether ignore these spiritual beings above him. It means that he is spending too much of his life in the company of his inferiors—not, one imagines, through mere preference for low company, but through mental inertia. It is not for nothing that the Church lists Sloth among the capital sins. There may, of course, even among those who accept the existence of angels, be a feeling that there is not much we can do about them—they are above our heads and there they must stay. But we are not so helpless. We can habituate the mind to the fact of them, exercise the mind in the comprehension of them, and pray to them for aid. The Church is rich in suggestions for prayer. We might take this (from the Mass for the Apparition of St. Michael) as a model: we ask God “that our life upon earth
may be protected by those who are always present with Thee in heaven, ministering to Thee.”

IV

Here then is the created universe in its broadest division from non-living matter through living matter, through man who is a union of matter and spirit, to the angels who are pure spirits. God brings it into being from nothing, God sustains it in being, and unsustained by Him it would be nothing as before. His will which is love is the sole reason for its existence, therefore His will must be the rule of its operation, its law. But even as law His will is still love. The laws which govern this universe and all things in it are the result of God’s knowledge of what the universe is, and this knowledge is perfect knowledge since there is nothing in the universe which is not His.

But a very brief consideration of the laws by which our universe is run shows us two rather different sets of laws, what we may call physical law and moral law. The practical distinction for us is that physical law is God’s ordinance as to how all things must act, moral law is His ordinance as to how spiritual beings ought to act. There is an element of choice in the operation of the moral law which does not exist in the operation of the physical law. But the element of choice, although it is there, may not be precisely what we think. That fire burns is a physical law, at times extraordinarily useful for man, at times catastrophic. But, useful or catastrophic, fire still burns. At first sight the moral law seems different. It tells us that we ought to do this and ought not to do that, and in those very terms implies that we are free to choose whether we will do this or that, whereas there is no freedom of choice about being burned if we put our hand in the fire. But in actual fact the moral law merely casts into the form of a command something that is already as much a law of nature as that fire burns. God’s command to us not to bear false witness implies that we are free to bear false witness if we choose; but to bear false witness—even if we do not know of God’s command and no question of sin arises—will damage us spiritually just as certainly as to put our hands into the fire will damage us bodily. We can if we choose bear false witness: we can if we choose put our hand into the fire: in either event we shall be damaged. In other words physical laws and moral laws are laws because we are what we are. If we were asbestos instead of flesh, fire would not burn us; if we were stags, adultery would not damage us either. Physical law or moral law, to know what it is to know the reality of things: to act in accordance with it is to act by the reality of things. And that is sanity.

God’s laws are there to enable the universe as a whole and each being in it to achieve what God meant it to achieve. For the universe as a whole and for each being God has a purpose, and He has made provision that each being should fulfill His purpose. This over-ruling provision which God has made that His plan be not stultified or any way frustrated is His Providence. The universe is not crashing towards a chaos, for it would not have been consonant with God’s all-wisdom and all-knowledge to bring something into existence which would escape His control and by its own aimlessness mock Him rather than mirror Him. The universe is not crashing towards a chaos but growing towards a harmony. All that anything is, all that anything does, has its part in the harmony. Nothing must be left out. Into the harmony are woven the actions of beings who have no choice but to act according to the nature God has given them, and the inweaving of these presents no difficulty to our mind: what does seem difficult is that into the harmony are woven also the acts of beings who can choose, and can choose to act inharmoniously. But God Who rules all things knows what they will do to wreck the harmony and knows what He will do to turn their discord into concord, so that the harmony is not wrecked. God, says the Portuguese proverb, writes straight with crooked lines.

Nor are we in this to figure God anxiously watching us to see what note we will play wrong and feverishly rushing to play the notes that will harmonize our discord into concord. God does not match the successiveness of our acts by a successiveness in His, so that every wrong act of ours is counteracted by a right act of His. Just as the spirit can dominate every part of the body by not being in space, so God can dominate every part of time by being outside of time. In the objection mentioned on page 18, the opening phrase—“If God knew last Tuesday”—shows unawareness of this. God did not know last Tuesday! Tuesday is a period of time and part of the duration in which I act. But God acts in eternity, which has no Tuesdays. God acts where He is: we receive the effects of His acts where we are. He acts in the spacelessness of His immensity and the timelessness of His eternity: we receive the effects of His acts in space and time. He acts in the singleness of His simplicity, and we receive the effect of His action in the
multiplicity of our dispersion. We find this hard to comprehend, because we have no direct knowledge of eternity. Like our concept of infinity, our concept of eternity is far stronger and clearer on the side of what it is not than of what it is. Even the smallest extra glimpse of what it is would make a world of difference. After all, we should never have guessed that infinity was Triune; there will be similar fruitful surprises about eternity. Meanwhile the truth stands: God knows all things and provides for all things: we choose, and He lets us choose, but He has His own way of acting upon our choice: and all in one single timeless operation of wisdom and love.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TESTING OF ANGELS AND MEN

I

We cannot handle anything intelligently until we know the purpose for which it was made. Without that knowledge we act only blindly upon things. When we are in doubt, there is one certain way of finding out what things are made for, namely to ask their maker; for the purpose of anything is not in itself but in the mind of the maker. With what purpose did God make material beings and spiritual beings and men who are both? Each thing He made to serve Him, and to serve Him by being totally itself. But within this total ordering of everything towards God there is a division: for, under God, spiritual beings are an end in themselves, matter is not. The earth is made for man, whereas man is not similarly made for the angels but men and angels alike for God only: they can serve one another, but it is not the service of a means to an end, but reciprocal service of the children of one father: the immortal beings have no end but God Himself.

The subordination of the earth to man is stated by God at man's creation: "Increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth." Thus man's domination of the animals is not simply a tyranny, based upon man's misuse of the superior power that his intellect gives him. It is a fulfilment of God's plan for animals and men. It is a natural consequence of this domination that Adam was given by God the charge of naming the animals: "And the Lord God having formed out of the ground all the beasts of the earth, and all the fowls of the air, brought them to Adam to see what he would call them: for whatsoever Adam called any living creature the same is its name." To our modern taste there seems something grotesque about all this: but we have imported the grotesqueness into it ourselves. Clearly it would be a comical sight to see a modern man on Clapham Common, say, summoning the animals and naming them at his whim with this or that meaningless collection of sounds. But this is not to allow for the difference between the dawn of all things and now, the tired
twilight. Man's first beginning upon earth is bound to have features which would look odd now; nothing was more unusual than any other thing; and we are not bound to trim down what we know about that first period to make it fit with the mental habits and associations of ourselves. This was the beginning, and man had as yet done nothing to damage the perfection of his own nature or the completeness of his rule over the earth; it was the beginning of language, too, and man had done nothing to weaken its saying power. There is something mysterious about this naming of the animals. Clearly Genesis is not giving a detailed description: it does not tell us whether it was all one episode, or whether God brought the animals before Adam's bodily or mental eye. But at least we can be certain that Adam did not simply look at the animals and make a suitable noise for each. In the full exercise of his undamaged powers over the animals and over language, he looked upon the animals and knew them for what they were, named them for what they were. For that while, nature and name were in total accord: "whatsoever Adam called any living creature, the same is its name."

II

For angels and men the only purpose could be the most perfect possible relation with God. Had we no revelation from God Himself as to the purpose for which He made them, we might at least hazard a guess; that as the highest powers of their nature are knowledge and love, it must be their destiny to come to know God and love God to the very limit of their power, using no element of energy upon anything that would distract them from this knowing and loving. Again considering their nature, we might hazard the further guess that this knowing of God would be by way of a richer and richer concept of Him, and that their love of God would bear a proportion to their growing knowledge. Such a natural destiny would be a thing of unrealizable splendour; yet that is not their destiny, but something more splendid still. No examination of the nature of angels and men would tell us what this more splendid destiny is, we can know it only from the word of God. God has told us that the destiny alike of men and angels is to see Himself, the Uncreated Splendour, face to face, not by means of any concept however rich, but direct—God Himself taking the place in the intellect of the idea of Himself, so that between the spirit of angel or of man and God nothing whatever shall intervene, not the purest concept, not anything at all. This is the Beatific Vision, the seeing that is our bliss. This is the end for which God has destined spiritual beings: it is an end for which their natural powers are totally inadequate, which is why we could not discover it for ourselves by examining those natural powers. Angels and men alike need to have ingrafted into them by God powers enabling them to achieve this end which their natural powers could not achieve.

Life, we have seen, is a principle of operation.

Natural life is the principle by which we carry out the kind of operations that go with the kind of beings we are.

The principle which is to enable us to operate above our nature is called supernatural life. The object of this supernatural life is the Beatific Vision, the direct gaze upon God. Without it we cannot have the Beatific Vision. We lack the power.

III

But in God's design neither angels nor men were to have the Beatific Vision without a previous testing. Consider the angels first. God created them in the perfection of their nature as pure spirits. Further, He endowed them with the supernatural life of which we have just spoken. But they were not as yet admitted to the Beatific Vision. They must first be tested. What the testing was, we do not know; but we know that some of them failed in the test, and we know, too, that they failed through some form of self-assertion, assertion of self against God. In the Book of Job we read: "In His angels He found wickedness" (Job iv. 18). Further, we know that one of these rebellious angels was the leader of the rest. We find such phrases as the "Devil and his angels" (e.g., Mt. xxv. 41) and "the Dragon and his angels" (Apoc. xii. 7). This chief of rebellious angels is most commonly called Satan, a Hebrew word meaning adversary or accuser, which is roughly the meaning also of the Greek word Diabolos, from which our word Devil comes. He is worth closer study.

Strictly speaking there is one Devil: the rest are demons: he is princeps daemoniorum (Mt. ix. 34). It is usually held that the rebellion was his affair primarily: he seduced the rest. The words Satan, Diabolos, Devil, express his nature: he is the enemy. What is his name? We say that he was Lucifer, the light-bearer, before his fall, though he is not called by that name in Scripture. Scripture has a handful of names for a devil of great power, and it is commonly thought that they are all his—the rest remain a nameless multitude of wickedness. He is Asmodeus, the murderous fiend of the book
of Tobias (iii. 8); he is Beelzebub, Lord of Flies, in the Gospels; he is Belial, the one without use or profit (2 Cor. vi. 15); he is Apollyon, the exterminator (Apoc. ix. 11).

Our Lord describes him (John viii. 44): "He, from the first, was a murderer; and as for truth, he has never taken his stand upon that; there is no truth in him. When he utters falsehood, he is only uttering what is natural to him; he is all false and it is he who gave falsehood its birth"—or in the Douay Version: "he is a liar and the father of lies". If Christians can be found to ignore the other angels, it seems an excess of rashness to ignore this one.

But to return to their great rebellion. We have seen that their sin was some form of self-assertion. It may be worth pausing at this first and most catastrophic of all sins to consider the nature of sin. In angels or men sin is always an effort to gain something against the will of God. Thus for angels and men sin is essentially ludicrous. All alike are made by God of nothing; all alike are held in existence by nothing save the continuing will of God to hold them so. To think that we can gain anything by hacking or biting or furtively nibbling at the Will which alone holds us in existence at all is a kind of incredible folly. It is precisely because apart from God we should be nothing, that Pride is the worst of all sins, for it is the direct assertion of self as against God. It is sin in its nakedness: all other sins are sin dressed up a little. Other sins are an effort to gain something against the will of God, pride is the claim to be something apart from the will of God.

I have said that sin is incredible folly. But it is made to look credible by the ease and frequency with which we do it. Sin is madness, but it is possible. Why? There is a profound mystery here: a mystery at its very darkest when we ask how pure spirits could have been guilty of a folly so monstrous, but a mystery still even when any one of us considers his own most recent effort to gain something against God's will. The rebellious angels must have known that it was madness, yet they did it; but after all, any instructed Catholic knows that it is madness, yet he does it. Sin, in fact, is not simply a matter of knowledge, mysterious as knowledge is; it is a matter of that far more mysterious thing, will, at the very ultimate point of its mysteriousness, its freedom of choice. The will, if it wants intensely enough, can ignore the intellect's information and go for what it wants. Even if the intellect knows that the thing will bring disaster, the will can choose it; even if it knows that the thing cannot be had at all,
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doing wrong, promised reward for the one, threatened punishment for the other: told us in a hundred ways that we are responsible for our choices. He who made us makes clear that He made us free to choose.

But freedom to choose does not mean freedom to choose the consequences of our choice, for we are living in a universe, not a chaos: we can choose to do this or that, but the consequences of our choice will be governed by the laws of the universe in which we are. It is only if we use our freedom of choice (that is our freedom to choose without coercion) to make choices in harmony with the reality of things—in harmony with what God is, with what we are and with what all other things are—that we achieve freedom in its second sense, namely fullness of being, the act of being all that by nature we are and doing all that by nature we are meant to do. And at this second level of freedom we shall find that choice without coercion which was part of our initial equipment, but now at a level of development which makes the rudimentary thing almost infinitesimal by comparison. Summarizing all this: we can choose what we want, and within our own limits what we shall do; but we cannot choose the consequences of what we do, nor can we prevent any action of ours—even our rebellion—from being used by God to His glory; we can only prevent its being used for our glory, too. "Them that glorify Me I shall glorify: but they that despise Me shall be ignoble." (1 Kings ii. 30.)

All this, as we have seen, applies to angels and to men. Let us return to the sin of the angels. They had chosen self as distinct from God: so far they were free, that is their choice was not coerced. But they had collided with reality. And the result could only be tragedy to them. St. Peter tells us starkly: "God spared not the angels who sinned" (2 Peter ii. 4). There are references in Scripture to a battle in Heaven, not between the rebellious angels and God, but between the rebellious angels and the faithful. Thus we find in the last book of the New Testament, the Apocalypse (xii. 7): "Fierce war broke out in Heaven, where Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought on their part, but could not win the day, or stand their ground in Heaven any longer." It would seem that St. John here has in mind the continuing struggle between good and evil, but it is hard to think that he has not in his mind the first battle in that long campaign. What we know with certainty is that Satan and his angels were cast out of Heaven into Hell. Our Lord warns human sinners that their ultimate place may be that eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels (Mt. xxv. 41).

What was their state in Hell? They had lost grace: "by pride" says St. Ambrose; their nature was badly damaged, particularly in the will: "the Devil and the other demons were created good in nature by God, but by their own act they became evil" (Decree Firmius, Fourth Council of Lateran). Of their own choice they had demanded independence of God, a life without God. Faced with a choice between God and self, they had opted for self: love of self grown monstrous turned them to hatred of God, and in this hatred of God their wills were now set so that they would not change. Totally without God they could not be, if they were to continue in existence at all; but by their own choice they were to have, from now on forever, nothing of God but His presence sustaining them in being and His strict justice punishing them for their sin.

Both ways the result could only be anguish. Angels, like men, are made by God and made for God: their very being is interwoven of needs which only God can satisfy. The fallen angels refused the satisfaction, because that would have meant turning to God Whom they hated; so that they were left to the torment of needs which could not be satisfied. Grasp that in their new state not merely the major need of created things, the need for God, could not be satisfied. No need could be satisfied. They could not make any sort of solace for one another—in their new destitution they had nothing to give one another, nor surely any will to give. Torn away from God, they were torn away from one another; torn away from the love of God, the very source of love was dried up in themselves. Whatever positive values were still in them were there by the continuing action of God: hating God, they could only hate one another. It may be fanciful to see a hint of this in the plea the demons made (Luke viii. 31) when Our Lord cast them out of the naked man that He should not send them back to hell, but let them instead go into a herd of swine—as though any sort of occupation upon earth was better than the company of their mightier fellows at home. But there is nothing fanciful in the total domination of their will by hatred, and the domination of all lesser hatreds by hatred of God. In their continuing hatred of God they were to continue their warfare against good; having lost their battle with the other angels, they were to continue to fight against the souls of men and in that warfare they were to have victories, but
such victories could only be minute satisfactions in an abyss of unsatisfaction.

But for the angels who triumphed in the test there was the Beatific Vision: they "behold the face of My heavenly Father continually" (Mt. xviii. 10). Now, gazing forever upon the unveiled face of God, their wills were united to His in love so utterly that sin was impossible to them: uncoerced, in the intensity of their love, they could will only what God willed. And in that life they were fully themselves, every power in fullest operation, utterly fulfilled. That is freedom.

IV

Man, too, was intended by God for the Beatific Vision, and he, too, was to have his probation. But whereas the proving of the angels was a test for each separate angel, for the proving of man the test was by a representative man, the first man from whom all others come. There is an obvious fittingness in this. Angels as we have seen do not procreate. Being pure spirits each has to be created separately as to his totality; there is no element in them that is not the direct creation of God, so that there is no organic connection between one angel and another. They are not related to each other in anything comparable to the family relationships of men. In that sense there is a human race but no angelic race. In that sense again there could be a representative man but not a representative angel.

Mankind was tested in one man. We shall never exhaust the story of the testing. Here we can take only the principal elements in it. Adam was created perfect: this does not of course mean infinite. All things have the perfection proper to them, when they are fully and completely the kind of thing God meant them to be. Soul and body were perfect in themselves and properly related to each other. The body was ruled by the soul and accepted the soul's rule without rebellion. Within the soul reason ruled, and the first law of reason which is acceptance of the will of God.

As well as this total integrity, Adam had certain other perfections which, like it, we can only call preternatural. He did not have to find out everything for himself, by experience and meditation upon experience and the comparison of his own experience with other people's. He began with an initial equipment of knowledge, simply given to him by God. Contained in this knowledge was all that he needed in order to live intelligently according to the plan God had

for him. There is no suggestion in all this that Adam could not grow in knowledge, but only that, starting out in this universe with no men before him, he had from God all the knowledge that he needed.

He had another gift, or rather two other gifts, which we may think of as utterly preternatural in relation to what man has become, yet almost natural according to man's first perfection. The first is what theologians call impassibility: the universe made for the service of men literally could not harm him. God would not allow it. Nature and man were part of one harmonious order, until man wrecked it. Man was lord of the world.

The other gift was immortality. Death was not in God's original design. "God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living." (Wisdom i. 13.) In the perfection He had planned for man, man was not to suffer the separation of soul and body which comes to us when the body is damaged to such a point by accident or the mere wear and tear of living that it can no longer respond to the animating power of the soul, and so disintegrates and is no more a human body. In one sense death is natural since the body has parts and therefore can fall apart; but in another sense we feel it as an unnatural interruption of man's existence; since his immortal destiny is to be forever soul and body, why the temporary separation? God would allow no accident to fall upon unfallen man; and the sinless soul in its first perfection was quite strong enough to supply for any wear and tear of the unrebellious body in a world which could not harm man.

We cannot conceive the natural excellence of Adam or of the woman made from him. His supernatural splendour was greater still. This paragraph and the three that follow must be read with the closest attention. The doctrine they contain is essential to the understanding of the purpose of our existence, and therefore to the intelligent living of our lives. As we have seen God intended that man should come to the Beatific Vision, the direct gaze upon Himself. We have seen likewise that this was beyond the powers of man's nature. Man's intellect is made to know things by dint of ideas, and by its natural powers it has no other way of knowing. When I say that I know someone, I mean that in my mind there is an idea of him and a mental picture of him. As I get to know him better, the mental picture gets a little clearer and the idea gets enormously fuller and richer. But the person himself is never in my mind, save by way of the idea. That is the kind of knowing
proper to man’s intellect—to know things not direct, but by means of an idea. But our destiny is to know God direct, with no idea however perfect aiding or intervening. The intellect will be in direct and conscious contact with God Himself. Since by nature direct knowledge is impossible to us, we must receive in our soul new powers to enable us thus to act above our nature, and for this God gives us, as He gave the angels, supernatural life.

Grasp with all possible clearness that this supernatural life is not a development of our natural powers; it is something over and above, something that our nature could never grow to, something that it can receive only as a direct gift from God. The gulf between non-living and living is not so great as the gulf between natural life and supernatural. The purpose of this supernatural life, as we have seen, is that in Heaven we may see God direct. But we do not wait until then to receive the supernatural life. It is given to man in this life, and what man does with it is the primary story of his life. Everything else is incidental, on the fringe, of no permanent importance. When we come to die we are judged by the answer to one question—whether we have the supernatural life in our soul. If we have, then to Heaven we shall surely go, for the supernatural life is the power to live the life of Heaven. If we have not, then we cannot possibly go to Heaven, for we could not live there when we got there. Thus it follows that the supernatural life, which we call also sanctifying grace, is not simply a passport to Heaven: it is the power to live in Heaven.

But if we are given the supernatural life hence upon earth, it does not here upon earth have its full effect of enabling us to see God direct. If it did, our probation would be over. But it has vast effects in the soul all the same, enabling the soul to do things that by nature it could not do. For a full discussion of the operation of sanctifying grace in the soul we must wait until the third section of this book. Here we can state it in summary. By the gift of faith, the intellect is given a new way of attaining and holding truth, upon the word of God: by the gifts of charity and hope, the will is given a new mode of loving God and effectually desiring to be with Him. These three are called the theological virtues, because their direct object is God—we believe in God, we hope in God, we love God. In addition our souls are given what are called the moral virtues—prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude—by which man is helped to handle the things of this created universe for the salvation of his soul. Further still there are the gifts of the Holy

Ghost. Thus supernaturally endowed we can act so as to merit the supernatural reward.

And by this supernatural endowment we are raised from being merely creatures of God to being sons of God. For the power to see God as He is is a power which by nature belongs to God alone. Thus by the supernatural life we are being given a share, a created share certainly, in God’s own life. Merely as created spirits we are in the likeness of God; but this natural likeness is as nothing to the supernatural likeness whereby, enabled to do what belongs to the nature of God, we are raised to such a likeness of His nature as joins children to their father.

God created Adam with this supernatural endowment, too. There was no first moment, however short, in which Adam existed simply as the perfect natural man. From the first moment of his creation until his fall Adam had two lives in him, the natural life and the supernatural life. He dominated the world; he was subject only to God. And in him the whole human race was tested. The first member of the human race to come from him was Eve—the word means “life” or “living”—and she too had natural perfection and supernatural life.

There is much in their life in this first stage that must be obscure to us. It is too far removed from anything we have experienced. But on the side of their relations with God we get some light. Their first duty and also in that happy unfallen state their supreme pleasure, was prayer, both in the wider sense of the direction of the whole of life to God, and in the special sense of conversing with God—talking to Him and listening to Him. That any man, knowing that God both is and is everywhere, should not talk to Him has a kind of ridiculousness. There is no one in whose company we so intimately and continuously are, and never to address Him is plainly funny—reminiscent of W. S. Gilbert’s poem about the two Englishmen cast up on a desert island who would not speak to each other because they had not been introduced.

But if it is natural for us, as for Adam, to talk to God, what kind of thing would one say? Obviously there is the acknowledgment of God’s glory by adoration and love; and the acknowledgment of our obligations to God by thanksgiving; and, since God wishes it so, there is the asking for what we want. All this was in Adam’s prayer as it should be in ours. But at first his prayer lacked what should be the most poignant element in ours, sorrow for sin.
Again his prayer (like ours) would be an offering of the whole of himself to God, not of his soul only but of soul and body, too. It would be a stoning of prayer to find nothing for the body to do. But we have not seen the whole of man's approach to God, in seeing it as the offering of the whole of himself, soul and body. There is the offering of other things, too, by way of sacrifice, which is the setting apart and consecrating to God of some part of all that He has given us by way of acknowledgment that He has given us all; and there is the offering along with others, by way of prayer and sacrifice in common. God gave Eve to Adam because it is not good for man to be alone. It is not indeed in the nature of man to be an isolated unit all by himself. By his needs and by his powers he is bound up with others. This element, too, in his nature must be offered to God. The excuse a modern man gives for staying away from church—that he finds that he prays better alone—misses the point. What he is doing is refusing to join with his fellow men in the worship of God, that is to say he is leaving the social element in his nature unoffered to God. Adam and Eve had their private prayers to God, but they prayed together, too.

It is tempting to speculate upon other elements in this paradisal life and upon what it would have meant for the generations to follow if they had remained faithful and triumphed in their testing. But it would be no more than speculation. What matters is that their splendour naturally and supernaturally was vast, and that they threw it away.

For remember that this first period of human life, like the first period of angelic life, was one of probation, of testing. What the test was for the angels, we do not know; but we know that it was a personal individual testing, one which each angel had to meet for himself, and that some of them failed in the test. Of the testing of man, we know something more, though there is obscurity about it; but as we have seen, there was this difference between the testing of men and of angels that the testing of the human race was not in each of us individually, but in the representative man from whom we are all sprung.

As I say, we know something about the testing of Adam, or rather of the human race in Adam. God made Adam lord of the world, but there was a condition attached. In the phrase of Genesis which may be interpreted literally or may have a figurative
CHAPTER XIV

THE FALL OF MAN

The immediate effect of Adam’s sin as stated in Genesis, is surprising enough. Whereas before the Fall “they were both naked, to wit, Adam and his wife; and were not ashamed”, now, instantly upon their eating, they were aware of each other’s nakedness and proceeded to fashion themselves some sort of clothing. And as they could no longer look upon each other untroubled, so they could no longer face God without fear. “Adam and his wife hid themselves from the face of the Lord God, amidst the trees of Paradise.” Nor was their fear without reason.

To Eve God said: “I will multiply thy sorrows, and thy conceptions. In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband’s power, and he shall have dominion over thee.”

To Adam He said: “Cursed is the earth in thy work: with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art and into dust thou shalt return.”

The rest of the story is in a couple of sentences: “And the Lord God sent him out of the Paradise of pleasure, to till the earth from which he was taken. And He cast out Adam; and placed before the Paradise of pleasure cherubim, and a flaming sword, turning every way to keep the way of the tree of life.”

Upon the story of the Fall of man set out with such appalling brevity in Genesis, mankind has had a long time to meditate; Christ himself came to give us a clearer knowledge of what was involved in it, and for two thousand years His Church has been thinking upon it in the light of His revelation. In the remainder of this chapter an attempt will be made to summarize the Church’s teaching.

In giving Adam the order not to eat of the fruit of this one tree, God had told Adam that to eat of it would mean death. But Adam, as we remember, had two lives in him—the natural life of body and soul by which he was a man, and the supernatural life of sanctifying grace by which he was a son of God and might one day look upon the living reality of God in Heaven. To each of these lives corresponded a death, and by his sin Adam fell under both.

Consider first the death which was the loss of the supernatural life. His soul had possessed sanctifying grace, and with it faith, hope and charity, the moral virtues of justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude, an extraordinary wealth of God’s gifts beside. But the key to supernatural life, as to all life, is love. The vivifying element in sanctifying grace is charity, which is the love of God. Adam, setting his own will against God’s, in that very fact annihilated love, thus lost the living principle in sanctifying grace, was supernaturally dead. From his soul had gone the power whose full effect was to have been the direct vision of God.

Thus he was left with natural life only, whereas before he had had both supernatural and natural life. But the natural life he was left with was not as it had been before. In losing the right relation of his own person to God by rebellion, he had lost his original integrity, the right relation of body and soul, and the harmonious working of the powers of the soul with one another; he was punished, too, by the withdrawal of freedom from suffering and death, gifts which in any event would have sat oddly upon a nature as disordered as his now was. Death had come upon man, and it had come as a penalty for sin; for though by the material element in his nature man is liable to death, yet if man had not sinned God would have stood between him and that liability.

Let us look more closely at the damage within his nature. The soul had ruled the body while the soul preserved its right relation of loving obedience to the Infinite Source of all life. But the soul in rebellion against its God had quite literally lost its rights and found the body rebellious against it. The soul’s various powers had maintained harmony because all alike were directed towards God as their supreme end; but having turned aside from God, they no longer had any one end to unify them and hold them in harmony, and each must pursue its own devices, one seeking its satisfaction in one direction, one in another. So that the soul was faced at once with the rebellion of the body, and with warfare
conceived and brought forth Cain"—the first murderer was the first fruit of sexual passion uncontrolled. In their paradisal state they would have had the sexual intercourse when they wanted it: now they must have it when it insists.

Adam, of course, was not bound to remain as low as he had fallen. He was still a man, he was still free to make choice of worse or better, still free, in fact, to place his love anywhere between nothingness and God Himself. He had lost his innocence but not his memory. What he knew of God before the Fall he still knew after it. Knowing God's goodness he still had motive for repentance; and any natural movement in this direction would not have been hindered by his enormous awareness that his sin had not paid. Because he was a man and so had free will, he was not bound to repent, but he was able to repent; and it is the universal teaching of theologians that by God's grace he did repent and received the supernatural life again into his soul, though not in its former plenitude—his troubled nature was not capable of that. If he had not thus received the supernatural life and died with it, he could not have entered heaven: for, as we have seen and cannot too often remind ourselves, the supernatural life is the power to live in heaven.

But the restoration of the supernatural life did not of itself heal the damage in his nature. We may here use a somewhat crude comparison. If a jug filled with cream falls from a high shelf, there will be two results: the jug will be cracked, the cream will be spilled. Provided the jug has not been smashed to pieces, cream can be poured into it again: but this will not heal the crack. The comparison is admittedly a crude one, and will need to be refined and corrected later, because the supernatural life, here figured by the cream, can have very profound effects on our nature. But in a general way it remains true that the damage done to our nature has to be healed by an immense striving within our nature itself. So that Adam, though he regained some measure of sanctifying grace, still had the warfare of body against soul, the warfare of the soul's powers among themselves, the swollen power of imagination, the clouding of the intellect and the distorting of the will by passion, the everpresent possibility of falling again into sin.

II

The third effect of the Fall he could do nothing about at all, namely the broken relation between mankind and God. Man had
been at one with God. He was no longer at one with God. There was a breach between God and the human race, and this was incomparably the most serious result of Adam’s sin. Oddly enough it is almost invariably overlooked, because we have lost the habit of thinking of the human race. We concentrate upon individuals, especially upon ourselves; then upon others according to their closeness to us, our family or our nation; we may even say that our affections embrace all living men, though our sense of oneness with them can hardly be very strong. But we have no natural and spontaneous response to the concept of the human race itself—not only all men now living but all men who have ever lived or ever will live. It is a defect in us that we find the human race as a whole too large to love effectively or even realize. It is because of this defect that so many find the notion of the whole race being tested in one man improbable and almost grotesque. But it would be strange if God, who is equally the creator of all men, to Whom no man is more immediately present than any other, to Whom no idea is too big, did not see the race as a whole and treat it so; and it is at once an enlargement of our limitedness and a strengthening of our own relation with all men to see Him do it. In the story of the first dealing of God with man this is what we see.

It will repay a closer look. As a beginning we should realize what was involved in the original relation of oneness between God and our race. He had conferred upon us supernatural life which as we have seen lifts us from mere creatures into sons of God. The gift was to Adam, but to Adam as head of the race and so for the whole race seen by God as incorporated in him. The race of man stood in the relation of a son to God; had that relation remained unbroken, we should all have received from God the same supernatural life merely by being members of a race that had it, we should have been sons of God individually because our race stood in the relation of sonship. But by Adam’s act the relation was broken. The human race was put to the test in Adam; Adam failed to pass the test. He sinned. And in that act the human race became a fallen race, a race no longer at one with God: a race to which Heaven was closed. The race had been at one with God as a son with his father: now it stood facing God as a servant his lord. There was a breach between.

It is held that Adam, and Eve, too, died in a state of sanctifying grace, personally united with God by charity, but members of a race which was no longer at one with Him. And so died many
nothing but damaged acts to offer. No man could offer even the whole of himself; for man was no longer in total possession of himself, too much of him was beyond his own control. God’s love desired the restoration of oneness, of the relation of sonship: but if expiation must first be made, how was expiation possible?

Thus one may muse over the problems that man had set by his sin. But it is only musing, valid enough while we are seeing what man could not do, but only hints and glimpses of probabilities when we try to see what required to be done. There is profit for the mind in speculating as to what God might have done; but it is as nothing to the profit in studying what He did do. In the event both problems were to find one solution in which love and justice were miraculously fused.

But not yet. And until God Himself remade the oneness, holy men and women could receive the supernatural life, but as a gift personal to themselves, a reward for their love, not through the human race; they could die with the supernatural life in their souls, and that meant that they had the power to live the life of Heaven; but they must wait until Heaven should be once more open to the race to which they belonged.

III

Let us consider in more detail the personal effect of Adam’s Fall upon his descendants. For, as we have seen, we were all involved in it. St. Paul writes (Rom. v. 12): “It was through one man that guilt came into the world; and since death came owing to guilt, death was handed on to all mankind by one man.” There were two lives in Adam with a death corresponding to each: and we fell under both. Because he sinned, we are all born into this life without the supernatural life, with natural life only: and that natural life is a damaged life, doomed inescapably to break up in death.

Consider these two effects separately. For our natural life, we are dependent by inheritance upon Adam. Our natural life is the life of soul and body, and though our souls are a direct creation of God, yet their relation with our bodies is so close that the variously damaged bodies with which each soul is united at the beginning of each man’s life are quite sufficient to ensure for each man a damaged nature. We have the same sort of disorder in the elements of our nature that Adam had: a body rebellious against the soul, warfare of the soul’s powers against one another, imagination far too powerful, passions and emotions swinging us toward sin. We too must die. Further, we must live in a world which has lost the necessity of obeying us. From Adam onwards man has been fighting for his life and his rights in a universe which no longer acknowledges him as its lord. The greatest conqueror can be brought down to death by a snake, or more humiliatingly by a microbe. Nor does man treat the animals any better than they treat him. The harmony is wrecked. To man in his perfection God gave “dominion” over the animals: but when He comes to bless Noah after the Flood, there is a new note: “Let the fear and dread of you be upon all the beasts of the earth and upon all the fowls of the air, and all that move upon the earth: all the fishes of the sea are delivered into your hand. And everything that moveth and liveth shall be meat for you: even as the green herbs have I delivered them all to you.” (Gen. ix. 1–3.)

There remains in the natural order one most mysterious result of Adam’s sin. The order of the material universe was damaged by it. God said to Adam: “The earth is cursed in thy work.” At the creation, God had looked upon all that He had made and seen that it was very good. But now there was a curse upon it. It was still good, but there was a disorder in it, all the same, which was not part of God’s design or the result of material causes only, but resulted from Adam’s sin. The material universe is so closely inter-linked, inter-balanced, that the catastrophe in its highest part spreads damage downward through all its parts. We have fallen into the naive habit of thinking of matter as wholly self-contained, affected only by material causes. But it is created by Spirit, preserved in being by Spirit, wholly under the control of Spirit; and there is no reason to think that what happens to spirit at any level leaves it unaffected. And quite apart from such possible direct effects, the action of man in the perverseness of his will and the darkness of his mind can produce the most appalling destructions of the equilibrium of the material order. We do not know what damage the earth took from Adam’s sin, but there is some new element of perversity in it as a result.

IV

So much, though it is sketchy enough, for the natural effects upon us of Adam’s sin. The supernatural effect is immeasurably more serious. We are born without the supernatural life—not because Adam, having lost it, could not transmit to us what he did not have himself (as we have seen, Adam almost certainly regained it for
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The supernatural life is not transmitted by inheritance as our bodies are. It is a free gift of God. But God had decreed that it should be hereditary in this other sense, that it should accompany the nature men were to inherit from Adam, if Adam had not sinned. We are born without it, not because Adam did not have it to give to us, but because the condition on which God would have given it to us at the first moment of our existence was that Adam should not fail; and he failed.

Here we come to one of the most mysterious of the doctrines that treat directly of man, the doctrine of Original Sin, which is bound up with the truth that Adam’s sin involved the whole race. In some profoundly dark way Adam’s sin is in his descendants as real sin: they are not only affected by the results of his sin, they are somehow involved in the guilt of it: “a multitude, through one man’s disobedience, became guilty” (Rom. v. 19).

It is in us not as an actual sin, a personal sin, as it was in Adam who actually committed it, but as a habitual sin, a state of unrighteousness, which most theologians equate with the absence of the supernatural life which should, had Adam not sinned, have been there. Thus the Council of Trent says that “unrighteousness follows natural birth precisely as righteousness follows regeneration”—in other words we are born into unrighteousness (absence of sanctifying grace) just as we should have been born into sanctifying grace but for Adam’s sin, just as (to anticipate things to come) we are born into sanctifying grace by baptism.

But wherein lies our guilt? That this privation of grace should be in us as an effect of sin, we can see. But how is it sin? It is, as we have seen, not a personal sin. But if it is not personal, how is it ours? Because of that other element in us, our nature. It was a state of sinfulness in Adam’s nature, and Adam’s nature was the source of our nature. Theologians teach that it is transmitted by the natural way of sexual generation: it comes to us because we are “ex semina Adae”, of Adam’s seed. If we could see more clearly into the relation of person and nature within ourselves, and into the relation of each man’s nature with the nature of those through whom and ultimately from whom it comes to him, there would be no mystery. Lacking that clear vision, we find it darkly mysterious. To me it seems that the twelfth century writer Odo of Cambrai came very close to the limit of lucidity in his work De Peccato Originali.1

The sin wherewith we sinned in Adam is natural in me,

1 M.P. CLX col. 1085.

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personal in Adam. In Adam it is graver, in me less grave; for in him I sinned not as who I am but as what I am. It was not I that sinned in him, but what I am; I sinned in him as man not as Odo, as substance not as person. Because the substance does not exist save in the person, the sin of the substance is the sin of the person, yet not personal. That sin is personal which I commit as who I am not as what I am, by which I sinned as Odo not as man, by which I sin as person not as nature.”

Our first reaction is quite likely to be a sense that we are being treated unfairly in thus being started off in life with a damaged nature and with no supernatural life at all, because of something done by someone else unmeasured ages ago. The unbeliever finds it matter for mockery—Eve, he says, ate the apple; we get the stomach-ache—and even the believer can be troubled by a seeming want of fairness in God. But if such a reaction is spontaneous, it should not survive a little reflection. The accusation of unfairness is peculiarly fragile. We have no right to supernatural life at all, because as men our nature is fully constituted without it; if God chooses to give it to us, it is an entirely free gift on His part, a gift, therefore, which He can give or withhold or give conditionally entirely as He pleases, with no question of right upon our part arising. As to our nature, we and all our ancestors owe it to Adam, and we cannot complain if he had only a damaged nature to transmit to us: it is still better than no nature at all. We had done nothing to earn a nature. Before we existed we were not entitled even to a human nature; once we exist we are not entitled to a super-nature. We cannot say that we have earned and been cheated out of a better nature than we were conceived with: we had not earned any nature at all and there was nothing to cheat us out of.

As I have said the accusation of unfairness will not stand a moment’s consideration. But even the complaint at our being thus bound up with Adam’s disaster shows a failure to grasp the organic solidarity of the human race. We are not isolated units, but even in the natural order members of one thing: it would be no advantage to us to be separated out, cut off, from the consequences of other men’s ill deeds, but cut off, too, from a sharing in the fruits of other men’s virtues: “One man,” so St. Paul writes to the Romans (v. 18), “commits a fault, and it brings condemnation upon all; one man makes amends, and it brings to all justification, that is, life. A multitude will become acceptable to God through one man’s obedience, just as a multitude, through one man’s disobedience,
became guilty.” The same solidarity of the race by which we receive the effects of Adam’s defeat enables us to receive the fruits of Christ’s victory. But of that more, much more, later.

V

There remains to consider one of the personages taking part in the tragedy of the Fall—the Devil. The account in Genesis tells us that Eve was tempted by the serpent. It tells us no more about the tempter than that. It does not say that it was the Devil. That it was no ordinary serpent as known to zoology we realize as clearly as that the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was no ordinary tree as known to botany. So much we shall scarcely need to be told. If we did not guess for ourselves that it was the Devil, we should find it in later passages of scripture. In the Book of Wisdom we read: “God created man incorruptible and to the image of His own likeness He made him. But by the envy of the Devil, death came into the world” (ii. 4); and in Apocalypse we read of “that old serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who seduced the whole world” (xii. 9).

From now onwards the Devil is to play a continuing part in the affairs of men. What he gained by this first and most resounding defeat of man it is hard to say with absolute precision, or any precision. But the general result is only too clear. Man has been established by God as lord of the world, and some sort of lordship passed to his conqueror. Again and again (e.g., John xiv. 30) the Devil is referred to as the Prince of this world. It is obvious enough that he became lord of the world in fact, in the sense that alcohol can become lord of a man; for as an angel he was superior in power to man, and he had found a weakness in man and could play on it with murderous effect. The world had him for its lord much as Scripture speaks of the man whose god is his belly. But did he gain some sort of rights over the world? It is hard to see how he could, for his own action in tempting Adam was sinful, and no rights can be acquired by sin. He could say to Our Lord (Luke iv. 6): “The Kingdoms of this world have been made over to me” and could offer them to Our Lord on a condition; nor does Our Lord say that it is not so. But what exactly does “made over to me” signify? Anyhow, the Devil’s power over fallen humanity was a horrifying fact. Individuals might resist, but the race looked as if it had sold out to the Devil.

Whatever his “lordship” involved, it is clear that following upon the success of this first effort to tempt man, he continues as tempter and adversary. We find Satan moving King David to make a census of Israel against the command of God; and there are scores of other instances. St. Paul tells us: “Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against Principalities and Powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places” (Eph. vi. 12). There is an extraordinarily full working out of this special relation of Satan to the human race in the Book of Job. Satan brings every kind of evil upon Job to try his faith in God; but we are especially told that he could do so only by God’s permission. To say that Satan gained the right to tempt mankind by his victory over Adam would be too strong. Satan’s action was sinful, and, as has been said, one can gain no rights by sin. But it would seem that God saw a certain fittingness in allowing Satan to tempt man: the human race, in Adam, had chosen to listen to Satan; very well, let them go on listening to Satan. God was there to help them, as He was there to help Adam. All the sins of all men since Adam have followed the pattern of Adam’s sin, and made a sort of solidarity in sin between us and him that is a horrid parody of the solidarity in nature. We all have some sort of replica of Adam’s experience in this matter. And on the whole our record is not very glorious. Nor is this surprising. If Satan could win a victory so resounding over unfallen man, his task would not necessarily be harder over fallen man. But strive against so powerful an enemy is very maturing to the soul if we stand firm; and this also God may have had in mind in allowing Satan to tempt us.

As we have already indicated, there was to be Atonement. God knew what He would do that the race of man might return to His friendship: otherwise there would have been no point in giving sanctifying grace to individual men. For the ultimate object of sanctifying grace is to enable men to live the life of heaven; and this they could do only if Heaven were once more to be opened to the race to which they belong. In other words there was to be for men a second chance. The nature of this second chance we shall discuss more thoroughly later; note here that it did not remove the need of testing, but involved that each man should be tested individually. That, now, is what man’s life upon earth is. And just as Adam’s representative testing involved temptation by the Devil, so likewise for our individual testing.

Fundamentally this testing is of the will. The will is free to choose God or to choose self as against God: and this latter choice is
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seldom a direct choice of self, but develops by way of seeking for happiness according to one's own desires—which may be directed to anything whatever that is—against the will of God. Given that the created order is so full of things capable of attracting us, and our nature so damaged, one might wonder why anything more should be needed to make the test severe. In other words we can so easily choose some lesser thing by our own momentum, so to speak, that one wonders why the Devil should bother with us. Certain elements in the answer must wait till we come to a more detailed treatment of our own nature, as we have received it damaged and have damaged it further; but there is one element which must be stated here. With every man simply following his own tendency to damage and diminish himself by making this or that choice against the will of God, evil might very well have a carnival, but it would be a somewhat chaotic carnival. It is hard to look upon this world without coming to a sense that evil is not simply chaotic, that there is a drive and a direction in it which suggests a living intelligence co-ordinating what would otherwise be only scattered and unrelated plunges of the human will—though the uncoercible will of man sets the Devil problems too.

The modern mood, out of touch with the very notion of religion as a statement of the reality of things, will have none of this notion of a personal Devil. It does not deny that evil is abroad: but it prefers to talk of forces and tendencies. In one sense this refusal to see the Devil as a person is a natural piece of wishful thinking: for if there is such a person, he is rather a terrifying person: it is more comfortable to believe that there is no such person: if one has to be terrified in the dark it is better to be terrified of a tendency than of Someone. But in a profounder sense the refusal of personality to the Devil is part of the general modern attack upon personality. We have already seen it in operation denying personality to God. All about us we see it in operation denying personality to man.

Why should the Devil be treated any better?

At any rate you must tear out a vast amount of Christianity if you will reduce the Devil to a tendency. From end to end of the story of man the Devil appears as Someone, as a being of intelligence and will. We have said that God knew what He would do to undo the catastrophe of man's Fall. It is not for nothing that the very first statement God made of what He would do, He made not to Adam and Eve but to the Devil, and He made it in terms of victory over the Devil: his head was to be crushed.

CHAPTER XV

BETWEEN THE FALL AND THE REDEMPTION

GOD knew what He would do, but He would not do it yet. "In the dispensation of the fullness of times," St. Paul tells the Ephesians (i. 10), "God was to re-establish all things in Christ." What does "the fullness of times" mean? At least it means that the Redemption was to take place not at a moment arbitrarily chosen, as though God suddenly decided that the mess had gone on long enough and He had better do something about it. There was a fullness of time, a due moment. Looking at it from our own angle, we feel it fitting that God did not heal the disease at once: a disease should run its course. There is a rhythm of sin, as of revolution. Mankind had started on the road of self-assertion: it must be allowed to work out all the bleak logic of self-assertion to discover for itself all the unwholesome places into which self-assertion could take it. To be redeemed instantly might have left a faint "perhaps" to trouble mankind's peace: the Devil had said that we should be as gods—perhaps, if we had been allowed to try it out thoroughly, we might have become as gods. Well, we were allowed to try it out thoroughly: and we did not become as gods. When mankind knew at last, and beyond a doubt, that the game was up, might not that have been "the fullness of times"? Certainly there is an element of that in it. St. Paul perhaps is only putting the same idea more positively when he speaks of mankind as growing up, coming to maturity. By sin, mankind threw away the maturity God had conferred upon it, started it off with, so to speak. It had gone after a childish dream and must now go through all the pains of growing back to the maturity it had lost. It would be an element in that attained maturity to know that the dream was childish, to be prepared to put away the things of a child.

Mankind did, in some way clear to the eye of God and half-clear to the eye of man, grow up. The fullness of time came. And in it, to quote St. Paul again (Gal. iv. 4), "God sent His Son, made of a woman, that we might receive the adoption of sons."
Observe that it took mankind a vast stretch of time to grow up. How long? We have no notion. We have a close and detailed account of God's continuous dealings with one race, His chosen race the Jews, from somewhere about the year 2000 B.C. when He called Abraham. Recorded history as a whole does not go so very much further back, even for the handful of favoured races whose earlier history is to be read at all. Scripture, as we have seen, is not concerned to tell us how long ago man was created. Archaeology and Geology give us glimpses of civilizations behind civilizations, and some certainty that the race was already very old when our history begins to take hold of its doings. What had happened to the human race between Adam's expulsion from Eden and the beginning of a continuous historical record? Above all, what had happened to man's relations with God?

I

The one astonishing fact is that at the time history takes hold, we find religion everywhere. And although there is an enormous variety of creed and rite and spiritual and moral atmosphere, there is a solid core of common principle. There is a universal belief in a creator of heaven and earth and in especial of man, in the existence of a moral law, in some sort of survival after death; the practice of prayer and sacrifice; and an almost universal belief in an earlier state of earthly happiness which mankind had and lost. All these things are not found everywhere with equal clearness: any one of them will be in one place strongly held and dominating the whole religious outlook, in another hardly realized, living or half-living in the background of the mind. But it is all there, and at any stage of clarity or shadowiness its universality is remarkable. We cannot know all the twists and turns of the road religion took from Adam onwards; but there is sufficient resemblance between what it was in him and what we find it to be in these remote descendants of his, to enable us to get some notion of the main forces at work.

What did the human race bring out of Paradise for the start of the vast adventure of regaining in the hardest possible way the maturity it had rejected? Two things principally: The first was religious knowledge: what God had revealed to Adam and Eve. They would teach it to their children, and they to theirs: it would become a tradition, a memory, a half-memory. The second was their human nature—made of nothing by God and held in existence by His continuing presence in them; a mind and a will wounded, but functioning; a body clamorous and hard to control, and no continuing will to control it. Had the human race been left to its own devices, the interplay of these two factors—the memory of truth revealed and the nature of man—would have governed the state of religion at any given time and place. But the human race was not left to its own devices and two other factors must be realized as in continuous action: Satan did not lose his interest in man after his first spectacular victory; and God never ceased in His care for the world He loved.

One can imagine what would happen to the tradition, the handing on from generation to generation of the religious truths that Adam knew. As the generations lengthened and the families of man spread to cover the earth, there was an inevitable dilution and distortion of the original message. We have seen what happened to the deposit of faith given by Christ to the Apostles, how it has been split into fragments and most of it lost, save where the infallible Church preserves it; the deposit of faith given by God to Adam, with no infallible Church to guard it, would not have fared better. The memory as a memory could only fade: the weakness of the human mind and human will would be too heavily against it. But human nature, if on this side it would make against the preservation of religious truth by memory, would on another side make for its rebuilding. The mind of man was disarrayed by sin but not destroyed. Quite apart from what might survive of the tradition or if nothing at all survived, the mind of man could establish the foundations of a religious interpretation of the universe; and the will of man, with all its tendency toward self as apart from God, could not rid itself of an impulse to move toward God, too. How could it, since God is more intimately present to it than it is to itself? Only a final rejection of God could annihilate finally the impulse to move toward him, and in this life men do not finally reject Him.

Just what elements in the universe and in himself led man to construct the religious interpretation of things which came to the aid of the religious memory that was fading, or supplied for it if it was faded altogether, we cannot know with any certainty. With the scraps of evidence that archaeology and anthropology provide, with inferences from the mental processes of savage peoples still existent, with a colouring from the personality of the theorist, admirable theories are constructed. Any of them may be true, possibly all of them represent an element in a complex process.
The human mind can, as we have seen, by its own powers and without the aid of revelation, establish the existence of God. There are the five proofs set down by St. Thomas, for instance. But did early man set about it like that? We do not know. We know that he did pretty universally believe in a God (or Gods) responsible for creating heaven and earth, in a moral law that expressed the divine will, in prayer and sacrifice as a way to approach the divinity. We do not know how he arrived at this: there are any number of ways leading to it. But after all how could he have failed to arrive at it, since all ways lead to it?

He saw the universe being and happening, so to speak. Things are done: he would assume (quite rightly as it happens) that someone does them. There is an order, of day and night and seasons and such: he would assume, rightly again, that someone arranged it so. If anyone had suggested to him that no one arranged it, that it merely happened, he would perhaps not have known the philosophical answer to that untruth; but it is an untruth, it would not have occurred to him spontaneously, and no one seems to have suggested it to him: or if anyone did he gave the perfectly good answer “Don’t be silly”. Atheism arrived later, and was not widely popular then.

Toward the Someone who made things and did things, he naturally felt dependence (for he knew his own helplessness in the grip of the universe), and he naturally felt awe in the presence of one so immeasurably more powerful. Prayer would be natural (and it may in exceptional souls have reached a very high point of union with God); so, at a further remove, would sacrifice—prayer and sacrifice being at the lowest likely to win the divine favour, and at the highest capable of expressing the profoundest reality about man himself. The reality of man must always be kept in mind. Man would not thus early have arrived at the freakish notion of leaving his body out of account in religion, therefore there would always be some sort of ritual; and the natural tendency to find outward expression for the soul’s deepest states would lead to the idea of sacrament and symbol—such as the notion of the ritual use of water for spiritual cleansing.

All this is at once right, and pretty well inevitable. What other attitudes man would adopt, or what embroidery he would put upon these, would depend on what further attributes—beyond personality and omnipotence—he considered that the Divinity would have. Upon this there is no limit. According to the elements in the universe which have most impressed their mind or their imagination or their fear or their fancy, men have in one time and place or another credited their gods with the strangest attributes and acted toward them accordingly. But the root of all this has been the assumption that God can be known from what He has made, an assumption in itself reasonable, but likely to mislead men who argued back from the thing made to the maker without allowing for the difference between infinite and finite. It would be impossible to pursue all the ways in which men have argued back from creation to Creator and the strange religious beliefs and practices that have resulted; but there are two which seem to be especially widespread and of special importance—two elements in man himself upon which he has built a notion of God.

The one is the human experience of sex—universal, life-giving, the closest union of two human beings, at once non-rational and ecstatic, lifting men for the moment out of themselves. It was inevitable that they should attribute some sort of sex-experience to the Divinity, and natural enough that they should (as so many did) introduce sexual union into their religious rituals as a symbolic means of union with the creative power.

The other is the human experience of conscience—worked out for us magnificently by Newman. The root of it is the awareness of something within us that says “You shall” or “You shall not”: the sense of a law written in our nature, asserting an obligation not imposed on us by ourselves to do right and avoid wrong. It might or might not have led men to believe in a Supreme Being: but once they did believe in such a Being, it was inevitable that they should connect that inner voice with Him, should see the law it utters as His, should see Him as a source of morality, and so even of holiness: as One whom they would worship, with whom they would seek some sort of mystical oneness.

All this, man following his own nature could do: and all this, whether by some such process as we have sketched or by some quite other, man did do. Yet precisely as, by the reality in it, human nature tends to build religion, so by the wounds in it it tends to deform what it has built.

Thus the human intellect would tend to see that there must be some sort of Supreme Being: but only a human intellect at full strength would by its own unsupported powers hold on to one God and that God spiritual, just as a human will at less than full strength would find one God too overwhelming, and a purely
spiritual God too remote. Polytheism and idolatry came crowding in everywhere; pantheism was an escape in a different direction. Moral corruption naturally corrupted religion, too. Sexual rites could only grow monstrous: man’s fallen nature gets too much excitement out of sex to be trusted with sexual ritual. Nor did man’s fallen nature always keep blood rituals in control: animal sacrifice suggested human sacrifice, and human sacrifice could grow to hecatombs. And if this means aberration by excess there was the possibility of aberration by defect, religion falling to a mere ritual relation without love or holiness or sense of moral obligation, but only gods to be placated and a routine of placation.

Scripture makes it clear that the Devil played a great part in it. The prophet Baruch (iv. 7) tells the Jews that their captivity in Babylon is a punishment from God for having worshipped false gods. “For you have provoked Him who made you, the eternal God, offering sacrifice to devils and not to God.” So St. Paul, advising Christians not to eat meat that is known to have been offered in sacrifice to idols, makes clear that this is not because what is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything, or that the idol itself is anything, but that “the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God. And I would not that you should be made partakers with devils.” In the very worst of religions, you can see what good thing they are travesty: somewhere below the travesty there is a basis of reality. The Devil indeed prefers to work with reality gone astray: there is more to it than to total fictions. The religions of heathendom gave him wonderful scope. Just how much he made of it, we see in a grim passage of Wisdom (xiv. 21-27): “Men, serving either their affection or their kings, gave the communicable name to stones and wood. And it was not enough for them to err about the knowledge of God: but whereas they lived in a great war of ignorance, they call so many and so great evils peace. For either they sacrifice their own children, or use hidden sacrifices, or keep watches full of madness. So that now they neither keep life nor marriage undefiled: but one killeth another by envy or grieveth lieth by adultery. And all things are mingled together, blood, murder, theft and dissimulation, corruption and unfaithfulness, tumults and perjury, disquieting of the good; forgetfulness of God, defiling of souls, changing of nature, disorder in marriage, and the irregularity of adultery and uncleanness. For the worship of abominable idols is the cause, and the beginning and end, of all evils.”

It was a carnival for the Devil. Yet religion did not perish. Nor is the history of religion a history of corruptions growing ever worse. There is degeneration, but there is revival, too. Between Adam and Our Lord we see now one section, now another of the pagan world, but we see no one section steadily, and a vast part of the world we scarcely see at all. So that it is impossible to figure a rhythm of degeneration and revival: but on the whole the movement of Paganism strikes us as not downward certainly, upward if anything. So history seems to show: so we should expect. For every Pagan was made by God in His own image and God loved them all. They had all fallen in Adam, but the Redemption was for them all. His providence did not ignore them in the immeasurable ages between. Wherever we look in time or place we see men calling upon God; it would be strange if God did not answer.

Just how God’s providence worked we do not know. St. John tells us in the first chapter of his Gospel that the Word who is God “enlightens every soul born into the world”, so that besides the supernatural illumination of the soul in grace which, as we have seen, is appropriated to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, there is an illumination of every human soul appropriated to the Second. St. Irenaeus, who knew Paganism—he lived in the midst of it in Asia and in Italy and in Gaul—writes in the Second Century: “One and the same Divine Father and His eternal Word are from the beginning and in every age close to the human race and approach man by many ordinances and many operations of assisting grace.”

The formula for this period as for all periods is man’s desire for God (not, alas, man’s sole desire, nor always his strongest, and in some men no longer there at all) and God’s love for man. Given that, we might expect to find what in fact we do find. With all the fantastic perversions wrought by man’s weakness of mind and will, there are true values, that is to say resemblances to the Christian revelation, to be found in every part of Paganism. Some elements in the true approach of God to man and of man to God are to be found in all religions; there is hardly one that is not to be found in some.

But in God’s plan for the re-establishment of the whole race, a special part was to be acted by one race, the Jews, and because of this God brought them into a special relation with Himself. The
story is told in the forty-six books of the Old Testament, from which I have already quoted so much. They are the sacred books of the Jews, and form a body of religious writing without parallel in the world. They cover the whole period from the creation of Adam to just before the coming of Christ; but they treat mainly of God's choosing of the Jews and what followed from it. The Church that Christ founded teaches that they were written by men under the inspiration of God—inspiration consisting in this, that God so illuminated the minds and energized in the wills of the writers, that what they wrote was what God wanted them to write. Thus these books have God for their principal author. That is why the arguments as to when and by whom the various books were written do not affect our acceptance of the doctrine they contain: our acceptance rests not on the human author but on God who inspired him.

The special relation of one people with God begins at a time and a place—the time roughly 2000 B.C., the place Haran in the land of Chanaan. There had come Abram, with his father and his brothers, from the Chaldaean town of Ur. And God said to Abram (Gen. xii): "I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee and magnify thy name: and thou shalt be blessed. I will bless them that bless thee and curse them that curse thee: and in thee shall all the kindred of the earth be blessed." In the years that followed, God renewed the promises many times: but it was twenty-five years later that the great covenant was made which constituted the Jews God's people (Gen. xvii): "God said to him: I am. And My covenant is with thee: and thou shalt be a father of many nations. And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and between thy seed after thee in their generations, by a perpetual covenant: to be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee." God changed Abram's name to Abraham, which means "father of nations", and gave the command of circumcision "as a sign of the covenant."

God then had singled out a particular family, which was to grow into a nation: not for their own sake but for the sake of all mankind: they were chosen not simply for a favour, but for a function, something God was to do through them for the whole race. This God makes clear again (Gen. xxii. 18): "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

The promises were repeated to Abraham's second son Isaac (he had already had a son Ishmael by a bondwoman) and to Isaac's second son Jacob (for the elder, Esau, had forsworn his birth-
instance, made no more appeal to them than to all that ocean of polytheistic people which surrounded them. All their instincts ran to strange gods and to idols: the thing seems to have been a craving as strong as a man might feel for alcohol. They were forever going after the gods of the heathen, and God forever restoring them to right ways. God's pedagogy was of two sorts: He allowed their enemies to work their will upon them as a reminder that they were in the hand of the one God and could achieve nothing without Him: He sent them the Prophets to bear glowing and glorious witness to the same truth. If they found monotheism difficult, they found not much easier the true doctrine as to the nature of the Messias, the Anointed One, who was to come, and of the Kingdom He was to found. Here again the Prophets were their instructors, and as the centuries pass the picture of the Messias and His Kingdom grows in detail and in clarity.

Yet we should be mistaken if we exaggerated the clarity. There is a vast mass of prophecy, and a magnificence over all of it. But much of it is obscure even to us who have seen its fulfilment; certain elements which now seem most wonderfully fulfilled appear buried in their context, not emphasized as prophetic or especially likely to catch the ear or the eye. The Prophets did not provide a blackboard diagram and then proceed to lecture on it. Indeed our modern use of the word prophet may give us a wrong notion of their office. Prophecy does not mean to foretell, but to speak out. They were not there primarily to foretell the future, but to utter the eternal and judge the present by it. The Jews not unnaturally found morality harder even than monotheism: the Law had imposed upon them a morality stricter than any known among men, and they fell from it. The Prophets thundered against this as against strange gods. For here, too, they must judge the present by the eternal.

But precisely because that was their function they did speak much of Him who was to come. Consider how the picture builds up. We have already seen that One who was to be the expectation of nations should come from Juda. From the Psalms (e.g., Ps. cxxxi. 11) we gather the further detail that He was to be a descendant of David the King, and this is confirmed by the statement of Isaías (xi. 1) that he is to be "a rod out of the root of Jesse," for Jesse was David's father: "In that day the root of Jesse, who standeth for an ensign of the people, him the Gentiles shall beseech and his sepulchre shall be glorious." There is no explicit statement that this is the Messias: but St. Paul takes it for granted (Rom. xv. 12), and in any event no Jew doubted that the Messias was to be sprung from David.

In the seventh chapter of Isaías we read: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son: and his name shall be called Emmanuel." From St. Matthew (i. 23) we know that this is a prophecy of the virgin birth of Christ; yet in the context, one might well think that the prophecy referred to an event immediately expected and actually described in the next chapter of Isaías, the eighth, as having happened. In the light of our new knowledge, we can re-read the eighth chapter and see that though there is some sort of fulfilment there and then, yet some mightier thing is involved: the language used is of a grandeur too great for the actual episode.

The fifth chapter of Micheas tells us that the Messias is to be born in Bethlehem: "And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda: out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler of Israel: and his going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity. . . . And this man shall be our peace."

There are other details which we see fulfilled, but which could hardly have meant so much to their first hearers: thus Zacharias (ix. 9) writes: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold thy King will come to thee, the just and saviour. He is poor and riding upon an ass, upon a colt, the foal of an ass."

Such details as we have been considering—that the Messias was to be of the tribe of Juda, of the family of David, born of a virgin and in Bethlehem—are not the primary things about Him. Two things that matter far more are Himself and what He was to do. Upon both, the prophecies are fuller and clearer.

As to what He was: there is a central stream of teaching which shows Him a man triumphant, and two parallel streams, one showing Him as more than a man, the other showing Him as less than triumphant. It would seem that the Jews concentrated on the central stream, and made little of either of the others. Yet these others are of such vast importance that missing them one hardly sees Him at all.

That He was to be more than man, not simply the greatest of men, is indicated again and again. We have already seen the phrase of Micheas—"his going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity." But it is not only by pre-existence that the Messias seems to be more than man. The hints are everywhere: as for
instance the suggestion that He is God's son in some special way (It is hard to see how they could be more than hints: the truth about the divinity of the Messias could not well be conveyed to a nation that did not know the doctrine of the Trinity.)

The reverse of the medal is the even clearer stream of prophecy that the Messias is to be poor and suffering. The greatest passages are in Psalm xxi. and in chapter iii., of Isaias. The Psalm and the chapter should be read most carefully. Here note a few verses from the chapter, summing all up: "Despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity....

"He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer.

"And the Lord was pleased to bruise him in infirmity. If he shall lay down his life for sin he shall see a long-lived seed."

To say that the Jews ignored a good deal of all this is not to accuse them of any startling malignity. The assertion of the Messias's pre-existence, for example, was difficult to reconcile with the certainty that he was to be a descendant of David: one gets the impression that the Jews, faced with two elements difficult to reconcile, simply took the intellectual line of least resistance, concentrated upon the clearer one and left the other in its mysteriousness. Similarly it is hard to see how anything short of what did in fact happen to Christ Our Lord could have shown the fulfilment both of the splendour and the suffering: lacking that clue they concentrated on the more obvious.

But if their intellect followed the line of least resistance in the picture they formed of the Messias in Himself, their will seems to have followed the line of greatest complacency in the picture they formed of the Kingdom He was to found. They saw it as a Kingdom of Israel in which the Gentiles, if they came into it at all, should be very much in a subordinate place; and they saw it as an earthly and not as a spiritual Kingdom. The Prophets, carefully read, supply correctives for both errors.

Thus they assert that the Messias is coming for a light to the Gentiles and that the Gentiles are to share in the joy of his Kingdom. When Psalm lxxi. says: "In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed: all nations shall magnify him"; it simply re-asserts what God said to Abram in the first of the promises. Isaias is filled with the same teaching: and he indicates the possibility that there may be Jews excluded from the Kingdom and Gentiles admitted. So St. Paul (Rom. x. 20) explains the contrast (Isaias lxv.) between what God says of the Gentiles: "Those who never looked for me have found me: I have made myself known to those who never asked for word of me", and what He says of the Jews: "I stretch out my hand all day to a people that refuses obedience and cries out against me". But if we find from the Prophets that the Gentiles were to have a place, and a place of joy, in the Kingdom, it was left for St. Paul to utter in plain words the intimate secret of the total equality of Jew and Gentile in the Kingdom, the mystery of Christ "which was never made known to any human being in past ages...that through the gospel preaching the Gentiles are to win the same inheritance, to be made part of the same body, to share the same divine promise in Christ Jesus" (Eph. iii. 5-6).

Thus all who belong to Christ are of the seed of Abraham and the promises of the Kingdom are to us. But what sort of Kingdom? The Jews, as we have seen, seemed to expect an earthly Kingdom. The Prophets do not precisely and explicitly contradict them, but they give a mass of teaching which should have made the notion of a merely earthly Kingdom untenable and not even desirable. Thus Ezechiel (xxxvi. 24-26): "And I will pour upon you clean water, and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness and I will cleanse you from all idols. And I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in the midst of you." And Zacharias (ix.): "And He shall speak peace to the Gentiles: and His power shall be from sea to sea, and from rivers even to the end of the earth. And the Lord their God will save them in that day, as the flock of his people: for holy stones shall be lifted up over His lands. For what is the good thing of Him and what is His beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect and wine springing forth virgins."

Indeed it is plain enough, for us who read the Prophets now, that there was to be a spiritualization at every point: even at the point of priesthood and sacrifice where Israel had most scrupulously observed the Law. For the Jewish priests and the Jewish sacrifices were but figures of, and preparations for, something that was mysteriously to transcend them. The Messias was to be (Ps. cix.) "a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech"—a strange phrase, for Melchisedech, who had offered a sacrifice of bread and wine (Gen. xiv.), was not a Jew. As for the priesthood, so for the sacrifices: "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice,
and there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Mal. i. 11.)

Everything in Israel was preparatory, looked forward to something which should complete it. The Law given by God to Moses was not a consummation. It was a preparation: a hard and heavy preparation: not maturity, but a superb training for maturity.

III

Maturity came. Look again at what St. Paul told the Galatians (iv. 3-5): “So we also, when we were children, were serving under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law: that He might redeem them who were under the Law: that we might receive the adoption of sons.” I have said that the moment of maturity was clear to the eye of God, half-clear to our eye. We seem to see, though it would be absurd to pretend in such a matter that we could be certain, that the Law had done for the Jews all that it had in it to do. Trained by the Law and hammered by their enemies, they had come to a splendid point of development—poor enough in the light of the possibilities Christ was to reveal, but magnificent in comparison with what was to be found elsewhere. Their century-old temptation to polytheism and idolatry, they had conquered: from their return out of captivity in Babylon, five hundred years before, it seems not to have troubled them. Under the Romans, who had ruled them now for sixty years, they had stood gloriously against the introduction of idols. They held unbreakably to belief in the one true God, and observed most scrupulously His ritual law; and if the moral law was harder to observe, they maintained its rights as law, and repented for their sins against it. It is easy enough to see defects here—as in the disproportionate observance of the outward act and failure to grasp that the inward state of the will was decisive. But the Jewish religion at the time of Christ’s birth was a thing of grandeur: and showed by the holiness it produced in the best of the Jews how fit it was for the completion that Christ was to bring it and the use He made of it. The Law, says St. Paul (Gal. iii. 24), was a pedagogue—the word here does not mean a teacher, but the slave who took the children to school: and the school that the Law brought them to was Christ. To Christ the Law did in all reality bring the Jews.

But the preparation was not only of the Jews, nor the fullness of time only a matter of their coming to maturity. For the Gentiles, too, the time was at the full. The history of the human race is one story from end to end, not a collection of unrelated short stories. The history of the race, says St. Augustine, is the story of one man. It was the race that fell in Adam, it was the race that was to be redeemed: in between the race had to be made ready. One cannot pretend to see the Gentile world as God saw it. Yet even in what we can see, there is at least a suggestion of a pedagogic action of God upon the Gentiles, parallel (though at a lower level) to His pedagogic action upon the Jews. If the Jews were made ready in one way, the Gentiles were made ready in another. God had not given them the Mosaic Law, but His natural law was written in their hearts. And His providence was over them. He had not sent them Prophets like those He had sent Israel, but they had had powerful religious teachers and great religious revivals, countless movements upwards to balance—and as it would seem more than balance—the countless movements downwards: and God was not for nothing in all this. Indeed it is hard to see how, otherwise, religion, under the combined influence of man’s weakness and the Devil’s destructive skill, should have survived at all—whereas in fact the general religious standard of the heathen world was almost certainly higher at the coming of Christ than it had been two thousand years earlier when God made His covenant with Abraham.

But that continuing providence of God over the Gentiles which a study of the Gentile world certainly suggests, we know as a fact from Scripture. St. John, we have seen, in the first chapter of his Gospel speaks of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity as the True Light “Who enlightens every soul born into the world.” St. Paul states unequivocally (Rom.i.) that “the knowledge of God is clear to their minds; God Himself has made it clear to them; from the foundation of the world men have caught sight of His invisible nature, His eternal power and His divineness, as they are known through His creatures.” Nor is it merely a matter of the intellect’s power to draw inferences from the external universe: “As for the Gentiles, though they have no Law to guide them, there are times when they carry out the precepts of the Law unbidden, finding in their own natures a rule to guide them, in default of any other rule: and this shows that the obligations of the law are written in their hearts; their conscience utters its own testimony, and when they dispute with one another, they find themselves condemning this, approving that.” (Rom. ii. 14-15.)

So that the Gentiles had a law uttering the will of God to them, but not supplemented as it was for the Jews by the Law given to
Moses. Similarly the Gentiles had religious teachers, not Prophets inspired by God, but men working toward truth all the same and by and large serving truth—at least to the point of bettering the proportion of truth to error. Around five hundred years before Christ, the Jews as we have seen returned from the Babylonian captivity cleansed once for all of attachment to strange gods. About the same time there was a religious movement—or series of movements—throughout the Pagan world. Zoroaster in Persia got closer to monotheism perhaps than any religious founder ever got outside the main stream of God’s revelation to man; in different ways Gautama Buddha in India, Confucius and Lao Tse in China founded systems based upon great truths from which, though they were mingled with error or hindered by insufficiency, men’s souls surely gained far more than they lost. A couple of hundred years later, the Greek philosophers—Socrates, Plato, Aristotle—did a marvellous intellectual work upon the nature of things, which moved St. Justin Martyr to give them the title which St. Paul a century earlier had given the Law—“Pedagogues to bring men to Christ”. Of the later religious movements—Stoicism, Neo-Pythagoreanism and such—we may say what we have said of the great sixth century movements: that, allowance made for their errors, they meant some sort of upward movement. Compared with Christianity they are laden with imperfections; but compared with what actually lay around them, one can see how they had their part in the preparation. There were many other elements at work. The Roman Law spread a greater measure of better discipline over a wider area of the world than any secular law before it. The Jews were widely dispersed inside and outside the Roman Empire, and some of the truth of Judaism had seeped into the surrounding paganism.

All these things are true, yet a glance at the state of the Pagan world might lead us to feel that they bear too tiny a proportion to a whole ocean of iniquity. Look at St. Paul’s powerful description in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans (a description blacker if anything than the passage already quoted from the centuries-earlier book of Wisdom):

“They, who claimed to be so wise, turned fools, and exchanged the glory of the imperishable God for representations of perishable man, of bird and beast and reptile. That is why God abandoned their lustful hearts to filthy practices of dishonouring their own bodies among themselves. They had exchanged God’s truth for a lie, reverencing and worshipping the creature in preference to

the Creator... and in return God abandoned them to passions which brought dishonour to themselves. Their women exchanged natural for unnatural intercourse; and the men, on their side, giving up natural intercourse with women, were burnt up with desire for each other; men practising vileness with their fellow-men. Thus they have received a fitting retribution for their false belief.

“And as they scorned to keep God in view, so God has abandoned them to a frame of mind worthy of all scorn, that prompts them to disgraceful acts. They are versed in every kind of injustice, knavery, impurity, avarice, and ill-will; spiteful, murderous, contentious, deceitful, depraved, back-biting, slanderers, God’s enemies; insolent, haughty, vainglorious; inventive in wickedness, disobedient to their parents; without prudence, without honour, without love, without loyalty, without piety.”

In what sense can we speak of a fullness of time for such people? How can we feel that they too have in any way been made ready? Clearly we cannot know: yet certain possibilities leap to the eye. In the best of the Gentiles clearly, and in the average less clearly, there had grown up a contempt for the peculiarities of the myths and a dissatisfaction with the Mysteries; philosophy which had promised so fair four centuries earlier had come to a sort of barrenness and clearly could do no more for them; the pleasures of the flesh were horribly exacting, but yielded less and less of joy. Despair lay over everything and despair is a kind of maturity too, or at least a last stage on one road to maturity. It is not altogether fanciful to think that Jew and Gentile, having different roles to play in the design of the Messias who was to come, were made ready by God in different ways. Israel was to receive the message from the Christ and bear it to the Pagan world; the Pagan world was to receive it from Israel. Israel was made ready to receive the new impulse because the Law had done so much for it; the Law had brought Israel as far as it could, but it had brought it there trained in mind and will and filled with hope—ready for what was to come. If Israel’s preparation was by way of vitality and hope, Paganism’s was by way of devitalization and despair. The Jew had learned the glory of God, the Pagan the worthlessness of all else. The spiritual energy of Israel needed this new relation with God: they had to do something with their energy. The spiritual deposition of Paganism needed this new inpouring of life: they had to get energy from somewhere. For Jew and for Gentile, it was the fullness of time. Christ came that all things might be re-established in Him.
CHAPTER XVI

THE MISSION OF CHRIST

Observe that the fullness of time, with all the mysterious spiritual resonances that the phrase has, actually is in time. It belongs to history. It has indeed been dated for us with some precision. Time came to its fullness during the reign of Augustus who, having defeated Mark Antony and his ally, Cleopatra, ruled from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14 and out of the ancient Roman Republic and its conquests fashioned the Roman Empire, whose destiny was to be so closely linked with that of Christ’s Kingdom on earth. St. Luke tells us that Augustus decreed a census of the whole Empire: as a consequence Joseph, a carpenter, “a man of David’s clan and family”, went from Nazareth in Galilee to register in David’s city of Bethlehem in Judea. With him was his wife, Mary, also of David’s line, still a virgin and ever to be a virgin. And in Bethlehem she gave birth to Jesus, who was the Christ, the Anointed One, the expectation of the nations.

For this, the highest function to which any human person had ever been called, God had prepared Mary most exquisitely. Her own conception in the womb of Anne, her mother had been in the ordinary way of nature. But in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, the Church teaches that from the moment that she was conceived, sanctifying grace was by the power of the Blessed Trinity in her soul; thus she was never stained by Adam’s sin. Throughout her life she was, by the power of the same most Holy Trinity, preserved from all personal sin. In due course she was betrothed to Joseph the carpenter—whose glory in the eyes of God’s Church has grown steadily, for all that we have not one word of his recorded.

During the time of betrothal, God (as St. Luke tells in his first chapter) sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth where Mary was. And Gabriel greeted her: “Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.” Then came his message: “Mary, do not be afraid; thou hast found favour in the sight of God. And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call him Jesus. He shall be great, and men will know him for the Son of the Most High; the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the Kingdom of Jacob eternally; his Kingdom shall never have an end.”

Mary said to the Angel: “How can that be, since I have no knowledge of man?”

The Angel answered: “The Holy Spirit will come upon thee, and the power of the most High will overshadow thee. Thus that holy thing which is to be born of thee shall be known for the Son of God.”

Thus she conceived. And to Joseph, profoundly troubled, an angel appeared in a dream and said: “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take thy wife Mary to thyself, for it is by the power of the Holy Ghost that she has conceived this child; and she will bear a son, whom thou shalt call Jesus, for he is to save his people from their sins.”

And now in Bethlehem Jesus is born: and at the Presentation Simeon under the inspiration of God hails Him as “The light which shall give revelation to the Gentiles, the glory of God’s people Israel”. For the first thirty years of His life we know almost nothing. Warned that Herod sought the life of the new-born Messias, Joseph fled with his wife and the Child to Egypt: Herod died (A.D. 4) and the family returned to Nazareth. When Jesus was twelve, there was a curious episode (to which we shall return) when they lost the child and found Him again in the Temple. Apart from that, nothing until He was about thirty.

Here again St. Luke dates the moment for us. In the fifteenth year of the reign of Augustus’s successor, Tiberius, (who reigned from A.D. 14 to 37) John the Baptist went all over the country round Jordan, baptizing and preaching that the Christ was at hand. To him came Jesus; and John cried: “This is the Lamb of God; this is He who takes away the sin of the world.” From then we may date the three years of Our Lord’s public life, ending in His death by crucifixion. On the third day after His death He rose again to life; and forty days after that He ascended into heaven. The story in its main outlines is familiar to all Christians. What we want now is to get at its meaning.
Theology and Sanity

II

We have to consider what Our Lord actually came into the world for. If you have taken the advice given in the first section of this book, you will have been taking special note of anything in the Gospels upon what Christ had come to do. The angel Gabriel who announced His coming to the Blessed Virgin Mary, His mother, told her that He was to be called Jesus, which means saviour, and that He was to be ruler of a kingdom which should never end (Luke i. 31-34). The angel who appeared to St. Joseph added a precision to the word saviour—He was to save His people from their sins. John the Baptist, sent by God to prepare the people for the coming of Christ, said: “This is the Lamb of God. This is He who takes away the sin of the world.” (John i. 29.)

The second phrase repeats what we already know, that He is to save, and to save from sin, and adds, with the word Lamb, the hint that He will be offered in sacrifice.

Our Lord Himself says many things upon what He had come for. Some of them represent not the purpose itself, but rather what He knows to be the certain result of what He has come to do: “Do not imagine that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have come to bring a sword, not peace” (Mt. x. 34); or “I have come into this world so that a sentence may come upon it, that those who are blind should see, and those who see should become blind” (Jn. ix. 39); or the intensely suggestive “It is fire that I have come to spread over the earth, and what better wish can I have than that it should be kindled” (Lk. xii. 49).

But what we must concentrate upon are His direct statements as to the purpose of His coming.

To Zacchaeus, the chief publican, He said: (Lk. xix. 10) “That is what the Son of Man has come for, to search out and to save that which was lost.”

Compare this with what He had said earlier to Nicodemus (Jn. iii. 15): “This Son of Man must be lifted up, as the serpent was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness; so that those who believe in Him may not perish, but have eternal life.” Following this, we have either as part of Our Lord’s speech to Nicodemus or written in commentary by the Evangelist: “God so loved the world, that He gave up His only-begotten Son, so that those who believe in Him may not perish, but have eternal life. When God sent His Son

The Mission of Christ

into the world, it was not to reject the world, but so that the world might find salvation through Him.”

To the Roman governor Pilate He said (Jn. xviii. 37): “What I was born for, what I came into the world for, is to bear witness of the truth.”

To the Pharisees and Scribes He said (Lk. v. 32): “I have come to call sinners to repentance.”

He sent out His Apostles (Lk. ix. 2) “to proclaim the Kingdom of God” and to work miracles in support of their message.

To the Apostles, angry with James and John for seeking the first place in His Kingdom, He said (Mt. xx. 28): “The Son of Man did not come to have service done Him; He came to serve others and to give His life as a ransom for the lives of many.”

Again to the Pharisees He said (Jn. x. 10): “I have come so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.”

These texts cover what He had to say directly as to why He had come. Observe that what He says of Himself is simply a development of what had already been said about Him—He is to save, to save from sin, to found a Kingdom; the hint in St. John’s word “Lamb” is now made explicit—He is to give His life a ransom for many; then there is the assertion of truth, the reality of things; and there is a further precision as to what salvation was from—He was to save a world that was lost, a race in danger of perishing—and a profounder statement as to what salvation was to be—life, more abundant life, eternal life: and, as we shall see from other things He said, life in union with God, as sons of God. But indeed upon every element in this summary of His purpose in coming we shall get great light from the rest of His teaching.

So St. Paul was to find. He more fully and closely than any analysed what Our Lord came to do. It would be possible to make an immense list of the things He has to say on the subject; much of it will be quoted later. He uses a great number of different words to express the work Our Lord did, because what He did was as many-sided as the damage we received from Adam and the spiritual needs of man: and one word or another is more appropriate according to which particular effect of Our Lord’s work St. Paul has in mind. Here we may note three words which He uses again and again: the word “redeem”, which means literally to buy back, to pay a price for something lost, so that it is roughly equivalent to “ransom”; the word “reconcile” which means
restoring good relations, bringing harmony where there is discord, and so represents the heart of atonement; and the word “justification” which means giving us that natural and supernatural rightness which God designed for us and is therefore a way of expressing the result of reconciliation with God.

As an example of “redeem”, we have “In the Son of God, in His blood, we find the redemption that sets us free from our sins” (Col. i. 14). “Reconcile” we find in: “Enemies of God, we were reconciled to Him through His Son’s death” (Rom. v. 10); “It is God who, through Christ, has reconciled us to Himself and allowed us to minister this reconciliation of His to others. Yes, God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, establishing in our hearts His message of reconciliation, instead of holding men to account for their sins.” (2 Cor. v. 18-20.)

For “justification”, we find: “We have found justification through His blood” (Rom. v. 9); “So being justified by His grace, we were to become heirs, with the hope of eternal life set before us” (Titus iii. 7).

In the Epistle to the Romans (iii. 24) St. Paul gives us all three effects: “Justification comes to us as a free gift from His grace, through our redemption in Christ Jesus. God has offered Him to us as a means of reconciliation, in virtue of faith, ransoming us with His blood.”

The new relation to which reconciliation brings us, the living element in justification, is to be sons of God by adoption, sharing the inheritance of Christ: “The spirit you have now received is not, as of old, a spirit of slavery, to govern you by fear: it is the spirit of adoption which makes us cry out Abba, Father.” (Rom. viii. 14-15.)

If we were to go no further than this into the meaning and mission of Christ Our Lord, we should still have enough to see Him as our only hope. If we had never heard of Adam’s sin (or having heard of it, did not believe it), we should still know our own sinfulness and need of cleansing; if we knew nothing of all the past, one look at the world would tell us of its urgent need for healing. Knowing these things, we need no very profound theology to tell us that in Christ Our Lord is salvation for us and for all men. So millions have found Him, and millions will still find Him. Yet it remains that there are depths below depths of understanding possible, and theology can open them to us. There is immense gain of every sort in seeing the detail of the relation between men’s need and Christ’s work. For our special purpose in this study—to get some understanding of what life is about—it is indispensable.

III

St. Paul’s words, “redeem” and “reconcile” and “justify”, are the fundamental ways of saying what Christ Our Lord came to do; for they state the ways in which His one single action solved the twofold problem set by the one single sin of Adam.

As we have seen, the race had lost its oneness with God, and Our Lord did the work of at-one-ment or reconciliation, restoration of man to sonship. In this restored sonship lies man’s right relation to God which St. Paul calls “justification”. But also the race had, by its sin, put itself in debt to God’s justice, and Christ paid the debt for He offered to God an act which expiated, balanced, compensated for the act by which the race had chosen itself as apart from God. This is the root idea of the word redeem, which literally means to buy something back, pay a price for the recovery of a captive. The metaphor must not be pressed too far: God was not a gaoler holding men captive until Christ paid a ransom to free them from His hands: on the contrary, what held men captive was not God but sin, and the object of redemption was not to take men from God but to bind them to Him in a life-giving union. Yet there is a real sense of a price paid: something was due from man as a preliminary to restoration, and Christ rendered it for us by His death. So St. Paul can say (1 Cor. vi. 20): “You are bought with a great price”, and St. Peter (in his first Epistle i. 19-20): “You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold and silver . . . but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled.”

Thus we have two elements in what Our Lord did. He made satisfaction for man’s sins, and He merited for men the new life of sons reconciled to their Father. The word Redemption, though in its literal meaning it seems to apply especially to the element of satisfaction for sin, is ordinarily used also to cover the whole work of Christ, and so to include the reconciliation and the justification: and this is natural. To “redeem” is to “buy back”, and if the “buy” suggests the satisfaction, the “back” suggests the restoration. The important thing, when we use the word Redemption for Christ’s whole work of re-establishing humanity, is that we should see that there are two elements.
The Council of Trent (vi. 7) says that Our Lord through the great charity wherewith He loved us, by His most Holy Passion on the wood of the cross, merited justification for us and made satisfaction to God on our behalf.

Notice again that it was not a question primarily of redeeming individuals, but of redeeming the human race to which these individuals belonged. As we have seen, St. John the Baptist speaks of Our Lord as taking away the sin of the world: not sins, sin. There was a sin of the world, which was the background against which all individual sins were written. The sin of the world was the breach between the human race and God, and it stood between men and the sonship of God. Christ healed it. It is in this widest sense that He is the Saviour of mankind. The individual does not need to sin in order to have Christ as his Saviour: the child who dies in the moment of Baptism never having committed any personal sin at all still has Christ for its Saviour, because it shares in the benefits of the act by which Christ reconciled to God the race to which it belongs: Our Blessed Lady, Christ’s mother, who had God’s grace in her soul from the first moment of her existence could still call God her Saviour, not only because He saved her from committing sin, but because He had saved the race of Adam whose sinless descendant she was.

This thing that Our Lord came to do, the restoration of the broken relationship, is the primary thing if we are to understand His mission at all—what He came to do, and who He was that came to do it. We have already seen from the Gospels that Christ is God. St. Paul tells us so as clearly (Col. ii. 9): “In Christ the whole plenitude of the Godhead is embodied” (or in the Douay version: “In Christ dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily”). We have seen also that Christ, not ceasing to be God, is man too. The opening of St. John’s Gospel tells us how the Word, who was God, was made flesh, was incarnate; again St. Paul has his own way of saying it: “His nature is from the first divine and He thought it no usurpation to claim the rank of Godhead; He dispossessed Himself, and took the nature of a slave, fashioned in the likeness of men, and presenting Himself to us in human form; and then He lowered His own dignity, accepted an obedience which brought Him to death, death on a cross.” (Phil. ii. 6–9.)

The Incarnation was God’s answer to the double problem which faced fallen mankind. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, God the Son, became man, took to Himself and made His own a human nature; and in that nature offered to God the sacrifice which outbalanced the sin of mankind, and merited the supernatural restoration of man: so that Adam’s offence was expiated, the breach it had caused between God and man was healed, so that God and man might be at one again, and man brought back from servitude to sonship.

To see how totally the Incarnation answers the problem we must consider more closely the relation of the humanity of Christ to his Godhead. It might be well to re-read chapter vi (section ii), where the distinction between person and nature is discussed in some detail. Here I need only summarize. Given a rational being, the nature answers the question what, the person answers the question who; again the person does what is done in the nature, but the nature conditions what the person does. The person does what his nature enables him to do. The nature is a source of possible actions: if any of those actions get done, it is the person who does them, not the nature. Where it is question of a finite rational nature, there is a question not only of doing things but of having things done to one, suffering, in a general way experiencing. Here again the nature is decisive as to what may be done or suffered or experienced; but the person does and suffers and experiences.

We may now apply these distinctions to God-made-man as earlier in the book we applied them to the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. God the Son was a Person, a Someone, possessing the nature of God in its fullness, and this in the eternity of the Divine Being. At a certain point in time He took to Himself and made His own a human nature. Thus we have the unique instance of one single person with two natures, divine and human. To the question “Who are you?” Christ would have but one answer. He is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, God the Son, the Word. But to the question “What are you?” Christ Our Lord would have two answers, for He has two natures; He is God and He is man. Note the consequences for Our Lord’s actions. Nature decides what the person can do. This one Person had two natures, two sources of action from which He could draw. He had the Divine Nature, and so could do all that goes with being God. He had a human nature, and so could do all that goes with being man. But whether He was doing the things of God in His Divine Nature or doing the things of man in His human nature, in either
event it was the Person Who was doing them: and there was but the one Person and He was God.

Thus Christ Our Lord, having a human nature, was able to perform a human act; but He who performed it was a divine Person. Being able to perform a human act, He could offer it in expiation of the human act of Adam. But because He was a divine Person His human act had a value which no act of a merely human person could have had.

And this same union in Him of human and divine which was the ground of His work of expiation, was the ground of His work of reconciliation, too. If the human race were to be brought back from servitude to sonship, here was the man who in Himself was Son and not servant; if the human race were once more to be at one with God, here in Christ Jesus humanity was already united with the Godhead in a union of inconceivable closeness. Christ Our Lord was the atonement before He made the atonement. He alone could perform an act at once human and divine. Thus He could offer to God an act of obedience in love which as human could rightly be set against humanity’s sin of rebellion in self-love, and which as divine must have all the value needed, or immeasurably more than all the value needed, to satisfy for it.

CHAPTER XVII

THE REDEEMER

I

THIS doctrine of the one person and two natures of Christ Our Lord, which is simply the answer to the questions who and what He is, is so vital to the understanding of what He did, and indeed to the understanding of all that we ourselves are and do, that we must examine it in more detail. There is not the tiniest scintilla of truth in it which will not cast a great beam of light. The tendency to dismiss the vast mass of Christ’s revelation upon it and the Church’s meditation upon His revelation as mere theology can come only from a total unawareness of its meaning.

Notice that it was the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity who became man, not the First, nor the Third, nor all Three. For the redemption of the world why was the Second Person chosen? Some hint at the answer will be found in what we have already seen about the special relation of the Second Person to God’s original plan of creation. God designed this creation according to the design of His intellect: and it is by way of intellect that the Son of God proceeds within the Blessed Trinity. God made this universe as a mirroring in the finite of His own perfection: but the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is that same mirroring in the infinite. As St. John tells us in the prologue to his Gospel, all things whatsoever that were made were made by the Word of God Who was with God and Who was God. Given this special linking of one Person within the Blessed Trinity to God’s original plan for this universe, it seems fitting that, when owing to the sin of man there was damage to be repaired, the repairing should fall to the same Person, and that He who had established all things should, in St. Paul’s phrase, re-establish them. Thus it was the Word who became Flesh and dwelt among us that we, believing in His name, might be made the sons of God: as He was.

God the Son took to Himself a human nature, not merely wearing it as a disguise or taking it up as an instrument He might use, but making it His own as my nature is my own, making it His own so
utterly that we can express the new relation only by saying that He, God the Son, became man. He did not take a human nature simply to be able to do the things that a man does, to act the part of a man, to pass for a man. Let us say it again, He became man. To the question what are you? He could answer with no mitigation or reservation “I am man”. That would not have been the whole answer, for it would not have reached His Divine Nature. But it would have been wholly true. The relation between His nature as man and His person was as direct, as intimate as the relation between my nature and my person. He could say “I am man” as completely as I can say “I am man”. Indeed He could say it with better title for He was more of a man than I: His human nature was not diminished by sin as mine is.

This nature He took was a real human nature and a complete human nature. Take the reality first. The human nature of Christ was not simply a human body animated by a human soul, thus possessing all that the definition of a man requires, suddenly appearing among us. He actually belongs to us. His soul was a direct and individual creation of the Blessed Trinity, just like your soul and my soul; but by His body He was conceived of a human mother, just as you and I.

Of a human mother, Mary. But not of a human father. In the sense in which other human beings have a mother and father, He had a mother only. The bodies of other human beings result from the action of an element supplied by their father upon an element supplied by their mother. In the case of Our Lord the effect upon the female element nornally produced by the male element was produced simply by a creative act of the will of God. Thus He is a member of Adam’s race on His mother’s side; He is a Jew on His mother’s side; but not upon His father’s side, for in the order of human generation He had no father. He was descended from Adam as we all are, but not as much as we all are. None of us derived our souls from Adam, but we all derived our bodies from Adam; whereas He derived His body from Adam only as to part. It follows that we are all related to Him—through her, and only through her: we are all His maternal relations, His mother’s people.

His was a real human nature: and it was a complete human nature, lacking nothing whatever that human nature requires for completeness. We read in Hebrews (iv. 15): “He has been through every trial, fashioned as we are, only sinless”—sin not being required to complete human nature, but always operating to diminish it. To grasp the completeness of Our Lord’s manhood, we have only to consider the elements of which manhood is composed, body and soul. His body was a real body, though conceived by miracle: He was born as an infant and grew through boyhood to manhood; in His body He knew hunger and thirst; when His body was scourged, it bled; when it had a weight to bear too heavy for it, it fell; when it was damaged beyond a certain point, it underwent that separation from the soul which is death.

Just as He had a human body, He had a human soul to animate it, a soul which like other human souls was a created spirit. He could cry in the Garden of Gethsemani: “My soul is sorrowful even unto death”. Again, His soul had the faculties of intellect and will, human intellect and human will. He who by His divine intellect had all wisdom could in His human intellect grow in wisdom. (Lk. ii. 52.) In the Garden He could say to God: “Not My will but Thine be done”, thereby indicating that though His human will was totally united to the divine will, there was question of two wills and not one.

The co-existence in Christ of a human intellect with the divine intellect may at first seem more difficult to conceive than the co-existence of the two wills. A human intellect proceeds toward knowledge discursively as the philosophers say, step by step as ordinary men say. The external world makes its impact upon the bodily senses; and from the evidence of the external world which thus gets through, the soul forms its concepts, and compares its concepts to form judgments; and as its experience increases, its knowledge grows. But all this in a necessarily limited way. It does seem difficult to conceive that the one identical person who, by His divine nature, knew all things could also proceed to acquire by the operation of His human intellect scattered sparkles of the infinite light of knowledge in which He already lived. It is, I say, hard to conceive, yet not inconceivable. The human nature and the divine nature belong to one person, but they are not one nature. The one person could operate, really and truly, in both natures. If Our Lord wanted to lift a load He could have lifted it either by the effortless fiat of the divine will or by the hard effort of the human muscles. Our Lord’s human nature was a reality, His human senses and His human intellect were reality. His human senses could not do other than receive the impact of the external world; His human intellect could not do other than act upon their
evidence to form concepts and judgments. The Godhead did not swallow up the manhood.

While we are upon this question of Our Lord's human intellect, there are two other things to be said about it. It has been the steady teaching of theologians that Our Lord's human intellect had both infused knowledge and the Beatific Vision. What it must have been like for the one human mind to move along so many roads at once we cannot well picture. But there is no contradiction in the idea of the mind moving by one road to a goal it has already reached by another. The point to be grasped is that neither infused knowledge nor beatific knowledge are beyond the power of human nature to receive from God. Many men have had infused knowledge—though not continuously; and all the saved will have beatific knowledge.

II

Our Lord then as man had a real body with a real soul, with a real intellect and a real will. His emotions were real, too: He loved St. John; He wept over Jerusalem and over dead Lazarus; He stormed at the Pharisees.

But if Our Lord had a real human nature with a real natural life, then He needed the supernatural life, too, to accomplish those things which are beyond the power of nature. By merely human natural power, He could not see God direct any more than we could; but His human nature was capable of receiving sanctifying grace, just as ours is. The work of grace in the soul is, as we have seen, appropriated to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. The Second Person as God possessed all things; but as man He needed the indwelling of the Holy Spirit both for that elevation and sanctification which every human nature needs, and for the special guidance and illumination His human nature needed for the unique work which as Son of God He was to do in it and through it. Our Lord then had sanctifying grace in His soul. He did not have hope or hope because, possessing the Beatific Vision He did not need them; but He had charity in the fullest measure possible to a creature—for, at the risk of wearying, we must constantly remind ourselves that His human nature was a creature; like ours.

His charity, like all charity, was love of God and love of neighbour. There is a modern fashion for concentrating on Christ's love for men and either totally ignoring His love for God or regarding it as an amiable weakness. It is easy enough to maintain this attitude

if one has either not read the Gospels, or had read them sketchily as a boy and forgotten them. For Christ Our Lord Himself His Father's will was paramount and His one joy was in doing it: indeed it is the one joy that He can see for anyone—"yea, rather blessed are they who have the word of My Father and keep it". Readers of this book who may be making a serious study of the Gospels for the first time will almost certainly be startled by the place that prayer to the Father takes in Christ's life. His first recorded words are that strange answer to His mother when after three days' loss she found Him in the temple: "Could you not tell that I must needs be in the place which belongs to my Father?" (Lk. ii. 49.) His last words as He was dying on the Cross were: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Lk. xxiii. 46).

Here again, as with the co-existence of human and divine knowledge in the one Person, the mind sees a real problem. If Christ was God, in what sense was He praying to God? It is idle to try to avoid the difficulty by answering that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was speaking to the other two Persons. Assuredly He was, but this converse within the Divine Nature is not the prayer we have in mind here, nor indeed is it prayer at all. Christ also prayed as we pray, as the creature prays to the Creator. And here precisely is the difficulty. What is done in the nature is done by the Person. To say that Christ prayed as the creature prayed to the Creator is to say that God the Son prayed the prayer of a creature. It is difficult, but it is precise. When God the Son took to Himself a human nature and was the Person in that nature, He took upon Himself all the obligations that a person has to his nature, and one such obligation is to express its creatureliness to its Creator. His prayer was the expression of a human nature in all the manifold relations that the human nature has to God; and because it was God Who uttered that human prayer it was the perfect human prayer. Nothing could be more repaying for ourselves than to study it closely.

III

Thus, God and man, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity in our nature, Our Lord moves through the Gospels: thirty years of all but complete silence, then three years' healing, teaching, in crowds or with the Twelve or alone in the prayer of God, moving steadily towards the thing He had come to do. But He must not remain for us simply a luminous figure, upon Whom we dare not
gaze too closely, upon Whom we need not gaze too closely. In Christ, God is showing Himself to us. Not to look at that which is shown would leave the showing vain. Growth in the knowledge of Christ is growth in the knowledge of God, which He is; and of man, which He is. Quite literally we cannot grow to our capacity in the knowledge either of God or of man if we do not grow in the knowledge of Christ. He is our best approach to the knowledge of God because, as we have seen, here God is to be studied not simply in His own nature, infinitely glorious but remote from our experience, but in our nature, finitely glorious and thronging with experiences that we have shared. He is our best approach to the knowledge of man, because man, like everything else, is best studied in its most perfect specimen-only defective knowledge can result from exclusive concentration upon damaged specimens.

This growth in the knowledge of Our Lord is not simply a matter of learning texts and seeing the detail of this or that episode of His life. We must get to know Him, as we know a person. But this involves something else, which I find it rather difficult to convey. I have already made one effort. I shall try again. A knowledge of a person has to be personal. There is no such thing as an abstract knowledge of a person which all who know him possess: there is your knowledge of a person and my knowledge of a person, and we may both know him intimately, but your knowledge will not be the same as mine. Knowledge of a person is a relation between that person and us: it is not only what is to be known about the person, but our reaction—the reaction of our whole self, intellect, will, emotions—to the person. As I have said any number of men may know another man intimately, and not only intimately but truly, yet if they could compare their knowledge there would be vast surprises. It is so with any man: there are elements in him which one friend will respond to and another not, and which those who respond to will respond to at different levels of intensity. It is so, above all, with Christ Our Lord because of the very perfection of His human nature, its depth and universality. No one of us can see and respond to all that is there; no two of us will see and respond to the same things in Him. What is vital for each one of us is that we develop our own closest possible personal knowledge of Him and personal relation with Him.

That is why I shall not here attempt a description of the man Christ Jesus. I could at most give my picture of Him which is not more valid or valuable than someone else's merely because it is mine. Nor is there any reason why I should try to impose my picture of Him upon others of His friends. It is for each one to develop His own personal intimacy by meeting Him. And the first place to meet Him is in the Gospels.

But if it would be at once impertinent and pointless to present the reader with a portrait of Christ by me, instead of letting him meet Christ for himself, it may be well to draw attention to certain elements in what I may call roughly the modern view of Christ Our Lord which may already be in the reader's mind, and which therefore he may bring with him to the reading of the Gospels and think he is finding in the Gospels. The mind needs to be cleansed of this particular error in order that it may be prepared to see the Christ who is actually there.

The error I have in mind is the picture of Christ as all love—love in this context meaning a sentimental weakness about human beings. This error is carved into almost all the statues one sees; one feels that the artists are not close or recent readers of the Gospels. It is enshrined in the line "Gentle Jesus meek and mild", an admirable line when it was written but now, by the wearing down of language, an appalling travesty. Meekness is a great and intensely dynamic virtue, so is mildness. But that is not what the words mean in the English of today. "Meek and mild" has become a term of contempt for the type of character which, if it does not deserve contempt, at least merits no particular admiration. It implies a passivity, a willingness to be pushed about, an amiable desire for niceness all round. It is doubtful if the money changers whom He cast out of the Temple would have called Him mild, or if the Syro-Phoenician would have called Him meek to whom He said "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (Mark vii. 27). It might be well, before proceeding to a new reading of the Gospels in the intent of meeting Christ, to begin with the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel where you will find His terrifying attack upon the Scribes and Pharisees: nothing could more violently purge the mind of the picture of ineffective niceness. Just consider a handful of phrases from it: "Woe upon you, Scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites, that swallow up the property of widows, under cover of your long prayers..."

"Woe upon you, Scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites that compass sea and land to gain a single proselyte, and then make the proselyte twice as worthy of damnation as yourselves..."
"Woe upon you, Scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites that scour the outward part of cup and dish, while all within is running with avarice and incontinence. . . .

"Woe upon you, Scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites that are like whitened sepulchres, fair in outward show, when they are full of dead men's bones and all manner of corruption within. . . .

"Serpents that you are, brood of vipers, how should you escape from the award of hell?

This is not the whole of Christ, but it is an element too often overlooked. It is an element not only in His character: what we must at every cost grasp is that it is an element in His love. Note that at the very end of this vast invective Our Lord utters one of the most perfect expressions of tenderness: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, still murdering the prophets, and stoning the messengers that are sent to thee, how often have I been ready to gather thy children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings; and thou didst refuse it."

Love is a more complex thing, in itself and in Christ, than our shallowness always knows, more complex and more extreme. It is a curious phenomenon, which will lead a psychologist of the future, perhaps, to a deeper understanding of the mind of our age, that it has effortlessly and one would say automatically sorted out the tenderer elements in Christ to the total ignoring of the fiercer. In the Sermon on the Mount, for instance (Mt. v. to vii.) every one has heard of the eight opening phrases: Blessed are the poor in spirit, the patient, those who mourn, those who hunger and thirst for holiness, the merciful, the clean of heart, the peacemakers, those who suffer persecution in the cause of right. But practically nobody remembers that in the long sermon that follows these opening phrases Our Lord threatens His hearers with hell no fewer than six times.

The plain truth is that we must bring to our meeting with Christ no preconceived ideas of what He ought to be, but a determination to learn what He is. He is not to be measured by our standard, for He is the God Who made us, He is the standard.

IV

I shall say no more of what in our modern phrase we call the human personality of Christ (be careful of this phrase: Christ Our Lord was not a human person, though He had a human nature: but the word personality as used today has got separated from the philosophical word person and only means the general effect of a person's character and temperament). What we must now consider is a certain difficulty that may strike us as we read the Gospels. It is part of the difficulty already discussed arising from the two natures of Christ. The person very rightly utters His nature; this one Person who had two natures rightly utters each nature. But the result is two quite different sets of utterances. He can say "I and the Father are one," He can also say "The Father is greater than I." In the one case it is the "I" who totally owns the divine nature and expresses a fact about His divine nature; in the second case it is the same "I" who owns a human nature and expresses a fact about His human nature. We must habituate ourselves to this dual utterance, holding firmly in the mind that in either utterance the person speaking is God the Son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Here again we must aim not at a mere verbal awareness, but at a realization of the man who was God. For the most part, I think, we tend to concentrate upon what it means that God took to Himself a human nature and became man. But we must also consider what it must have meant to this man, really man as we are man, to know that He was God. We see what it meant to His apostles as they came gradually to be aware that the man was God: it stunned their human minds, then revitalized their human minds with its glory. We must try to see also what it meant to Christ Himself to be aware that He was God, for it was with a human mind that He was aware of it, a mind as human as theirs.

What the blaze of the glory and the wonder of the knowledge must have been we can barely begin to conceive: but that bare beginning of conceiving we must attempt. Here again each must do it for himself. As the Apostles themselves grew to the knowledge of the fact, they could only be (as we should be without the clue) utterly bewildered. They saw him acting and speaking as man; they saw Him acting and speaking as man has no right to act and speak, as only God rightly could. But they had no concept born of experience of one person with two natures, for there never had been such a person any more than there ever would be such another.

Their bewildermant was not simply the difficulty of reconciling two sets of statements from the same person, one set entirely true of Him as God, one set entirely true of Him as man. The difficulty goes deeper. Until they realized that He was God they must have been uncertain even of His virtue as man. This is a truth which a great deal of modern talk quite incredibly overlooks. The phrase
“Christ was not God but He was the perfect man”, can surely only be the product of a long and heroic abstention from Gospel reading. If He was not God, He was not a perfect man: He was a totally intolerable man. Consider one phrase only: “He that loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me”. If the speaker was not God then he was a man of an egoism so monstrous that no word short of insanity would fit it. And in one way or another this note runs through all Our Lord’s sayings. If He was God, then He was perfect man; if He was not God then He was a very arrogant man. But we know what the Apostles came to know: He was God, and all falls in place.

He was man, but He was different. And the difference was not only in that He had a divine nature in which also He acted and spoke. Though the divine nature and the human did not mingle, though there was, so to speak, no spilling over of the divine into the human, yet even in the activity of the human nature many things had of necessity to be different because the person whose nature it was was God. He loved the companionship of the Apostles, and they loved His companionship. But He knew the difference and they felt His difference. He never asked their advice; never argued with them or indeed with anyone. He was the Master and He taught, and men must either accept His teaching or reject it: there was no place for argument about it. Nor did He ever pray with His Apostles: He taught them how to pray, but His own prayer was alone with the Father. Still they loved Him as no other man has ever been loved, though still not in the measure of His love for them. They were desolate without Him. And the one of them that He loved most summarized the doctrine of Christ’s Godhead and his own experience of Christ in the key-phrase of all religion “God is Love”.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE REDEEMING SACRIFICE

In the three words Way, Truth and Life, Our Lord sums up what He is. In the same three words we may summarize what He did. He opened to men the way of salvation, gave them the truth by which they might know the way, and the life by which they might travel it.

The truth He gave by way of doctrine and law, doctrine as to the great realities of existence, and law to tell us how we should act given that these realities are what they are. He teaches of God and of man, the breach between God and man and how it must be healed, the purpose of life, heaven and hell, the kingdom He is to establish and the laws of the kingdom—what things we must do, what things we must avoid, what food we must eat.

He not only taught us about the food we must eat, He saw to it that food should be provided. The way He had come to open could not be walked by the merely natural strength of man; it called for energies of action and resistance which the natural life cannot supply. Men needed a higher principle of action, a higher life, the Supernatural Life. Without this new life they could neither live in heaven hereafter nor so live here as to attain heaven. At the very beginning of His ministry He told Nicodemus that man must be born again, that is born into this new life, by baptism: and He established baptism, and set His apostles to baptizing. After the feeding of the five thousand He told the multitude that they should not have life in them unless they ate the flesh of the Son of Man and drank His blood: and He established the Blessed Eucharist and so gave His apostles the power to feed men with His Body and Blood.

But neither the truth, which gave knowledge of the way and of how to conduct oneself on the way, nor the life, which gave power for the way, would have had a great deal of point if the way itself were not open. The map of the road and the rules of the road and the food for the road would have been merely tantalizing to a race of men to whom the road itself was closed. The reopening of the road was, could only be, the act that would give meaning
to all the rest of His immeasurable activity. The way was closed because the race of men was not at one with God; Heaven was for the sons of God, and the way was closed to a race which had fallen from sonship into servitude. Christ opened the way. Let us see how He did it.

He offered Himself as a sacrifice to God for the sin of the race. That was the thing He had come to do, and it gave meaning to every other thing that He did. The prophets of Israel had said that it would be so, but—incredibly, as it now seems to us—their message had made no apparent impact on the mind of their people. Our Lord said it again and again, even more clearly, with almost as little impact. Right at the beginning, in that conversation with Nicodemus just quoted, Christ had foreshadowed the cross: the Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert for the healing of the stricken Israelites (Jn. iii. 14). Near the end of His ministry, just after the glory of Palm Sunday, and on the very threshold of the Passion, He uses the same comparison: "If only I am lifted up from the earth, I will attract all men to myself" (Jn. xii. 33). "In saying this," St. John comments, "He prophesied the death He was to die."

In between the first conversation with Nicodemus and Palm Sunday He had more than once spoken of the same thing to Scribes and Pharisees, but in language so veiled that they can hardly be held blind for not grasping His meaning. They had asked Him for "a sign"; and He had answered: "The generation that asks for a sign is a wicked and unfaithful generation; the only sign that will be given it is the sign of the prophet Jonas. Jonas was in the belly of the sea-beast three days and three nights, and the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Mt. xii. 39-40.) Earlier still to the Jews challenging Him for a sign He had used language still more cryptic: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." His hearers then thought that He was referring to the great temple in Jerusalem, and in this sense His words were quoted against Him at His trial and hurled at him in derision as he hung on the Cross. "But," as St. John comments, "He spoke of the temple of His body."

If His language to outsiders was veiled, what He said to His apostles was quite clear and literal; yet, save by flashes, they seemed to have understood Him no better than the others, and the event found them as utterly unprepared as if He had never spoken a word. On three occasions Our Lord told them in great detail just what must happen. After the great scene at Caesarea Philippi when Our Lord had named Peter as the rock upon which He would build His Church, He told the Apostles "that He must go up to Jerusalem, and there, with much ill-usage from the chief priests and elders and scribes, must be put to death and rise again on the third day" (Mt. xvi. 21).

In Galilee a little later He told them the same thing with the added detail that He was to be betrayed (Mt. xvii. 21). Just before Palm Sunday, which was the first day of the week in which all these things were to be accomplished, He gave them the most detailed statement of all: "Now we are going up to Jerusalem: and there the Son of Man will be given up into the hands of the chief priests and scribes, who will condemn Him to death; and they will give Him up into the hands of the Gentiles, who will mock Him and spit upon Him and scourge Him and kill Him: but on the third day He will rise again." (Mark x. 33-34): upon which St. Luke comments: "They understood none of these things."

Some of these things they should certainly have understood: all that was to flow from Christ's death as a willed sacrifice might well have been mysterious; but that the leaders of the Jews would plan to kill Him was all but certain. From the great mass of prophecy they had singled out certain elements to construct what we may call the orthodox hope of Israel, and His teaching, embracing and transcending the whole of prophecy, was a challenge and a denial of their hope: the Kingdom He talked of was not the Kingdom they dreamed of. His own personal claims were plain blasphemy if He was not God: not believing Him God, they naturally took Him for a blasphemer. And then there was His scorn for them. The line of teaching and conduct upon which He had embarked meant that they would desire His death. His action was the logical consequence of His whole grasp, as their reaction was the logical consequence of their partial grasp, of reality. Once they made up their minds to kill Him, in the natural order they must succeed. The only question was whether God would prevent them doing the thing they planned. God willed not to prevent them. Since they would, as He knew they would, kill Christ, He would use their act as the occasion of the salvation of the race of man.

On Palm Sunday, He entered Jerusalem humbly, riding upon an ass, and the crowds acclaimed Him wildly: for the last time.
II

With Palm Sunday past, things moved rapidly to the crisis. On the Wednesday of that week He said to His Apostles: "You know that after two days the paschal feast is coming; it is then that the Son of Man must be given up to be crucified" (Mt. xxvi. 2). On the Thursday, "Knowing that His hour was come, that He should pass out of this world to the Father," He ate the paschal supper prescribed by Jewish law with His Apostles and then went on to make them the priests of the Eucharistic meal whereby until the end of the world men should receive His own Body and Blood.

Matthew and Mark and Luke each gave their account of this; so does St. Paul (1 Cor. xi). All four accounts should be read closely. Here is St. Luke's (xxii. 19):

"Then He took bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them saying, This is My body, which is to be given for you; do this for a commemoration of Me."

"And so with the cup, when supper was ended, This cup, He said, is the new testament, in My blood which is to be shed for you."

St. Matthew (xxvi. 28) phrases Our Lord's words upon the chalice slightly differently (leaving the meaning, of course, unaffected) and adds one further thing that He said: "Drink, all of you, of this; for this is My blood, of the new testament, which is to be shed for many, to the remission of sins."

The institution of the Blessed Eucharist tends to fill the mind's horizon when we think of the Last Supper. But though it was the towering fact of that night, it does not stand alone. At and after the Last Supper we have the greatest mass of teaching that Our Lord ever gave at one time. All four Evangelists give their own account, and the reader of this book is urged to study them all; but it is St. John who gives us the fullest statement in his wonderful chapters xiv to xvii. Here we glance at two or three points of this great mass of teaching.

Our Lord has much to say to the Apostles by way of preparation for the rôle that must be theirs when He is gone from them and they must carry on His work. He tells them with no apparent anger that they are all about to desert Him and that Peter will deny Him thrice that night. But as though none of this had any great relevance, He goes on to the greater things to which they are called.

"I dispose to you, as My Father has disposed to Me, a kingdom; that you may eat and drink at my table in My kingdom, and may sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Lk. xxii. 29-30);

"It was I that chose you, the task I have appointed you is to go out and bear fruit, fruit which will endure" (Jn. xvi. 16); "You are to be My witnesses" (Jn. xv. 27). But all this they shall not do in their own power, but in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is indeed necessary that Our Lord go to the Father in order that the Holy Spirit may come to them. There is a great deal about the Holy Spirit; and it is natural therefore that Our Lord should give His most extended teaching on the Blessed Trinity.

We have already taken some stock of what He said at the Last Supper on the Trinity; we shall return a little later to what He said on the rôle of the Apostles. What concerns us most at this point in the story, when He is within hours of His death, is that He states so clearly both elements in His mission. We have just heard Him state it as expiation: "This is My blood of the new testament which is to be shed for many, to the remission of sins." What He says of the restoration of oneness between man and God is as clear: He prays for all who through the teaching of the Apostles, shall come to believe in Him, "that they all may be one as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me ... Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me ... that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them" (Jn. xvil. 20-22).

This then is the life-formula of the Atonement: men are to be united with Him as He is united with God. "I am in my Father, and you in Me, and I in you." (Jn. xiv. 20.)

III

From the supper room Our Lord went with the Apostles to the Garden of Gethsemani and the whole atmosphere changes most terrifyingly. Mankind, we know, was redeemed by the Passion and Death of Christ; but we tend to overlook the Passion and concentrate upon the Death. The loss is vast for our understanding of mankind's redemption, and for our understanding of the Man Christ Jesus. What happened in the Garden will cast a strong light upon both. In a sense what happened there is the Passion, at any rate its fiercest point. There is an immeasurable contrast between the serene mastery of Our Lord at the Supper and the
fear and agony here; and the same contrast in reverse when Our Lord goes out from the Garden and suffers mockery and scourging and nailing to a cross with a martyr as serene.

Matthew, Mark and Luke give very similar descriptions. Here is Matthew’s (xxvi. 37-39) of what follows the arrival at Gethsemani: “He took Peter and the sons of Zebedee with Him. And now He grew sorrowful and dismayed. My soul, He said, is ready to die with sorrow; do you abide here, and watch with Me. When He had gone a little further, He fell upon His face in prayer, and said, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Only as Thy Will is, not as Mine is.’”

St. Luke continues the account (xxii. 43-44): “And there appeared to Him an angel from Heaven, encouraging Him. And now He was in an agony, and prayed still more earnestly. His sweat fell to the ground like thick drops of blood.”

A second and a third time He prayed as St. Matthew tells: “My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done.”

It is important to grasp just what the suffering was from which Our Lord shrank with so much anguish, of which as St. Mark tells us He was in fear. It was not simply, nor even primarily, the bodily torments that He was to endure, though He foresaw them in every detail and already felt their horror in His flesh. Other men had been through those torments. The ground of His anguish lay deeper. The prophet Isaias had foretold it: “Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sin. The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.” St. Peter, who slept while his Master was in agony, was to say the same thing: “Who His own self bore ours sins in His body upon the tree” (1 Peter ii. 24). Our Lord, offering Himself for the sins of the world, not only took upon His single self the punishment those sins have deserved: in some sense He took the sins themselves, everything of them save the guilt. Sin repented can still leave a crushing weight upon the soul, even one sin. Christ’s soul bore the burden of all the sin of mankind. That was His agony, that was the chalice which He prayed might pass from Him. That is a key to the mysterious phrase of St. Paul: “Him, Who knew no sin, God has made into sin for us.” (2 Cor. v. 21.)

Yet Christ Our Lord did not suffer unwillingly, did not make His sacrifice under compulsion. We have already seen that when, as
him for his failure to understand the thing that was now in process:

"Put thy sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup
which my Father Himself has appointed for Me?" (Jn. xviii. 11.)

There is no need here to follow in detail Our Lord’s various
appearances before this and that court—two appearances before
the Jewish Sanhedrin, and two before Pilate, separated by an
appearance before Herod. The accusation the Jews made against
Him in their own court was not the same as the accusation
they made against Him before the Roman governor. In their own
court the accusation was that He called Himself the Son of God;
and His admission settled the matter for them: He deserved to die.
Before Pilate they accused Him of sedition—"Forbidding to
give tribute to Caesar, and saying that He is Christ the King"
(Lk. xxiii. 2). As the night proceeded and merged into the day,
He was mocked and spat upon, thorns were twisted into a rough
wreath and pressed upon His head, He was scourged. Finally He
was made to carry His own cross to a hill outside the city, the hill
of Calvary, which means a skull. There He was nailed to His cross
and so hung for three hours between two thieves chosen for
 crucifixion with him.

As with the Last Supper, so with the Crucifixion, each of the
Evangelists gives His own account, and all four should be read
most closely. We should especially concentrate upon the things
Our Lord said during the three hours that He hung upon the cross.
Among the four accounts we find seven such sayings. The last
word recorded by St. John is "It is consummated." The last
recorded by St. Luke is "Father, into Thy hands I commend My
spirit." And saying this, He gave up the ghost." Matthew and
Mark both tell us that at the moment of death He cried out with
a loud voice.

Christ Our Lord died on the Friday. He rose again from the
death on the third day. What had passed in between? His body,
separated by death from the animating power of His soul, lay in
the tomb. But what of His soul? He had said to one of the thieves
on the cross: "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise".
From this we might imagine that Our Lord’s soul—and the thief’s
—had gone to Heaven that day. But after His Resurrection Our
Lord expressly told Mary Magdalene that He had not yet ascended
to His Father. Where then was His soul, what does paradise mean?
The English form of the Apostles’ Creed says bluntly "He de-
scended into hell" and one might figure to oneself the con-

sternation He would have produced if at this moment of His
triumph over Satan He had appeared in Satan’s realm. But He
did not do this either: the Latin word translated by "hell" is
"inferos" which means not necessarily the hell of the damned
but the lower regions. St. Peter tells us (1 Peter iii. 19): "In His
spirit He went and preached to the spirits who lay in prison". It
would seem that Our Lord’s soul visited that place where those who
had died in the grace of God before Christ’s coming were awaiting
the redemptive act which should open Heaven to them. It is not
difficult to see the fitness of all three names—paradise by com-
parison with the hell of the damned, lower regions, because lower
than heaven, prison, because there they must wait although they
would rather be elsewhere.

IV

On the Sunday morning Our Lord rose from the dead. And
it was the Resurrection of the whole man, body and soul united
and no more separable. For this was the conquest of death. By
this victory over death, Our Lord’s body had put off corruption
and mortality and was now as immortal and incorruptible as His
soul. The destiny which St. Paul sees for us in our resurrection,
"that our mortal nature must be swallowed up in life" (2 Cor. v. 4),
comes to us only because in His Resurrection it had already come
to Him. Already His body was glorified, in the state of a body
in Heaven, worthy of union with a soul which is looking directly
upon the unveiled face of God.

For forty days more He was upon earth, in repeated though not
continuous contact with His followers. He comes and goes with
an independence of the restricting power of space, which is not
now miracle but part of the consequence of the glorification
of His body. He comes to the Apostles through a closed door, He
vanishes from their sight. In all His contact with them He is
continuing and completing their preparation for the work they must
do once He has left the earth. Thus He gives them power to forgive
sins or withhold forgiveness (Jn. xx. 22–23); He opens their
understanding that they may understand the Scriptures (Lk.
xxiv. 45); He gives them the commission to carry His doctrine and
His sacraments to all nations to the end of time (Mt. xxviii. 19–20).
But none of this activity is to begin until the Holy Ghost has come
upon them; and the Holy Ghost will not come until Christ Our
Lord has gone to His Father—"for if I go not", He had told them
at the Last Supper, "the Paraclete will not come to you: but if
I go I will send Him to you”. At the end of forty days He left this earth.

He gave them one more reminder that they should receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon them. “And when He had said these things, while they looked on, He was raised up and a cloud received Him out of their sight,” so St. Luke tells us in the first chapter of the Acts. St. Mark’s account is as brief: “And the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them was taken up into Heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God”.

Realize that the Resurrection was not simply a convenient way for Our Lord to return to His Apostles and give them final instructions, nor His Ascension simply a convenient way of letting them know definitely and beyond question or peradventure that He had left this world. Resurrection and Ascension belong organically to the Sacrifice He offered for us. The Sacrifice, insofar as it is the offering to God of a victim slain, was complete upon Calvary. But in the total conception of sacrifice, it is not sufficient—as Cain found long before—that a victim be offered to God; it is essential that the offering be accepted by God: and given that the nature of man requires that sacrifice be an action externally visible, it belongs to the perfection of sacrifice that God’s acceptance should be as externally visible as humanity’s offering. It is in this sense that Resurrection and Ascension belong organically to the Sacrifice. By the miracle of the Resurrection, God at once shows His acceptance of the Priest as a true priest of a true sacrifice and perfects the Victim offered to Him, so that whereas it was offered mortal and corruptible it has gained immortality and incorruptibility. By the Ascension God accepts the offered Victim by actually taking it to Himself. Humanity, offered to God in Christ the Victim, is now forever at the right hand of the Father.

This is the significance of the prayer at Mass which comes a little before the Consecration: “Receive, O Holy Trinity, this oblation which we offer Thee in memory of the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of Our Lord,” and of the prayer which follows the Consecration immediately: “We offer to God’s most excellent Majesty, the pure Victim, the holy Victim, the spotless Victim: and we offer it in commemoration not only of Christ’s blessed Passion but also of His Resurrection from the dead, and likewise of His glorious Ascension.”

CHAPTER XIX

REDEMPTION

The very heart of the doctrine of the Redemption is that the human acts of Christ were the acts of a Person who was divine. Everything that Christ did and suffered and experienced must be seen as done and suffered and experienced by God. God was born of a virgin in Bethlehem, God was a carpenter, God rejoiced, God sorrowed, God suffered, God died. It is the last two phrases that force us really to face the mystery and test our realization of it. If God did not suffer and die, then no one did, for there was but the one person in Christ; that is there was no suffering, no dying: no sacrifice, no redemption. The phrase “God died” gives us at first the greater shock, but afterwards is less profoundly mysterious than the phrase “God suffered”. The whole created universe, with everything in it from archangel down to electron, or any lower thing there may be, is held in existence from instant to instant solely by the continuing will of God to hold it so. And the words God died seem to carry annihilation to all things that thus depend upon God. But it is by the operation of His divine nature that God sustains all things in being, and it is not in His divine nature that God the Son died, but only in His human nature, the most glorious of created things, but a created thing for all that. Death is a separation of soul and body. The phrase “God died” means that for that three days’ space God’s soul was separated from God’s body: it was a real death but it left the divine Nature totally unaffected.

But what are we to make of the phrase God suffered? Again the suffering was not in the divine nature, but in the human. Christ’s suffering, the fear and agony in the Garden for instance, was real suffering, that is to say someone really suffered it. And that someone was God the Son. How this can be, what indeed it means, we cannot fully know, indeed we can hardly feel that we know at all. The mind seems able to make no statement here. Yet it is literally true that, even if we cannot say it, there are momentary flashes of light, glimpses and glances, in which we half
see it; and there is no measuring the fruitfulness of even this momentary half-seeking for sanctity; and not for sanctity only but for plain human consolation.

Summarizing this relation of nature and person in Christ’s atoning act, we see that because He was man with a true human nature He could offer a true human act in expiation of human sin, an act of total love to balance humanity’s self-love; and because He was God, the human act He offered was of infinite value and so could satisfy and more than satisfy for the sins of men. But stating it thus, we see another question. Any act of Christ must be of infinite value since the Person who does the act is God. Why then does Christ offer His death, when some lesser act would have been of infinite value and therefore totally sufficient? Might He not have offered His thirst when He sat weary from His journey by Jacob’s Well in Samaria? Or His patience under insult? Or any one of a thousand other things? Why did it have to be His death?

In one sense the answer is clear. He had come into the world to teach the truth—about Himself as God, for instance, about Himself as Messiah, about the Kingdom which was to be in the world but not of it, about the Gentiles who would come into it, about the failure of the leaders of Israel to grasp the essentials of their own religion. His execution was the natural consequence. Only a miraculous intervention of the divine power could have prevented it. Given that He was to die, it is hard to think of His offering some lesser thing than His death as the sacrifice that should save mankind.

But all things are in the power of God. God could have intervened to prevent His death. Or He might have chosen a way of life that meant no such direct challenge to the rulers. Why, we may ask in all reverence, did the divine plan include the death of the Redeemer?

The two answers that instantly spring to mind are that nothing could show the love of God so overpoweringly as His willingness to die for us, and nothing could show the horror of sin so clearly as that it needed His death to expiate it. Now it is true that Calvary is a proof both of the awfulness of sin and of the love of God, but it would not be so unless there was something in the nature of sin that required Calvary. If the sin could as well have been expiated by some act of Christ less than His death, then Calvary would not show the horror of sin but would in fact exaggerate it.

The same line of argument would not so obviously apply to Calvary as a proof of God’s love, yet there would be something profoundly unsatisfying in the notion of God’s showing His love for us by a needless death. A moment’s reflection will show that there was something in what Our Lord had to do which made His dying the best way to do it. It is true that on the side of the Person who made the offering any act in the human nature, however small in itself, would have sufficed. But on the side of the nature in which the offer was made, can we feel that any act however small would have sufficed?

Obviously no. The sacrifice was a true act of human virtue offered in reparation for a human act of rejection of God. It is true that no act of human nature could by itself have sufficed to expiate, and that it was the divinity of His Person which gave the act of Christ’s human nature the efficacy which by itself it could not have had. But that is no reason for reducing the human element in the sacrifice to a mere token. For if it were so, we should be left with a sense of an unreal transaction in which God makes an offering to God. It was human nature’s offering, though it took a divine Person to make it. The God who made the offering was man, too, and it was in His manhood that He made it. Human nature could not do all: yet it must do all that it could, leaving the divinity of the Person to supply for the remainder. In the profoundest sense humanity would want this. Expiation is something required not only by the nature of God, but by the nature of man. There is something in man which, when his intellect is clear and his will right, longs to make expiation rather than merely have his sin forgiven out of hand. It belongs to human dignity that a man should want to pay his debt rather than have it written off. And if he cannot pay the whole of it, as in this supreme instance, he yet wants to pay all that he can. Had Our Lord’s offering been by way of some human act of little cost, then one would feel that humanity’s part in the expiation was barely more than a fiction. In fact Christ’s humanity gave all it had to give, for a man has no more to give than his life. What divinity gave was only what humanity could not give.

But all this discussion is academic. To discuss what the Redeemer might have done gives us certain lights upon the problem of our redemption. But they are as nothing to the light that floods out from what He did do. He gave all that He had upon Calvary: martyrs since have died in the strength of His death, knowing
that even humanly speaking He gave more than they. He died; if He had not, we should not have had the Resurrection. As we shall see, by baptism we are buried with Him in His death, and rise with Him in His Resurrection. Only God knows what splendours might have been associated with some other way of Redemption; but we have seen the splendour of this.

II

The sacrifice of Christ was totally effective. It could not be otherwise, given that He Who offered it was God. But it is important to grasp what it effected. Whatever it was meant to effect, it did effect. But what was it? A little precision here will be extraordinarily clarifying later.

At the moment of His death on Calvary Christ Our Lord said “It is consummated”. Something was completed. But something was beginning, too, and the something that was beginning was not simply the paradisal enjoyment by men—either by all men or by an elect or even by Christ Himself—of what He had achieved by His sacrifice, but something with vast labour and anguish and the possibility of failure in it for men, and with work still for Christ to do. Something was completed. But, at the right hand of the Father, Christ Himself continues His work of intercession for us (Heb. vii. 25); and we have seen His last days upon earth filled with the preparation of His Apostles to continue His work among men until the end of time.

The thing that was completed was the Redemption of the race. The race had sinned in its representative man and as a result was no longer at one with God: so that Heaven was closed to it; bound up with the severed relationship of the race with God there was a mysterious subjection to the Devil: by his victory over Adam the Devil had secured some kind of principedom over Adam’s race, so that he is called the prince of this world. His principedom carried no legal rights but vast power: in the decree Firmi, Pope Eugenius IV says: “no one has ever been liberated from the domination of the Devil save by the merit of the Mediator “. The primary effect of Our Lord’s sacrifice was the undoing of Adam’s sin. The principedom of the Devil was destroyed. And the breach between the race and God was healed, so that Heaven was opened to the members of the race. This fundamentally is the Redemption.

Let us consider these two results in turn. “If the Son of God was revealed to us,” says St. John, “it was so that He might undo what the devil had done.” (I John iii. 8.) It is, as we have noted, foreign to our habits of thought to attach any real importance to the Devil, that strange intervening third in the relations between man and God. But this is a defect in our mental habits. It can never be intelligent to take lightly anything that God takes seriously. And God takes the Devil very seriously indeed. It will be remembered that when, after the fall of man, God had foretold Redemption, He had not only foretold it to the Devil, but had expressed it in terms of a victory over the Devil: the seed of the woman was to crush his head.

When the hour of the Redemption came, Our Lord was intensely preoccupied with this aspect of it as the struggle between Himself and the Devil, issuing in victory for Himself over the Devil. Early in Passion Week He cried out: “Now is the judgment of the world: now shall the Prince of this World be cast out.” (Jn. xii. 31.) At the Last Supper He returns to the theme twice: “The Prince of this World comes and in me He has not anything” (Jn. xiv. 30); and again: “The Prince of this World is already judged” (Jn. xvi. 11). Why was Our Lord so preoccupied with Satan? It may be because He was restoring the order of reality against which Satan is the great protest, so that Satan’s power was ranged against Him at the peak of intensity. What is interesting is that the Devil so little understood the nature of Our Lord’s mission, that he rushed upon his own defeat. For as St. Luke and St. John both tell us, it was Satan who entered into Judas to cause him to betray Christ into the hands of His enemies, thus precipitating Christ’s redemptive sacrifice. It is some consolation to us to know that an enemy of intellect so powerful is not always well informed.

But the overthrow of Satan’s principedom is only incidental to the healing of the breach between the race and God, by which Heaven is opened to the race of men. Let us repeat that this was something done for the race. John the Baptist had hailed Our Lord: “Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who takes away the sin of the world.” (John i. 29.) There was a sin of the world, and Christ died to destroy it. “Now once at the end of ages, He has appeared for the destruction of sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” (Heb. ix. 26.) As a result, Heaven was once more opened to men. A man was enthroned there where no man had yet been, a man who had gone there to prepare a place for us. As the Roman
Missal has it, in one of the prayers of Easter Week: “He unlocked for us the gates of eternity”.

Thus the sin of the race in the representative man, Adam, was taken away by the new representative man, Christ. “A man had brought us death and a man should bring us resurrection from the dead; just as all have died with Adam, so with Christ all will be brought to life.” (1 Cor. xv. 21.) It is magnificent, and the soul rejoices. Yet the intellect, trying to comprehend, may be faintly troubled. At first glance there seems something arbitrary and almost capricious in it. Adam falls, and we are informed that Adam represented us and we have all fallen in him. Christ atones, and we are informed that Christ represents us and we are all redeemed in Him. Where, we might wonder, do we really come in? Who and what are these representatives? Above all, why?

But there is nothing arbitrary. Each is our representative because of a real relation of us to him. We have already seen that this is so of Adam. There is a solidarity of the human race, linking us physically to one another, and to the first man from whom we all come: and because of it our fate was involved in his. Christ is entitled to act for us by a double title: first on the side of His divinity, He is the God by whom and in whose image man was created; second on the side of His humanity, He is the perfect man, so that where Adam was the first man in time, Christ is the first man in value, Christ is the moral head of the race as Adam the physical. Adam represents humanity in that all of us come from him, Christ in that there is no element of humanity in any of us (Adam included) that is not better and richer and completer in Him. So that His act in compensation of Adam’s is available for all men (Adam again included). The barrier erected by man’s sin between the race and God is down. There is no longer a sin of the race to stand between us and sonship of God, between us and entry into Heaven.

But our different relationships to Adam and to Christ involve a difference in the way of our sharing in the result of their acts. We fell in Adam insomuch as we are united with him: we are restored in Christ insomuch as we are united with Him. Adam’s act becomes ours because we are (as we cannot help being) one with him. Christ’s act becomes ours only when we become (as we may unhappily fail to become) one with Him. We are incorporated with Adam by the mere fact of being born; for incorporation with Christ, we must be re-born. “The man who came first came from earth, fashioned of dust, the man who came afterwards came from heaven, and his fashion is heavenly. The nature of that earth-born man is shared by his earthly sons, the nature of the heaven-born man by his heavenly sons; and it remains for us, who once bore the stamp of earth, to bear the stamp of heaven.” (1 Cor. xv. 47.) We fell as members of humanity stemming from Adam; we are restored as members of a new humanity stemming from Christ.

We may now look again at what was completed by Our Lord’s sacrifice on Calvary. Satisfaction was made, complete satisfaction, for the sin of the human race: the breach between God and the race was healed. That work was done, done completely, done once for all, because Christ had offered complete satisfaction for the sin of the race. He had not only satisfied, but more than satisfied: He had merited for men restoration to the sonship of God, the supernatural life in which that sonship consists, the life by which we can look upon the face of God in Heaven. Heaven was once more open to men.

But the opening of Heaven does not mean that every man will get there. Some will fail: the defeat of Satan in his effort to hold the race does not mean that he will have no more victories over individuals. In other words the Salvation of the individual does not follow automatically upon the Redemption of the race. It is a further problem, involving a further warfare. In plain words, though no man enters Heaven save because Christ offered the atoning sacrifice, no man enters Heaven simply because Christ offered the atoning sacrifice. His sacrifice availed both for the Redemption of the race—satisfying for sin and meriting restoration—and for the Salvation of the individual, but in different ways: it effected the Redemption of the race, it made possible the Salvation of the individual.

The distinction here made between the terms Redemption and Salvation must not, of course, be taken too absolutely. Obviously, there can be no hard and fast allocation of the word Redemption to what Our Lord did for the race and Salvation to what He does to the individual; He was the saviour of the race as well as of the individual; by redeeming the race, He redeemed the individual. Yet I think there is a tendency in Scripture to use the words more often in the way here suggested.

However this may be, let us repeat that the sacrifice on Calvary
was a propitiation not only for the representative sin of the race, but for the personal sins of all members of the race: "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world." (1 Jn. ii. 2.) "He has washed us from our sins in His own blood." (Apoc. i. 5.) But whereas the Redemption of the race was entirely His work and therefore wholly achieved, the Salvation of the individual depends upon our co-operation with His work and some of us may fail. This is the reason for a variation of phrasing in Scripture—Christ being said at one time to have died for all and at another time to have died for some—which at first seems puzzling. The first phrase means that He excluded none from the reach of the sacrifice, the second that some have excluded themselves and so are not reached by it. "Being consumed He became, to all that obey Him, the cause of eternal salvation." (Heb. v. 9.) But nothing must dim our realization of the truth that He died for all without exception: "Such prayer is our duty, it is what God our Saviour expects of us, since it is His will that all men should be saved and be led to recognize the truth: there is only one God, and only one Mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, who is a man, like them, and gave Himself as a ransom for them all." (1 Tim. ii. 3.)

Christ died for all. "But though He died for all, yet not all receive the benefit of His death, but those only unto whom the merit of His passion is communicated." (Council of Trent vi. §2.) Salvation depends upon our receiving the supernatural life by which we become sons of God and having this life in our souls when we die. Christ merited it for all men. But, as we have already seen, we do not receive it automatically merely by being born (for by birth we are one with Adam in whom we fell), but by being re-born in Christ, made one with Him in such a way that in Him we are restored. If we do not receive the life, or if we receive it but lose it and die without it, then we shall not be saved.

Notice particularly how St. Paul emphasized the distinction between Christ's death on Calvary and our salvation by it. "God means us to win salvation through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has died for our sakes, that we, waking or sleeping may find life with Him." (1 Thess. v. 10.) In the Epistle to the Romans he makes equally clear not only that there is something to be done by us for our salvation, but that Christ's own part in our salvation is not confined to His death on Calvary: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled shall we be saved by His life." (v. 10.) Christ dying made our salvation possible, Christ living still operates to make it actual.

How? Christ works for us in Heaven in His own Person, upon earth through His Church. Here let us consider for a moment Christ in Heaven. We have seen that He is at the right hand of the Father in the whole of His reality, body and soul and divinity. We have also seen that He continues to make intercession for us: "Jesus continues forever, and His priestly office is unchanging; that is why He can give eternal salvation to those who through Him make their way to God, He lives on still to make intercession on our behalf." (Heb. vii. 25.) As St. Thomas says (S.T. iii q. 54): "Interceding for us, He ever shows the Father what kind of death He bore for man." In other words Christ Our Lord is ever in the presence of His Father in that sacred humanity which He offered once for all upon Calvary: and by that continuing presence before God of that which was offered for us, our own continuance in the way of salvation is made possible. "He sits now at the right hand of God, annihilating death, to make us heirs of eternal life." (1 Peter iii. 22.)

We shall have occasion to return to this continuing priesthood of Christ in Heaven. For the moment we must turn to a study of the Church which is the continuation of His work upon earth, which is in fact Himself continuing to work upon earth. As we proceed in this study of the Church, we shall come to a fuller understanding than we have even yet indicated of what is meant by oneness with Christ, and with that to the deepest meaning of Christ's redemptive work.