

THE MAGNIFICAT

THE SONG
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

FOUNDATION STONE
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The Magnificat:

The Song of the Blessed Virgin

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There are in use today several approved Roman Catholic versions of the Holy Scriptures, but the primary one is the Rheims-Douai (commonly known as the Douai or Douay). Only Church-approved versions are used throughout this book. Unless otherwise stated, Scripture quotations are taken from the Rheims-Douai. References within brackets (generally referring to verses in the book of Psalms) indicate verse locations in other Church-approved translations.

“For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting.”

— St. John 3:16

DEDICATION

TO ALL THOSE WHO LOVE
THE BLESSED VIRGIN
WHO BORE
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR.

MAY THE BLESSING
OF THE ALMIGHTY
REST ON THOSE
WHO READ THIS BOOK
AND DRAW
COMFORT AND STRENGTH
FROM ITS PAGES.

THE SONG OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

ET AIT MARIA MAGNIFICAT ANIMA MEA
DOMINUM ET EXULTAVIT SPIRITUS MEUS IN
DEO SALUTARI MEO QUIA RESPEXIT
HUMILITATEM ANCILLAE SUAE ECCE ENIM
EX HOC BEATAMME DICENT OMNES
GENERATIONES QUIA FECIT MIHI MAGNA
QUI POTENS EST ET SANCTUM NOMEN EIUS
ET MISERICORDIA EIUS IN PROGENIES ET
PROGENIES TIMENTIBUS EUM FECIT
POTENTIAM IN BRACHIO SUO DISPERSIT
SUPERBOS MENTE CORDIS SUI DEPOSUIT
POTENTES DE SEDE ET EXALTAVIT HUMILES
ESURIENTES IMPLEVIT BONIS ET DIVITES
DIMISIT INANES SUSCEPIT ISRAHEL
PUERUM SUUM MEMORARI MISERICORDIAE
SICUT LOCUTUS EST AD PATRES NOSTROS
ABRAHAM ET SEMINI EIUS IN SAECULA

ST. LUKE 1:46-55

LATIN VULGATE, A.D. 405

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“Behold a Virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

— *St. Matthew 1:23*

“And may my God supply all your want, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

— *Philippians 4:19*

“He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, freely given us all things?”

— *Romans 8:32*

“The Lord is good and giveth strength in the day of trouble: and knoweth them that hope in Him.”

— *Nahum 1:7*

“For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

— *Romans 8:38-39*

“Knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience . . . Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him.”

— *James 1:3, 12*

“My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth . . . The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord is thy protection upon thy right hand.”

— *Psalms 119:2, 5*
[*Psalms 120:2, 5*]

THE CHURCH DIRECTS US TO SCRIPTURE

The Church directs us to the Holy Scriptures. As we study it, the Sacred Writings direct us to our Lord. Coming to Him, we praise Him for His marvelous mercy to the children of men.

“The Church of Jesus Christ, by virtue of her divinely endowed infallibility, vouches for the divine origin of the Sacred Scriptures, and as such we respectfully, but confidently, submit them to the public.”

— *His Eminence James Cardinal Gibbons,
Preface, p. 2, of the Holy Bible, Douay Version*

“To be ignorant of the Scripture is not to know Christ.”

— *St. Jerome, Isaiam Prologue*

“A man who is well grounded in the testimonies of the Scripture is the bulwark of the Church.”

— *St. Jerome, Isaiam 54:12*

“Often read the divine Scriptures; yea, let holy reading be always in thy hand; study that which thou thyself must preach . . . Let the speech of the priest be ever seasoned with Scripture reading.”

— *St. Jerome, in Epistle to Nepotian*
S. Hier. de vita cleric, ad Nepot

“Those who are zealous in the work of preaching must never cease the study of the written Word of God.”

— *St. Gregory the Great*
M. Regul. past. ii. 11 (al. 22)
Moral. xvii. 26 (al. 14)

“For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of affliction, to give you an end and patience.”

— *Jeremias 29:11*

“He that feareth man shall quickly fall. He that trusteth in the Lord, shall be set on high.”

— *Proverbs 29:25*

“As many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name.”

— *St. John 1:12*

“The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace . . . The salvation of the just is from the Lord, and He is their protector in the time of trouble. And the Lord will help them and deliver them.”

— *Psalms 36:11, 39-40*

[*Psalms 37:11, 39-40*]

TWO IMPORTANT ENCYCLICALS

Two important papal encyclicals demand our attention. The first encyclical was written by Pope Leo XIII (February 20, 1878 - July 20, 1903) in the fifteenth year of his reign. It is a profound document, full of meaning.

The second was penned by Pope Benedict XV (September 3, 1914 - January 22, 1922) in the sixth year of his papacy. This significant document, from the papal chair, should be viewed with the deepest interest.

THE ENCYCLICAL OF LEO XIII PROVIDENTISSIMUS DEUS

In November 1893, Pope Leo XIII penned his most famous encyclical, entitled *Providentissimus Deus*. It was addressed to priests and bishops throughout the world, on the study of Sacred Scripture by the laity. It included the following passages:

“1. DOCTRINAL.—Among the reasons for which the Holy Scripture is so worthy of commendation—in addition to its own excellence and to the homage which we owe to God’s Word—the chief of all, is the innumerable benefits of which it is the source; according to the infallible testimony of the Holy Ghost Himself, who says: ‘All

Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice: that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work' (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

“a. Words and Example of Christ. That such was the purpose of God in giving the Scriptures to men is shown by the example of Christ our Lord and of His apostles. For He Himself who ‘obtained authority by miracles, merited belief by authority, and by belief drew to Himself the multitude’ was accustomed, in the exercise of His divine mission, to appeal to Scriptures. He uses them at times to prove that He is sent by God, and is God Himself. From them He cites instructions for His disciples and confirmation of His doctrine. He vindicates them from the calumnies of objectors; He quotes them against Sadducees and Pharisees and retorts from them upon Satan himself when he dares to tempt Him. At the close of His life His utterances are from the Holy Scriptures, and it is the Scriptures that He expounds to His disciples after His resurrection, until He ascends to the glory of His Father.”

Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical further states that Christ made use of the Scriptures and that He is our example: “We, therefore, should follow His example by being conversant with the Holy Scriptures.”

The pope even granted an indulgence for reading the Bible: “ ‘Pope Leo XIII grants to the faithful who shall read for at least a quarter of an hour the books of the Sacred Scripture with the veneration due to the Divine Word and as spiritual reading, indulgence of 300 days.’ ”—*Providentissimus Deus*, 645.

THE ENCYCLICAL OF BENEDICT XV SPIRITUS PARACLITUS

Pope Benedict XV wrote his encyclical, *Spiritus Paraclitus* (September 15, 1920), on the importance of

regular study of Holy Scripture by everyone. These excerpts are worthy of prayerful consideration by every Catholic:

“The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, had bestowed the Scriptures on the human race for their instruction in Divine things. He also raised up in successive ages saintly and learned men whose task it should be to develop the treasure and so provide for the faithful plenteous ‘consolation afforded by the Scriptures’ (Romans 15:4). Foremost among these teachers stands St. Jerome . . . The responsibility of our Apostolic office impels us to set before you his wonderful example and so promote the study of Holy Scripture in accordance with the teachings of our predecessors, Leo XIII and Pius X.

“And none can fail to see what profit and sweet tranquillity must result in well-disposed souls from such devout reading of the Bible. Whoever comes to it in piety, faith and humility, and with a determination to make progress in it, will assuredly find therein and will eat the ‘bread that comes down from heaven’ (St. John 6:50).

“Hence, as far as in us lies, we, Venerable Brethren, shall, with St. Jerome as our guide, never desist from urging the faithful to read daily the Gospels, the Acts and the epistles, so as to gather thence food for their souls . . . But what, in his view, is the goal of such study? First, that from the Bible’s pages we learn spiritual perfection . . . Secondly, it is from the Bible that we gather confirmations and illustrations of any particular doctrine we wish to defend . . . We confidently hope that his example will fire both clergy and laity with enthusiasm for the study of the Bible . . . So convinced indeed was Jerome that familiarity with the Bible was the royal road to the knowledge and love of Christ that he did not hesitate to say: ‘Ignorance of the Bible means ignorance of Christ’ (Prol. in Comment. in Isa. cf. Tract. de Ps. 77).

“Jerome still calls to us. His voice rings out, telling us of the superexcellence of Holy Scripture, of its integral

character and historical trustworthiness, telling us, too, of the pleasant fruits resulting from reading and meditating upon it.

“Our one desire for all the church’s children is that, being saturated with the Bible, they may arrive at the all-surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ.

“Every professed Christian should accept the instruction of St. Jerome, who said, ‘Love the Bible and wisdom will love you; love it and it will preserve you; honor it and it will embrace you; these are the jewels which you should wear on your breast and in your ears.’ ”—*Spiritus Paraclitus*, 130:20.

“The fear of the Lord is the lesson of wisdom: and humility goeth before glory.”

— *Proverbs 15:33*

“I will look towards the Lord, I will wait for God my Saviour: my God will hear me.”

— *Michaehs 7:7*

“My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity.”

— *2 Corinthians 12:9*

“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians. For he looked unto the reward.”

— *Hebrews 11:26*

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you.”

— *St. John 15:7*

WHAT THE HOLY SCRIPTURES CAN DO FOR YOU

As Leo XIII and Benedict XV clearly established, the Holy Scriptures are the Inspired Word of Our Saviour. As we study the Sacred Writings, our Lord works by His Spirit to change our lives for the better.

Did Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, base His teachings on the Holy Scriptures? This is a very important question. Both the Church and the Scriptures themselves give a resounding yes!

Pope Benedict XV, in his encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus*, published these words:

“When Christ preached to the people, whether on the mount by the lakeside, or in the synagogue at Nazareth, or in His own city of Capernaum, He took His points and His arguments from the Bible.”

We find that the record of Sacred Scripture bears this out.

The basis of all religious authority is found in the Holy Scriptures.

Here is why the Holy Scriptures are so important and

All Scripture quotations in this chapter are from the Rheims-Douai.

what they can do for you:

The Holy Scriptures are God's Inspired Word. They were given to us by the Holy Spirit.

"For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost."—2 *St. Peter* 1:21.

By studying and obeying the Sacred Scriptures, God can help you in ways which nothing and no one else can.

"Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths."—*Psalms* 118:105.

"All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice. That the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work."—2 *Timothy* 3:16-17.

"For what things soever were written, were written for our learning: that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope."—*Romans* 15:4.

"Sanctify them in truth. Thy word is truth."—*St. John* 17:17.

"And because from thy infancy thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which can instruct thee to salvation, by the faith which is in Christ Jesus."—2 *Timothy* 3:15.

Jesus taught the importance of Scripture study.

"Search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting; and the same are they that give testimony of Me."—*St. John* 5:39.

"Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, who received the Word with all eagerness, daily searching the Scriptures, whether these things were so."—*Acts* 17:11.

"Blessed is he, that readeth and heareth the words of this prophecy; and keepeth those things which are written in it; for the time is at hand."—*The Apocalypse* 1:3.

“And Jesus answering, said to them: You err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.”—*St. Matthew 22:29*.

“And He [Christ] said to them: These are the words which I spoke to you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me.”—*St. Luke 24:44*.

“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures, the things that were concerning Him.”—*St. Luke 24:27*.

We must test everything by Scripture. If any teaching, theory, or doctrine is not found in it, we cannot accept it as Scriptural.

“I have not departed from the commandments of His lips, and the words of His mouth I have hid in my bosom.”—*Job 23:12*.

“To the law rather, and to the testimony. And if they speak not according to this Word, they shall not have the morning light.”—*Isaias 8:20*.

The Inspired Word of God will never lose its importance or its authority in our lives.

“The grass is withered, and the flower is fallen: but the Word of our Lord endureth for ever.”—*Isaias 40:8*.

“Heaven and earth shall pass, but My words shall not pass.”—*St. Matthew 24:35*.

The Sacred Scriptures can help you clean your life and live in harmony with the will of God.

“Being born again not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God who liveth and remaineth for ever.”—*1 St. Peter 1:23*.

“By what doth a young man correct his way? by observing Thy words.”—*Psalms 118:9*.

“Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee.”—*Psalms 118:11*.

“For the Word of God is living and effectual, and

more piercing than any two edged sword; and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”—*Hebrews 4:12*.

“If then any be in Christ a new creature, the old things are passed away, behold all things are made new.”—*2 Corinthians 5:17*.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Amen, amen I say unto thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”—*St. John 3:3*.

“The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, He will save: He will rejoice over thee with gladness, He will be silent in His love, He will joy over thee in praise.”

— *Sophonias 3:17*

“If any one love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with Him.”

— *St. John 14:23*

“Behold My servants shall rejoice . . . My servants shall praise for joyfulness of heart.”

— *Isaias 65:14*

“Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb: that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.”

— *The Apocalypse 22:14*

“Our help is in the name of the Lord.”

— *Psalms 123:8 [124:8]*

THE RHEIMS-DOUAI AND THE VULGATE

All Scripture passages quoted in this book have received the *Nihil obstat* and *Imprimatur*. Most are from the Rheims-Douai Version (also known as the Douai and Douay). This is the standard Catholic translation, in English, of the Latin Vulgate. References within brackets refer to verse locations in other translations. (All other Scripture quotations in this book are cited, and are from other Church-approved Scripture versions.)

Here is additional information on the Rheims-Douai and its origins:

The Rheims-Douai Bible: In 1568, several Catholics left England and established an English-language college in Douai, in Flanders, France. This city was the seat of a university founded by Philip II of Spain in 1562, and was an important center of English Roman Catholicism.

The founder of this English college, William Allen, was an Oxford graduate and a canon under Queen Mary. He conceived the idea of producing an English translation of the Scriptures for English Roman Catholics. Gregory Martin, another Oxford graduate, headed the translation team.

During the progress of the work, political problems compelled the removal of the college from Douai to Rheims in 1578. By 1582 the entire work of translation had been completed and the New Testament section was published. In 1593 the college was compelled by political turmoil to

return to Douai where the Old Testament was printed in 1609-1610.

For this reason, scholars refer to this translation as the Rheims-Douai Bible, but generally the Douai Bible. (It is often called the Douay Bible today.)

This Douai Version was translated from St. Jerome's Vulgate. This version became the official English Bible of the Roman Catholic Church.

The revision of Bishop Challoner in the middle of the eighteenth century, along with later minor changes while adapting it to the needs of its modern readers, have not fundamentally affected its character.

In spite of the later introduction of other Church-approved English Bibles, because of its qualities and the authority of ecclesiastical superiors, the Douai continues to maintain its position as the Bible of English-speaking Catholics the world over.

The Douai has the approbation of His Eminence James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore. For this reason, it is the only Bible quoted in the book you have in hand (with one or two exceptions, which are quoted from other Church-approved versions).

It should be remembered that, in the Rheims-Douai, some Old Testament passages, when quoted in the New Testament, have been placed in Italics.

The Rheims-Douai was translated from the Latin Vulgate. Here is the story behind that translation:

The Latin Vulgate: St. Jerome (c. 345-c. 419) was born near Aquileia, on the Adriatic Sea's northernmost point, about the year A.D. 345. Jerome spent his youth obtaining a broad education in Rome. In 375, St. Jerome became concerned about his soul, and began a period of intense study of the Bible. To do this required learning Hebrew and Greek, the languages in which the Bible was written.

In 377, St. Jerome was ordained to the priesthood; and, in 385, he became personal secretary to Pope Damasus.

Throughout this time, St. Jerome continued his deep personal study of the Bible. From 382 to 385, while he was still with Pope Damasus, St. Jerome translated the New Testament from the Greek into Latin.

In 386, after the death of Pope Damasus, St. Jerome moved to Bethlehem, where he spent the last years of his life. From 390 to 405, he completed his final revisions of the New Testament and translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew to the Latin. He died about the year 419.

St. Jerome had produced what became known as the Vulgate. It was later declared to be the official Latin Bible of the Roman Catholic Church.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.”

— *1 Corinthians 2:9*

“Hearken to My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people: and walk ye in all the way that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.”

— *Jeremias 7:23*

“He became to all that obey Him, the cause of eternal salvation.”

— *Hebrews 5:9*

“Who keepeth mercy unto thousands, who taketh away iniquity, and wickedness, and sin.”

— *Exodus 34:7*

- PART ONE -

THE MAGNIFICAT

THE SONG
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN
AS GIVEN IN
THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

THE MAGNIFICAT

INTRODUCTION

THE VIRGIN'S DEEPEST THOUGHTS

“And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord.”—
St. Luke 1:46.

The song of the Blessed Virgin Mary is considered one of the most sublime hymns in all sacred literature. It is a lyric of exquisite beauty worthy of the Virgin.

It is not only pervaded by a spirit of humble adoration and thankfulness, but it glorifies the power, holiness, and mercy of God.

This wonderful song has, for centuries, been called the *Magnificat*. This is because “Magnificat” (magnifies) is the first word of this canticle, in the Latin Vulgate, which was translated in the early fifth century and became the official Latin text of the Bible. From that time down to the present, the song of the Virgin Mary has been called the Magnificat.

The well-recognized and very scholarly one-volume *Catholic Encyclopedia* explains the background of this glorious song:

“Magnificat—This title has been given to the canticle spoken by the Blessed Mother on the occasion of

All Scripture passages quoted in this chapter have received the *Nihil obstat* and *Imprimatur*. When not otherwise stated, quotations are from the Rheims-Douai. (References within brackets refer to verse locations in other translations.)

her visit to her cousin, Elizabeth, as recorded in St. Luke 1:46-55. The Magnificat is an expression of genuine humility, which is drawn largely from Old Testament thought, especially the Psalms (Psalms 22:8; 30:8; 33:4; 70:18). It acknowledges the goodness of God, that God is her Savior, and that God is to be served. The title comes from the first word of the Latin version.”—*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1986 edition, p. 367.

The gift of inspiration seems to fall upon the Virgin as she speaks forth in calm and majestic strains. It expresses her personal emotion and experience as she meditates upon the message of the angel Gabriel.

The ideas and words reflect what inspired Bible writers have said, both before and after she uttered that sublime song.

As one would gaze into a pool of clearest water, with its myriad hues of blue and green, mingled with shimmering light, so, in this book, we shall penetrate the depths of

“Thou wilt keep peace: peace because we have hoped in Thee. You have hoped in the Lord for evermore, in the Lord God mighty for ever.”

— *Isaias 26:3-4*

“The joy of the Lord is our strength.”

— *Nehemias 8:10*

“In God I will praise my words, in God I have put my trust: I will not fear what flesh can do against me.”

— *Psalms 55:5 [Psalm 56:4]*

“Many are the afflictions of the just; but out of them all will the Lord deliver them.”

— *Psalms 33:20 [Psalm 34:19]*

this wondrous song. It is a study from which you, the reader, will draw renewed courage.

How thankful we can be for this wonderful song, from which we derive so much strength. This is because, as we study it, the song of the Virgin is a song of the Holy Scriptures. It carries us from one sweet theme of the Bible to another.

Let us, together, consider this sweetest of hymns. This is the story of the inmost thoughts of the Blessed Virgin: This is the Magnificat.

CHAPTER ONE

THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman.”—*Galatians 4:4*.

Mary was important in the sending of our Saviour to us. The God of heaven looked down and saw that she would prove faithful to the calling which He was about to bring to her.

“In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.”—*St. Luke 1:26-27*.

She was just a young girl, in her late teens or early twenties. As she was growing into adulthood, few in her village of Nazareth would have thought that anything out of the ordinary might ever happen to the maiden.

Yet the young girl had a profound dedication to the will of God. This was unusual in her time. She loved and obeyed God’s Word—the Holy Scriptures,—and she sought in every little way to be helpful to those around her.

Do you and I realize that, as we study God’s Word today and seek to be obedient to what we find therein, that

someday we too might be used by God to bring a greater blessing to others?

That is what Mary did, and that is why she became so Blessed. She was, indeed, blessed of God, because she sought to comfort and help all who came in contact with her.

One day as young Mary was working about the house, an angel came to see her. It was an important angel from the heavenly courts, and he came with an important message.

“And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.”—*St. Luke 1:28.*

Mary had received of the grace of God; and, as we read her song, we can better understand why she was so

“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just . . . He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world . . . I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for His name’s sake.”

—1 *St. John 2:1-2, 12*

“As the Father hath loved Me, I also have I loved you. Abide in My love.”

— *St. John 15:9*

“Blessed be the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence. And he shall be as a tree that is planted by the waters, that spreadeth out her roots toward moisture: and it shall not fear when heat cometh. And the leaf thereof shall be green; and in the time of drought it shall not be solicitous, neither shall it cease at any time to bring forth fruit.”

— *Jeremias 17:7-8*

blessed.

It was by the enabling grace of God that the young girl was able to live such a clean life. Mary loved God and was a daily recipient of His grace.

“Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus.”—*St. Luke 1:31*.

The Virgin was astounded. Yet there was more to the message:

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever.”—*St. Luke 1:32*.

To Mary was to be born the Saviour of the world! An astonishing message! Why was Mary selected? The reason is given in verse 38: She was one who was fully surrendered to the will of God and totally willing to obey His Word.

“And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word.”—*St. Luke 1:38*.

Gabriel had brought her the Word of God, and she bowed willingly in submission to it. God can only use those who are willing to obey His Word, as given in the Sacred Scriptures.

For Mary, God’s Word was found in those Scriptures; and, because she readily obeyed them, she was called to a special work for God.

So it may be with us today. For years, Mary had been in the habit of obeying God’s Written Word; that was why she was selected for a special task.

As the angel Gabriel was concluding his astounding announcement, he mentioned that Mary’s cousin, Elizabeth the wife of Zachary (also called Zacharias), was also to have a child.

“And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath con-

ceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren.”—*St. Luke 1:36*.

The following verses of Sacred Scripture tell us that Mary then journeyed south to the home of her cousin.

“And she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth.”—*St. Luke 1:40*.

Oh, how happy the two women were to see one another! But further evidence was immediately given that Mary had the Christ Child within her.

“And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.”—*St. Luke 1:41*.

As Mary contemplated these things, and especially the words of Gabriel, the spirit of Inspiration came upon her, and she lifted up her voice in holy words of praise.

“Then Moses and the children of Israel sung this canticle [song] to the Lord: and said: Let us sing to the Lord: for He is gloriously magnified.”

— *Exodus 15:1*

“And they sung as it were a new canticle, before the throne . . . These follow the Lamb withersoever He goeth.”

— *The Apocalypse 14:3-4*

“And singing the canticle of Moses, the servant of God, and the canticle of the Lamb, saying: Great and wonderful are Thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, O King of ages.”

— *The Apocalypse 15:3*

“For in Him our heart shall rejoice: and in His holy name we have trusted.”

— *Psalms 32:21 [Psalm 33:21]*

That glorious song has come down through the ages, and cheered thousands who have sought a closer walk with God. It will encourage us today, as we study more fully into the message the Virgin Mary had for us.

How thankful we can be for the Holy Scriptures, for they provide us with perfectly true and accurate statements—which we can always rely upon.

CHAPTER TWO

MAGNIFYING THE LORD

ST. LUKE 1:46

The Song of Mary reveals many things: Why she was chosen, who Christ is, what His work is, and how we can receive what He has for us! There are many noble truths revealed in that glorious canticle. In her song, we find that Mary explains major teachings of the Bible.

“And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord.”—
St. Luke 1:46.

Mary was selected because *her whole life* magnified the Lord! She loved God with all her heart, and fully yielded to His will.

Think not that God casually chose her out of the crowd at random. Before He sent His angel to her with a special work, she was already dedicated to Him.

Oh, that each one of us will be as dedicated as Mary.

In this song, the soul of Mary is magnifying the Lord. *We have here the very words of Mary!* Profound are the truths to be found within them.

“My soul doth magnify the Lord.”—*St. Luke 1:46.*

It is Mary that is magnifying the Lord. Mary’s “soul” is part of her. A “soul” is not something separate from the body which floats in space. It is part of us. It is our feelings, our inner being; it is each one of us.

The word, "soul," comes from a Greek word, *psuche* (as in psychology), and denotes the inner feeling, part of the entire being.

Especially in these last days, we must beware of those who would teach strange theories which are not found in the Word of God. Her soul was not something apart from Mary that was praising God; it was her heart and very being. It was her.

"Now the Spirit manifestly saith, that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their conscience seared."—*1 Timothy 4:1-2*.

While Mary was magnifying the Lord, most people in her time were magnifying themselves. This is the condition of many in our society today. We must beware of the ungodly.

"Traitors, stubborn, puffed up, and lovers of pleasures more than of God. Having an appearance indeed

"The Lord will redeem the souls of His servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall offend."

— *Psalm 33:23 [Psalm 34:22]*

"And they shall know that I the Lord their God am with them."

— *Ezekiel 34:30*

"We are saved by hope."

— *Romans 8:24*

"Search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have life everlasting; and the same are they that testify of Me."

— *St. John 5:39*

of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid.”—2 *Timothy* 3:4-5.

Instead of magnifying the Lord, all too many are busy seeking to be puffed up. Oh, how many lives are lost by exalting self!

But blessed Mary chose the right way: She magnified the Lord! And that is why she was so blessed.

Later, in her song, Mary made this comment:

“He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.”—*St. Luke* 1:52.

Through all history, God has pulled down the mighty and exalted the humble. Back in the beginning, Lucifer was a leading angel in heaven, but he became conceited and opposed God. He wanted to exalt himself, so he was cast out of heaven.

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? How art thou fallen to the earth, that didst wound the nations?”

“And thou saidst in thy heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides of the north.

“I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the most High.”—*Isaias* 14:12-14.

Just as Mary said, it is the arrogant who trust in themselves and oppose the godly who are cast down—for the Scriptures declare of Lucifer who sinned in heaven, “But yet thou shalt be brought down” (*Isaias* 14:15).

Lucifer got many angels on his side, and he defied God. Ultimately there was a great war.

“And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels: And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven.

“And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and

his angels were thrown down with him.”—*The Apocalypse 12:7-9*.

The Scriptures tell us that the angels that sinned were cast down, “to be reserved unto judgment” (2 St. Peter 2:4).

If the angels sinned, what is sin?

“Whosoever committeth sin committeth also iniquity; and sin is iniquity.”—*1 St. John 3:4*.

Sin is the transgression of the law. “Iniquity” comes from the Latin, *iniquitum*, which means a violation of equity; that is, a violation of justice and right rules.

Another translation which has received the *imprimatur* of the Church, says it this way:

“Every one who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.”—*1 John 3:4, RSV*.

St. Paul said that where there is no law, there is no sin. This is because it is by the law that we identify sin for what it is.

“I do not know sin, but by the law; for I had not

“My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready: I will sing, and rehearse a psalm.”

— *Psalms 56:8 [Psalm 57:7]*

“Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee: Thou art my God, and I will exalt Thee.”

— *Psalms 117:28 [Psalm 118:28]*

“Behold, God is my Saviour, I will deal confidently, and will not fear: because the Lord is my strength, and my praise, and He is become my salvation.”

— *Isaiah 12:2*

“O praise ye the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever.”

— *Psalms 117:29 [Psalm 118:29]*

known concupiscence, if the law did not say, Thou shalt not covet.”—*Romans 7:7*.

Indeed, where there is no law, there is no transgression.

“For the law worketh wrath. For where there is no law, neither is there transgression.”—*Romans 4:15*.

Therefore, if the angels in heaven sinned,—*there had to be an eternal law in heaven that they sinned against*. So there is an everlasting law which cannot be abolished nor destroyed.

“All His commandments are faithful: confirmed for ever and ever, made in truth and equity.”—*Psalms 110:8*.

The evil angels were expelled from heaven because they disobeyed God’s holy law. We today cannot transgress even part of that law, or we shall suffer for having done so.

“And whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all.

“For He that said, Thou shalt not commit adultery, said also, Thou shalt not kill. Now if thou do not commit adultery, but shalt kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.”—*St. James 2:11*.

So, when we break one of the Ten Commandments, we have broken all of them. The Decalogue is a written statement of what God is like. Those who are godly live in obedience to this law. Trusting in Jesus, they are given grace to render that obedience.

How terrible would life be, if we did not have our Saviour! Only Jesus can empower us to obey the Word of God.

Jesus, Himself, emphasized the importance of the clean, pure way of life which He offers us—which we can have as, by faith in His enabling grace, we obey His Ten Commandment law.

“Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled.

“He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”—*St. Matthew 5:17-19*.

How thankful we can be that God’s holy law is unchangeable and eternal! It will never change—never. Because God and His law are unchangeable, all His creatures who are saved will live in holy obedience to His principles throughout all eternity.

What are the Ten Commandments? They are found in Exodus 20:3-17. Here they are:

The First Commandment—“Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me.”—*Exodus 20:3*.

The Second Commandment—“Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of

“Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord: he shall delight exceedingly in His commandments.”

— *Psalm 111:1 [Psalm 112:1]*

“Much peace have they that love Thy law, and to them there is no stumbling block.”

— *Psalm 118:165 [Psalm 119:165]*

“God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city.”

— *Hebrews 11:16*

“By what doth a young man correct his way? by observing Thy words.”

— *Psalm 118:9 [Psalm 119:9]*

those things that are in the waters under the earth.

“Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them: I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me: And shewing mercy unto thousands to them that love Me, and keep My commandments.”—*Exodus 20:4.*

The Third Commandment—“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain.”—*Exodus 20:7.*

The Fourth Commandment—“Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour, and shalt do all thy works.

“But on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.

“For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.”—*Exodus 20:8-11.*

The Fifth Commandment—“Honour thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest be long lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee.”—*Exodus 20:12.*

The Sixth Commandment—“Thou shalt not kill.”—*Exodus 20:13.*

The Seventh Commandment—“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”—*Exodus 20:14.*

The Eighth Commandment—“Thou shalt not steal.”—*Exodus 20:15.*

The Ninth Commandment—“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.”—*Exodus 20:16.*

The Tenth Commandment—“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house: neither shalt thou desire his wife,

nor his servant, nor his handmaid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his.”—*Exodus 20:17*.

The Apocalypse 12 not only tells us how Satan was cast out of heaven, but also tells of his efforts to slay Christ. That chapter reveals that Satan tried to destroy God’s faithful people in the centuries that followed.

According to verse 9, the “dragon” in this chapter is Satan and the organization he works through to accomplish his purpose. The pure “woman” is a symbol of the true church (2 Cor 11:2). The “child” of the woman is Christ. Here is the passage:

“And a great sign appeared in heaven: A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. And being with child, she cried travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered.

“And there was seen another sign in heaven: and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns: and on his heads seven diadems.

“And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven,

“I Know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of affliction, to give you an end and patience.”

— *Jeremias 29:11*

“The Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him.”

— *Lamentations 3:25*

“Say to the just man that it is well, for he shall eat the fruit of his doings.”

— *Isaias 3:10*

“The Lord is my helper: I will not fear what man shall do to me.”

— *Hebrews 13:6*

and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered; that, when she should be delivered, he might devour her Son.

“And she brought forth a man Child, who was to rule all nations with an iron rod: and her Son was taken up to God, and to His throne.

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God.”—*The Apocalypse 12:1-6*.

All through the ages—and even down at the end of time—Satan has continued his efforts to slay God’s faithful people!

“And the dragon was angry against the woman: and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”—*The Apocalypse 12:17*.

This Bible passage identifies the faithful sons and daughters of God in the last days. The unique characteristic of God’s people at the end of time is that they keep the commandments of God. That is something you and I want to do, is it not? By faith in the empowering grace of Jesus Christ, we can do it!

Did you know that, down at the end of time—and just two verses before the second coming of Christ—we are given another description of what God’s faithful ones will be like?

“Here is the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”—*The Apocalypse 14:12*.

Surely, we want to be among those people who, through the faith of Jesus, obey the commandments of God. Trust Him, Oh, my friend, trust Him! He can guide you all along life’s journey!

Through the enabling strength of Christ’s grace, you can withstand the temptations of the devil, and live a clean, pure life.

CHAPTER THREE
REJOICING IN HER SAVIOUR
ST. LUKE 1:47

“And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”—
St. Luke 1:47.

Mary’s Saviour was God. It is clear that she looked to no other. The sweet Virgin knew that she could not save herself. All she had was God; and in giving her all to Him—she had become a person whom He could use for a special work.

“Let them rejoice and be glad, who are well pleased with My justice, and let them say always: The Lord be magnified, who delights in the peace of His servant. And my tongue shall meditate Thy justice, Thy praise all the day long.”

— *Psalm 34:27-28 [Psalm 35:27-28]*

“If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.”

— *2 Timothy 2:12*

“Wherefore having the loins of your mind girt up, being sober, trust perfectly in the grace which is offered you in the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

— *1 St. Peter 1:13*

“Go out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you.”

— *2 Corinthians 6:17-18 [2 Corinthians 6:17]*

Think not that God cannot use you also! The God of heaven loves you with the deepest love; and He will work through you to help and bless others, to whatever degree you let Him.

Mary tells us that she needed a Saviour! There is a deep truth here. The Bible teaches that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

“For all have sinned, and do need the glory of God.”—*Romans 3:23*.

A wonderful chapter, *Isaias 53*, echoes the same words.

“All we like sheep have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way: and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”—*Isaias 53:6*.

This has been the story of all Adam’s children. We have all gone our own way. Because of this, each one of us needs a Saviour. Only those who have never sinned never need a Saviour.

So when Mary, by the Inspiration of God, says, “God is my Saviour,” it means a lot. She recognizes that she also has sinned and is dependent on the saving grace of Christ.

How thankful we can be that we have a Saviour to whom we can go! What if we had no Saviour? How terrible would be our lot!

Mary knew who her Saviour was. For the angel had explained it. Jesus Christ is the only Saviour.

“And she shall bring forth a Son: and thou shalt call His name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins.”—*St. Matthew 1:21*.

How does Christ save us? He does it by His grace. And what is grace? It is both forgiveness for sins and enabling strength to obey God’s holy law.

“For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God.”—*Ephesians 2:8*.

Grace is more than love and forgiveness, it is also help and power to obey.

“And He said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity.”—*2 Corinthians 12:9.*

“Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.”—*2 Timothy 2:1.*

Grace is power to live a virtuous life.

Many today say that grace is a blank check to follow their own gratification. But this is not true. Grace is help through the merits of Christ to help us stop sinning—not to help us keep doing it.

“What shall we say, then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. For we that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?”—*Romans 6:1-2.*

If we want to follow Mary’s example, we must trust in the grace of God to help us obey His Ten Commandment law.

“I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: because they shall return to Me with their whole heart.”

— *Jeremias 24:7*

“Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the evil day.”

— *Psalms 40:2 [Psalm 41:1]*

“They cried to the Lord in their affliction: and He delivered them out of their distresses.”

— *Psalms 106:19 [Psalm 107:19]*

“This is God, our God unto eternity, and for ever and ever: He shall rule us for evermore.”

— *Psalms 47:15 [Psalm 48:14]*

Thank God every day for His grace!

“Not because we first loved Him did Christ love us; but ‘while we were yet sinners’ He died for us. He does not treat us according to our desert. Although our sins have merited condemnation, He does not condemn us. Year after year He has borne with our weakness and ignorance, with our ingratitude and waywardness. Notwithstanding our wanderings, our hardness of heart, our neglect of His Holy Word, His hand is stretched out still.

“Grace is an attribute of God exercised toward undeserving human beings. We did not seek for it, but it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow His grace upon us, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our only claim to His mercy is our great need.”—*Ministry of Healing*, 161.

Jesus is our Saviour. But what does He save us from? He saves us from sin.

“And she shall bring forth a Son: and thou shalt call His name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins.”—*St. Matthew 1:21*.

St. Paul said that we cannot know what sin is, except by the law.

“I do not know sin, but by the law; for I had not known concupiscence, if the law did not say, Thou shalt not covet.”—*Romans 7:7*.

Mary is saying, “Jesus is my Saviour.” Blessed Mary! She is blessed who hath done so much for us, by bearing the Messiah! And we can be blessed too. All of us have sinned and come short; but, in the strength of Christ our Saviour, we can be empowered to live clean, godly lives.

And it is done by His grace. His grace is His empowering strength, which He freely offers us.

God is love,—and in love He offers us so much help! Just so much! All that we need.

So we see that it is grace which enables us to obey His

will, which is His law. This is because the Ten Commandments are a reflection of all that God is and stands for. When we read the Ten Commandments, we read what God is like, His character.

Yet is there not anyone else to whom we can turn for salvation? No, there is not one. The Sacred Scriptures tell us that there is no one else who can save us from our sins.

“Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven, given to men, whereby we must be saved.”—*Acts 4:12*.

“No other name.” And what is that name?

“Be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God hath raised from the dead,—even by Him this man standeth here before you whole.”—*Acts 4:10*.

“Now to Him who is able to preserve you without sin, and to present you spotless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.”

— *Jude 24*

“All thy children shall be taught of the Lord: and great shall be the peace of thy children.”

— *Isaias 54:13*

“You shall walk in the way that the Lord your God hath commanded, that you may live, and it may be well with you, and your days may be long in the land of your possession.”

— *Deuteronomy 5:33*

“For according to the height of the heaven above the earth: He hath strengthened His mercy towards them that fear [reverence] Him.”

— *Psalms 102:11 [Psalm 103:11]*

The Scriptures do not support the idea that any human being can be a co-redemptor. Salvation is only in Jesus Christ. That is what the Bible teaches.

“For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”—*1 Timothy 2:5*.

Only God can redeem us. And those whom He redeems are those who have sinned, but who, in humility of soul, have confessed that He is their Saviour. Mary did this.

“And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”—*St. Luke 1:47*.

The Redemptor is Jesus. He is Mary’s Redemptor; He is ours. Christ is the only Redemptor anyone can have!

“Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven, given to men, whereby we must be saved.”—*Acts 4:12*.

Everyone needs a Saviour; and, by her own statement, Mary herself needed a Saviour!

“And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”—*St. Luke 1:47*.

Look to Jesus! Jesus Christ is the only pathway to heaven for any human being.

“Jesus saith to him: I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by Me.”—*St. John 14:6*.

That verse does not say “by us,” but “by Me.” Only through Christ can we have forgiving and enabling grace. Only through Him can we be saved.

CHAPTER FOUR

BLESSED ART THOU

ST. LUKE 1:48-49

Continuing on with the wonderful song of Mary, we

next read this passage:

“Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”—*St. Luke 1:48*.

Mary was a sweet child of God who loved Him deeply. She recognized that she was a humble servant. It is only the humble, those who take a lowly place before God, that He can use in His work.

Her attitude was clearly shown in her words when she first received the message of the Incarnation:

“And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word.”—*St. Luke 1:38*.

It is difficult for us today to realize the great sacrifice that Mary made in her decision to submit to the Word of God.

“His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him.”

— *St. Luke 1:50*

“The needy and the poor seek for waters, and there is none: their tongue hath been dry with thirst. I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”

— *Isaias 41:17*

“It is good to give praise to the Lord: and to sing to Thy name, O Most High. To shew forth Thy mercy in the morning, and Thy truth in the night.”

— *Psalm 91:2-3 [Psalm 92:1-2]*

“Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners.”

— *Psalm 1:1*

She was poor, a single parent. Today people would say she should abort her baby! In obeying the Word of God, Mary knew that, for the rest of her life, she would face the stigma of an unusual birth. Those were times when women were stoned for having children out of wedlock.

But Mary was willing to pay a price, the highest price, if it would please God. Although to all about her, this would be viewed as a betrayal to her betrothed, yet Mary remained firm to her commitment.

She would obey the Word of God. And she was blessed for it. Greatly blessed.

You will recall her submissive words when the task was presented to her:

“Be it done to me according to Thy word.”—*St.*

Luke 1:38.

This was what made Mary great! This is why the God of heaven could use her to bear the promised Messiah! She had total submission to the revealed will of God. She would obey, regardless of the cost.

Our Saviour speaks to us today through the pages of Holy Writ. To you and me today, the will of God is found in the Scriptures. To the degree that we are as submissive as Mary to the Word of God, we shall, like her, receive a blessing.

In her song, Mary also spoke these words:

“From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”—*St. Luke 1:48.*

She knew she would be held in remembrance by all ages because she was the bearer of the Messiah. Only one person throughout human history would ever have that task assigned to her. It was the dream of every Jewish woman that she might be the mother of the Messiah.

Mary, humble little Mary, was the one given that solemn responsibility.

Elizabeth had spoken these words to the Virgin:

“Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.”—*St. Luke 1:42.*

This was not the first time, in Scripture, that a special blessing had been given by God to women. Another example is to be found in the book of Judges.

“Blessed among women be Jahel the wife of Haber the Cinite, and blessed be she in her tent.”—*Judges 5:24*.

Jahel was also a humble woman who loved God and obeyed His will. Just as that woman was especially blessed of God, we too can be blessed, each of us in our own sphere of activity.

The Virgin was blessed because she was willing to take any assignment, do any task assigned her. This was clearly expressed in her words, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to Thy word” (St. Luke 1:38).

Mary was calling herself a servant of the Lord. Mary showed a commitment to fully obey whatever she was told in God’s Word.

Thirty years later, the Virgin was still submissive to

“The Lord keepeth all them that love Him.”

— *Psalm 144:20 [Psalm 145:20]*

“The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace.”

— *Psalm 36:11 [Psalm 37:11]*

“The poor shall eat and be filled: and they shall praise the Lord that seek Him: their hearts shall live for ever and ever.”

— *Psalm 21:27 [Psalm 22:26]*

“He was mindful of us in our affliction: for His mercy endureth for ever.”

— *Psalm 135:23 [Psalm 136:23]*

“He shall save His people from their sins.”

— *St. Matthew 1:21*

God's Word! We shall see this as we continue this study.

As we live our earthly life, we should say to ourselves, "Are we going to follow the example of Mary? Are we going to do whatever we are told by the Lord in the Scriptures?"

Mary's life was a life of obedience. We can surely know that, as she worked with young Jesus, she emphasized obedience to the law of God. The child Jesus happily did so. So it should be with us today. It is those that teach obedience who are called great in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus carefully explained this in the Sermon on the Mount:

"Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled.

"He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."—*St. Matthew 5:17-19.*

Today we hear many conflicting voices, telling us to obey the sayings of men. But those who are truly blessed are those who keep the commandments of God, by enabling faith in Jesus Christ.

"Here is the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."—*The Apocalypse 14:12.*

When the angel first told Mary that she was going to bear the Son of the living God, she was startled.

"And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man."—*St. Luke 1:34.*

The reply of the angel was deep with significance.

"And the angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy

which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”—*St. Luke 1:35*.

The power of the most High would be the means by which the Word of God would be fulfilled. This is the way it shall ever be.

The power of the Almighty is related to His Word. By a word, God can help His people in time of need.

“Come ye to Him and be enlightened: and your faces shall not be confounded. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him: and saved him out of all his troubles.

“The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him: and shall deliver them. O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet: blessed is the man that hopeth in Him.”—*Psalm 33:8-9*.

God’s Word has immense power.

“It is good to confide in the Lord, rather than to have confidence in men.”

— *Psalm 117:8 [Psalm 118:8]*

“I am come that they might have life, and may have it more abundantly.”

— *St. John 10:10*

“Believe in your God, and you shall be secure; believe His prophets, and all things shall succeed well.”

— *2 Paralipomenon 20:20*

“The Lord your God is in the midst of you, and will fight for you against your enemies, to deliver you from danger.”

— *Deuteronomy 20:4*

“Through God we shall do mightily: for He shall bring to nothing them that afflict us.”

— *Psalm 59:14 [Psalm 60:12]*

“So shall My word be, which shall go forth from My mouth: it shall not return to Me void, but it shall do whatsoever I please, and shall prosper in the things for which I sent it.”—*Isaias 55:11*.

That power, which can build the human body within the womb, can also cleanse our souls of sin and restore our entire being in newness of life.

The power of God’s Word is to be found in the Holy Scriptures. As we study and obey them, our lives become clean and godly.

“All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice; that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work.”—*2 Timothy 3:16-17*.

But there is more to Mary’s song in St. Luke 1:48.

“Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”—*St. Luke 1:48*.

The sweet Virgin is saying that all future generations would recognize that, through her, the Saviour came into the world. She surely was blessed in being selected to bear the Messiah!

There is an interesting parallel ten chapters later in St. Luke. Jesus was speaking precious words of life to the people gathered about Him. Oh, how their hearts thrilled with joy upon learning the words of life.

You and I today may also hear those words as we faithful read in the Four Gospels and elsewhere in the Holy Scriptures.

As Jesus spoke to the group about Him, a woman cried out. What was it that she said? *She repeated the blessing on Mary:*

“And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to Him: Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck!”—*St. Luke 11:27*.

How many down through the centuries have echoed that adoring statement of the Virgin Mary!

Yet to this Christ gave a remarkable reply. Turning toward the woman, and then beckoning to all that vast throng, He said:

“Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it!”—*St. Luke 11:28.*

What did Christ mean when He said that? The words are quite obvious, and so is the meaning. Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, declared that, even though the Virgin was blessed for having borne Him,—*yet the greater blessing of God rested on anyone and everyone who would obey the Holy Scriptures!*

This is an extremely significant statement,—and it agrees with what God and all the holy prophets and apostles have said throughout the Bible.

Was Mary blessed? Yes, she surely was. Can anyone else be blessed to a like degree? According to the words of

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the just runneth to it, and shall be exalted.”

— *Proverbs 18:10*

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”

— *Romans 1:16*

“And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself for me.”

— *Galatians 2:20*

“Better is a little to the just, than the great riches of the wicked.”

—*Psalm 36:16 [Psalm 37:16]*

Christ, everyone can—if they will obey the Word of God. Mary obeyed God; you and I can also.

The greatest blessing rests on those who humble their hearts before God; surrender their lives to His control; and, in full reliance on the enabling grace of Christ,—put into their every day lives the teachings of Scripture! They live for God fully, and they are blessed for it.

The Virgin was blessed because she humbled her heart and dedicated her life to God, so she could be used by Him.

What a glorious promise it is, that you and I can have a blessing such as Mary received! According to St. Luke 11:27-28, each of us can! Indeed, the deeper our dedication and obedience to God's Word, the deeper will be the blessing.

It is a blessing which comes to all who, through the grace of Christ, live clean, godly lives and spend their time encouraging others and ministering to their needs. Yes, yes, we can be blessed as Mary was! It is a blessing we today can share in.

Notice what Jesus said:

“Blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it!”—*St. Luke 11:28*.

It is hearing and doing that counts. Listen to God speak:

“If therefore you will hear My voice, and keep My covenant, you shall be My peculiar possession above all people: for all the earth is Mine.”—*Exodus 19:5*.

God predicted that the people could be saved when, amid their troubles, heartaches, and sins, they sought Him with all their heart, and returned and heard His voice. Then He would be found of them.

“And when thou shalt seek there the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him: yet so, if thou seek Him with all thy heart, and all the affliction of thy soul.

“After all the things aforesaid shall find thee, in the latter time thou shalt return to the Lord thy God, and shalt hear His voice.”—*Deuteronomy 4:29-30*.

What a wonderful promise. O child of God, whatever

the sins you may have committed, you can come back to Him—even now—and find forgiveness and acceptance. But it can only happen as we repent of our sins, and in the strength of Christ determine to forsake them, listen, and obey God’s voice as given in the sacred books of the Old and New Testaments.

There are those in the world today who refuse to do this. They choose to not hear and obey God speaking to them in the Scriptures.

“And the word of the Lord came to Zacharias, saying:

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, saying: Judge ye true judgment, and shew ye mercy and compassion every man to his brother. And oppress not the widow and the fatherless, and the stranger, and the poor: and let not a man devise evil in his heart against his brother.

“But they would not hearken, and they turned away

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the just runneth to it, and shall be exalted.”

— *Proverbs 18:10*

“Trust in the Lord, and do good, and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches . . . They that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the land . . . The Lord will help them and deliver them: and He will rescue them from the wicked, and save them, because they have hoped in Him.”

— *Psalms 36:3, 9, 40 [Psalms 37: 3, 9, 40]*

“Seek the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, you that have wrought His Judgment: seek the just, seek the meek: if by any means you may be hid in the day of the Lord’s indignation.”

— *Sophonias 2:3 [Zephaniah 2:3]*

the shoulder to depart: and they stopped their ears, not to hear.

“And they made their heart as the adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of host sent in His Spirit by the hand of the former prophets: so a great indignation came from the Lord of hosts.”—*Zacharias 7:8-12*.

We do not want to be like those who stubbornly rebel against the Word of the Lord and refuse to hear it! God’s instruction to Josue (also called Joshua) tells us how we may please Him:

“Let not the book of this law depart from thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate on it day and night, that thou mayst observe and do all things that are written in it: then shalt thou direct thy way, and understand it.”—*Josue 1:8*.

The blessing is for those who will take time to read in the Bible every day, and obey it!

We want that promised blessing,—the blessing our Saviour promised to those who would hear and do the Words of God.

“And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to Him: Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck!

“But He said: Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it!”—*St. Luke 11:27-28*.

There must be not only hearing, but doing! The Holy Scriptures declare that only the doers are justified.

“For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.”—*Romans 2:13*.

Christ gave many deep truths in His Sermon on the Mount (recorded in St. Matthew 5, 6, and 7). He ended that wonderful sermon with words which summarized it all:

“Every one therefore that heareth these My words,

and doeth them, shall be likened to a wise man that built his house upon a rock.

“And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

“And every one that heareth these My words, and doeth them not, shall be like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand.

“And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof.”—*St. Matthew 7:24-27.*

It is hearing Christ’s words—all through the Sacred books of Scripture—and doing them that counts. Just knowing that the Bible is on the shelf is not enough.

We must be founded on the Rock; and that Rock is

“The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart: and He will save the humble of spirit.”

— *Psalm 33:19 [Psalm 34:18]*

“If any man love God, the same is known by Him.”

— *1 Corinthians 8:3*

“When thou shalt pass through the waters, I will be with thee, and the rivers shall not cover thee: when thou shalt walk in the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; and the flames shall not burn in thee: For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.”

— *Isaias 43:2-3*

“Blessed are the meek; for they shall possess the land.”

— *St. Matthew 5:4 [Matthew 5:5]*

Jesus Christ, our only Saviour from sin.

“Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.”—*Acts 4:12*.

Before concluding this section on those whom Heaven blesses, we surely want to consider the people of God whom Christ has said are especially blessed.

When our Lord and Saviour gave the Sermon on the Mount, He began by giving the Beatitudes. These consist of eight blessings on those who, having accepting Christ as their Saviour, hear and obey the Word of God.

These blessings are for you and me today. It is for all those who see their spiritual need, humble their hearts before God, mourn over their sins and put them away, hunger and thirst for godliness, show mercy to others, have clean hearts, try to make peace with others, and willingly suffer persecution for Christ’s sake:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice [righteousness]: for they shall have their fill.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

“Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were

before you.”—*St. Matthew 5:3-12.*

God is willing to bestow these blessings upon each of us.

CHAPTER FIVE

BE THOU THEREFORE HOLY

ST. LUKE 1:49

Let us now continue on with Mary’s song:

“Because He that is mighty, hath done great things to me; and holy is His name.”—*St. Luke 1:49.*

In order to honor a holy God, we must be holy ourselves. As we submit our lives to Him, He will make us holy.

“In whom we have redemption through His blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”

— *Ephesians 1:7*

“We look for new heavens and a new earth according to His promises, in which justice dwelleth.”

— *2 St. Peter 3:13*

“Now we have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given us from God.”

— *1 Corinthians 2:12*

“Be thou faithful until death: and I will give thee the crown of Life.”

— *The Apocalypse 2:10*

“Holy is His name.”—*St. Luke 1:49*.

The name indicates the character. Moses in the mount asked to better know the name of God. He wanted to better know what He was like. So the Lord graciously passed before Moses and proclaimed His holy name.

“And when the Lord was come down in a cloud, Moses stood with Him, calling upon the name of the Lord.

“And when He passed before him, He [the Lord] said, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion and true.

“Who keepeth mercy unto thousands: who takest away iniquity, and wickedness, and sin.”—*Exodus 34:7*.

That is what the holiness of the Lord is. It means to be good, kind, and just. The Virgin said, “And holy is His name.”

“Because He that is mighty, hath done great things to me; and holy is His name.”—*St. Luke 1:49*.

We need to share with others the blessings God has given us. In her song, the Virgin Mary immediately began sharing the good news of how kind the Lord had been to her. We should be like Mary, and also tell what great things God hath done for us.

When Jesus healed a man at Gadara, who then became His new disciple, Christ immediately gave him a message to carry everywhere to the people.

“Now the man, out of whom the devils were departed, besought Him [Christ] that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying:

“Return to thy house, and tell how great things God hath done to Thee. And he went through the whole city, publishing how great things Jesus had done to him.”—*St. Luke 8:38-39*.

As soon as Jesus made a disciple, He sent him out to be a missionary. We too should go out and tell others the blessings God has given us.

Mary said that the name of God is holy. St. Peter said we should be holy also.

“Because He that is mighty, hath done great things to me; and holy is His name.”—*St. Luke 1:49*.

“But according to Him that hath called you, who is holy, be you also in all manner of conversation holy: because it is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy.”—*1 St. Peter 1:15-16*.

“Conversation” in this passage comes from a Greek word for “conduct.” In all ways we are to live clean, godly lives. This includes the way we eat. According to Holy Scripture, we should eat clean food.

In the Scriptures, God explained that some food is not clean and should not be eaten. For example, Scripture says

“And whatsoever we shall ask, we shall receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight.”

—*1 St. John 3:22*

“The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor: Thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart.”

— *Psalms 9:17 [Psalm 10:17]*

“And this is the confidence which we have towards Him: That whatsoever we shall ask according to His will, He heareth us. And we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask: we know that we have the petitions which we request of Him. He that knoweth his brother to sin a sin which is not to death, let him ask, and life shall be given to him, who sinneth not to death.”

—*1 St. John 5:14-16*

that swine (pigs) are unclean animals and should never be eaten. Both farmers and scientific researchers know that this is because they eat all kinds of garbage and are filled with worms and parasites. Our kind heavenly Father commands only that which is for our best good.

After describing which animals, birds, and fish are unclean, the final verses of the eleventh chapter of Leviticus explain why we must not eat such creatures:

“Do not defile your souls, nor touch aught thereof, lest you be unclean, for I am the Lord your God: be holy because I am holy. Defile not your souls by any creeping thing that moveth upon the earth.”—*Leviticus 11:43-44*.

Thus we see that God wants His people to have clean bodies. Heaven communicates with us through our brains; and, when the mind is clouded with impurities from bad food, then our moral nature is weakened and it is more difficult to resist temptation.

“You shall be holy, because I am holy. This is the law of beasts and fowls, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and creepeth on the earth: that you may know the differences of the clean, and unclean, and know what you ought to eat and what to refuse.”—*Leviticus 11:46-47*.

God’s biddings are enablings. Every command of the Lord is actually a promise of divine help, to strengthen us to obey it. He commands us to be holy. Whenever God commands us to do something, He will help us do it.

Our Saviour wants us to be holy people, a holy nation. He gives us a holy diet, and wants us to eat moderately even of that which is good. In Leviticus 11, He tells us which are the scavenger animals, and commands us not to eat them. They are scavenger foods.

“The prohibition of so many kinds of beasts, birds, and fishes in the law, was ordered, first, to exercise the people in obedience and temperance; secondly, to restrain them from the vices of which these animals were symbols; thirdly, because the things here forbidden were

for the most part unwholesome and not proper to be eaten; fourthly, that the people of God, by being obliged to abstain from things corporally [physically] unclean, might be trained up to seek a spiritual cleanness.”—*Footnote to Leviticus 11, Rheims-Douai Bible.*

Elsewhere in Leviticus, God explains His purpose for our lives:

“Sanctify yourselves, and be ye holy because I am the Lord your God.”—*Leviticus 20:7.*

God is showing Himself as the source of the power needed to live a holy life. The command to live such a holy life is found, not only in St. Peter’s writings, but all through the Scriptures. We can be thankful that God has told us how to live better, more wholesome lives.

“Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled: and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”

— *St. Matthew 23:12*

“He that sheweth mercy to the poor, shall be blessed.”

— *Proverbs 14:21*

“Sanctify them in truth: Thy word is truth . . . And for them do I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

— *St. John 17:17, 19*

“We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works, which God hath prepared that we should walk in them.”

— *Ephesians 2:10*

CHAPTER SIX

HIS MERCY AND JUSTICE

ST. LUKE 1:50

The Virgin Mary tells us in her song about the continual mercies of God.

“And His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him.”—*St. Luke 1:50*.

The word “fear,” given here, means “reverence, awe, reverential respect.” God is the Maker of all things! He is all powerful, and we are to bow in total submission, reverence, and worship to Him. No created being—anywhere—is to receive our worship and reverence! Only the Creator of heaven and earth.

Those who fear—reverence, worship—the true God, hate every evil thing.

“The fear of the Lord hateth evil: I hate arrogance, and pride, and every wicked way, and a mouth with a double tongue.”—*Proverbs 8:13*.

The followers of Christ hate evil and live righteousness. Christianity is not merely avoiding the negative; it is also loving those things which are good.

“Thou [Christ] hast loved justice, and hated iniquity.”—*Hebrews 1:9*.

The word “justice,” in the Rheims-Douai, is frequently translated “righteousness” in many other translations. What is both justice and righteousness? they mean obedience to the law of God.

God’s justice, His righteousness, is bound up in His eternal Ten Commandment law.

“Thy justice is justice for ever and Thy law is the truth.”—*Psalms 118:142*.

“My tongue shall pronounce Thy Word [proclaim Thy Scriptures] because all Thy commandments are justice.”—*Psalms 118:172*.

Here is how another Church-approved version words this:

“Thy righteousness is righteous for ever, and Thy law is true.”—*Psalm 119:142, R.S.V.*

“My tongue will sing of Thy Word, for all Thy commandments are right.”—*Psalm 119:172, R.S.V.*

St. Peter has stated it so well:

“Let him decline [stay away] from evil, and do good; let him seek after peace and pursue it: because the countenance of the Lord [is] upon them that do evil things.”—*1 St. Peter 3:11-12.*

King Solomon was a wise man; and, in the book of Ecclesiastes, he summarized the only way to live a happy, useful life which God could approve:

“Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made Heaven and earth.”

— *Psalm 123:8 [Psalm 124:8]*

“He that shall hear Me, shall rest without terror, and shall enjoy abundance, without fear of evils.”

— *Proverbs 1:33*

“He that feareth the commandment, shall dwell in peace.”

— *Proverbs 13:13*

“My flesh and my heart hath fainted away: Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever.”

— *Psalm 72:26 [Psalm 73:26]*

“I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

— *St. John 14:18*

“Let us all hear together the conclusion of the discourse. Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is all man [all that man needs to do].

“And all things that are done, God will bring into judgment for every error, whether it be good or evil.”—*Ecclesiastes 12:13-14*.

Another accepted version says it this way:

“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.

“For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”—*Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, R.S.V.*

Those who truly fear—truly reverence—God will be those who obey His Ten Commandment law. A parallel passage to Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 is The Apocalypse 14:7 - 12. Both tell us that the ones who genuinely worship and reverence God are those who obey Him. They will be safe in that hour when God judges the secrets of men.

“Fear the Lord and give Him honour, because the hour of His judgment is come; and adore ye Him, that made heaven and earth, the sea, and the fountains of waters.”—*The Apocalypse 14:7*.

At the end of time, as in all ages before, those who love and reverence God and keep His commandments—will be the ones who will be the closest to Him. The Apocalypse 14:7 emphasizes that God’s people, living in the last days, will adore God—and no human creature. The Apocalypse 14:12, which is only two verses before the Second Advent of Christ, declares that God’s special people in the last days will keep His Ten Commandment law, by the faith of Jesus Christ.

“Here is the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”—*The Apocalypse 14:12*.

The above verse defines a “saint.” It is one who serves the Lord Jesus and who keeps God’s commandments. We

dare not set aside God's law as of little consequence. The immorality in the world today is destroying it. But it is because the great majority of mankind scorn obedience to God's moral law.

The Apocalypse, quoted above, explains that God's judgment of mankind will occur in the last days. The so-called Apostles' Creed also mentions the fact that God is going to judge mankind. (It is officially acknowledged that the Apostles did not write it: The *Catholic Encyclopedia* explains: "Its name is not because of the fact that it was written by the Apostles."—*Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 45.

Here is what the Apostles Creed says about the coming judgment:

"He [Christ] ascended into heaven, sits at the right

"And hope confoundeth not: because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us."

— *Romans 5:5*

"To whom shall I have respect? But to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My words."

— *Isaias 66:2*

"The innocent in hands, and clean of heart, who hath not taken his soul in vain, nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbor. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and mercy from God his Saviour."

— *Psalms 23:4-5 [Psalm 24:4-5]*

"My sheep hear My voice: and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them life everlasting."

— *St. John 10:27-28*

hand of God, the Father. From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.”—*From the Apostles’ Creed.*

We know that the judgment is coming, and we want to prepare for it. In the strength of Christ’s enabling grace, we can obey God’s law and do all that He asks of us in the Scriptures.

When St. Paul was brought before Governor Felix to answer for his faith, Felix was terrified at the thought of a judgment to come.

“And as he [St. Paul] treated of justice, and chastity, and of the judgment to come, Felix being terrified, answered: For this time, go thy way: but when I have a convenient time, I will send for thee.”—*Acts 24:25.*

But Felix busied himself with other matters and did not return to talk to St. Paul about this. You and I do not want to be like Felix! We want to come to God right now; surrender our lives to Him;—and determine, in His strength, to study and obey His Inspired Writings and tell others about them.

Fortunately, we know what those Inspired Writings are. They are the books of the Old and New Testaments: the Holy Bible.

All other books and writings and decrees are fallible and erring. Only the Sacred Scriptures are a safe guide on the pathway to heaven.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HE HATH PUT DOWN THE MIGHTY

ST. LUKE 1:51-52

“He hath shewed might in His arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

“He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble.”—*St. Luke 1:51-52.*

Mary was thinking about the dealings of God with His people in past centuries. Just as we should do today, she thought about what is taught in the Bible.

In ancient times, God brought His people out of Egypt and set them free from oppression and slavery. The deeds of God, all through history, are mighty.

In the twentieth chapter of 2 Paralipomenon (also known as 2 Chronicles), there is a wonderful example of how God will protect and guide His earthly children. Here is the story of what happened:

A large army had gathered to destroy God’s people, and were marching toward them.

“After this the children of Moab, and the children of

“The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

— *Philippians 4:7*

“The Lord shall be unto thee for an everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.”

— *Isaias 60:20*

“Light is risen to the just, and joy to the right of heart.”

— *Psalms 96:11 [Psalm 97:11]*

“Whosoever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify.”

— *1 Kings 2:30 [1 Samuel 2:30]*

“If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love.”

— *St. John 15:10*

Ammon, and with them of the Ammonites, were gathered together to fight against Josaphat.

“And there came messengers, and told Josaphat, saying: There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea, and out of Syria, and behold they are in Asosonthamar, which is Engaddi.”—*2 Paralipomenon 20:1-2*.

When King Josaphat (Jehoshaphat) heard this, he prayed to God for help. Then, after gathering the Israelites together they prayed some more, and the Lord instructed them by a prophet to march against the immense foe. They were given the assurance that the God of heaven would fight the battle for them.

“It shall not be you that shall fight, but only stand with confidence, and you shall see the help of the Lord over you.”—*2 Paralipomenon 20:17*.

In full faith and courage, they set a group of singers to go in front of the army! Then off they marched. However, they had not gone far, when another message came from the Lord. It was not only a message to God’s people in ancient times, it is a message for us today:

“Hear me, ye men of Juda, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem: believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be secure: believe His prophets, and all things shall succeed well.”—*2 Paralipomenon 20:20*.

What a wonderful message of instruction and courage! You and I will be perfectly safe if we trust our lives to the Inspired Writings—the Holy Scriptures!

No human help could deliver the Israelites, but God fought for them that day; and, when they arrived at the place of battle, they found their enemies slain by one another.

“He hath shewed might in His arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.”—*St. Luke 1:51*.

It is as we trust in the Lord our God, that we have help from above! He can do wonderful things to guide and pre-

serve us, if we will let Him. In His strength, we can overcome all the power of the enemy, and come off more than conquerors. This is because Jesus came to earth to save us from our sins!

“And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins.”—*St. Matthew 1:21*.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HE FILLS THE HUNGRY

ST. LUKE 1:53

Just as the Virgin said: If we would be blessed like

“He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, freely given us all things?”

—*Romans 8:32*

“The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.”

— *Isaias 29:19*

“In all these things we overcome because of Him that hath loved us.”

— *Romans 8:37*

“God is our refuge and strength: a helper in troubles, which have found us exceedingly. Therefore we will not fear, when the earth shall be troubled; and the mountains shall be removed into the heart of the sea. The waters roared and were troubled: the mountains were troubled with His strength.”

— *Psalm 45:2-4 [Psalm 46:1-3]*

Mary, we must be humble little children of God.

“He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away.”—*St. Luke 1:53*.

Only those who bow low in reverent worship of, and obedience to, the God of heaven can receive His blessing. But, as we have seen, the Virgin did just that. She meekly submitted to the will of God, therefore He could fulfill His plan for her life.

In St. Matthew 19, we learn about a wealthy, young man who did not make the right choice. Although he had great treasures, he did not have the Lord in his life. He had not done as Mary did. He had not surrendered all that he had to God.

“And behold one came and said to Him [Jesus]: Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have everlasting life?”—*St. Matthew 19:16*.

To this, Jesus replied,

“If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”—*St. Matthew 19:17*.

When the young man asked, “which one,” Jesus named several of the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20:3-17.

“He said to him, Which? And Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness.”—*St. Matthew 19:18*.

In answer to the young man’s question about how to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to keep the law of God. But, unfortunately, the young man hesitated, would not make a full surrender, and he left.

“He went away sad: for he had great possessions.”—*St. Matthew 19:22*.

The rich man had allowed his wealth to keep him from heaven. Truly, Mary said:

“He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away.”—*St. Luke 1:53*.

Unless they surrender their lives to Jesus Christ, the strong, the wealthy, the great men of this world will lose out on eternal life. Only those who are humble, meek, and obedient to the Word of God will enter through the heavenly gates into the glorious paradise beyond.

God can, indeed, fill the hungry with good things! Mary probably had in mind the wonderful story of the manna in the wilderness.

After the Israelites had left Egypt, they found that they lacked food. They cried to Moses for help, and God worked a miracle. The entire story is in Exodus, chapter 16.

“And the Lord said to Moses: Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you: let the people go forth, and gather what is sufficient for every day: that I may prove them whether they will walk in My law, or not.”—*Exodus 16:4*.

“The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him: to all that call upon Him in truth.”

— *Psalms 144:18 [Psalm 145:18]*

“Praising I will call upon the Lord: and I shall be saved from my enemies.”

— *Psalms 17:4 [Psalm 18:3]*

“Let not the book of this law depart from thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate on it day and night, that thou mayst observe and do all things that are written in it: then shalt thou direct thy way, and understand it.”

— *Josue 1:8 [Joshua 1:8]*

“He will keep the salvation of the righteous, and protect them that walk in simplicity . . . For they that are upright shall dwell in the earth, and the simple shall continue in it.”

— *Proverbs 2:7, 21*

The Lord was testing the people. Would they obey His law? But, you might ask, “How would the gathering of the manna each day show whether they were obeying the Ten Commandments?”

The next verse explains the test:

“But the sixth day, let them provide for to bring in: and let it be double to that they were wont to gather every day.”—*Exodus 16:5*.

The remainder of the chapter explains what happened after this. Each night, while the children of Israel slept, manna would fall from the sky. It appeared to be small and white; and, the following morning, the people would gather it in pots and eat it. By the middle of the day, the manna had melted away.

The Lord had instructed the people through Moses that, throughout the week, they should not try to save any of the manna till the next morning. So, when some tried to do so, they found that it had putrefied.

Then, on the sixth day, twice as much manna fell! The people were told to gather twice as much and save part of it till the next day, which was the Bible Sabbath.

This they did; but, when some went out on Sabbath morning to gather manna, the Lord was displeased.

“Gather it six days: but on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, therefore it shall not be found.

“And the seventh day came: and some of the people going forth to gather, found none.

“And the Lord said to Moses: How long will you refuse to keep My commandments, and My law?

“See that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, and for this reason on the sixth day He giveth you a double provision.”—*Exodus 16:26-29*.

So that was the test: Would the people keep the Fourth Commandment, which is the Sabbath Commandment?

After that reproof, the Israelites observed the Sabbath more carefully.

“And the people kept the Sabbath on the seventh day.”—*Exodus 20:30*.

It is of interest that this incident about the manna occurred four chapters before the Ten Commandments were proclaimed in Exodus 20. God’s people had known about God’s law of Ten Commandments earlier; but, after coming out of Egyptian bondage, they were given the law again to remind them of its great importance.

They would not, in Exodus 16, have been expected, to know and keep the Sabbath commandment, if they were first given it four chapters later.

Here is the Fourth Commandment, as given in the Holy

“Seek ye Me, and you shall live.”

— *Amos 5:4*

“The Lord will give strength to His people: the Lord will bless His people with peace.”

— *Psalms 28:10 [Psalm 29:11]*

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”

— *St. Matthew 5:7*

“God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city.”

— *Hebrews 11:16*

“The Lord is my firmament, my refuge, and my deliverer. My God is my helper, and in Him will I put my trust. My protector and the horn of my salvation, and my support.”

— *Psalms 17:3 [Psalm 18:2]*

“Godliness with contentment is great gain.”

— *1 Timothy 6:6*

Scriptures:

The Fourth Commandment—“Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour, and shalt do all thy works.

“But on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.

“For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.”—*Exodus 20:8-11*.

Remembering all this, the Virgin Mary declared in her song:

“He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away.”—*St. Luke 1:53*.

God is able to feed us both physically and spiritually.

“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice [righteousness]: for they shall have their fill.”—*St. Matthew 5:6*.

Another version, approved by the Catholic Church, says it this way:

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”—*St. Matthew 5:6*.

Here is an interesting comment on this beautiful verse:

“Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and ‘God is love.’ 1 St. John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God, for ‘all Thy commandments are righteousness’ (Psalm 119:172), and ‘love is the fulfilling of the law’ (Romans 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.

“Not by painful struggles or wearisome toil, not by gifts or sacrifice, is righteousness obtained; but it is

freely given to every soul who hungers and thirsts to receive it. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat . . . without money and without price.' 'Their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord.' And, 'This is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.' Isaias 55:1; 54:17; Jeremias 23:6.

"No human agent can supply that which will satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul. But Jesus says, 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.' 'I am the bread of life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.' The Apocalypse 3:20; St. John 6:35.

"As we need food to sustain our physical strength, so do we need Christ, the Bread from heaven, to sus-

"But He giveth greater grace. Wherefore He saith: God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble."

— *James 4:6*

"For you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you shall appear with Him in glory."

— *Colossians 3:3-4*

"Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good, and bad, and raineth upon the just and unjust."

— *St. Matthew 5:44-45*

tain spiritual life and impart strength to work the works of God. As the body is continually receiving the nourishment that sustains life and vigor, so the soul must be constantly communing with Christ, submitting to Him and depending wholly upon Him.”—*Mount of Blessing, 18-19.*

Thank God every day for what He can do in your life! Your Redeemer can take the shattered threads of your life and reunite them. He can do for you that which you could never do for yourself.

CHAPTER NINE

GOD'S ETERNAL FAITHFULNESS

ST. LUKE 1:54-55

The Virgin Mary knew that God would fulfill His promises to His faithful, obedient people; for, throughout history, He always has.

“He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy.

“As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever.”—*St. Luke 1:54-55.*

In earlier centuries, the Lord had made promises to Abraham that, in his seed, all the world would be blessed.

“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice.”—*Genesis 22:18.*

God chose Abraham and blessed the world through him, because he willingly obeyed God's commandments.

The promise was later repeated to Jacob:

“And in thee and thy seed all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed.”—*Genesis 28:14.*

The blessing was to come through Abraham's seed, that is, through Christ.

“To Abraham were the promises made and to his seed. He saith not, And to his seeds, as of many: but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”—*Galatians*

3:16.

And that promise is for us today!

“And if you be Christ’s, then are you the seed of Abraham, heirs according to the promise.”—*Galatians* 3:29.

God made the promise to Abraham that, in his seed, all the world would be blessed.

God made a covenant with Abraham. It is called the Abramic covenant. It is the foundation covenant of God with His people in all ages.

Just before proclaiming the Ten Commandments to the people at Mount Sinai, God promised to make them His people if they would obey Him.

“If therefore you will hear My voice, and keep My covenant, you shall be My peculiar possession above all people: for all the earth is Mine.

“Surely His salvation is near to them that fear Him.”

— *Psalms* 84:10 [Psalms 85:9]

“The blessing of the Lord is upon the head of the just . . . to the just their desire shall be given . . . The expectation of the just is joy.”

— *Proverbs* 10:6, 24, 28

“The Lord will reward me according to my justice; and according to the cleanness of my hands before His eyes.”

— *Psalms* 17:25 [Psalms 18:25]

“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper: and every tongue that resisteth thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their justice with Me, saith the Lord.”

— *Isaiah* 54:17

“And you shall be to Me a priestly kingdom, and a holy nation.”—*Exodus 19:5-6*.

A covenant is an agreement between two parties. God promised to protect and save the people, if they would, by faith in His enabling strength, obey His law.

God has never changed that covenant, for God does not change. It is an everlasting covenant.

“For I am the Lord, and I change not.”—*Malachias 3:6*.

“Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration.”—*St. James 1:17*.

How thankful we can be that, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, we can enter into the everlasting covenant and be redeemed!

Our Lord never changes, and He is one in divinity and purpose with the Father.

“Jesus Christ, yesterday, and to day; and the same for ever.”—*Hebrews 13:8*.

“That which My Father hath given Me, is greater than all: and no one can snatch them out of the hand of My Father. I and My Father are one.”—*St. John 10:29-30*.

As God does not change, and Christ does not change; neither does the covenant change. Those who will, by faith in Christ, obey God’s law may inherit eternal life.

There is only one everlasting covenant (also called the “everlasting testament”).

“And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great pastor of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the blood of the everlasting testament, fit you in all goodness, that you may do His will; doing in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom is glory for ever and ever.”—*Hebrews 13:20*.

This “everlasting” covenant, or testament, God will write

in our hearts, if we will humbly repent of our sins and accept Him as our only Saviour.

“And this is the testament which I will make unto them after those days, saith the Lord. I will give My laws in their hearts, and on their minds will I write them.”—*Hebrews 10:16* (quoting *Jeremias 31:32-33*).

This is not a “new” covenant in the sense of a new kind. But it is new in the sense of a new aspect of the covenant made with Abraham. It is the one everlasting covenant.

Who are the special people whom God uses here on earth, the ones who especially enter into the everlasting covenant with Him? They are the ones who obey His Word. Because Abraham was obedient to God’s commands, he was especially used by heaven to give an example to generations which came after him.

“The mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity upon them that fear Him: And His justice unto children’s children, to such as keep His covenant, and are mindful of His commandments to do them.”

— *Psalm 102:17-18* [*Psalm 103:17-18*]

“If you be willing, and will hearken to Me, you shall eat the good things of the land.”

— *Isaias 1:19*

“He will guide the mild in judgement: He will teach the meek His ways.”

— *Psalm 24:9* [*Psalm 25:9*]

“The Lord is good and giveth strength in the day of trouble: and knoweth them that hope in Him.”

— *Nahum 1:7*

“For I know that he will command his children, and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord and do judgment and justice: that for Abraham’s sake the Lord may bring to effect all things He hath spoken unto him.”—*Genesis 18:19*.

So it may be with us today. God will accept and take us for His special people, if we will take hold of His strength and obey Him.

“If therefore you will hear My voice, and keep My covenant, you shall be My peculiar possession above all people: for all the earth is Mine.”—*Exodus 19:5*.

The entire song of Mary consists of Mary’s understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures. Everything she presents comes from the Old Testament.

“He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy: As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever.”—*St. Luke 1:54-55*.

We have learned that the covenant which God spoke to our fathers is the everlasting covenant. It has not changed; for God does not change. This covenant is established on the fact that we will obey Him. He writes His law on our hearts; and, by the enabling grace of our Saviour, we obey it.

Along with the covenant, our Lord has given us abundant promises through the Bible prophets! Let us consider several of these glorious promises:

“And thou shalt know that the Lord thy God, He is a strong and faithful God, keeping His covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments, unto a thousand generations.”—*Deuteronomy 7:9*.

A Bible “generation” is frequently considered to be 120 years. At that rate, it would take 120,000 years for a thousand generations to elapse! If a “generation” were only half that amount (60 years), it would be 60,000 years. According to the Scriptures, the world was created only about 6,000 years ago. God’s covenant with man will last so far

into the future that time will be forgotten by then.

Here are more of these sweet promises:

“Blessed be the Lord, who hath given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised: there hath not failed so much as one word of all the good things that He promised.”—*3 Kings [1 Kings] 8:56*.

“O Lord, Thy mercy is in heaven, and Thy truth reacheth even to the clouds.”—*Psalms 35:6 [Psalms 36:5]*.

“God is faithful: by whom you are called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”—*1 Corinthians 1:9*.

“God, meaning more abundantly to shew to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, interposed an oath. That by two immutable things, in which

“I love them that love Me: and they that in the morning early watch for Me, shall find Me.”

— *Proverbs 8:17*

“Faith then cometh by hearing; and hearing by the Word of Christ.”

— *Romans 10:17*

“Because I live, and you shall live.”

— *St. John 14:19*

“And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself for me.”

— *Galatians 2:20*

“Blessed is he, that readeth and heareth the words of this prophecy; and keepeth those things which are written in it.”

— *The Apocalypse 1:3*

it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us. Which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm.”—*Hebrews 6:17-19*.

“Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God, commend their souls in good deeds to the faithful Creator.”—*2 St. Peter 4:19*.

Christ, our Saviour, said that He is the only pathway to heaven. Only through Him can we be saved.

“Jesus saith to him: I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by Me.”—*St. John 14:6*.

Jesus has gone to prepare mansions for us; so, we should spend our time down here preparing our lives for heaven. By His grace we should live clean, obedient lives.

“Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me.

“In My Father’s house there are many mansions. If not [If it were not so], I would have told you: because I go to prepare a place for you.

“And If I shall go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to Myself; that where I am, you also may be.”—*St. John 14:1-3*.

There are many other wonderful promises in the Holy Scriptures. As you read, you will come across one after another. They are like diamonds lying on the ground, just waiting to be gathered up!

Did you know that the Virgin Mary is also mentioned in the book of Galatians?

“But when the fulness of 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.”—*Galatians 4:4-5*.

This Son is the son of the Blessed Virgin Mary—whom she pointed to—declaring that the people should obey all that He said.

Did you know that the Virgin told the people that they must obey Christ? We read about this event in the second chapter of St. John.

“And the third day, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee: and the mother of Jesus was there.

“And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage.”—*St. John 2:1-2*.

Some people say that Jesus is opposed to marriage, and the holiest people on earth are those who never marry. Yet Jesus went to a wedding, at the beginning of His ministry, and performed His first miracle there.

Marriage was given to mankind by the God of heaven. When a man and woman who have dedicated their lives to God, to serve and obey Him, are wedded—they start a home which is a little heaven on earth. The children which go forth from that home are a blessing to mankind. Marriage, when properly entered into, is of God.

“I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”

— *Romans 1:16*

“You, when you were dead in your offences, and sins . . . God, who is rich in mercy . . . even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ (by whose grace you are saved) and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places, through Christ Jesus.”

— *Ephesians 2:1, 4-6*

“Watch ye therefore . . . lest coming on a sudden, He find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch.”

— *Mark 13:35-37*

“And the Lord God said: It is not good for man to be alone: let Us make him a help like unto himself . . . And the Lord God . . . brought her [Eve] to Adam . . . Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh.”—*Genesis 2:18, 22, 24.*

There are those who say that marriage does not have the honor which God placed upon it. They declare that the holiest people are those who never marry! They forbid marriage. But this teaching is unscriptural. Here is what the Apostle Paul says:

“Now the Spirit manifestly saith that, in the last times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their conscience seared, forbidding to marry.”—*1 Timothy 4:1-3.*

St. Peter was married and, to the best of our knowledge, so were all the other Apostles. They were the first ministers of the church: and the ministers, in later centuries, would follow their example.

It is God’s plan that a man be married. It is normal and good.

“Let every man have his own wife.”—*1 Corinthians 7:2.*

But should ministers in the church be married? What does the Bible say?

Three of the Apostle Paul’s letters were written to young pastors, and are filled with ministerial counsel. Three times St. Paul mentioned that church officers (deacons, elders, pastors, etc.) should be married.

First, St. Paul said that deacons should be married:

“Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife: who rule well their children, and their own houses.”—*1 Timothy 3:12.*

Second, St. Paul said that bishops in the church should be married:

“It behoveth therefore a bishop to be blameless, the

husband of one wife.”—*1 Timothy 3:2*.

Third, St. Paul said that all the priests should be married. He also said they should not drink fermented wine:

“I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and shouldest ordain priests in every city, as I also appointed thee:

“If any be without crime, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly.

“For a bishop must be without crime, as the steward of God: not proud, not subject to anger, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre:

“But given to hospitality, gentle, sober, just, holy, continent.

“Embracing that faithful word which is according to doctrine, that he may be able to exhort in sound doctrine, and to convince the gainsayers.”—*Titus 1:5-9*.

“You shall seek Me, and shall find Me: when you shall seek Me with all your heart.”

— *Jeremias 29:13*

“The same is Lord over all, rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.”

— *Romans 10:12-13*

“When thou shalt seek there the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him: yet so, if thou seek Him with all thy heart, and all the affliction of thy soul.”

— *Deuteronomy 4:29*

“Thy mercy will follow me all the days of my life. And that I may dwell in the house of the Lord unto the length of days.”

— *Psalms 22:6 [Psalm 23:6]*

It is God's plan that a minister be married, so that he is not tempted when he is counseling his parishioners. We read in the newspapers of the scandals which Catholic priests and Protestant ministers are led into, when they are not married. Indeed, without marriage, the moral fabric of civilization tends to break down!

But, just now, let us return to the marriage at Cana. When Jesus went there, He took His disciples so they could see how important the institution of marriage was in His estimation. He did not want people to later say that He was opposed to marriage.

When they arrived for the wedding, Mary was already there. She was so happy to see her Son again.

But then a problem developed. Normally, the family of the bridegroom would provide enough grape juice (called "wine" in this passage) to last throughout the entire marriage feast. But the supply had run out.

"And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to Him: They have no wine."—*St. John 2:3*.

Was this wine fermented or unfermented? There is no doubt that Jesus would not have attended this gathering—if it had been a drunken feast! Neither would His mother, Mary! Can you imagine Mary at a liquor party? There were no alcoholic beverages at this happy event.

It was Christ who, in the Old Testament, condemned the use of alcoholic drinks.

"Wine is a luxurious thing and drunkenness riotous: whosoever is delighted therewith shall not be wise."—*Proverbs 20:1*.

Here is how another Church-approved translation puts it:

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whoever is led astray by it is not wise."—*Proverbs 20:1, R.S.V.*

Drunkenness is terrible, and is classed with other terrible sins:

"Fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, idola-

try, witchcrafts . . . envies, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Of the which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God.”—*Galatians 5:19-21*.

No, no! neither Jesus nor His good mother, Mary, went to a drunken party!

“Be not in the feasts of great drinkers, nor in their revellings, who contribute flesh to eat: Because they that give themselves to drinking, and that club together shall be consumed.”—*Proverbs 23:20-21*.

“Who hath woe? Whose father hath woe? Who hath contentions? Who falls into pits? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? —Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups.

“Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

— *1 Timothy 4:8*

“In every nation, He that feareth Him and worketh justice, is acceptable to Him.”

— *Acts 10:35*

“Then they that feared the Lord spoke every one with his neighbor: and the Lord gave ear, and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that fear the Lord, and think on His name. And they shall be My special possession, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day that I do judgment: and I will spare them, as a man spareth his son that serveth him.”

— *Malachias 3:16-17*

“Look not upon wine . . . It goeth in pleasantly, but, in the end it will bite like a snake, and will spread abroad poison like a basilisk [another type of serpent].”—*Proverbs 23:29-32*.

The Greek word, translated “wine” in St. John 2, is *oinos*. It means unfermented grape juice.

So Mary, the mother of Jesus went to Him and told Him that the supply of grape juice was exhausted.

“And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to Him: They have no wine.”—*St. John 2:3*.

The Virgin Mary had implicit faith in her Son. She knew that she, herself, could do nothing to solve the problem,—but that Jesus had all power to do whatever was needed.

So it is today! Only Jesus can help us! No one else can, not even His precious mother. Christ alone can deliver, Christ alone can redeem our souls. Christ alone can provide for our great need. He alone can intercede for us in heaven today. He alone can answer our prayers.

In response to what Mary said, Jesus said something, which to us, seems unusual:

“And Jesus saith to her: Woman, what is that to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come.”—*St. John 2:4*.

“And Jesus said to her, O woman, what have you to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.”—*John 2:4, R.S.V.*

If you could read this in the original Greek, you would find that it reads just like the above; yet was not an unkind remark. In the custom of that time, Jesus was addressing His mother very courteously.

Yet He was telling her that He was now an adult, about to start on His mission to save mankind, and that He was no longer her child, to be directed and told what to do. Remember this. Jesus was grown-up when He said that to Mary. *He is still grown up!* His work of redeeming mankind, begun back then, continues today.

It was important that Jesus explain this to His mother. Mary needed to understand that she was not in charge of

Christ, and no longer—forever—able to get Him to do anything special for her, that He would not do for any of His other followers.

Then Mary turned to the attendants at the wedding feast, and she made this extremely significant statement:

“Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.”—*St. John* 2:5.

Here is how another version, approved by Rome, translates it:

“Do whatever He tells you.”—*John 2:5, R.S.V.*

Thirty years had passed since Christ was a new-born child. He was now beginning His ministry, and it would lead to His death on Calvary—and to His resurrection and ascension to heaven to begin His ministry as our great High Priest.

In view of all that was ahead, what did Mary say to the

“Trust in the Lord, and do good, and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches. Delight in the Lord, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart.”

— *Psalms 36:3 [37:3]*

“But the mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity upon them that fear Him. And His justice unto children’s children, to such as keep His covenant, and are mindful of His commandments to do them.”

— *Psalms 102:17-18 [Psalm 103:17-18]*

“In every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh justice, is acceptable to Him.”

— *Acts 10:35*

“Salvation is of the Lord, and Thy blessing is upon Thy people.”

— *Psalms 3:9*

people?

She said, "*Do whatever He tells you!*" That is what she said to them. That is what she would say to us today.

"Do whatever He tells you!"

Did you know that these were the last words of Mary, recorded in Holy Scripture? That makes them important words for us, today. Let us remember them:

"Do whatever He tells you!"

The rest of the story is well-known. You will find the entire story in St. John 2:1-11. Christ turned fresh water into fresh grape juice.

Yet it only happened because the servants obeyed. Good things can only happen in our lives today because we, too, obey our Saviour.

If we want our hearts changed by a miracle of Christ, we need to follow all that Jesus says in His Written Word.

We do not honor Jesus when we do not obey Him.

"And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to Him: Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck!

"But He said: Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it!"—*St. Luke 11:27-28*.

Mary recognized the fact that Christ could work miracles for the people, and that she could not. It was because she knew He could, that she directed the people to go to Him for help.

Just as Mary did, we today should direct people to go to Christ for spiritual help and healing of soul. Only the Creator can provide what we need. Jesus is God; Mary was only His earthly mother. Christ is her Saviour, just as He is ours.

If you want help, do as Mary said: Go to Jesus and do what He says. It is found in the Bible.

All the information we find in Holy Scripture was given to us by Christ. That is where you will find His instructions. None of it will do us any good unless we obey it. The last words of Mary are for us today: "Do what He tells you!"

- PART TWO -
**BASIC STEPS
TO
OUR SAVIOUR**

FOR THE BLESSED SEEKERS
OF THE INHERITANCE
OF THE HOLY ONES OF OLD

BASIC STEPS TO OUR SAVIOUR

CHAPTER ONE HOW CAN I COME TO OUR SAVIOUR?

Nature and revelation alike testify of God's love. It is transgression of God's law - the law of love - that has brought woe and death. Yet even amid the suffering that results from sin, God's love is revealed. "God is love" is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass.

Jesus came to live among men to reveal the infinite love of God. Love, mercy, and compassion were revealed in every act of His life; His heart went out in tender sympathy to the children of men. He took man's nature, that He might reach man's wants. The poorest and humblest were not afraid to approach Him. Such is the character of Christ as revealed in His life. This is the character of God.

It was to redeem us that Jesus lived and suffered and died. He became a "Man of Sorrows," that we might be

All Scripture passages quoted in this chapter have received the *Nihil obstat* and *Imprimatur*. When not otherwise stated, quotations are from the Rheims-Douai.

made partakers of everlasting joy. But this great sacrifice was not made in order to create in the Father's heart a love for man, not to make Him willing to save. No, no! "For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting." St. John 3:16. The Father loves us, not because of the great propitiation, but He provided the propitiation because He loves us. None but the Son of God could accomplish our redemption.

What a value this places upon man! Through transgression the sons of man become subjects of Satan. Through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ the sons of Adam may become the sons of God. The matchless love of God for a world that did not love Him! The thought has a subduing power upon the soul and brings the mind into captivity to the will of God.

Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy. But through disobedience, his powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil.

It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness. To all, there is but one answer, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29. Let us avail ourselves of the means provided for us that we may be transformed into His likeness, and be restored to fellowship with the ministering angels, to harmony and communion with the Father and the Son.

How shall a man be just with God? How shall the sinner be made righteous? It is only through Christ that we

can be brought into harmony with God, with holiness; but how are we to come to Christ?

Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life.

But when the heart yields to the influence of the Spirit of God, the conscience will be quickened, and the sinner will discern something of the depth and sacredness of God's holy law, the foundation of His government in heaven and on earth. Conviction takes hold upon the mind and heart.

The prayer of David, after his fall, illustrates the nature of true sorrow for sin. His repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate his guilt; no desire to escape the judgment threatened inspired his prayer. David saw the enormity of his transgression; he saw the defilement of his soul; he loathed his sin. It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart. He longed for the joy of holiness, to be restored to harmony and communion with God. A repentance such as this is beyond the reach of our own power to accomplish; it is obtained only from Christ.

Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will. If we refuse, what more can He do? Study God's Word prayerfully. As you see the enormity of sin, as you see yourself as you really are, do not give up in despair. It was sinners that Christ Jesus came to save. When Satan comes to tell you that you are a great sinner, look to your Redeemer and talk of His merits. Acknowledge your sin, but tell the enemy that "Christ came into this world to save sinners" and that you may be saved (1 Timothy 1:15).

"He that hideth his sins, shall not prosper: but he that shall confess, and forsake them, shall obtain mercy." Proverbs 28:13. The conditions of obtaining the mercy of God are simple and just and reasonable. Confess your sins to God, who only can forgive them, and your faults to one another. Those who have not humbled their souls before God, in acknowledging their guilt, have not yet fulfilled the

first step of acceptance. We must be willing to humble our hearts and comply with the conditions of the Word of truth. The confession that is the outpouring of the inmost soul finds its way to the God of infinite pity. True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. All confession should be definite and to the point. It is written, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." 1 St. John 1:9.

God's promise is, "You shall seek Me, and shall find Me, when you shall seek Me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13. The whole heart must be yielded, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be restored to His likeness.

The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness.

In giving ourselves to God, we must necessarily give up all that would separate us from Him. There are those who profess to serve God while they rely upon their own efforts to obey His law, to form a right character and secure salvation. Their hearts are not moved by any deep sense of the love of Christ, but they seek to perform the duties of the Christian life as that which God requires of them in order to gain heaven. Such religion is worthless.

When Christ dwells in the heart, the soul will be so filled with His love, with the joy of communion with Him, that it will cleave to Him; and in the contemplation of Him, self will be forgotten. Love to Christ will be the spring of action. Such do not ask for the lowest standard, but aim at perfect conformity to the will of their Redeemer.

Do you feel that it is too great a sacrifice to yield all to Christ? Ask yourself the question, "What has Christ given for me?" The Son of God gave all - life and love and suffering - for our redemption. And can it be that we, the unworthy objects of so great love, will withhold our hearts from Him? What do we give up, when we give all? A sin-

polluted heart, for Jesus to purify, to cleanse by His own blood, and to save by His matchless love. And yet men think it hard to give up all! God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view.

Many are inquiring, “*How* am I to make the surrender of myself to God?” You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair.

What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.

Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not *now choose* to be Christians.

Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life. You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast, and thus through constant surrender to God you will be enabled to live the new life, even the life of faith.

As your conscience has been quickened by the Holy Spirit, you have seen something of the evil of sin, of its

power, its guilt, its woe; and you look upon it with abhorrence. It is peace that you need. You have confessed your sins, and in heart put them away. You have resolved to give yourself to God. Now go to Him, and ask that He will wash away your sins and give you a new heart.

Then believe that He does this *because He has promised*. The gift which God promises us, we must believe we do receive, and it is ours. You are a sinner. You cannot atone for your past sins; you cannot change your heart and make yourself holy. But God promises to do all this for you through Christ. You *believe* that promise. You confess your sins and give yourself to God. You will to serve Him. Just as surely as you do this, God will fulfill His Word to you. If you believe the promise, - God supplies the fact. Do not wait to *feel* that you are made whole, but say, "I believe it; it is so, not because I feel it, but because God promised."

CHAPTER TWO

HOW CAN I REMAIN TRUE TO OUR SAVIOUR?

Jesus says, "Therefore I say unto you, all things, whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive; and they shall come unto Thee." Mark 11:24. There is a condition to this promise - that we pray according to the will of God. But it is the will of God to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life. So we may ask for these blessings, and believe that we receive them, and thank God that we *have* received them.

Henceforth you are not your own; you are bought with a price. Through this simple act of believing God, the Holy Spirit has begotten a new life in your heart. You are a child born into the family of God, and He loves you as He loves His Son.

Now that you have given yourself to Jesus, do not draw back, do not take yourself away from Him, but day by day say, "I am Christ's; I have given myself to Him," and ask Him to give you His Spirit and keep you by His grace. As it is by giving yourself to God, and believing Him, that you become His child, so you are to live in Him.

Here is where thousands fail; they do not believe that Jesus pardons them personally, individually. They do not take God at His Word. It is the privilege of all who comply with the conditions to know for themselves that pardon is freely extended for every sin. Put away the suspicion that God's promises are not meant for you. They are for every repentant transgressor.

Look up, you that are doubting and trembling; for Jesus lives to make intercession for us. Thank God for the gift of His dear Son.

"If then any be in Christ a new creature, the old things are passed away, behold, all things are made new." 2 Corinthians 5:17.

A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the chain of circumstances in this process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they have become. Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him. There is no evidence of genuine repentance unless it works reformation. The loveliness of the character of Christ will be seen in His followers. It was His delight to do the will of God.

There are two errors against which the children of God especially need to guard: The first is that of looking to their own works, trusting to anything they can do, to bring themselves into harmony with God. All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, which can make us holy.

The opposite and no less dangerous error is that belief in Christ releases men from keeping the law of God; that since by faith alone we become partakers of the grace of Christ, our works have nothing to do with our redemption.

Obedience is the fruit of faith. Righteousness is defined by the standard of God's holy law, as expressed in the ten commandments (Exodus 20:3-20). That so-called faith in Christ, which professes to release men from the obligation of obedience to God is not faith, but presumption. The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been - just what it was in paradise before the fall of our first parents - perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized.

Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure.

The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer. This is evidence that Satan's delusions are losing their power. No deep-seated love for Jesus can dwell in the heart that does not realize its own sinfulness. The soul that is transformed by the grace of Christ will admire His character. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal Himself in power. The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the Word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall reflect His image.

The change of heart by which we become children of God is in the Bible spoken of as birth. Again it is compared to the germination of the good seed sown by the husbandman. It is God who brings the bud to bloom and the flower to fruit. It is by His power that the seed develops.

As the flower turns to the sun, that the bright beams may aid in perfecting its beauty and symmetry, so should we turn to the Sun of Righteousness, that heaven's light may shine upon us, that our character may be developed into the likeness of Christ.

Do you ask, "How am I to abide in Christ?" In the same way as you received Him at first. "As therefore you have received Jesus Christ the Lord, walk ye in Him." Colossians 2:6. By faith you became Christ's, and by faith you are to grow up in Him - by giving and taking. You are to give all, - your heart, your will, your service - give yourself to Him to obey all His requirements; and you must take all - Christ, the fullness of all blessing, to abide in your heart, to be your strength, your righteousness, your everlasting helper - to give you power to obey.

Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, "Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee." This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.

A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. When the mind dwells upon self, it is turned away from Christ, the source of strength and life. Hence, it is Satan's constant effort to keep the attention diverted from the Saviour and thus prevent the union and communion of the soul with Christ.

When Christ took human nature upon Him, He bound humanity to Himself by a tie of love that can never be broken by any power, save the choice of man himself. Satan will constantly present allurements to induce us to break this tie - to choose to separate ourselves from Christ. But let us keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, and He will pre-

serve us. Looking unto Jesus, we are safe. Nothing can pluck us out of His hand. All that Christ was to the disciples, He desires to be to His children today.

Jesus prayed for us, and He asked that we might be one with Him, even as He is one with the Father. What a union is this! Thus, loving Him and abiding in Him, we shall "grow up in Him who is the head, even Christ." Ephesians 4:15.

God is the source of life and light and joy to the universe. Wherever the life of God is in the hearts of men, it will flow out to others in love and blessing.

Our Saviour's joy was in the uplifting and redemption of fallen men. For this He counted not His life dear to Himself, but endured the cross, despising the shame. When the love of Christ is enshrined in the heart, like sweet fragrance it cannot be hidden. Love to Jesus will be manifested in a desire to work as He worked for the blessing and uplifting of humanity. It will lead to love, tenderness, and sympathy toward all the creatures of our heavenly Father's care. Those who are the partakers of the grace of Christ will be ready to make any sacrifice, that others for whom He died may share the heavenly gift. They will do all they can to make the world better for their stay in it. This spirit is the sure outgrowth of a soul truly converted. No sooner does one come to Christ than there is born in his heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus. If we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, we shall have something to tell. We shall seek to present to others the attractions of Christ and the unseen realities of the world to come. There will be an intensity of desire to follow in the path that Jesus trod.

And the effort to bless others will react in blessings upon ourselves. Those who thus become participants in labors of love are brought nearest to their Creator. The spirit of unselfish labor for others gives depth, stability, and Christlike loveliness to the character, and brings peace and happiness to its possessor. Strength comes by exercise. We need not go to heathen lands, or even leave the narrow

circle of the home, if it is there that our duty lies, in order to work for Christ. With a loving spirit we may perform life's humblest duties "as to the Lord." Colossians 3:23. If the love of God is in the heart, it will be manifested in the life. You are not to wait for great occasions or to expect extraordinary abilities before you go to work for God. The humblest and poorest of the disciples of Jesus can be a blessing to others.

Many are the ways in which God is seeking to make Himself known to us and bring us into communion with Him. If we will but listen, Nature speaks to our senses without ceasing. God's created works will teach us precious lessons of obedience and trust.

No tears are shed that God does not notice. There is no smile that He does not mark. If we would but fully believe this, all undue anxieties would be dismissed. Our lives would not be so filled with disappointment as now; for everything, whether great or small, would be left in the hands of God.

God speaks to us through His providential works and through the influence of His Spirit upon the heart. God speaks to us in His Word. Here we have in clearer lines the revelation of His character, of His dealings with men, and the great work of redemption. Fill the whole heart with the words of God. They are the living water, quenching your burning thirst. They are the living bread from heaven.

The theme of redemption is one that the angels desire to look into; it will be the science and the song of the redeemed throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. Is it not worthy of careful thought and study now? As we meditate upon the Saviour, there will be a hungering and thirsting of soul to become like Him whom we adore.

The Bible was written for the common people. The great truths necessary for salvation are made as clear as noonday. There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. But there is little benefit derived from a hasty reading of the Bible. One passage studied, until its significance is clear to the mind

and its relation to the plan of salvation is evident, is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained.

Keep your Bible with you. As you have opportunity, read it; fix the texts in your memory.

We cannot obtain wisdom without earnest attention and prayerful study. Never should the Bible be studied without prayer. Before opening its pages, we should ask for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and it will be given. Angels from the world of light will be with those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance. How must God esteem the human race, since He gave His Son to die for them and appoints His Holy Spirit to be man's teacher and continual guide!

Through nature and revelation, through His providence, and by the influence of His Spirit, God speaks to us. But these are not enough; we need also to pour out our hearts to Him. In order to commune with God, we must have something to say to Him concerning our actual life.

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him.

Our heavenly Father waits to bestow upon us the fullness of His blessing. What a wonder it is that we pray so little! God is ready and willing to hear the sincere prayer of the humblest of His children. What can the angels of heaven think of poor helpless human beings, who are subject to temptation, when God's heart of infinite love yearns toward them, ready to give them more than they can ask or think, and yet they pray so little and have so little faith?

The darkness of the evil one encloses those who neglect to pray. The whispered temptations of the enemy entice them to sin; and it is all because they do not make use of prayer. Yet prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence.

There are certain conditions upon which we may expect that God will hear and answer our prayers:

One is that we feel our need of help from Him. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, if we cling to any known sin, the Lord will not hear us; but the prayer of the penitent, contrite soul is always accepted. When all known wrongs are righted, we may believe that God will answer our petitions.

Another element of prevailing prayer is faith. When our prayers seem not to be answered, we are to cling to the promise; for the time of answering will surely come, and we shall receive the blessing we need most. But to claim that prayer will always be answered in the very way and for the particular thing that we desire is presumption.

When we come to God in prayer, we should have a spirit of love and forgiveness in our own hearts.

Perseverance in prayer has been made a condition of receiving. We must pray always if we would grow in faith and experience.

We should pray in the family circle, and above all we must not neglect secret prayer, for this is the life of the soul. Family or public prayer alone is not sufficient. Secret prayer is to be heard only by the prayer-hearing God.

There is no time or place in which it is inappropriate to offer up a petition to God. In the crowds of the street, in the midst of a business engagement, we may send up a petition to God and plead for divine guidance.

Let the soul be drawn out and upward, that God may grant us a breath of the heavenly atmosphere. We may keep so near to God that in every unexpected trial our thoughts will turn to Him as naturally as the flower turns to the sun. Keep your wants, your joys, your sorrows, your cares, and your fears before God. You cannot burden Him; you cannot weary Him. He is not indifferent to the wants of His children.

We sustain a loss when we neglect the privilege of associating together to strengthen and encourage one another in the service of God. If Christians would associate

together, speaking to each other of the love of God and the precious truths of redemption, their own hearts would be refreshed and they would refresh one another.

We must gather about the cross. Christ and Him crucified should be the theme of contemplation, of conversation, and of our most joyful emotion. We should keep in our thoughts every blessing we receive from God, and when we realize His great love we should be willing to trust everything to the hand that was nailed to the cross for us.

The soul may ascend nearer heaven on the wings of praise. As we express our gratitude, we are approximating to the worship of the heavenly hosts.

Many are at times troubled with the suggestions of skepticism. God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. Disguise it as they may, the real cause of doubt and skepticism, in most cases, is the love of sin. We must have a sincere desire to know the truth and a willingness of heart to obey it.

This chapter was adapted from the book, *Steps to Christ*.

“All you that thirst, come to the waters:
and you that have no money make haste,
buy, and eat: come ye, buy wine and milk
without money, and without price.”

— *Isaias 55:1*

“A faithful saying, and worthy of all
acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into
the world to save sinners.”

— *1 Timothy 1:15*

“In all thy ways think on Him, and He shall
direct thy steps.”

— *Proverbs 3:6*

- PART THREE -

**THE PROPHECY
OF ST. SIMEON
TO THE
BLESSED VIRGIN**

INSTRUCTION FROM
THE ANCIENT WRITINGS
TO THE VIRGIN

THE PROPHECY OF ST. SIMEON TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

St. Simeon, a prophet of God, entered the Temple in Jerusalem as the infant Jesus was being dedicated.

Under the inspiration of God, St. Simeon took the infant Christ in His arms and uttered a remarkable prediction, part of which applied to the blessed Virgin Mary. Here is the entire passage, as quoted in the Rheims-Douai:

“And behold there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was in him.

“And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Christ of the Lord.

“And he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when his parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law,

“He also took him into his arms, and blessed God, and said:

All Scripture quotations in this chapter are from the Rheims-Douai, unless otherwise cited.

“Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace;

“Because my eyes have seen Thy salvation,

“Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples:

“A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.

“And his father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning him.

“And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother: Behold this Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted;

“And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed.”—*St. Luke 2:25-35* (Rheims-Douai).

For the sake of greater clarity, we will repeat the actual prophecy in another Church-approved version:

“And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against.

“(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.”—*St. Luke 2:34-35* (*Revised Standard Version*).

Let us consider this important prophecy more closely. Scripture quotations in the following comment will be from the Church-approved Revised Standard:

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. In the temple, the Son of God was dedicated to the work He had come to do. The priest looked upon Him as he would upon any other child. But though he neither saw nor felt anything unusual, God’s act in giving His Son to the world was acknowledged. This occasion did not pass without some recognition of Christ.

“Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name

was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ."—*St. Luke 22:25-26.*

As Simeon enters the Temple, he sees a family presenting their first-born son before the priest. Their appearance bespeaks poverty; but Simeon understands the warnings of the Spirit, and he is deeply impressed that the infant being presented to the Lord is the Consolation of Israel, the One he has longed to see. To the astonished priest, Simeon appears like a man enraptured. The child has been returned to Mary, and he takes it in his arms and presents it to God, while a joy that he has never before felt enters his soul. As he lifts the infant Saviour toward heaven, he says:

"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Thy people Israel."—*St. Luke 2:29-32.*

The spirit of prophecy was upon this man of God; and, while Joseph and Mary stood by, wondering at his words, he blessed them, and said unto Mary:

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."—*St. Luke 2:33-34.*

Anna also, a prophetess, came in and confirmed Simeon's testimony concerning Christ. As Simeon spoke, her face lighted up with the glory of God, and she poured out her heartfelt thanks that she had been permitted to behold Christ the Lord.

These humble worshipers had not studied the prophecies in vain. But those who held positions as rulers and priests in Israel, though they too had before them the precious utterances of prophecy, were not walking in the way of the Lord and their eyes were not open to behold the

Light of life.

So it is still. Events upon which the attention of all heaven is centered are undiscerned; their very occurrence is unnoticed by religious leaders and worshipers in the house of God. Men acknowledge Christ in history while they turn away from the living Christ. Christ in His Word calling to self-sacrifice, in the poor and suffering who plead for relief, in the righteous cause that involves poverty and toil and reproach, is not more readily received today than He was eighteen hundred years ago.

Mary pondered the broad and far-reaching prophecy of Simeon. As she looked upon the child in her arms and recalled the words spoken by the shepherds of Bethlehem, she was full of grateful joy and bright hope. Simeon's words called to her mind the prophetic utterances of Isaias:

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of His roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord . . . Righteousness shall be the girdle of His waist. . . The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined . . . For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder, and His name will be called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”—*Isaias 11:1-5; 9:2-6.*

Yet Mary did not understand Christ's mission. Simeon had prophesied of Him as a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as a glory to Israel. Thus the angels had announced the Saviour's birth as tidings of joy to all peoples. God was seeking to correct the narrow Jewish conception of the Messiah's work. He desired men to behold Him, not merely as the deliverer of Israel, but as the Redeemer of the world. Many years must pass before even the mother of Jesus would understand His mission.

Mary looked forward to the Messiah's reign on David's throne, but she saw not the baptism of suffering by which it must be won. Through Simeon it is revealed that the Messiah is to have no unobstructed passage through the world.

The words are then spoken to Mary,

“A sword will pierce through your own soul also.”—

St. Luke 2:35.

In those words, God in His tender mercy gives to the mother of Jesus an intimation of the anguish that already for His sake she had begun to bear.

“Behold,” Simeon had said, “this Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against.”—*St. Luke 2:34.*

We must fall upon the Rock and be broken before we can be uplifted in Christ. Self must be dethroned, pride must be humbled, if we would know the glory of the spiritual kingdom. The Jews would not accept the honor that is reached through humiliation. Therefore they would not receive their Redeemer. He was a sign that was spoken against.

“That thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.”—*St. Luke 2:35.*

In the light of the Saviour's life, the hearts of all, even from the Creator to the prince of darkness, are revealed. Satan has represented God as selfish and oppressive, as claiming all and giving nothing, as requiring the service of His creatures for His own glory and making no sacrifice for their good. But the gift of Christ reveals the Father's heart. It testifies that the thoughts of God toward us are “thoughts of peace, and not of affliction.” *Jeremias 29:11.*

It declares that while God's hatred of sin is as strong as death, His love for the sinner is stronger than death. Having undertaken our redemption, He will spare nothing, however dear, which is necessary to the completion of His work. No truth essential to our salvation is withheld, no miracle of mercy is neglected, no divine agency is left unemployed. Favor is heaped upon favor, gift upon gift.

The whole treasury of heaven is open to those He seeks

to save. Having collected the riches of the universe, and laid open the resources of infinite power, He gives them all into the hands of Christ, and says, All these are for man. Use these gifts to convince him that there is no love greater than Mine in earth or heaven. His greatest happiness will be found in loving Me.

At the cross of Calvary, love and selfishness stood face to face. Here was their crowning manifestation. Christ had lived only to comfort and bless; and, in putting Him to death, Satan manifested the malignity of his hatred against God. He made it evident that the real purpose of his rebellion was to dethrone God and to destroy Him through whom the love of God was shown.

By the life and the death of Christ, the thoughts of men also are brought to view. From the manger to the cross, the life of Jesus was a call to self-surrender and to fellowship in suffering. It unveiled the purposes of men. Jesus came with the truth of heaven, and all who were listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit were drawn to Him. The worshippers of self belonged to Satan's kingdom. In their attitude toward Christ, all would show on which side they stood. And thus everyone passes judgment on himself (*adapted from Desire of Ages, 55-57*).

“Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek, and humble in heart: and you shall find rest to your souls.”

— *St. Matthew 11:29*

“Being confident of this very thing, that He, who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus.”

— *Philippians 1:6*

- PART FOUR -

**THE LETTERS
OF ST. PETER
TO THE CHURCH**

THE ONLY WRITINGS
OF ST. PETER
WHICH EXIST

THE LETTERS OF ST. PETER

St. Peter, acknowledged by the faithful as one of the most important leaders of the early Church, sent by special courier two very important messages to the churches. These letters were sent not only to the leaders but also to the members. They contain valuable counsel for us today. After all these centuries, this is all that Peter wrote that we have today; nothing else!

Should we listen to and heed the words of St. Peter? Yes, we should.

INTRODUCTION

St. Peter was born Simon, the son of Jona (also called Jonah). His home was in Bethsaida, a town on the Sea of Galilee. The Apostle Andrew was St. Peter's brother. It is believed that he may have been living closer to Capernaum when Jesus called him to the ministry.

In later years, it is thought that St. Peter went to Rome where, at his own request, he was crucified with his head downward. It is likely that he was killed, between A.D. 64 and 68, during the persecutions of the Emperor Nero

During his ministry, St. Peter wrote two important letters to the the people of God. The Church considers these documents of extreme importance, and you will want to

read them carefully. They are filled with deep spiritual insights into the love of God, the sacrifice of our Lord, and how to go to our Lord for forgiveness of sin, how to trust and obey His Word.

Commenting on the two letters of St. Peter, we are told:

“They assuredly contain the doctrine of St. Peter . . . Their content gives a doctrinal background to our supernatural knowledge of Christ and the promises He gave.”—*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 474.

Here are these two very important letters, penned by St. Peter himself:

They are the only written materials by St. Peter which exist, so they are considered extremely important.

CHAPTER ONE

OF THE FIRST LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers dispersed through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect,

2. According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, unto the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you and peace be multiplied.

3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy hath regenerated us unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4. Unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that can not fade, reserved in heaven for you,

5. Who, by the power of God, are kept by faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

6. Wherein you shall greatly rejoice, if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptation:

7. That the trial of your faith (much more precious

than gold which is tried by the fire) may be found unto praise and glory and honour at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

8. Whom having not seen, you love: in whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe: and believing shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified;

9. Recieving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

10. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and diligently searched, who prophesied of the grace to come in you.

11. Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in them did signify: when it foretold those sufferings that are in Christ, and the glories that should follow.

12. To whom it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to you they ministered those things which are now declared to you by them that have preached the gospel to you, the Holy Ghost being sent down from heaven, on whom the angels desire to look.

13. Wherefore having the loins of your mind girt up, being sober, trust perfectly in the grace which is offered you in the revelation of Jesus Christ,

14. As children of obedience, not fashioned according to the former desires of your ignorance:

15. But according to Him that hath called you, who is holy, be you also in all manner of conversation holy:

16. Because it is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy.

17. And if you invoke as Father Him who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every one's work: converse in fear during the time of your sojourning here.

18. Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver, from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers:

19. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled,

20. Foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but manifested in the last times for you,

21. Who through Him are faithful in God, who raised

Him up from the dead, and hath given Him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.

22. Purifying your souls in the obedience of charity, with a brotherly love, from a sincere heart love one another earnestly:

23. Being born again not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God who liveth and remaineth for ever.

24. For all flesh is as grass: and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass is withered, and the flower thereof is fallen away.

25. But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel has been preached unto you.

CHAPTER TWO

OF THE FIRST LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. Wherefore laying away all malice, and all guile, and dissimulations, and envies, and all detractions,

2. As newborn babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation:

3. If so be you have tasted that the Lord is sweet.

4. Unto whom coming, as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen and made honourable by God.

5. Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6. Wherefore it is said in the Scripture: Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious. And he that shall believe in Him, shall not be confounded.

7. To you therefore that believe, He is honour: but to them that believe not, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head of the corner:

8. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of scandal, to

them who stumble at the Word, neither do believe, whereunto also they are set.

9. But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people: that you may declare His virtues, who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light:

10. Who in time past were not a people: but are now the people of God. Who had not obtained mercy; but now have obtained mercy.

11. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul,

12. Having your conversation good among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by the good works, which they shall behold in you, glory God in the day of visitation.

13. Be ye subject therefore to every human creature for God's sake: whether it be to the king as excelling;

14. Or to governors as sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of the good.

15. For so is the will of God, that by doing well you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

16. As free, and not as making liberty a cloak for malice, but as the servants of God.

17. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King.

18. Servants, be subject to your master with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

19. For this is thankworthy, if for conscience towards God, a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully.

20. For what glory is it, if committing sin, and being buffeted for it, you endure: But if doing well you suffer patiently; this is praiseworthy before God.

21. For unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps.

22. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.

23. Who, when He was reviled, did not revile: when He suffered, He threatened not: but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly.

24. Who His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree: that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice: by whose stripes you were healed.

25. For you were as sheep going astray; but you are now converted to the shepherd and bishop of your souls.

CHAPTER THREE OF THE FIRST LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. In like manner also let wives be subject to their husbands: that if any believe not the Word, they may be won without the Word, by the conversation of the wives.

2. Considering your chaste conversation with fear.

3. Whose adorning let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel:

4. But the hidden man of the heart in the incorruptibility of a quiet and a meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God.

5. For after this manner heretofore the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands:

6. As Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughter you are, doing well, and not fearing any disturbance.

7. Ye husbands, likewise dwelling with them according to knowledge, giving honour to the female as to the weaker vessel, and as to the co-heirs of the grace of life: that your prayers be not hindered.

8. And in fine, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, being lovers of the brotherhood, merciful, modest, and humble.

9. Not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but

contrariwise, blessing: for unto this are you called, that you may inherit a blessing.

10. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.

11. Let him decline from evil, and do good: let him seek after peace and pursue it:

12. Because the eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and His ears unto their prayers: but the countenance of the Lord is upon them that do evil things.

13. And who is he that can hurt you, if you be zealous of good?

14. But if also you suffer any thing for justice' sake, blessed are ye. And be not afraid of their fear, and be not troubled.

15. But sanctify the Lord Christ in you hearts, being ready always to satisfy every one that asketh you a reason of the hope which is in you.

16. But with modesty and fear, having a good conscience: that whereas they speak evil of you, they may be ashamed who falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17. For it is better doing well (if such be the will of God) to suffer, than doing ill.

18. Because Christ also died once for our sins, the just, for the unjust: that He might offer us to God, being put to death indeed in the flesh, but enlivened in the spirit,

19. In which also coming He preached to those spirits that were in prison:

20. Which had been some time incredulous, when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noe, when the ark was in building: wherein a few, that is eight souls, were saved by water.

21. Whereunto baptism being of the like form, now saveth you also: not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the examination of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

22. Who is on the right hand of God, swallowing down

death, that we might be made heirs of life everlasting: being gone into heaven, the angels and powers and virtues being made subject to Him.

CHAPTER FOUR

OF THE FIRST LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. Christ therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought: for he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sins.

2. That now, he may live the rest of his time in the flesh, not after the desires of men, but according to the will of God.

3. For the time past is sufficient to have fulfilled the will of the Gentiles for them who have walked in riotousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and unlawful worshipping of idols.

4. Wherein they think it strange, that you run not with them into the same confusion of riotousness, speaking evil of you.

5. Who shall render account to Him, who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

6. For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to the dead: that they might be judged indeed according to men, in the flesh; but may live according to God, in the Spirit.

7. But the end of all is at hand. Be prudent therefore, and watch in prayers.

8. But before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves: for charity covereth a multitude of sins.

9. Using hospitality one towards another, without murmuring,

10. As every man hath received grace, ministering the same one to another: as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

11. If any man speak, let him speak, as the words of

God. If any man minister, let him do it, as of the power, which God administereth: that in all things God may be honoured through Jesus Christ: to whom is glory and empire for ever and ever. Amen.

12. Dearly beloved, think not strange the burning heat which is to try you, as if some new thing happened to you;

13. But if you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice that when His glory shall be revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

14. If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed: for that which is of the honour, glory, and power of God, and that which His Spirit, resteth upon you.

15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a railer, or a coveter of other men's things.

16. But if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.

17. For the time is, that judgment should begin at the house of God. And if first at us, what shall be the end of them that believe not the gospel of God?

18. And if the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

19. Wherefore let them also that suffer according to the will of God, commend their souls in good deeds to the faithful Creator.

CHAPTER FIVE

OF THE FIRST LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. The ancients therefore that are among you, I beseech, who am myself also an ancient, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ: as also a partaker of that glory which is to be revealed in time to come.

2. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it, not by constraint, but willingly, according to God: not for filthy lucre's sake, but voluntarily:

3. Neither as lording it over the clergy, but being made

a pattern of the flock from the heart.

4. And when the prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never fading crown of glory.

5. In like manner, ye young men, be subject to the ancients. And do you all insinuate humility one to another, for God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace.

6. Be you humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in the time of visitation:

7. Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you.

8. Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

9. Whom resist ye, strong in faith: knowing that the same affliction befalls your brethren who are in the world.

10. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little, will Himself perfect you, and confirm you, and establish you.

11. To Him be glory and empire for ever and ever. Amen.

12. By Sylvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I think, I have written briefly: beseeching and testifying that this is the true grace of God, wherein you stand.

13. The church that is in Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you: for so doth my son Mark.

14. Salute one another with a holy kiss. Grace be to all you, who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

CHAPTER ONE

OF THE SECOND LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. Simon Peter, servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained equal faith with us in the justice of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2. Grace to you and peace be accomplished in the

knowledge of God and of Christ Jesus our Lord:

3. As all things of His divine power which appertain to life and godliness, are given us, through the knowledge of Him who hath called us by His own proper glory and virtue.

4. By whom He hath given us most great and precious promises: that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature: flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world.

5. And you, employing all care, minister in your faith, virtue; and in virtue, knowledge;

6. And in knowledge, abstinence; and in abstinence, patience; and in patience, godliness;

7. And in godliness, love of brotherhood; and in love of brotherhood, charity.

8. For if these things be with you and abound, they will make you to be neither empty nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9. For he that hath not these things with him, is blind, and groping, having forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

10. Wherefore, brethren, labour the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election. For doing these things, you shall not sin at any time.

11. For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

12. For which cause I will begin to put you always in remembrance of these things: though indeed you know them, and are confirmed in the present truth.

13. But I think it meet as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.

14. Being assured that the laying away of this my tabernacle is at hand, according as our Lord Jesus Christ also hath signified to me.

15. And I will endeavour, that you frequently have after my decease, whereby you may keep a memory of these things.

16. For we have not by following artificial fables, made known to you the power, and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ; but we were eyewitnesses of His greatness.

17. For He received from God the Father, honour and glory: this voice coming down to Him from the excellent glory: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.

18. And this voice we heard brought from heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount.

19. And we have the more firm prophetic Word: whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

20. Understanding this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation.

21. For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER TWO

OF THE SECOND LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there shall be among you lying teachers, who shall bring in sects of perdition, and deny the Lord who brought them: bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

2. And many shall follow their riotousnesses, through whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

3. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you. Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their perdition slumbereth not.

4. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but delivered them, drawn down by infernal ropes to the lower hell, unto torments, to be reserved unto judgment:

5. And spared not the original world, but preserved

Noe, the eighth person, the preacher of justice, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.

6. And reducing the cities of the Sodomites, and of the Gomorrhites, unto ashes, condemned them to be overthrown, making them an example to those that should after act wickedly.

7. And delivered just Lot, oppressed by the injustice and lewd conversation of the wicked.

8. For in sight and hearing he was just: dwelling among them, who from day to day vexed the just soul with unjust works.

9. The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly from temptation, but to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be tormented.

10. And especially them who walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government, audacious, self willed, they fear not to bring in sects, blaspheming.

11. Whereas angels who are greater in strength and power, bring not against themselves a railing judgment.

12. But these men, as irrational beasts, naturally tending to the snare and to destruction, blaspheming those things which they know not, shall perish in their corruption,

13. Receiving the reward of their injustice, counting for pleasure the delights of a day: stains and spots, sporting themselves to excess, rioting in their feasts with you:

14. Having eyes full of adultery and of sin that ceaseth not: alluring unstable souls, having their heart exercised with covetousness, children of malediction:

15. Leaving the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam of Bosor, who loved the wages of iniquity,

16. But had a check of his madness, the dumb beast used to the yoke, which speaking with man's voice, forbade the folly of the prophet.

17. These are fountains without water and clouds tossed with whirlwinds, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved.

18. For, speaking proud words of vanity, they allure by the desires of fleshly riotousness, those who for a little while

escape, such as converse in error:

19. Promising them liberty, whereas they themselves are the slaves of corruption. For by whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave.

20. For if, flying from the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they be again entangled in them and overcome: their latter state is become unto them worse than than the former.

21. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back from the commandment which was delivered onto them.

22. For, that of the true proverb has happened to them: The dog is returned to his vomit: and, The sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

CHAPTER THREE

OF THE SECOND LETTER OF ST. PETER

1. Behold this second epistle I write to you, my dearly beloved, in which I stir up by way of admonition your sincere mind:

2. That you may be mindful of those words which I told you before from the holy prophets, and of your apostles, of the precepts of the Lord and Saviour.

3. Knowing this first, that in the last days there shall come deceitful scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

4. Saying: Where is His promise or His coming? for since the time that the fathers slept, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

5. For this they are wilfully ignorant of, that the heavens were before, and the earth out of water, and through water, consisting by the Word of God.

6. Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

7. But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the

same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of the ungodly men.

8. But of this one thing be not ignorant, my beloved, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9. The Lord delayeth not His promise as some imagine, but dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance.

10. But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works which are in it, shall be burnt up.

11. Seeing then that all these things are to be dissolved, what manner of people ought you to be in holy conversation and godliness?

12. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of the Lord, by which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with the burning heat?

13. But we look for new heavens and a new earth according to His promises, in which justice dwelleth.

14. Wherefore, dearly beloved, waiting for these things, be diligent that you may be found before Him unspotted and blameless in peace.

15. And account the longsuffering of our Lord, salvation; as also our most dear brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, hath written to you:

16. As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

17. You therefore, brethren, knowing these things before, take heed, lest being led aside by the error of the unwise, you fall from your own steadfastness.

18. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and unto the day of eternity. Amen.

- PART FIVE -

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

IMPORTANT TRUTHS
ABOUT THE
ORIGIN, NATURE, AND DESTINY
OF SIN AND SATAN.
THE PROBLEM OF SIN
IS NOT GOD'S FAULT.

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

How DID evil begin? Why IS there sin anyway? Here is the remarkable story of how sin began.

Although surrounded by continual selflessness, something happened. What could turn an angel of light into a devil—and do it right in the middle of heaven? You will here learn why our Blessed Saviour had to wait—and the wonderful future in store for His earthly children—because He did.

To many minds, the origin of sin and the reason for its existence are a source of great perplexity. They see the work of evil, with its terrible results of woe and desolation, and they question how all this can exist under the sovereignty of One who is infinite in wisdom, in power, and in love. Here is a mystery, of which they find no explanation. And in their uncertainty and doubt, they are blinded to truths plainly revealed in God's Word, and essential to salvation.

There are those who, in their inquiries concerning the existence of sin, endeavor to search into that which God has never revealed; hence they find no solution of their difficulties; and such as are actuated by a disposition to doubt and cavil, seize upon this as an excuse for rejecting the words of Holy Writ.

All scriptures in this chapter are from Church-authorized versions. Unless otherwise noted, the Rheims-Douai is quoted.

Others, however, fail of a satisfactory understanding of the great problem of evil, from the fact that tradition and misinterpretation have obscured the teaching of the Bible concerning the character of God, the nature of His government, and the principles of His dealing with sin.

It is impossible to so explain the origin of sin as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and the final disposition of sin, to fully make manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil.

Nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that God was in nowise responsible for the entrance of sin; that there was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion.

Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it, is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. Our only definition of sin is that given in the Word of God; it is "the transgression of the law;" it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government.

Before the entrance of evil, there was peace and joy throughout the universe. All was in perfect harmony with the Creator's will. Love for God was supreme, love for one another impartial. Christ the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,—one in nature, in character, and in purpose,—the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.

By Christ, the Father wrought in the creation of all heavenly beings. "For in Him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominations, [dominions], or principalities, or powers." (Colossians 1:16) and to Christ, equally with the Father, all Heaven gave allegiance.

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love,—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.

But there was one that chose to pervert this freedom. Sin originated with him, who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God, and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of Heaven.

Before his fall, Lucifer was first of the covering cherubs, holy and undefiled. "You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering." "An annointed guardian cherub I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you." Ezekiel 28:11-15, R.S.V.

Lucifer might have remained in favor with God, beloved and honored by all the angelic host, exercising his noble powers to bless others and to glorify his Maker. But, says the prophet, "Thy heart was lifted up with thy beauty: thou hast lost thy wisdom in thy beauty." Ezechiel 28:17. Little by little, Lucifer came to indulge a desire for self-exaltation. "Because you consider yourselves as wise as a god." "You said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven: above the stars of God. I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High." Ezekiel 28:6; Isaiah 14:13-14, R.S.V.

Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of His creatures, it was Lucifer's endeavor to win their service and homage to himself. And, coveting the honor which the infinite Father had bestowed upon His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power which

it was the prerogative of Christ alone to wield.

All Heaven had rejoiced to reflect the Creator's glory and to show forth His praise. And while God was thus honored, all had been peace and gladness. But a note of discord now marred the celestial harmonies. The service and exaltation of self, contrary to the Creator's plan, awakened forebodings of evil in minds to whom God's glory was supreme. The heavenly councils pleaded with Lucifer.

The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the goodness, and the justice of the Creator, and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law. God Himself had established the order of Heaven; and in departing from it, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker, and bring ruin upon himself. But the warning, given in infinite love and mercy, only aroused a spirit of resistance. Lucifer allowed jealousy of Christ to prevail, and he became the more determined.

Pride in his own glory nourished the desire for supremacy. The high honors conferred upon Lucifer were not appreciated as the gift of God, and called forth no gratitude to the Creator. He gloried in his brightness and exaltation, and aspired to be equal with God. He was beloved and revered by the heavenly host. Angels delighted to execute his commands, and he was clothed with wisdom and glory above them all.

Yet the Son of God was the acknowledged sovereign of Heaven, one in power and authority with the Father. In all the counsels of God, Christ was a participant, while Lucifer was not permitted thus to enter into the divine purposes. "Why," questioned this mighty angel, "should Christ have the supremacy? Why is He thus honored above Lucifer?"

Leaving his place in the immediate presence of God, Lucifer went forth to diffuse the spirit of discontent among the angels. Working with mysterious secrecy, and for a time concealing his real purpose under an appearance of reverence for God, he endeavored to excite dissatisfaction concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, inti-

mating that they imposed an unnecessary restraint.

Since their natures were holy, he urged that the angels should obey the dictates of their own will. He sought to create sympathy for himself, by representing that God had dealt unjustly with him in bestowing supreme honor upon Christ. He claimed that in aspiring to greater power and honor he was not aiming at self-exaltation, but was seeking to secure liberty for all the inhabitants of Heaven, that by this means they might attain to a higher state of existence.

God, in His great mercy, bore long with Lucifer. He was not immediately degraded from his exalted station when he first indulged the spirit of discontent, nor even when he began to present his false claims before the loyal angels. Long was he retained in Heaven. Again and again he was offered pardon, on condition of repentance and submission. Such efforts as only infinite love and wisdom could devise, were made to convince him of his error.

The spirit of discontent had never before been known in Heaven. Lucifer himself did not at first see whither he was drifting; he did not understand the real nature of his feelings. But as his dissatisfaction was proved to be without cause, Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong, that the divine claims were just, and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all Heaven. Had he done this, he might have saved himself and many angels. He had not at this time fully cast off his allegiance to God.

Though he had forsaken his position as covering cherub, yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator's wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God's great plan, he would have been reinstated in his office. But pride forbade him to submit. He persistently defended his own course, maintained that he had no need of repentance, and fully committed himself, in the great controversy, against his Maker.

All the powers of his master mind were now bent to the work of deception, to secure the sympathy of the angels that had been under his command. Even the fact that

Christ had warned and counseled him, was perverted to serve his traitorous designs. To those whose loving trust bound them most closely to him, Satan had represented that he was wrongly judged, that his position was not respected, and that his liberty was to be abridged.

From misrepresentation of the words of Christ, he passed to prevarication and direct falsehood, accusing the Son of God of a design to humiliate him before the inhabitants of Heaven. He sought also to make a false issue between himself and the loyal angels. All whom he could not subvert and bring fully to his side, he accused of indifference to the interests of heavenly beings.

The very work which he himself was doing, he charged upon those who remained true to God. And to sustain his charge of God's injustice toward him, he resorted to misrepresentation of the words and acts of the Creator. It was his policy to perplex the angels with subtle arguments concerning the purposes of God. Everything that was simple he shrouded in mystery, and by artful perversion cast doubt upon the plainest statements of Jehovah. His high position, in such close connection with the divine administration, gave greater force to his representations, and many were induced to unite with him in rebellion against Heaven's authority.

God in His wisdom permitted Satan to carry forward his work, until the spirit of disaffection ripened into active revolt. It was necessary for his plans to be fully developed, that their true nature and tendency might be seen by all. Lucifer, as the anointed cherub, had been highly exalted; he was greatly loved by the heavenly beings, and his influence over them was strong.

God's government included not only the inhabitants of Heaven, but of all the worlds that He had created; and Satan thought that if he could carry the angels of Heaven with him in rebellion, he could carry also the other worlds. He had artfully presented his side of the question, employing sophistry and fraud to secure his objects. His power to deceive was very great, and by disguising himself in a cloak

of falsehood he had gained an advantage. Even the loyal angels could not fully discern his character, or see to what his work was leading.

Satan had been so highly honored, and all his acts were so clothed with mystery, that it was difficult to disclose to the angels the true nature of his work. Until fully developed, sin would not appear the evil thing it was. Heretofore it had had no place in the universe of God, and holy beings had no conception of its nature and malignity. They could not discern the terrible consequences that would result from setting aside the divine law.

Satan had, at first, concealed his work under a specious profession of loyalty to God. He claimed to be seeking to promote the honor of God, the stability of His government, and the good of all the inhabitants of Heaven. While instilling discontent into the minds of the angels under him, he had artfully made it appear that he was seeking to remove dissatisfaction. When he urged that changes be made in the order and laws of God's government, it was under the pretense that these were necessary in order to preserve harmony in Heaven.

In his dealing with sin, God could employ only righteousness and truth. Satan could use what God could not—flattery and deceit. He had sought to falsify the Word of God, and had misrepresented His plan of government before the angels, claiming that God was not just in laying laws and rules upon the inhabitants of Heaven; that in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, He was seeking merely the exaltation of Himself.

Therefore it must be demonstrated before the inhabitants of Heaven as well as of all the worlds, that God's government was just, His law perfect. Satan had made it appear that He Himself was seeking to promote the good of the universe. The true character of the usurper, and his real object, must be understood by all. He must have time to manifest himself by his wicked works.

The discord which his own course had caused in Heaven, Satan charged upon the law and government of

God. All evil he declared to be the result of the divine administration. He claimed that it was his own object to improve upon the statutes of Jehovah. Therefore it was necessary that he should demonstrate the nature of His claims, and show the working out of his proposed changes in the divine law. His own work must condemn him.

Satan had claimed from the first that he was not in rebellion. The whole universe must see the deceiver unmasked.

Even when it was decided that he could no longer remain if Heaven, infinite wisdom did not destroy Satan. Since the service of love can alone be acceptable to God, the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and benevolence. The inhabitants of Heaven and of other worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice and mercy of God in the destruction of Satan.

Had he been immediately blotted from existence, they would have served God from fear, rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. Evil must be permitted to come to maturity.

For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, Satan must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might forever be placed beyond all question.

Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages, a perpetual testimony to the nature and terrible results of sin. The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God's government and His law is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made.

Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin, and suffering its punishment.

To the very close of the controversy in Heaven, the great usurper continued to justify himself. When it was announced that with all his sympathizers he must be expelled from the abodes of bliss, then the rebel leader boldly avowed his contempt for the Creator's law. He reiterated his claim that angels needed no control, but should be left to follow their own will, which would ever guide them right. He denounced the divine statutes as a restriction of their liberty, and declared that it was his purpose to secure the abolition of law; that, freed from this restraint, the hosts of Heaven might enter upon a more exalted, more glorious state of existence.

With one accord, Satan and his host threw the blame of their rebellion wholly upon Christ, declaring that if they had not been reprov'd, they would never have rebelled. Thus stubborn and defiant in their disloyalty, seeking vainly to overthrow the government of God, yet blasphemously claiming to be themselves the innocent victims of oppressive power, the arch-rebel and all his sympathizers were at last banished from Heaven.

The same spirit that prompted rebellion in Heaven, still inspires rebellion on earth. Satan has continued with men the same policy which he pursued with the angels. His spirit now reigns in the children of disobedience. Like him they seek to break down the restraints of the law of God, and promise men liberty through transgression of its precepts.

Reproof of sin still arouses the spirit of hatred and resistance. When God's messages of warning are brought home to the conscience, Satan leads men to justify themselves, and to seek the sympathy of others in their course of sin. Instead of correcting their errors, they excite indignation against the reprov'er, as if he were the sole cause of

difficulty. From the days of righteous Abel to our own time, such is the spirit which has been displayed toward those who dare to condemn sin.

By the same misrepresentation of the character of God as he had practiced in Heaven, causing him to be regarded as severe and tyrannical, Satan induced man to sin. And having succeeded thus far, he declared that God's unjust restrictions had led to man's fall, as they had led to his own rebellion.

But the Eternal One Himself proclaims His character: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness; keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty." Exodus 34:6, 7 (R.S.V.).

In the banishment of Satan from Heaven, God declared His justice, and maintained the honor of His throne. But when man had sinned through yielding to the deceptions of this apostate spirit, God gave an evidence of His love by yielding up His only begotten Son to die for the fallen race. In the atonement the character of God is revealed. The mighty argument of the cross demonstrates to the whole universe that the course of sin which Lucifer had chosen was in nowise chargeable upon the government of God.

In the contest between Christ and Satan, during the Saviour's earthly ministry, the character of the great deceiver was unmasked. Nothing could so effectually have uprooted Satan from the affections of the heavenly angels and the whole loyal universe as did his cruel warfare upon the world's Redeemer.

The daring blasphemy of his demand that Christ should pay him homage, his presumptuous boldness in bearing Him to the mountain summit and the pinnacle of the temple, the malicious intent betrayed in urging Him to cast Himself down from the dizzy height, the unsleeping malice that hunted Him from place to place, inspiring the hearts of priests and people to reject His love, and at the last to cry,

“Crucify Him! crucify Him!”—all this excited the amazement and indignation of the universe.

It was Satan that prompted the world’s rejection of Christ. The prince of evil exerted all his power and cunning to destroy Jesus; for he saw that the Saviour’s mercy and love, His compassion and pitying tenderness, were representing to the world the character of God. Satan contested every claim put forth by the Son of God, and employed men as His agents to fill the Saviour’s life with suffering and sorrow.

The sophistry and falsehood by which he had sought to hinder the work of Jesus, the hatred manifested through the children of disobedience, his cruel accusations against Him whose life was one of unexampled goodness, all sprung from deep-seated revenge. The pent-up fires of envy and malice, hatred and revenge, burst forth on Calvary against the Son of God, while all Heaven gazed upon the scene in silent horror.

When the great sacrifice had been consummated, Christ ascended on high, refusing the adoration of angels until He had presented the request, “I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me.” St. John 17:24.

Then with inexpressible love and power came forth the answer from the Father’s throne, “Let all the angels of God adore Him.” Hebrews 1:6. Not a stain rested upon Jesus. His humiliation ended, His sacrifice completed, there was given unto Him a name that is above every name.

Now the guilt of Satan stood forth without excuse. He had revealed his true character as a liar and a murderer. It was seen that the very same spirit with which he ruled the children of men, who were under his power, he would have manifested had he been permitted to control the inhabitants of Heaven. He had claimed that the transgression of God’s law would bring liberty and exaltation; but it was seen to result in bondage and degradation.

Satan’s lying charges against the divine character and

government appeared in their true light. He had accused God of seeking merely the exaltation of Himself in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, and had declared that while the Creator exacted self-denial from all others, He Himself practiced no self-denial, made no sacrifice.

Now it was seen that for the salvation of a fallen and sinful race, the Ruler of the universe had made the greatest sacrifice which love could make; for "God indeed was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19. It was seen, also, that while Lucifer had opened the door for the entrance of sin, by his desire for honor and supremacy, Christ had, in order to destroy sin, humbled Himself, and become obedient unto death.

God had manifested His abhorrence of the principles of rebellion. All Heaven saw His justice revealed, both in the condemnation of Satan and in the redemption of man. Lucifer had declared that if the law of God was changeless, and its penalty could not be remitted, every transgressor must be forever debarred from the Creator's favor. He had claimed that the sinful race were placed beyond redemption, and were therefore his rightful prey.

But the death of Christ was an argument in man's behalf that could not be overthrown. The penalty of the law fell upon him who was equal with God, and man was free to accept the righteousness of Christ, and by a life of penitence and humiliation to triumph, as the Son of God had triumphed, over the power of Satan. Thus God is just, and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus.

But it was not merely to accomplish the redemption of man that Christ came to the earth to suffer and to die. He came to "magnify the law" and to "make it honorable." Not alone that the inhabitants of this world might regard the law as it should be regarded; but it was to demonstrate to all the worlds of the universe that God's law is unchangeable.

Could its claims have been set aside, then the Son of God need not have yielded up His life to atone for its trans-

gression. The death of Christ proves it immutable. And the sacrifice to which infinite love impelled the Father and the Son, that sinners might be redeemed, demonstrates to all the universe—what nothing less than this plan of atonement could have sufficed to do—that justice and mercy are the foundation of the law and government of God.

In the final execution of the Judgment it will be seen that no cause for sin exists. When the Judge of all the earth shall demand of Satan, “Why hast thou rebelled against Me, and robbed Me of the subjects of My kingdom?” the originator of evil can render no excuse. Every mouth will be stopped, and all the hosts of rebellion will be speechless.

The cross of Calvary, while it declares the law immutable, proclaims to the universe that the wages of sin is death. In the Saviour’s expiring cry, “It is finished,” the death-knell of Satan was rung. The great controversy which had been so long in progress was then decided, and the final eradication of evil was made certain. The Son of God passed through the portals of the tomb, that “through death He might destroy him that had the empire of death, which is the devil.” Hebrews 2:14. Lucifer’s desire for self-exaltation had led him to say,

“I will ascend to heaven: above the stars of God . . . I will set my throne on High.” Isaiah 14:13 (R.S.V.). God declares, “I will make thee as ashes upon the earth . . . and thou shalt never be any more.” Ezekiel 28:18, 19. When “the day shall come kindled as a furnace; and all the proud, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall set them on fire, saith the Lord of hosts. It shall not leave them root, nor branch.” Malachias 4:1.

“The day comes burning like an oven.” Malachi 4:1 (R.S.V.)

The whole universe will have become witnesses to the nature and results of sin. And its utter extermination, which in the beginning would have brought fear to angels and dishonor to God, will now vindicate His love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do

His will, and in whose heart is His law. Never will evil again be manifest. Says the Word of God, "There shall not rise a double affliction." Nahum 1:9.

The law of God, which Satan has reproached as the yoke of bondage, will be honored as the law of liberty. A tested and proved creation will never again be turned from allegiance to Him whose character has been fully manifested before them as fathomless love and infinite wisdom.

This chapter was adapted from the book, Great Controversy.

"Then they that feared the Lord spoke every one with his neighbour; and the Lord gave ear, and heard it: and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and think on His name.

"And they shall be My special possession, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day that I do judgment; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his son that serveth him."

—*Malachias 3:16-17*

"And Christ died for all; that they also who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again . .

"If then any be in Christ a new creature, the old things are passed away, behold all things are made new. But all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Christ."

— *2 Corinthians 5:15, 17-18*

"To whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My Words."

— *Isaias 66:2*

- PART SIX-

**CHRISTIANS
WHO WERE TRUE
TO GOD**

HUMBLE PEOPLE
WHO PROVED FAITHFUL

- PART SIX -

CHRISTIANS WHO WERE TRUE TO GOD

HUMBLE PEOPLE
WHO WERE FAITHFUL

Here is an interesting story from earlier times. It is a sweet story of how folk in earlier centuries came to know their precious Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The Waldenses were the first of all the peoples of Europe to obtain a translation of the Holy Scriptures. Hundreds of years before the Reformation, they possessed the Bible in manuscript in their native tongue. They had the truth unadulterated. While, under the pressure of long-continued persecution, some compromised their faith, little by

All Scripture passages quoted in this chapter have been approved by the Church. When not otherwise stated, quotations are from the Rheims-Douai.

little yielding its distinctive principles, others held fast the truth.

Behind the lofty bulwarks of the mountains,—in all ages the refuge of the persecuted and oppressed,—the Waldenses found a hiding place. Here, for a thousand years, witnesses for the truth maintained the ancient faith.

God had provided for His people a sanctuary of awful grandeur, befitting the mighty truths committed to their trust. To those faithful exiles the mountains were an emblem of the immutable righteousness of Jehovah. They pointed their children to the heights towering above them in unchanging majesty, and spoke to them of Him with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning, whose Word is as enduring as the everlasting hills. God had set fast the mountains, and girded them with strength; no arm but that of infinite power could move them out of their place. In like manner He had established His law, the foundation of His government in Heaven and upon earth. The arm of man might reach His fellow-men and destroy their lives; but that arm could as readily uproot the mountains from their foundations, and hurl them into the sea, as it could change one precept of the law of Jehovah or blot out one of His promises to those who do His will. In their fidelity to His law, God's servants should be as firm as the unchanging hills.

The mountains that girded their lowly valleys were a constant witness to God's creative power, and a never-failing assurance of His protecting care. Those pilgrims learned to love the silent symbols of Jehovah's presence. They indulged no repining because of the hardships of their lot; they were never lonely amid the mountain solitudes. They thanked God that He had provided for them an asylum from the wrath and cruelty of men. They rejoiced in their freedom to worship before Him. Often when pursued by their enemies, the strength of the hills proved a sure defense. From many a lofty cliff they chanted the praise of God, and the armies of their enemies could not silence their songs of thanksgiving.

Pure, simple, and fervent was the piety of these fol-

lowers of Christ. The principles of truth they valued above houses and lands, friends, kindred, even life itself. These principles they earnestly sought to impress upon the hearts of the young. From earliest childhood the youth were instructed in the Scriptures, and taught to sacredly regard the claims of the law of God. Copies of the Bible were rare; therefore its precious words were committed to memory. Many were able to repeat large portions of both the Old and the New Testaments. Thoughts of God were associated alike with the sublime scenery of nature and with the humble blessings of daily life. Little children learned to look with gratitude to God as the giver of every favor and every comfort.

Parents, tender and affectionate as they were, loved their children too wisely to accustom them to self-indulgence. Before them was a life of trial and hardship, perhaps a martyr's death. They were educated from childhood to endure hardness, to submit to control, and yet to think and act for themselves. Very early they were taught to bear responsibilities, to be guarded in speech, and to understand the wisdom of silence. One indiscreet word let fall in the hearing of their enemies, might imperil not only the life of the speaker, but the lives of hundreds of his brethren; for as wolves hunting their prey did the enemies of truth pursue those who dared to claim freedom of religious faith.

The Waldenses had sacrificed their worldly prosperity for the truth's sake, and with persevering patience they toiled for their bread. Every spot of tillable land among the mountains was carefully improved; the valleys and the less fertile hillsides were made to yield their increase. Economy and severe self-denial formed a part of the education which the children received as their only legacy. They were taught that God designs life to be a discipline, and that their wants could be supplied only by personal labor, by forethought, care, and faith. The process was laborious and wearisome, but it was wholesome, just what man needs in his fallen state, the school which God has provided for His training and development.

While the youth were inured to toil and hardship, the culture of the intellect was not neglected. They were taught that all their powers belonged to God, and that all were to be improved and developed for His service.

The Vaudois [Waldensian] churches, in their purity and simplicity, resembled the church of apostolic times. They held the Bible as the only supreme, infallible authority. Their pastors followed the example of their Master, who “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” They fed the flock of God, leading them to the green pastures and living fountains of His holy Word. Far from the monuments of human pomp and pride, the people assembled, not in magnificent churches or grand cathedrals, but beneath the shadow of the mountains, in the Alpine valleys, or, in time of danger, in some rocky stronghold, to listen to the words of truth from the servants of Christ. The pastors not only preached the gospel, but they visited the sick, catechized the children, admonished the erring, and labored to settle disputes and promote harmony and brotherly love. In times of peace they were sustained by the free-will offerings of the people; but, like Paul the tent-maker, each learned some trade or profession by which, if necessary, to provide for his own support.

From their pastors the youth received instruction. While attention was given to branches of general learning, the Bible was made the chief study. The Gospels of Matthew and John they committed to memory, with many of the Epistles. They were employed also in copying the Scriptures. Some manuscripts contained the whole Bible, others only brief selections, to which some simple explanations of the text were added by those who were able to expound the Scriptures. Thus were brought forth the treasures of truth so long concealed by those who sought to exalt themselves above God.

By patient, untiring labor, sometimes in the deep, dark caverns of the earth, by the light of torches, the sacred Scriptures were written out, verse by verse, chapter by chapter. Thus the work went on, the revealed will of God shin-

ing out like pure gold; how much brighter, clearer, and more powerful because of the trials undergone for its sake, only those could realize who were engaged in the work. Angels from Heaven surrounded these faithful workers.

In a most wonderful manner the Word of truth was preserved uncorrupted through all the ages of darkness. It bore not the stamp of man, but the impress of God. Men have been unwearied in their efforts to obscure the plain, simple meaning of the Scriptures, and to make them contradict their own testimony; but, like the ark upon the billow deep, the Word of God outrides the storms that threaten it with destruction. As the mine has rich veins of gold and silver hidden beneath the surface, so that all must dig who would discover its precious stores, so the Holy Scriptures have treasures of truth that are revealed only to the earnest, humble, prayerful seeker. God designed the Bible to be a lesson-book to all mankind, in childhood, youth, and manhood, and to be studied through all time. He gave His Word to men as a revelation of Himself. Every new truth discerned is a fresh disclosure of the character of its Author. The study of the Scriptures is the means divinely ordained to bring men into closer connection with their Creator, and to give them a clearer knowledge of His will. It is the medium of communication between God and man.

While the Waldenses regarded the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom, they were not blind to the importance of a contact with the world, a knowledge of men and of active life, in expanding the mind and quickening the perceptions. From their schools in the mountains some of the youth were sent to institutions of learning in the cities of France or Italy, where there was a more extended field for study, thought, and observation than in their native Alps. The youth thus sent forth were exposed to temptation, they witnessed vice, they encountered Satan's wily agents, who urged upon them the most subtle heresies and the most dangerous deceptions. But their education from childhood had been of a character to prepare them for all this.

In the schools whither they went, they were not to

make confidants of any. Their garments were so prepared as to conceal their greatest treasure,—the precious manuscripts of the Scriptures. These, the fruit of months and years of toil, they carried with them, and, whenever they could do so without exciting suspicion, they cautiously placed some portion in the way of those whose hearts seemed open to receive the truth. From their mother's knee the Waldensian youth had been trained with this purpose in view; they understood their work, and faithfully performed it. Converts to the true faith were won in these institutions of learning, and frequently its principles were found to be permeating the entire school; yet the church leaders could not, by the closest inquiry, trace the so-called corrupting heresy to its source.

The spirit of Christ is a missionary spirit. The very first impulse of the renewed heart is to bring others also to the Saviour. Such was the spirit of the Vaudois Christians. They felt that God required more of them than merely to preserve the truth in its purity in their own churches; that a solemn responsibility rested upon them to let their light shine forth to those who were in darkness; by the mighty power of God's Word they sought to break the bondage which error had imposed. The Vaudois ministers were trained as missionaries, every one who expected to enter the ministry was required first to gain an experience as an evangelist. Each was to serve three years in some mission field before taking charge of a church at home. This service, requiring at the outset self-denial and sacrifice, was a fitting introduction to the pastor's life in those times that tried men's souls. The youth who received ordination to the sacred office saw before them, not the prospect of earthly wealth and glory, but a life of toil and danger, and possibly a martyr's fate. The missionaries went out two and two, as Jesus sent forth His disciples. With every young man was usually associated a man of age and experience, the youth being under the guidance of his companion, who was held responsible for his training, and whose instruction he was required to heed. These co-laborers were not always together, but of-

ten met for prayer and counsel, thus strengthening each other in the faith.

To have made known the object of their mission would have insured its defeat; therefore they carefully concealed their real character. Every minister possessed a knowledge of some trade or profession, and the missionaries prosecuted their work under cover of a secular calling. Usually they chose that of merchant or peddler. They dealt in choice and costly articles, such as silks, laces, and jewels, which in those times could not be readily procured, and thus they found entrance where they would otherwise have been repulsed. All the while their hearts were uplifted to God for wisdom to present a treasure more precious than gold or gems. They secretly carried about with them copies of the Bible, in whole or in part, and whenever an opportunity was presented, they called the attention of their customers to these manuscripts. Often an interest to read God's Word was thus awakened, and some portion was gladly left with those who desired to receive it.

The work of these missionaries began in the plains and valleys at the foot of their own mountains, but it extended far beyond these limits. With naked feet and in garments coarse and travel-stained as were those of their Master, they passed through great cities, and penetrated to distant lands. Everywhere they scattered the precious seed. Churches sprung up in their path, and the blood of martyrs witnessed for the truth. The day of God will reveal a rich harvest of souls garnered by the labors of these faithful men. Veiled and silent, the Word of God was making its way through Christendom, and meeting a glad reception in the homes and hearts of men.

To the Waldenses the Scriptures were not merely a record of God's dealings with men in the past, and a revelation of the responsibilities and duties of the present, but an unfolding of the perils and glories of the future. They believed that the end of all things was not far distant; and as they studied the Bible with prayer and tears, they were the more deeply impressed with its precious utterances, and

with their duty to make known to others its saving truths. They saw the plan of salvation clearly revealed in the sacred pages, and they found comfort, hope, and peace in believing in Jesus. As the light illuminated their understanding and made glad their hearts, they longed to shed its beams upon those who were in the darkness of papal error.

They saw that under the guidance of the churches of the day, multitudes were vainly endeavoring to obtain pardon by afflicting their bodies for the sin of their souls. Taught to trust to their good works to save them, they were ever looking to themselves, their minds dwelling upon their sinful condition, seeing themselves exposed to the wrath of God, afflicting soul and body, yet finding no relief. Thus conscientious souls were bound by the erroneous doctrines. Thousands abandoned friends and kindred, and spent their lives in convent cells. By oft-repeated fasts and cruel scourgings, by midnight vigils, by prostration for weary hours upon the cold, damp stones of their dreary abode, by long pilgrimages, by humiliating penance and fearful torture, thousands vainly sought to obtain peace of conscience. Oppressed with a sense of sin, and haunted with the fear of God's avenging wrath, many suffered on, until exhausted nature gave way, and without one ray of light or hope, they sank into the tomb.

The Waldenses longed to break to these starving souls the bread of life, to open to them the messages of peace in the promises of God, and to point them to Christ as their only hope of salvation. The doctrine that good works can atone for the transgression of God's law, they held to be based upon falsehood. Reliance upon human merit intercepts the view of Christ's infinite love. Jesus died as a sacrifice for man because the fallen race can do nothing to recommend themselves to God. The merits of a crucified and risen Saviour are the foundation of the Christian's faith. The dependence of the soul upon Christ is as real, and its connection with Him must be as close, as that of a limb to the body, or of a branch to the vine.

The teachings of the Church had led men to look upon

the character of God, and even of Christ, as stern, gloomy, and forbidding. The Saviour was represented as so far devoid of all sympathy with man in his fallen state that the mediation of priests and saints must be invoked. Those whose minds had been enlightened by the Word of God longed to point these souls to Jesus as their compassionate, loving Saviour, standing with outstretched arms inviting all to come to Him with their burden of sin, their care and weariness. They longed to clear away the obstructions which Satan had piled up that men might not see the promises, and come directly to God, confessing their sins, and obtaining pardon and peace.

Eagerly did the Vaudois missionary unfold to the inquiring mind the precious truths of the gospel. Cautiously he produced the carefully written portions of the Holy Scriptures. It was his greatest joy to give hope to the conscientious, sin-stricken soul, who could see only a God of vengeance, waiting to execute justice. With quivering lip and tearful eye did he, often on bended knees, open to his brethren the precious promises that reveal the sinner's only hope. Thus the light of truth penetrated many a darkened mind, rolling back the cloud of gloom, until the Sun of Righteousness shone into the heart with healing in His beams. It was often the case that some portion of Scripture was read again and again, the hearer desiring it to be repeated, as if he would assure himself that he had heard aright. Especially was the repetition of these words eagerly desired: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 St. John 1:7. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish; but may have life everlasting." St. John 3:14, 15.

Many were undeceived in regard to the claims of Church. They saw how vain is the mediation of men or angels in behalf of the sinner. As the true light dawned upon their minds, they exclaimed with rejoicing, "Christ is my priest; His blood is my sacrifice; His altar is my confessional." They cast themselves wholly upon the merits of

Jesus, repeating the words, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Hebrews 11:6. "There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

The assurance of a Saviour's love seemed too much for some of these poor tempest-tossed souls to realize. So great was the relief which it brought, such a flood of light was shed upon them, that they seemed transported to Heaven. Their hand was laid confidently in the hand of Christ; their feet were planted upon the Rock of Ages. All fear of death was banished. They could now covet the prison and the fagot if they might thereby honor the name of their Redeemer.

In secret places the Word of God was thus brought forth and read, sometimes to a single soul, sometimes to a little company who were longing for light and truth. Often the entire night was spent in this manner. So great would be the wonder and admiration of the listeners that the messenger of mercy was not infrequently compelled to cease his reading until the understanding could grasp the tidings of salvation. Often would words like these be uttered: "Will God indeed accept my offering? Will He smile upon me? Will He pardon me?" The answer was read, "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 (R.S.V.).

Faith grasped the promise, and the glad response was heard, "No more long pilgrimages to make; no more painful journeys to holy shrines. I may come to Jesus just as I am, sinful and unholy, and He will not spurn the penitential prayer. 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' Mine, even mine, may be forgiven!"

A tide of sacred joy would fill the heart, and the name of Jesus would be magnified by praise and thanksgiving. Those happy souls returned to their homes to diffuse light, to repeat to others, as well as they could, their new experience; that they had found the true and living Way. There was a strange and solemn power in the words of Scripture that spoke directly to the hearts of those who were longing

for the truth. It was the voice of God, and it carried conviction to those who heard.

The messenger of truth went on his way; but his appearance of humility, his sincerity, his earnestness and deep fervor, were subjects of frequent remark. In many instances his hearers had not asked him whence he came, or whither he went. They had been so overwhelmed, at first with surprise, and afterward with gratitude and joy, that they had not thought to question him. When they had urged him to accompany them to their homes, he had replied that he must visit the lost sheep of the flock. Could he have been an angel from Heaven? they queried.

In many cases the messenger of truth was seen no more. He had made his way to other lands, he was wearing out his life in some unknown dungeon, or perhaps his bones were whitening on the spot where he had witnessed for the truth. But the words he had left behind could not be destroyed. They were doing their work in the hearts of men; the blessed results will be fully known only in the Judgment.

The persecutions visited for many centuries upon this God-fearing people were endured by them with a patience and constancy that honored their Redeemer. Notwithstanding the crusades against them, they continued to send out their missionaries to scatter the precious truth. They were hunted to the death; yet their blood watered the seed sown, and it failed not of yielding fruit.

Thus the Waldenses witnessed for God, many centuries ago. Their work is to be carried forward to the close of time by those who also are willing to suffer all things for "the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus." The Apocalypse 1:9.

This chapter was adapted from the book, *Great Controversy*.

"Blessed are all they that trust in Him."

— *Psalms 2:13*

- PART SEVEN-

**LESSONS FROM
THE MOST ANCIENT
WRITINGS
OF THE SAINTS**

LESSONS FROM
THE ANCIENT WRITINGS
OF THE MOST HOLY GOD,
THROUGH
THE HOLY SAINTS OF OLD

- PART SIX -

**LESSONS FROM THE
MOST ANCIENT
WRITINGS**

**LESSONS FROM THE GOD OF
HEAVEN THROUGH THE MOST
ANCIENT SAINTS**

**CHAPTER ONE
OUR BLESSED LORD
AND THE HOLY SCRIPTURES**

Did Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, base His teachings on the Holy Scriptures? When we stop to think about it, this is a very important question. *Both the Church and the Scriptures themselves answer with a resounding yes!*

Pope Benedict XV, in his encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus*, wrote these words:

“When Christ preached to the people, whether on the

mount by the lakeside, or in the synagogue at Nazareth, or in His own city of Capernaum, He took His points and His arguments from the Bible.”—*Benedict XV, Spiritus Paraclitus*.

And that is what we find in the Sacred Scriptures. Christ used the Bible, and the Bible only, to prove what He said was true.

Following His baptism, our Lord Jesus Christ went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day and took part in the service by reading from Isaias 61:1-2.

“And He came to Nazareth, where He was brought up: and He went into the synagogue, according to His custom, on the Sabbath day; and He rose up to read. And the book of Isaias the prophet was delivered unto Him.

“And as He unfolded the book, He found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. Wherefore He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He hath sent Me to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward.

“And when He had folded the book, He restored it to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him.”—*St. Luke 4:16-20*.

Christ, our Saviour, then told the people that the prophecy He had just read from Isaias was at that very time being fulfilled. This was clear evidence that Jesus was the Messiah of whom the Old Testament prophets wrote.

“And He began to say to them: This day is fulfilled this Scripture in your ears.”—*St. Luke 4:21*.

Our Saviour said that He did not come to destroy or abolish the Old Testament, but to fulfill it; that is, bring to completion its principles.

All Scripture passages quoted in this chapter have been approved by the Church. When not otherwise stated, quotations are from the Rheims-Douai.

“Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled.”—*St. Matthew 5:17-18.*

In declaring His divinity, Christ quoted from Psalm 82:6 and then added, “The Scripture cannot be broken.”

“The multitude answered Him: We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever; and how sayest Thou: The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man? Jesus therefore said to them: Yet a little while, the light is among you. Walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not. And he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth.”—*St. John 12:34-35.*

When Jesus was asked how a person could possess eternal life, He answered, “What is written?” Christ then showed that it took more than reading—but doing. The words of Scripture must be lived out in the life.

“And behold a certain lawyer stood up, tempting Him, and saying, Master, what must I do to possess eternal life? But He said to him: What is written in the law? How readest thou? He answering said: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind: and thy neighbour as thyself. And He said to him: Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.”—*St. Luke 10:25-28.*

The lawyer’s question to Christ revealed that, while he read the law, he did not practice it. Our Saviour told the lawyer that, unless he obeyed the law fully, he could not be saved.

“But he, willing to justify himself, said to Jesus: And who is my neighbour?”—*St. Luke 10:29.*

Our Lord mentioned the days of Noe. —But if we did not have the Old Testament—and without reading Genesis 6 to 8—we would not know what the “days of Noe” were.

“Likewise as it came to pass in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat and drink, they married wives, and were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark: and the flood came and destroyed them all.”—*St. Luke 17:26-27.*

What were “the days of Lot”?

“Likewise as it came to pass, in the days of Lot: they did eat and drink, they bought and sold, they planted and built. And in the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed.”—*St. Luke 17:28-30.*

Without the Book of Genesis, we would not know the meaning of these things. All of the Bible is important, if we would know the will of God for our lives today.

Christ urged us to “remember Lot’s wife.”

“Remember Lot’s wife.”—*St. Luke 17:32.*

A strong warning was contained here, yet we would not know what it meant if we had not read it in the Old Testament (Genesis 18 and 19). How can we remember something of which we know nothing? It is vital that we, today, read the Bible—all of it!

Christ predicted the downfall of Jerusalem, which occurred in A.D. 70. He told the people to carefully study the book of Daniel, so they would be prepared for the coming crisis. Great importance was attached to this prophecy. If a person refused this prophecy, what would be the result?

“When therefore you shall see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place: he that readeth let him understand.”—*St. Matthew 24:15.*

Our Saviour tells us to search the Scriptures. He said that they testified of Him. We must study the Bible in order to know our Lord. The Sacred Scriptures alone reveal His character.

“Search the Scriptures, for you think in them to have

life everlasting; and the same are they that give testimony of Me.”—*St. John 5:39*.

Jesus said “Have you not read this Scripture?” Were our Lord on earth today and were He to ask whether we were reading the Scriptures, what would we answer? Throughout His ministry, Christ emphasized the importance of studying the Bible.

“And have you not read this Scripture, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head of the corner.”—*St. Mark 12:10*.

In the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Luke, Jesus was talking to two disciples. Unbelief in the Holy Scriptures had caused them to doubt the Messiahship of Christ. Our Lord would not have been betrayed and forsaken by His followers had they been studying and believing the prophecies of the Old Testament about the Messiah. How urgent it is for us today to “believe in all things which the prophets have spoken”!

“Then He said to them: O foolish, and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?”—*St. Luke 24:25-26*.

What a wonderful Bible study that must have been! Our Lord and Saviour began with Genesis and followed His topic all the way through the Old Testament. We today should also carefully study the Bible.

“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures, the things that were concerning Him.”—*St. Luke 24:27*.

Later in the same chapter, Christ met with more of His disciples. His resurrection was past, yet He was telling them the importance of studying the Bible.

“And He said to them: These are the words which I spoke to you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning Me.”—*St. Luke 24:44*.

Our Lord opened the minds of the disciples to an understanding of the Scriptures. He will do the same for us today, as we humbly pray for guidance.

“Then He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.”—*St. Luke 24:45*.

We err in doctrine when we do not understand the Scriptures. The Scriptures and the power of God are closely connected.

We can see that our Saviour taught from the Old Testament Scriptures, and that He stressed their importance. He intended that all His followers study and accept the Bible as their standard of faith, doctrine, and morality.

“And Jesus answering, said to them: You err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.”—*St. Matthew 22:29*.

Jesus, our Lord, said that it is those who hear and keep the Sacred Scriptures—the Holy Bible—who will be blessed. How important it is that we today be men and women of the Word. Only then can we have the close walk with Him that we so much need!

“But He said: Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it.”—*St. Luke 11:28*.

CHAPTER TWO

THE APOSTLES

AND THE EARLY CHURCH

The Bible preceded the Church. In fact, if there were no Bible, there would be no church!—that is, no true church.

In fact, it is the teachings of Scripture which distinguish the true church from the false.

How thankful we can be for the Holy Scriptures! They are given for “doctrine,” for correcting false religious creeds.

“All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice.”—*2 Timothy*

3:16.

In Monsignor Knox's New Testament, the above verse is translated this way:

"Everything in the Scripture has been divinely inspired, and has its uses: to instruct us, to expose our errors, to correct our faults, to educate us in holy living."—2 *Timothy* 3:16, *Knox translation*.

A thousand years before it happened, the Bible foretold the part that Judas was to act in the betrayal of our Lord and Saviour, and the result. Here in Acts 1:16-20, St. Peter is preaching a sermon. Notice all the Old Testament Scriptures which he mentioned or quoted! St. Peter knew the Bible well, and we should also. (He referred to Psalm 41:9 and Zecharias 11:12-13.)

"Men, brethren, the Scripture must needs be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was the leader of them that apprehended Jesus: Who was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

"And he indeed hath possessed a field of the reward of iniquity, and being hanged, burst asunder in the midst: and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the same field was called in their tongue, Haceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

"For it is written in the book of Psalms: Let their habitation become desolate, and let there be none to dwell therein. And his bishopric let another take."—*Acts* 1:16-20.

Later, on the day of Pentecost, St. Peter gave another sermon. This one was based on the prophecies of Joel and David. The result of that Bible-based sermon was the conversion of three thousand people! The New Testament church was founded on the Old Testament Scriptures.

"But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spoke to them: Ye men of Judea, and all you

that dwell in Jerusalem, be this known to you, and with your ears receive my words . . .

“But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass, in the last days, (saith the Lord) I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And upon My servants indeed, and upon My handmaids will I pour out in those days of My spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will shew wonders in the heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath: blood and fire, and vapour of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and manifest day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved . . . For David saith concerning him: I foresaw the Lord before my face: because He is at my right hand, that I may not be moved . . . They therefore that received his word, were baptized; and there were added in that day about three thousand souls.”—*Acts 2:14, 16-21, 25, 41.*

Jesus our Saviour said that, in order to be in the kingdom of heaven, one must be born anew (St. John 3:3). St. Peter wrote that conversion, or the new birth, is the result of the study of the Sacred Scriptures.

“Being born again not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God who liveth and remaineth for ever.”—*1 St. Peter 1:23.*

St. Peter preached *the Word*, which “endureth for ever”; and by that preaching many came to their Saviour. He and all the Apostles taught that it was the Word of God—the Bible—which was enduring and infallible; it was not the traditions of men or the dogmas of a general council.

“But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel hath been preached unto you.”—*1 St. Peter 1:25.*

St. Paul, when he preached, taught from the Scriptures. In this passage, it resulted in the founding of the

Thessalonian church.

“And Paul, according to his custom, went in unto them; and for three Sabbath days he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures.”—*Acts 17:2*.

When St. Paul arrived in the city of Berea, he taught his hearers from the Bible. He also commended the Bereans for the way they carefully studied the Bible each day, in order to test his words by the Scriptures. We today should test the preachers by God’s Word, not the other way around! If the doctrines which are taught us do not harmonize with a “Thus saith the Lord,” then we must remain with the Bible, not with the words and theories of men.

“But the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea. Who, when they were come thither, went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, who received the Word with all eagerness, daily searching the Scriptures, whether these things were so.”—*Acts 17:10-11*.

There was opposition to St. Paul as he preached from the Bible. Some people today still try to stir up trouble to hinder the preaching of the Word.

“And when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the Word of God was also preached by Paul at Berea, they came thither also, stirring up and troubling the multitude.”—*Acts 17:13*.

St. Paul says that it is the gospel, based upon the Scriptures and prophets, which must be made known to all nations.

“Now to him that is able to establish you, according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret from eternity; (which now is made manifest by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the precept of the eternal God, for the obedience of faith,) known among all nations.”—*Romans 16:25-26*.

The writings of the Old Testament Scriptures brought learning, comfort, and hope to the Church of Rome and to

the aged apostle. The Bible will do the same for us today, as we read it. The power of God, to change and purify our hearts, is in His Written Word.

“For what things soever were written, were written for our learning: that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope.”—*Romans 15:4*.

St. Paul said that Timothy’s sincere faith was due to the earnest teaching of his mother and grandmother.

“To Timothy my dearly beloved son, grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from Christ Jesus our Lord . . . Calling to mind that faith which is in thee unfeigned, which also dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and in thy mother Eunice, and I am certain that in thee also.”—*2 Timothy 1:2, 5*.

How was it that those two women helped young Timothy develop such a godly, dedicated life? They did it by teaching him from the Bible. He had come to know it well.

“And because from thy infancy thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which can instruct thee to salvation, by the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”—*2 Timothy 3:15*.

St. Paul solemnly charged Timothy, now a young pastor, to not preach men’s ideas—but to preach the Word!

“I charge thee, before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by His coming, and His kingdom: Preach the Word: be instant in season, out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine.”—*2 Timothy 4:1-2*.

St. Paul predicted that, instead of the Scriptures, “fables” and false doctrine would later be taught and received by many.

“For there shall be a time, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: And will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables.”—*2 Timothy 4:3-4*.

Christ’s burial and resurrection occurred in accordance

with the Scripture, therefore He is the true Messiah.

“For I delivered unto you first of all, which I also received: how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures: And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.”—*1 Corinthians 15:3-4*.

The fulfillment of Bible prophecy establishes faith in the Scriptures.

“And now I have told you before it come to pass: that when it shall come to pass, you may believe.”—*St. John 14:29*.

Both St. Peter and St. Paul provided many examples of the fulfillment of such prophecies.

CHAPTER THREE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES OF CHRIST

The Old Testament provides us with many vivid pictures of our Saviour, from His birth to His crucifixion. Mathematicians tell us that the fulfillment of all those Bible predictions could never have occurred by chance.

In addition, Christ's resurrection and intercessory work as our High Priest in the Sanctuary in heaven are depicted by shadows and types.

It is essential for each of us to study the Sacred Scriptures in order to understand the great truths found in them.

Listed below are but a few of the many Old Testament prophecies which were exactly fulfilled to the letter in the earthly life of Christ

If the disciples had accepted what the Old Testament said about the Messiah, they never would have forsaken Him. And St. Peter would not have denied Him in that crucial hour. Christ's loving heart yearned for the support and sympathy of the men He had chosen to be His follow-

ers. But, because they did not cherish and obey the Word of God, the record says, “then the disciples all leaving Him, fled” (St. Matthew 26:56).

The following list compares the Old Testament prophecies with their fulfillment in the New Testament. Look up the passages yourself, and see how solid is the accuracy and authenticity of the Bible. It is God’s Inspired book to mankind! Only one person—our blessed Lord—fulfilled all the specifications of those prophecies!

Verse numbers sometimes vary in the Psalms. In the list below, those variations are listed in this way: The Rheims-Douai Version reference is given, and then, in parenthesis, the reference of many other versions (including the King James). Most of the Psalms were written nearly a thousand years before the time of Christ.

<i>Old Testament Prophecy</i>	<i>New Testament Fulfillment</i>
Isa 7:14 (742 B.C.)	Born of a Virgin St. Matt 1:18
Mic 5:2	Will come out of Bethlehem St. Matt 2:1-6
Zech 11:12 (487 B.C.)	Sold for 30 pieces of silver St. Matt 26:15-16
Zech 11:13 (487 B.C.)	Betrayal money cast into potter’s field St. Matt 27:5-7, 10
Isa 53:7 (712 B.C.)	Dumb before His accusers St. Matt 27:12-14
	Smitten and spat upon St. Matt 27:30
Isa 53:5 (712 B.C.)	Wounded and bruised St. Matt 27:26-29
Ps 21:17 (22:16)	Hands and feet pierced St. John 20:25-27
Isa 53:12 (712 B.C.)	Crucified with thieves St. Mark 15:27-28
Ps 108:25 (109:25)	Shaked their heads St. Matt 27:39
Ps 21:8-9 (22:7-8)	Ridiculed by leaders St. Matt 27:41-43
Ps 21:19 (22:18)	Parted His garments St. John 19:23-24
Ps 21:2 (22:1)	His forsaken cry to God St. Matt 27:46
Ps 33:21 (34:20)	Bones not broken St. John 19:33, 36
Zech 12:10 (487 B.C.)	His side pierced St. John 19:34, 37
Isa 53:9 (712 B.C.)	Buried in rich man’s tomb St. Matt 27:57-60

It is clear that there is a very close relationship of the Old Testament with the New Testament. They go together.

The prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled. Were it not for those prophecies, we could never be certain of the true identity of Christ. He fulfilled every specification of what was written in the Old Testament Scriptures, many centuries earlier. He Himself established His Messiahship by pointing to the Scriptures. Will He not rebuke us, as He rebuked His disciples, if we do not believe all that the prophets have spoken?

CHAPTER FOUR THE ORIGIN OF SIN AND ITS REMEDY

The question often arises, Where did sin come from? How did it begin? Who is responsible for the entrance of evil into our world?

Another important question is asked, Why did God not destroy Satan when he first introduced sin into the universe? Without the Holy Scriptures, these and other questions could not be explained with certainty.

Our Lord has suffered ever since the time that sin began. In this study, we shall see how, because of His deep love for mankind, God found a way to offer us salvation through Christ.

Instead of blotting mankind out of existence, God sent His Son to die in His stead. What wonderful love is this!

We are all recipients of this great salvation, which our blessed Lord made possible by His humility in taking our nature, and then suffering and dying in our behalf.

Who was the originator of evil? Sin started with the devil. There was no wickedness in the universe until he introduced it.

“He that committeth sin is of the devil: for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son

of God appeared, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”—*1 St. John 3:8*.

Satan committed the first murder. He spoke the first lie. It is our Lord and Saviour who charged him with being a murderer and liar. Christ knew, for He was well-acquainted with Satan’s rebellion in heaven. The devil abode not in the truth. This indicates that, at an earlier time, he had been in the truth.

“You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and he stood not in the truth; because truth is not in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof.”—*St. John 8:44*.

What kind of being was this fallen angel? The Bible record says that he was perfect until iniquity was found in him. He made a devil out of himself. God is not responsible for Satan’s action. The devil was a free moral agent, as we are, with the power of choice. He could choose to obey God’s commandments or he could choose to disobey and take the consequences.

“Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day of thy creation, until iniquity was found in thee.”—*Ezekiel 28:15*.

How did Satan sin? We are told that he thought too much of himself. He took the beauty and intellect which God gave him and became proud and self-exalted.

“And thy heart was lifted up with thy beauty: thou hast lost thy wisdom in thy beauty, I have cast thee to the ground: I have set thee before the face of kings, that they might behold thee.”—*Ezekiel 28:17*.

Lucifer was once a beautiful angel who fell so far!

“How are thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? how art thou fallen to the earth, that didst wound the nations?”—*Isaiah 14:12*.

Thinking he could become greater than God, Satan talked himself into deception. He rose higher and higher in his selfish ambitions. There seemed to be no limit, in his

thinking, to what he would be able to do.

“And thou saidst in thy heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides of the north.

“I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the most High.”—*Isaias 14:13-14*.

Satan had once been a beautiful being. One translation of the following passage says he was “the anointed cherub,” above all the angelic host.

“Thou a cherub stretched out, and protecting, and I set thee in the holy mountain of God, thou hast walked in the midst of the stones of fire.”—*Ezechiel 28:14*.

Satan was cast out of heaven, but he was not immediately destroyed because the good angels and the inhabitants of other worlds would question the justice of God. So it was necessary for the results of sin to be fully seen. You and I in our world today see those results continually. Time had to be given to demonstrate the evil and destructiveness of Satan’s character, methods, and plans.

“By the multitude of thy merchandise, thy inner parts were filled with iniquity, and thou hast sinned: and I cast thee out from the mountain of God, and destroyed thee, O covering cherub, out of the midst of the stones of fire.”—*Ezechiel 28:16*.

Then God created our world, and told Adam and Eve to have dominion over it. Their life and happiness depended on obedience to their Maker.

“And God blessed them, saying: 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.”—*Genesis 1:28*.

In His deep love, God made a beautiful garden in which our first parents could live. God supplied their every need.

“And the Lord God had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning: wherein He placed man whom He had formed.

“And the Lord God brought forth of the ground all manner of trees, fair to behold, and pleasant to eat of: the tree of life also in the midst of paradise: and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”—*Genesis 2:8-9*.

But there was one prohibition: Adam and Eve were not to eat the fruit of only one tree. As long as they obeyed, they acknowledged God as their ruler.

“And He commanded him, saying: Of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat:

“But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.”—*Genesis 2:16-17*.

Satan determined to cause them to fall. He used a serpent in the forbidden tree as a medium to speak to Eve. He told her, “Why did God tell you this?”—implying that God was not a nice Person, but was keeping something very good from them. Today, the devil is still casting doubt on the words of God! Through men Satan says that the Bible, the Word of God, cannot be trusted and should not be obeyed.

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth which the Lord God had made. And He said to the woman: Why hath God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?”—*Genesis 3:1*.

Eve should have run away from the tempter, but she stopped to talk with him. By doing so, she was overcome. When you are tempted, run to Christ your Saviour! Do not pause to dally with sin.

“And the woman answered him, saying: Of the fruit of the trees that are in paradise we do eat:

“But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not eat; and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die.”—*Genesis 3:2-3*.

Satan contradicted God. He said. “You will not die by disobeying; you will actually be more alive than before!”

“And the serpent said to the woman: No, you shall not die the death.

“For God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”—*Genesis 3:4-5*.

After all that God had done for them, Eve believed Satan’s lie! Then she enticed her husband to also eat of the forbidden fruit. Adam sold his dominion to Satan and became subject to him.

“And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold: and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband who did eat.”—*Genesis 3:6*.

God in His great mercy made known the plan of redemption to Adam and Eve. Through the grace of God they could be redeemed from the power of the devil. The “seed,” our Saviour, would bruise the head of Satan. Thus was foretold the battle which would occur when Christ came to earth. Satan would, as it were, bruise Christ’s heel, by causing Him great suffering. But Christ would conquer the devil—and, by faith in Christ, we can share in that victory! Only through Christ can we be saved!

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”—*Genesis 3:15, R.S.V.*

God made coats of skin and clothed them. This covering cost the life of an innocent animal. Blood had to be shed. This typified the death of the innocent Lamb of God who was to shed His blood in behalf of the human family; and, with His perfect life, He would clothe us, that is, credit to our account,—His own righteousness. Thank God every day for what He has provided! Salvation in Jesus Christ, our Lord and only Saviour. All that was lost in the fall would be bought back by Christ.

“And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins, and clothed them.”—*Genesis 3:21*.

All about us, in newspapers and news reports, we witness the effects of what Satan is doing in our world. The

devil is the “prince of this world”; yet, by clinging to Christ, we can overcome him!

“I will not now speak many things with you. For the prince of this world cometh, and in Me he hath not any thing.”—*St. John 14:30*.

Satan is also called “the prince of the power of the air.” As far as God permits, the devil controls the elements—and causes terrible storms and other tragedies. Were it not for the restraining hand of God, Satan would destroy everything and everyone. He is only evil continually.

“Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief.”—*Ephesians 2:2*.

God sent His Son to “seek and to save that which was lost.” He is seeking His lost children today. We must come to Him that we might be saved, and help bring others to Him.

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”—*St. Luke 19:10*.

Satan tempted Christ, in the hope of causing Him to doubt God’s care, as Eve had been led to doubt it.

“And the devil led Him into a high mountain, and shewed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

“And he said to Him: To thee will I give all this power, and the glory of them; for to me they are delivered, and to whom I will, I give them.

“If Thou therefore wilt adore before me, all shall be Thine.”—*St. Luke 4:5-7*.

Had Christ yielded to the suggestions of Satan, all would have been lost. But, thank God, our Saviour withstood the enemy. Notice that, instead of arguing with the devil, Christ answered him with Bible commands and promises.

“And Jesus answering said to him: It is written: thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”—*St. Luke 4:8*.

Christ paid the ransom for our souls, by dying in our place. We are twice His. Christ made us and then He bought us back. What more could He do to show us how much He loves us? We are precious to Him, and He should be precious to us.

“And His sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground.”—*St. Luke 22:44*.

The “tower of the flock” is Christ; and to Him will come the “first power,” that is, the purchased possession—the whole earth.

“And thou, O cloudy tower of the flock, of the daughter of Sion, unto thee shall it come: yea the first power shall come, the kingdom to the daughter of Jerusalem.”—*Micheas 4:8*.

Soon Christ will return, and we will be with Him forever.

“And the seventh angel sounded the trumpet: and there were great voices in heaven, saying: The kingdom of this world is become our Lord’s and His Christ’s and He shall reign for ever and ever. Amen.”—*The Apocalypse 11:15*.

CHAPTER FIVE THE GREAT IMAGE OF DANIEL TWO

The prophecy of Daniel 2 was given by the God of heaven, to call our attention to the events leading up to the close of this world’s history. This prophecy, relating to world empires, has been confirmed by historians.

The historian Gibbon wrote this:

“The images of God, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the *iron* monarchy of Rome.”—*Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. 3, p. 634*.

St. Peter explains how God gave Bible prophecy to us. It did not come by the will of man, but by the Holy Spirit taking control of the prophet, who then wrote as the Holy Spirit guided.

“For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost.”—*2 St. Peter 1:21*.

Only God can reveal the end from the beginning.

“Remember the former age, for I am God, and there is no God beside, neither is there the like to Me:

“Who shew from the beginning the things that shall be at last, and from ancient times the things that as yet are not done, saying: My counsel shall stand, and all My will shall be done.”—*Isaias 46:9-10*.

The Lord reveals future events by His prophets. We should study what the prophets have written in order to know what the future holds for us. If we refuse to investigate the prophecies, we are ignoring what God in His love gave to prepare us for coming events.

“For the Lord God doth nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets.”—*Amos 3:7*.

Our Lord recognized Daniel as a prophet. According to Christ, we can understand prophecy if we read the Book of Daniel. How few are heeding the injunction which our Lord gave, to read and understand the prophecies of Daniel. Satan wants to keep us in ignorance regarding the future.

“When therefore you shall see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place: he that readeth let him understand.”—*St. Matthew 24:15*.

The king had a dream which troubled him. He was aware that it involved him as a world ruler.

“In the second year of the reign of Nabuchodonosor [Nebuchadnezzar], Nabuchodonosor had a dream, and his spirit was terrified, and his dream went out of his mind.”—*Daniel 2:1*.

The so-called wise men had professed to foretell the

mystery of the future, and now they are to be put to the test.

“Then the king commanded to call together the diviners and the wise men, and the magicians, and the Chaldeans: to declare to the king his dreams: so they came and stood before the king.

“And the king said to them: I saw a dream, and being troubled in mind I know not what I saw.”—*Daniel 2:2-3*.

Had the king remembered the dream and made it known to the astrologers, they would have evoked by some magic incantation an interpretation which would have been false. God withheld the dream so that no false meaning would be applied by the professed wise men.

“And the Chaldeans answered the king in Syriac: O king, live for ever: tell to thy servants thy dream, and we will declare the interpretation thereof.”—*Daniel 2:4*.

The king was about to take drastic measures because he had been deceived by these pseudoscientists. They claimed to read the stars, tell their influences upon human affairs, and predict what would happen.

“And the king answering said to the Chaldeans: The thing is gone out of my mind: unless you tell me the dream, and the meaning thereof, you shall be put death, and your houses shall be confiscated.

“But if you tell the dream, and the meaning of it, you shall receive of me rewards, and gifts, and great honour: therefore tell me the dream, and the interpretation thereof.”—*Daniel 2:5-6*.

They again asked the king to tell them the forgotten dream, and they promised that the interpretation would be forthcoming.

“They answered again and said: Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will declare the interpretation of it.”—*Daniel 2:7*.

The king said if they would only tell him the dream, he would have confidence in their interpretation.

“The king answered, and said: I know for certain

that you seek to gain time, since you know that the thing is gone from me.

“If therefore you tell me not the dream, there is one sentence concerning you, that you have also framed a lying interpretation, and full of deceit, to speak before me till the time pass away. Tell me therefore the dream, that I may know that you also give a true interpretation thereof.”—*Daniel 2:8-9*.

Only “the gods, whose conversation is not with men,” can tell the dream, said the magicians.

“Then the Chaldeans answered before the king, and said: There is no man upon earth, that can accomplish thy word, O king, neither doth any king, though great and mighty, ask such a thing of any diviner, or wise man, or Chaldean.

“For the thing that thou askest, O king, is difficult; nor can any one be found that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose conversation is not with men.”—*Daniel 2:10-11*.

A death decree which included Daniel and his companions went forth.

“Upon hearing this, the king in fury, and in great wrath, commanded that all the wise men of Babylon should be put to death.

“And the decree being gone forth, the wise men were slain: and Daniel and his companions were sought for, to be put to death.”—*Daniel 2:13*.

Daniel learned for the first time what he faced.

“Then Daniel inquired concerning the law and the sentence, of Arioch the general of the king’s army, who was gone forth to kill the wise men of Babylon.

“And he asked him that had received the orders of the king, why so cruel a sentence was gone forth from the face of the king. And . . . Arioch had told the matter to Daniel.”—*Daniel 2:14-15*.

It took courage to appear before such an infuriated ruler. Daniel was a captive from Judea who believed in the true God, the One who alone could reveal the future.

“Daniel went in and desired of the king, that he would give him time to resolve the question and declare it to the king.”—*Daniel 2:16*.

Daniel and his three companions had a prayer meeting in which they implored God to reveal the dream and its interpretation.

“And he went into his house, and told the matter to Ananias, and Misael, and Azarias his companions:

“To the end that they should ask mercy at the face of the God of heaven concerning this secret, and that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.”—*Daniel 2:17-18*.

The answer to their united prayers came. God will do the same for us today if we seek Him for wisdom and an understanding of the prophecies of His Word.

“Then was the mystery revealed to Daniel by a vision in the night: and Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

“And speaking he said: Blessed be the name of the Lord from eternity and for evermore: for wisdom and fortitude are His.

“And He changeth times and ages: taketh away kingdoms and establisheth them, giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that have understanding.

“He revealeth deep and hidden things, and knoweth what is in darkness: and light is with Him.

“To thee, O God of our fathers, I give thanks, and I praise Thee: because Thou hast given me wisdom and strength: and now Thou hast shewn me what we desired of Thee, for Thou hast made known to us, the king’s discourse.”—*Daniel 2:19-23*.

Arioch took the credit for finding a man who would make known to the king his lost dream and its meaning.

“After this Daniel went in to Arioch, to whom the king had given orders to destroy the wise men of Babylon, and he spoke thus to him: Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king and I will tell the solution to the king.

“Then Arioch in haste brought in Daniel to the king and said to him: I have found a man of the children of the captivity of Juda, that will resolve the question to the king.”—*Daniel 2:24-25*.

“Art thou able?” The professed wise men had failed. Could Daniel reveal the dream?

“The king answered, and said to Daniel, whose name was Baltassar [Belteshazzar]: Thinkest thou indeed that thou canst tell me the dream that I saw, and the interpretation thereof?

“And Daniel made answer before the king, and said: The secret that the king desireth to know, none of the wise men, or the philosophers, or the diviners, or the sooth-sayers can declare to the king.”—*Daniel 2:26-27*.

Daniel even told the king what he was thinking before he had the dream. He was wondering what would happen to his kingdom and what the future held in store for him.

“Thou, O king, didst begin to think in thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and He that revealeth mysteries shewed thee what shall come to pass.”—*Daniel 2:29*.

Note Daniel’s humility.

“To me also this secret is revealed, not by any wisdom that I have more than all men alive: but that the interpretation might be made manifest to the king, and thou mightest know the thoughts of thy mind.”—*Daniel 2:30*.

The king must have listened with rapt attention as Daniel unfolded the dream to him. It was no wonder he was troubled regarding it. He was eager to know what it implied.

“Thou, O king, sawest, and behold there was as it were a great statue: this statue, which was great and high, tall of stature, stood before thee, and the look thereof was terrible.

“The head of this statue was of fine gold, but the breast and the arms of silver, and the belly and the thighs of brass:

“And the legs of iron, the feet part of iron and part

of clay.

“Thus thou sawest, till a stone was cut out of a mountain without hands: and it struck the statue upon the feet thereof that were of iron and of clay, and broke them in pieces.

“Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of a summer’s thrashingfloor, and they were carried away by the wind: and there was no place found for them: but the stone that struck the statue, became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.”—*Daniel 31-35*.

Daniel did not ask the king if this was what he had dreamed. That would have cast reflection upon the validity of what God had revealed to him. “This is the dream,” he said. Daniel spoke with total certainty.

“This is the dream: we will also tell the interpretation thereof before thee, O king.”—*Daniel 2:36*.

The king was an idolater. He worshiped images. The metallic image in his dream, therefore, made a profound impression. His kingdom represented the head of this image, which was *gold*. Imagine his reaction when he realized the image was not all gold, which would indicate that his kingdom would not last forever.

“Thou art a king of kings: and the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, and strength, and power, and glory:

“And all places wherein the children of men, and the beasts of the field do dwell: He hath also given the birds of the air into thy hand, and hath put all things under thy power: thou therefore art the head of gold.”—*Daniel 2:37-38*.

Later Nebuchadnezzar made an image all of gold, in defiance of the word of prophecy, and commanded every one, under penalty of death, to bow down and reverence the image he had made.

“King Nabuchodonosor [Nebuchadnezzar] made a

statue of gold, of sixty cubits high, and six cubits broad, and he set it up in the plain of Dura, of the province of Babylon.

“Then Nabuchodonosor the king sent to call together the nobles, the magistrates, and the judges, the captains, the rulers, and governors, to come to the dedication of the statue which king Nabuchodonosor had set up.

“Then the nobles, the magistrates, and the judges, the captains, and rulers, and the great men that were placed in authority, and all the princes of the provinces, were gathered together to come to the dedication of the statue, which king Nabuchodonosor had set up. And they stood before the statue which king Nabuchodonosor had set up.

“Then a herald cried with a strong voice: To you it is commanded, O nations, tribes, and languages:

“That in the hour that you shall hear the sound of the trumpet, and of the flute, and of the harp, of the sackbut, and of the psaltery, and of the symphony, and of all kind of music; ye fall down and adore the golden statue which king Nabuchodonosor hath set up.”—*Daniel 3:1-5*.

Three young men refused. They believed in God’s Ten Commandments. They would rather die than violate them; and bowing to this golden image would be breaking the first and second commandments.

Their love for their Lord surpassed their love for life in this world. This is true Christianity. We, too, should choose to die rather than bow to an image.

“And presently at that very time some Chaldeans came and accused the Jews.

“And said to the king Nabuchodonosor: O king, live for ever:

“Thou, O king, hast made a decree that every man that shall hear the sound of the trumpet, the flute, and the harp, of the sackbut, and the psaltery, of the symphony, and of all kind of music, shall prostrate himself, and adore the golden statue:

“And that if any man shall not fall down and adore,

he should be cast into a furnace of burning fire.

“Now there are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the works of the province of Babylon, Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago: these men, O king, have slighted thy decree: they worship not thy gods, nor do they adore the golden statue which thou hast set up.

“Then Nabuchodonosor in fury, and in wrath, commanded that Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago should be brought: who immediately were brought before the king.

“And Nabuchodonosor the king spoke to them, and said: Is it true, O Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago [Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego], that you do not worship my gods, nor adore the golden statue that I have set up?

“Now therefore if you be ready at what hour soever you shall hear the sound of the trumpet, flute, harp, sackbut, and psaltery, and symphony, and of all kind of music, prostrate yourselves, and adore the statue which I have made: but if you do not adore, you shall be cast the same hour into the furnace of burning fire: and who is the God that shall deliver you out of my hand?”—*Daniel 3:8-15*.

But the young men were faithful to the God of heaven. They knew that they dared not bow down to statues, even though not doing so might cost them their lives.

“Sidrach, Mesach, and Abdenago answered and said to king Nabuchodonosor: We have no occasion to answer thee concerning this matter.

“For behold our God, whom we worship, is able to save us from the furnace of burning fire, and to deliver us out of thy hands, O king.

“But if He will not, be it known to thee, O king, that we will not worship thy gods, nor adore the golden statue which thou hast set up.”—*Daniel 3:16-18*.

Nebuchadnezzar (605-539 B.C.) reigned over one of the greatest of kingdoms, which was represented by the golden head of this image. In 605 B.C. Babylon became a

universal power. Its capital, regarded as one of the wonders of the world, was laid out in a perfect square, 15 miles on each side. It had a wall 350 feet high and 86 feet thick. The city had 50 streets, each 150 feet in width, and 150 gates of solid brass. The river Euphrates flowed through the city. Never has there been a city like it. Isaias, the prophet, writing about Babylon, expresses it thus: "Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency."

Such was Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom of Babylon. In this city with its impregnable walls, Daniel witnessed for the true God. He was a captive, yet he maintained his integrity to his Lord. He lived to see the fulfillment of the king's dream in the overthrow of Babylon by the Medes and Persians. The golden kingdom perished, and another took its place.

"Thou art a king of kings: and the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, and strength, and power, and glory:

"And all places wherein the children of men, and the beasts of the field do dwell: He hath also given the birds of the air into thy hand, and hath put all things under thy power: thou therefore art the head of gold."—*Daniel 2:37-38.*

An "inferior" kingdom. As silver is inferior to gold, so the Medo-Persian Empire (539-331 B.C.) was inferior to Babylon.

"And after thee shall rise up another kingdom, inferior to thee, of silver: and another third kingdom of brass, which shall rule over all the world."—*Daniel 2:39.*

The Lord called Cyrus by name 113 years before he was born, and told how he was to take the impregnable city of Babylon.

"Thus saith the Lord to My anointed Cyrus, whose right hand I have taken hold of, to subdue nations before his face, and to turn the backs of kings, and to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut.

“For the sake of My servant Jacob, and Israel My elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have made a likeness of thee, and thou hast not known Me.”—*Isaias 45:1, 4.*

The gates of brass were not to be shut. Had they been, Cyrus could never have taken the city. God went before Cyrus, for the time had come when the wickedness of Babylon had reached its summit.

“I will go before thee, and will humble the great ones of the earth: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and will burst the bars of iron.

“And I will give thee hidden treasures, and the concealed riches of secret places: that thou mayest know that I am the Lord who call thee by thy name, the God of Israel.”—*Isaias 45:2-3.*

This chapter tells the story of why the God of heaven could no longer bear with this kingdom. (See *Jeremias 50:24, 25.*) During Belshazzar’s feast, marked by drunkenness and unholy revelry, Cyrus made his attack. The massive gates were not shut, for the sentries were insensible to the impending danger because of the gala season.

“Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his nobles: and every one drank according to his age.

“And being now drunk he commanded that they should bring the vessels of gold and silver which Nabuchodonosor his father had brought away out of the temple, that was in Jerusalem, that the king and his nobles, and his wives and his concubines, might drink in them.

“Then were the golden and silver vessels brought, which he had brought away out of the temple that was in Jerusalem: and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines, drank in them.

“They drank wine, and praised their gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, and of wood, and of stone.

“In the same hour there appeared fingers, as it were of the hand of a man, writing over against the candle-

stick upon the surface of the wall of the king's palace: and the king beheld the joints of the hand that wrote.

"Then was the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him: and the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees struck one against the other.

"And the king cried out aloud to bring in the wise men, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spoke, and said to the wise men of Babylon: Whosoever shall read this writing, and shall make known to me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with purple, and shall have a golden chain on his neck, and shall be the third man in my kingdom.

"Then came in all the king's wise men, but they could neither read the writing, nor declare the interpretation to the king.

"Wherewith king Baltasar was much troubled, and his countenance was changed: and his nobles also were troubled."—*Daniel 5:1-9*.

But the queen mother remembered Daniel, and she told the young king that there was a man of God, in the realm, who could read the ominous writing on the wall.

"Then the queen, on occasion of what had happened to the king, and his nobles, came into the banquet house: and she spoke and said: O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, neither let thy countenance be changed.

"There is a man in thy kingdom that hath the spirit of the holy gods in him: and in the days of thy father knowledge and wisdom were found in him: for king Nabuchodonosor thy father appointed him prince of the wise men, enchanters, Chaldeans, and soothsayers, thy father, I say, O king:

"Because a greater spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, and interpretation of dreams, and shewing of secrets, and resolving of difficult things, were found in him, that is, in Daniel: whom the king named Baltasar. Now therefore let Daniel be called for, and

he will tell the interpretation.

“Then Daniel was brought in before the king. And the king spoke, and said to him: Art thou Daniel of the children of the captivity of Juda, whom my father the king brought out of Judea?

“I have heard of thee, that thou hast the spirit of the gods, and excellent knowledge, and understanding, and wisdom are found in thee.

“And now the wise men the magicians have come in before me, to read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof: and they could not declare to me the meaning of this writing.

“But I have heard of thee, that thou canst interpret obscure things, and resolve difficult things: now if thou art able to read the writing, and to shew me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with purple, and shalt have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third prince in my kingdom.

“To which Daniel made answer, and said before the king: Thy rewards be to thyself, and the gifts of thy house give to another: but the writing I will read to thee, O king, and shew thee the interpretation thereof.”—*Daniel 5:10-17*.

Daniel, the faithful servant of God, was the only man in the kingdom who could read the writing on the wall.

“O king, the most high God gave to Nabuchodonosor thy father a kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and honour.

“And for the greatness that He gave to him, all people, tribes, and languages trembled, and were afraid of him: whom he would, he slew: and whom he would, he destroyed: and whom he would, he set up: and whom he would, he brought down.

“But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit hardened unto pride, he was put down from the throne of his kingdom, and his glory was taken away.

“And he was driven out from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses, and he did eat grass like an ox, and his

body was wet with the dew of heaven: till he knew that the most High ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He will set over it whomsoever it shall please Him.

“Thou also his son, O Baltasar, hast not humbled thy heart, whereas thou knewest all these things:

“But hast lifted thyself up against the Lord of heaven: and the vessels of His house have been brought before thee: and thou, and thy nobles, and thy wives, and thy concubines have drunk wine in them: and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and of gold, and of brass, of iron, and of wood, and of stone, that neither see, nor hear, nor feel: but the God who hath thy breath in His hand, and all thy ways, thou hast not glorified.”—*Daniel 5:18-23*.

Daniel read the handwriting which spelled the doom of that once-great empire.

“And this is the writing that is written: MANE, THECEL, PHARES.

“And this is the interpretation of the word. MANE: God hath numbered thy kingdom, and hath finished it.

“THECEL: thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting.

“PHARES: thy kingdom is divided, and is given to the Medes and Persians.

“Then by the king’s command Daniel was clothed with purple, and a chain of gold was put about his neck: and it was proclaimed of him that he had power as the third man in the kingdom.”—*Daniel 5:25-29*.

The young profligate king was slain, and the kingdom went into the hands of the Medes. The unrivaled Babylonian Empire, the master of western Asia, was shattered, never to be restored.

“The same night Baltasar the Chaldean king was slain. And Darius the Mede succeeded to the kingdom, being threescore and two years old.”—*Daniel 5:0-31*.

The Medo-Persian kingdom bore sway over the world from 539 to 331 B.C. It was inferior in wealth, luxury, and

magnificence, but not in power or extent. The silver breast and arms of the image extended from the Aegean Sea to the River Indus, the most extensive empire which had ever existed up to that time.

“And after thee shall rise up another kingdom, inferior to thee, of silver.”—*Daniel 2:39*.

A third kingdom of brass was to supplant the Persian kingdom, namely, Greece (331-168 B.C.). Alexander the Great, the formidable foe at the Battle of Arbela in 331 B.C., was victorious over the Persians. But prophecy further states that the Grecian Empire was not to stand forever.

“And another third kingdom of brass, which shall rule over all the world.”—*Daniel 2:39*.

What kingdom succeeded Grecia? The legs of iron denote the strength of the fourth and last world empire. Rome conquered Grecia in the Battle of Pydna, June 22, 168 B.C. The whole empire of Grecia fell to the Roman power. The Roman Empire (168 B.C.-A.D. 476) extended throughout Europe, with possessions in Asia and Africa. It conquered everything; and its laws, in many instances just, were felt throughout the world. But even this universal kingdom, according to prophecy, was not to stand forever. It was to be divided into ten parts

“And the fourth kingdom shall be as iron. As iron breaketh into pieces, and subdueth all things, so shall that break and destroy all these.”—*Daniel 2:40*.

In the next two verses is depicted the dividing of the Roman Empire—ten toes, ten divisions. This division was accomplished between A.D. 351 and 476. These ten independent kingdoms were Alemanni, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, Vandals, Suevi, Burgundians, Heruli, Anglo-Saxons, and Lombards. The connection between these nations and the nations of modern Europe can be easily discerned by such names as England (the Anglo-Saxons), Franks (the French), and Alemanni (which suggests the name of Ger-

many). The European nations today are “partly strong and partly broken,” just as the prophecy states.

“And whereas thou sawest the feet, and the toes, part of potter’s clay, and part of iron: the kingdom shall be divided, but yet it shall take its origin from the iron, according as thou sawest the iron mixed with the miry clay.

“And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.”—*Daniel 2:41-42*.

“They shall not cleave one to another.” Men have dreamed of uniting Europe, men such as Charlemagne, Charles V, Louis XIV, Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, and Hitler. But all have failed. Rome was to be the last universal kingdom until God’s kingdom is set up. Prophecy cannot be broken. Force, intrigue, and diplomacy thus far have failed to weld together the fragments of the old Roman Empire. “The Scripture cannot be broken” (St. John 10:35).

“They shall mingle themselves with the seed of men.” Through intermarriage of royal families, alliances, intrigues, and high-level conferences, governments have tried to consolidate their power for the purpose of uniting these divided nations. But all such human endeavors have failed, as the prophecy has declared. Iron and clay cannot mix.

“And whereas thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall be mingled indeed together with the seed of man, but they shall not stick fast one to another, as iron cannot be mixed with clay.”—*Daniel 2:43*.

“In the days of these kings” God is going to take over. No man or body of men can find a lasting solution to world problems. All attempts thus far have been futile. The United Nations has not yet solved the vexing situation confronting the world. In this text, we reach the glorious end of this stupendous prophecy, the end of human history and human rulership.

“But in the days of those kingdoms the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, and

His kingdom shall not be delivered up to another people, and it shall break in pieces and shall consume all these kingdoms, and itself shall stand for ever.”—*Daniel 2:44*.

Only one universal kingdom can be established—the kingdom of God.

“According as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and broke in pieces, the clay, and the iron, and the brass, and the silver, and the gold, the great God hath shewn the king what shall come to pass hereafter, and the dream is true, and the interpretation thereof is faithful.”—*Daniel 2:45*.

“The kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord.” We are still praying the Lord’s prayer—“Thy kingdom come.” This kingdom is soon to be set up.

“And the seventh angel sounded the trumpet: and there were great voices in heaven, saying: The kingdom of this world is become our Lord’s and His Christ’s, and He shall reign for ever and ever. Amen.”—*The Apocalypse 11:15*.

The stone that strikes the image on the feet is Christ. St. Peter declares that our blessed Lord is the stone. He is the “Rock of Ages” who paid the infinite price not only for man, but for the whole earth. He bought back this earth by shedding His blood on Calvary.

“If so be you have tasted that the Lord is sweet.

“Unto whom coming, as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen and made honourable by God.”—*1 St. Peter 2:3-4*.

This is the coming kingdom. This should be the all-absorbing thought of our lives. We want to participate in the glories and blessings of our Lord’s everlasting kingdom. And He wants us with Him.

“Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of a summer’s thrashingfloor, and they were carried away by the wind: and there was no place found for them: but the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”—*Daniel*

2:35.

CHAPTER SIX

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

How the God of heaven regards image worship is clearly revealed in Holy Scripture.

The fundamental principle of love is what we find in the Ten Commandments. We are to love God with *all* the heart, soul, strength, and mind.

“He answering said: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind: and thy neighbour as thyself.”—*St. Luke 10:27*.

God had the same standard down through the ages. His plan for mankind has never changed.

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength.”—*Deuteronomy 6:4-5*.

God alone is entitled to supreme reverence and worship. This commandment forbids man to give worship to another, saint or angel, his affections or his service. Whatsoever we adore that interferes with our love for God, of that we make a god.

“And the Lord spoke all these words: I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me.”—*Exodus 20:1-3*.

Images or similitudes are forbidden by this second commandment. The heathen claims that his images are only symbols by which his god is worshiped. Some may claim that we have the image only to remind us of God and the saints. But God says not to “make . . . any graven image.” Any attempt to represent our blessed Lord by material objects would lower man’s perception of Him.

“Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth.”—*Exodus 20:4*.

“Thou shalt not adore them”—images, carvings, or pictures. Since God gave this commandment, He expects His people to obey by putting aside all material objects of worship. For more than four hundred years a controversy was waged over images being placed in the church. This practice eventually led to their being accepted as objects of worship. But all the general council decrees can never change what God *spoke* and also *wrote* on tables of stone.

“I the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous.” The sacred relation of God to His people is here revealed. The displeasure of God against images being made and adored is fitly called jealousy.

“Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them: I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me.”—*Exodus 20:5*.

“Our God is in heaven.” He is neither on a cross nor in the arms of His mother.

“But our God is in heaven: He hath done all things whatsoever He would.”—*Psalms 113:3 [Psalm 115:3]*.

Idols are . . . “the works of the hands of men.”

The idols of the Gentiles are silver and gold, the works of the hands of men.”—*Psalms 113:4 [Psalm 115:4]*.

Looking at images turns the mind away from the infinite perfection of God and attracts it to the creature rather than to the Creator.

“They have mouths and speak not: they have eyes and see not. They have ears and hear not: they have noses and smell not. They have hands and feel not: they have feet and walk not: neither shall they cry out through their throat.”—*Psalms 113:5-7 [Psalm 115:5-7]*.

Truth can be exchanged for error, and the creature can be worshiped and served more than the Creator. Un-

fortunately, more prayers are frequently offered to beatified and canonized saints than to God Himself.

“Who changed the truth of God into a lie; and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.”—*Romans 1:25*.

A woe is pronounced upon those who worship graven images.

“What doth the graven thing avail because the maker thereof hath graven it, a molten, and a false image? because the forger thereof hath trusted in a thing of his own forging, to make dumb idols.

“Woe to him that saith to wood: Awake: to the dumb stone: Arise: can it teach? Behold, it is laid over with gold, and silver, and there is no spirit in the bowels thereof.”—*Habacuc 2:19*.

“By beholding we become changed.” Our character is formed by what we look at in our religious exercises. If we gaze upon that which is formed by human hands, the conception of the eternal God becomes obscure, and as a consequence the character becomes defective.

“Every man is become foolish by his knowledge: every founder is confounded by his idol, for what he hath cast is a lie, and there is no breath in them.

“They are vain works, and worthy to be laughed at, in the time of their visitation they shall perish.”—*Jeremias 51:17-18*.

The Lord did not allow His people to see any “similitude,” form, or resemblance of Himself when He was on Mount Sinai.

“Keep therefore your souls carefully. You saw not any similitude in the day that the Lord God spoke to you in Horeb from the midst of the fire.”—*Deuteronomy 4:15*.

Had they seen God’s “similitude,” they would have been inclined to corrupt themselves by forming an image like a male or female. His attitude is the same today toward images.

“Lest perhaps being deceived you might make you a graven similitude, or image of male or female.”—*Deuteronomy 4:16*.

God declares He is the Eternal. He is the One and only One.

“Thus saith the Lord the king of Israel, and His redeemer the Lord of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last, and besides Me there is no God.

“Fear ye not, neither be ye troubled from that time I have made thee to hear, and have declared: you are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me, a Maker, whom I have not known?”—*Isaias 44:6, 8*.

Images are “profitable for nothing,” God declares. Why should we have in our worship that which is of no benefit?

“Who hath formed a god, and made a graven thing that is profitable for nothing?”—*Isaias 44:10*.

We are told that the ones who form the images are only “men.” Should we fall down before something a man made?

“Behold, all the partakers thereof shall be confounded: for the makers are men: they shall all assemble together, they shall stand and fear, and shall be confounded together.”—*Isaias 44:11*.

The “tongs,” “coals,” and “hammers” are used in the formation of idols. Workmen use their strength and skill to fashion them. The artisan gets hungry and has to be revived by food and water. How futile to put faith in any object made by human hands!

“The smith hath wrought with his file, with coals, and with hammers he hath formed it, and hath wrought with the strength of his arm: he shall hunger and faint, he shall drink no water, and shall be weary.”—*Isaias 44:12*.

The skilled carpenter is employed to use his technique in fashioning the “figure of a man,” to be set up in the house for the devout to venerate.

“The carpenter hath stretched out his rule, he hath formed it with a plane: he hath made it with corners,

and hath fashioned it round with the compass: and he hath made the image of a man as it were a beautiful man dwelling in a house.”—*Isaias 44:13*.

What can more graphically portray the utter futility of idol making and idol worship than is recorded in these few texts! To give obeisance to that which is made by the hands of man is an insult to our blessed Lord.

“He hath cut down cedars, taken the holm, and the oak that stood among the trees of the forest: he hath planted the pine tree, which the rain hath nourished.

“And it hath served men for fuel: he took thereof, and warmed himself: and he kindled it, and baked bread: but of the rest he made a god, and adored it: he made a graven thing, and bowed down before it.

“Part of it he burnt with fire, and with part of it he dressed his meat: he boiled pottage, and was filled, and was warmed, and said: Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire.

“But the residue thereof he made a god, and a graven thing for himself: he boweth down before it, and adoreth it, and prayeth unto it, saying: Deliver me, for thou art my God.”—*Isaias 44:14-17*.

Thinking about image worship, someone has written:

“But how very foolish is the practice of idolatry: For life man prays to that which is dead. For health he prays to that which has no health or strength. For a good journey he prays to that which cannot move a foot. For skill and good success he prays to that which cannot do anything. For wisdom and guidance and blessing, he commits himself to a senseless piece of wood or stone.”

The Lord, through His Holy Word, will open our eyes and give us an understanding of the awful danger in disregarding the second commandment of the Decalogue.

“They have not known, nor understood: for their eyes are covered that they may not see, and that they may not understand with their heart.”—*Isaias 44:18*.

It is just as clear in another Church-authorized version:

“All who make idols are nothing, and things they delight in do not profit; their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame. Who fashions a god or casts an image, that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be put to shame, and the craftsmen are but men . . . They shall be put to shame together . . .

“He cuts down cedars . . . He makes a god and worships it. He makes it a graven image—and falls down before it! . . . The rest of it he makes into a god, his idol; and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, Deliver me, for thou art my god!”—*Isaias 44:9-11, 14-17, R.S.V.*

According to the above Scripture, idolaters cannot be saved unless they turn from their ways.

“And he that spoke with me, had a measure of a reed of gold, to measure the city and the gates thereof, and the wall.”—*The Apocalypse 21:15.*

May God help us to give, from the heart, the adoration which is due to God alone.

“Then Jesus saith to him: Begone, Satan: for it is written, The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.”—*St. Matthew 4:10.*

“Be gone, Satan: for it is written: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”—*Matthew 4:10, R.S.V.*

CHAPTER SIX

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A study of church history reveals that it was not until centuries after the last book of the Bible was written in the first century, A.D., that Christians began to bow down before images (statues and paintings), praying to and worshipping them. In fact, it was not until halfway through the

eight century A.D. that church leaders officially declared, for the first time, that such worship was not idolatry!

The second commandment as found in the Rheims-Douai Version reads thus:

“Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth.

“Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them: I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me: and showing mercy unto thousands to them that love Me, and keep My commandments.”—*Exodus 20:4-6*.

The early Fathers of the Christian church is the name given to the Christian writers of the first several centuries after the first century in which the New Testament was finished.

These early Fathers voiced a strong protest against images being brought into the church. Here are a few terse statements as historical evidence:

“It is an injury to God, to make an image of Him in base wood or stone.”—*Justin Martyr, Justin’s Apology, II, p. 44*.

“God ought to be worshiped without an image; images serving only to bring the Deity into contempt.”—*Augustine, Augustine de Civil. Dei, I. VII, C. 5*.

St. Augustine also said this:

“It would be impious in a Christian to set up a corporeal image of God in a church; and that he would be thereby guilty of the sacrilege condemned by St. Paul, of turning the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.”—*Augustine, Augustine de Fidi, et symb., C. VII*.

Here is another testimony of an important early church writer:

“We Christians have nothing to do with images, on

account of the second commandment; the first thing we teach those who come to us is, to despise idols and all images; it being the peculiar character of the Christian religion to raise our minds above images, agreeably to the law which God Himself has given to mankind.”—*Origen, Origen Against Celsus, I. V., 7.*

Others of the early Fathers, such as Tertullian and Clemens Alexandrinus (Clement of Alexandria), opposed images and their introduction into the church. These Fathers disapproved the arts of statuary and painting.

The principles of the second commandment have been practiced by the people of God down through the ages. That commandment was a safeguard against the heathen system of idol worship. Bowing before an image of wood, brass, marble, fired clay, or porcelain—the workmanship of human hands—was something those who kept the second commandment did not do. They knew it was idolatry.

According to the first commandment, we are not to worship anyone other than God; we cannot bow down and venerate a created being. According to the second commandment, no images are permitted. We cannot use an image as part of our worship of God.

The First Commandment—“Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me.”—*Exodus 20:3.*

The Second Commandment—“Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things that are in the waters under the earth.

“Thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them: I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me: And shewing mercy unto thousands to them that love Me, and keep My commandments.”—*Exodus 20:4-6.*

This commandment of God is clear and exact and needs no theologian to explain it away. Had all obeyed this commandment, there would never have been a heathen or the

various religions which are practiced in Africa, Asia, and in other parts of the world.

How did image worship get started in the Church? Several centuries after the time of Christ and the Apostles, the beginning of image worship into the Church first came with the veneration of the cross and of relics. Next came the belief that those who died as martyrs, or those who were regarded as saints, could make intercession if implored, because they were in heaven, close to the throne of God.

Pilgrimages by the devout were made to the tombs of deceased saints. Merits and supernatural favors were allegedly gained by those who visited, touched, and kissed the place where the deceased saint lay. But a memento was needed. A memorial was sought which would be more appealing than a skull, a bone, or the mantle of a departed saint. Painters and sculptors were employed. Paintings and sculpture of deceased Christians began to be made and displayed.

Pictures, when first introduced, were seemingly for the purpose of instructing those who had difficulty in learning. To meet the minds of the newly converted pagans, pictures were in demand. Heathen artists and craftsmen who prepared pictures and sculptures of pagan gods and the heathen dead found a demand for their services by half-converted Christians. Slowly, their work began to adorn the places of worship.

It was not until over 650 years after the time of Christ that image worship came into the Church. The pictures, images, and relics were not at first venerated, nor did they become part of worship *until about the beginning of the eighth century*, when stealthily and imperceptibly reverence and adoration were given to the images. The progression was slow, but the inevitable results were realized; for Christians began praying before the images of the saints, and the door was opened for image worship in the Church.

Here is the story of how image worship was officially

adopted by a Church council:

A brief entry in the National Catholic Almanac summarizes part of the changeover.

“A.D. 726: Eastern Emperor Leo III . . . issued an edict which declared that the veneration of images, pictures and relics was idolatrous, and ordered their removal from churches. This was the error of Iconoclasm, or image-breaking.

“A.D. 727: A synod at Rome declared that the veneration of images was in accordance with Catholic tradition. Pope Gregory III condemned Iconoclasm in 731.”—*National Catholic Almanac, 1961 ed., p. 134.*

The above statement speaks about an “error of iconoclasm.” “Iconoclasm” is the breaking of one’s idols, so they can no longer be venerated and worshiped. It is not an “error” to do this. At the command of God, His people in Bible times would smash their idols in order to purify the land of idolatry. God told them to break their idols. In later centuries this continued to be done by faithful Christians, when they converted from heathenism—until Gregory III declared that anyone who destroyed his idol would be excommunicated.

Here is the strange story behind how this happened:

Because church members were beginning to fall down before statues and worship them, the Eastern Emperor Leo III who was located at Constantinople issued an edict in A.D. 726 that the veneration of images, pictures, and relics was idolatry; and he ordered their removal from churches. He commanded that bishops and priests oversee the smashing of those idols.

Both Emperor Leo III, and his son Constantine V, were opposed to having images in the churches and homes since, when they were there, people were tempted to kneel and pray to them. So Constantine V decided to call a Christian council, to prohibit images throughout the Catholic Church.

That council was held in A.D. 754 at Hiera, near Constantinople. (It is variously referred to as the Council

of Hiera or the Council of Constantinople.) There were 338 bishops present at this large Church council, which lasted a long time—over six months from February 10 to August 17. It was a major Church council.

The assembly was unanimously opposed to the worship of images, and the council issued the following decree:

“The holy and Ecumenical council . . . adhering to the Word of God, the definitions of the six preceding councils, to the doctrine of the approved Fathers, and practice of the church in the earliest times, pronounce and declare, in the name of the Trinity, and with one heart and mind, that no images are to be worshiped; that to worship them or any other creature is robbing God of the honor that is due to Him alone, and relapsing into idolatry.”—*Decree of the Council of Hiera (Constantinople)*.

The council went so far as to prohibit the setting up of images in churches or in private places of worship. This council was, at the time, reckoned as the Seventh General Council. But, in later centuries, the Catholic Church stopped listing it as a Church council, because it had decreed against image worship. On official Church records, that council never occurred!

Thirty-three years later, the decision of that council was reversed by another Church council—the Second Nicaean Council, which today is listed as the “seventh council,” when it is actually the eighth.

Here is how this happened:

Queen Irene was the widow of the deceased Emperor Leo IV. During his reign, Leo IV had also been opposed to images; and, in accordance with the second of the Ten Commandments, he had zealously tried to eradicate idolatry from the Christian church.

But, after his death, Irene became the ruler, and she liked idols. She believed and practiced image worship, and wanted the entire Church to do likewise. Amazingly, it was because of the continued urging of that one woman, that the Catholic Church today has images in the church for

people to pray to.

So, in A.D. 787, because she held the regency, Queen Irene called another general Church council. To make sure she got her way, she wrote a letter to Pope Adrian I, requesting his presence (or that of one of his papal legates) at the forthcoming council. In the letter, she told him of her intention—and demanded that the pope help her bring image worship back into the Church!

This council was to be held at Nice, France, the second one to be held there. For this reason, it was called the Second Council of Nice—or the Second Nicaean Council. Since she was empress, Pope Adrian I decided he would do as the woman demanded. In addition, some of his counselors recommended it, since the churches could erect larger and more beautiful images than the people could afford at home—and this would bring people, with their offerings, to the churches more frequently.

When the Second Council of Nicaea convened in A.D. 754, 350 bishops were present, they thought it best to do what Queen Irene wanted. So they reversed the earlier decision, and voted full approval of images.

Here are two Church statements about the second Nicaean Council:

“Nicaea II, 787: Adrian I condemned Iconoclasm, which held that the use of images was idolatry.”—*National Catholic Almanac, 1961 ed., p. 142.*

“The Second Council of Nicaea (Seventh Ecumenical Council) was held in 787 and defined the Catholic Teaching regarding the veneration of images.”—*Catholic Encyclopedia, p. 423.*

The decree was signed and issued on October 13, A.D. 787, by 308 of the 350 bishops present.

Here was the official decree issued by this council. It required not only the erection of statues, but the making of exquisitely designed clothes to place on them:

“That holy images of the cross should be consecrated, and put on the sacred vessels and vestments,

and upon walls and boards, in private houses and in public ways. And especially that there should be erected images of the Lord God, our Saviour Jesus Christ, of our blessed Lady, the mother of God, of the venerable angels, and of all the saints.

“And that whosoever should presume to think or teach otherwise, or throw away any painted books, or the figure of the cross, or any image or picture, or any genuine relics of the martyrs, they should, if bishops or clergymen, be deposed, or if monks or laymen, be excommunicated.”—*Decree of Second Council of Nicaea.*

Images were to be placed everywhere, but the largest and most expensive ones were reserved for inside the churches. Anathemas were pronounced against all those who refused to bow to the images. In this way, the second of the Ten Commandments, given by God to mankind, was fully set aside. Frankly, the Second Nicaean Council prohibited obedience to the Second Commandment!

The council openly declared that the veneration of the statues was “worship,” which is what “veneration” is.

“In it the council teaches that the figure of the cross, and ‘holy images, whether made in colours, or of stone, of any other material,’ are to be retained . . . It is right to salute, honour, and venerate them, to burn lights and incense before them . . . The council uses the word ‘worship’ of the veneration due to images . . . This decision was approved by Pope Adrian.”—*William E. Addis and Thomas Arnold, A Catholic Dictionary, p. 423.*

Queen Irene, representing the state, and Pope Adrian I, representing the Church, united their regentship for the purpose of establishing image worship by decree through this Nicaea Council. The commandment of God was cast aside for the traditions of men. Today, statues, relics, medals, pictures, and amulets are venerated and appealed to for guidance and for protection against evil. Their devotees do not realize they are robbing God of His rightful place as the only one worthy of worship.

In later centuries, the Council of Trent gave its approval to images in the churches and their worship.

“The images of Christ and the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints, are to be had and to be kept, especially in churches, and due honor and veneration are to be given them.”—*Council of Trent, Session 25*.

Why is only God to be worshiped? Because He is the Creator of heaven and earth. It is sin, a terrible sin, to worship the creature instead of the Creator.

“In the beginning God created heaven, and earth.”—*Genesis 1:1*.

“For in Him [Christ] were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominations, or principalities, or powers. All things were created by Him and in Him.”—*Colossians 1:16*.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works, which God hath prepared that we should walk in them.”—*Ephesians 2:10*.

“Thus then shall you say to them: The gods that have not made heaven and earth, let them perish from the earth.”—*Jeremias 10:11*.

In later centuries, the Church declared that there were three kinds of worship which could be offered to God and to the images: *Latria* to God, *Dulia* to saints and angels, and *Hyperdulia* to the virgin Mary. But, to most of the laity, it is all the same thing: worship.

An interesting question arose at the Frankfort Council regarding these three forms of worship. God, the virgin Mary, and the saints are all interwoven in prayers. How could the worshiper change his form from *Latria* to *Hyperdulia* and then to *Dulia*? The Frankfort Council questioned this and found it to be irreconcilable. The whole thing was so complicated, they could not figure it out.

But to the laity, it really is no problem: It is all worship.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FOUNDED ON A ROCK

Only a divine Being could walk on the angry waves which endangered the lives of the Twelve. Who but the Master of sea and land could still the violent tempest? Christ had given repeated evidence of His Godship, and it was on the disciples' belief in Him as God that their own salvation depended, as well as the salvation of those whom they were to teach.

“But the boat in the midst of the sea was tossed with the waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, He came to them walking upon the sea. And they seeing Him walking upon the sea, were troubled, saying: It is an apparition. And they cried out for fear. And immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying: Be of good heart: it is I, fear ye not.”—*St. Matthew 14:24-27.*

Peter's faith in Christ as a divine Being was tested.

“And Peter making answer, said: Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters. And He said: Come, And Peter going down out of the boat, walked upon the water to come to Jesus. But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid: and when he began to sink, he cried out, saying: Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretching forth His hand took hold of him, and said to him: O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?”—*St. Matthew 14:28-31.*

“When they [Christ and Peter] were come up into the boat,” the other disciples said, “Indeed Thou art the Son of God.” Peter did not unite with the disciples in acknowledging Christ as the Son of God, as the record bears out. Later, however, at Caesarea Philippi, when the question was asked by our Lord, “Whom say ye that I am?” Peter acknowledged Him before the other disciples.

“And when they were come up into the boat, the wind ceased. And they that were in the boat came and

adored Him, saying: Indeed Thou art the Son of God.”—
St. Matthew 14:33.

After the disciples’ missionary tour, Jesus inquired how the people regarded Him. From the answer, it was evident that none at that time recognized Him as the Messiah. John the Baptist, Elias, and Jeremias were sinners and needed a Saviour even though they were considered good men. Christ was more than an ordinary man: He was God. He was anxious that all should see Him to be the Redeemer of the world, the One sent of God.

“And Jesus came into the quarters of Cesarea Phillippi: and He asked His disciples, saying: Whom do men say that the Son of man is?

“But they said: Some John the Baptist, and other some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.”—*St. Matthew 16:13-14.*

Now Christ asks all the disciples, “Whom say ye that I am?” Had the people influenced them in any way? Was their faith in Christ as a divine Being weakened by the report which they brought back?

“Jesus saith to them: But whom do you say that I am?”—
St. Matthew 16:15.

Peter was the spokesman on this occasion. The disciples’ opinion had not changed. Prior to Peter’s acknowledgment of the divinity of Christ, the other disciples had openly expressed their belief in Him as the Son of God. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This confession expressed the faith of the Twelve. Beneath the form of humanity, they saw the glory of the Son of God. *The truth which Peter had confessed* is the foundation of every believer’s faith.

“Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.”—*St. Matthew 16:16.*

Possessing such knowledge was no ground for self-glorification. Humanity, of itself, cannot attain to a knowledge of God. It was only through the Spirit of God that Peter and the other disciples could get the revelation of

God and the plan of salvation. Blessed indeed are those to whom the Holy Spirit, through the Word, reveals the truth regarding Christ as the divine One.

“And Jesus answering, said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in heaven.”—*St. Matthew 16:17.*

Here is the text the Church uses as the basis for its claim that Christ instituted the office of pope, giving Peter credentials to the papal chair and making him the foundation of the Church. Let us examine this statement: “Thou art Peter [*petros* in the Greek, meaning “a stone”], and upon this rock [*petra* in the Greek, meaning “a rock”] I will build My church.”

“And I say to thee: That thou art Peter [*petros*]; and upon this rock [*petra*] I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”—*St. Matthew 16:18.*

Petra, the immovable rock, is Christ and not Peter. Two different Greek words are *petros*, a stone—a rolling stone; and *petra*, a rock—the Rock of Ages which stands unmoved. Moreover, the Greek word, *petros*, is a masculine noun, whereas; *petra* is a neuter substantive. In the Greek, they cannot be interchanged!

Jesus told Peter, “You are as your name, a movable, little stone, but the truth which you stated is, in contrast, a mighty boulder which cannot be moved. Upon it My followers will find a solid foundation, which Satan cannot destroy!”

Was Peter the rock upon which the Church was founded? The gates of hell did prevail against him when he denied his Lord by cursing. (See *St. Matthew 26:69-74.*) Peter’s confession of faith, that Christ was the Son of the living God, was the foundation upon which the Church was built; and the gates of hell would never prevail against that foundation. There is security in the Church which has for her foundation the One who stood unmoved amid the storms of the enemy.

“And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”—*St. Matthew 16:18.*

Did Peter think that he, Peter, was the rock upon which the Christian church was founded? On the contrary, the following texts clearly show that he knew Christ was the “chief cornerstone,” the “head of the corner,” the “precious” One. Peter did not say, “He that believeth on me shall not be confounded,” but “he that believeth on Him.”

Peter declared that Christ was the Rock!

“If so be you have tasted that the Lord is sweet. Unto whom coming, as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen and made honourable by God: Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

“Wherefore it is said in the Scripture: Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious. And He that shall believe in Him, shall not be confounded.”—*1 St. Peter 2:3-6.*

Peter applies the prophecy of Isaias 28:16 to Christ.

“Wherefore it is said in the Scripture: Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious. And he that shall believe in Him, shall not be confounded.”—*1 St. Peter 2:6.*

Some will believe in Him as the foundation while others reject Him.

“To you therefore that believe, He is honour: but to them that believe not, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head of the corner.”—*1 St. Peter 2:7.*

To those who stumble at the Word—the Bible—Christ becomes a Rock of offense. A substitute stone—some human being—will be accepted by those who do not believe what the Bible teaches: *that Christ is the Rock upon which the true church is founded.*

“And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of scandal, to them who stumble at the Word, neither do believe, whereunto also they are set.”—*1 St. Peter 2:8*.

Paul admonishes us to take heed upon what foundation we build, Christ or mere men.

“But let every man take heed how he buildeth . . . For other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid; which is Christ Jesus.”—*1 Corinthians 3:10*.

If Peter was the foundation—the rock upon which the Christian church was to be built—then Paul knew nothing about it. *He declares Christ is the foundation.*

Paul states that Christ is the Rock; this was also known back in the days of Moses.

“And all drank the same spiritual drink; and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.”—*1 Corinthians 10:4*.

Why should Christ, being the Rock and Foundation of His church down through the ages, abdicate in favor of Peter or any other mortal? A position as important as the foundation, chief cornerstone, and head of His spiritual structure (the church) would never be transferred to any human being.

The church is not built upon any one apostle or prophet, but upon all of them—that is, their work and their doctrine, which is contained in the New and Old Testaments. Christ is the Chief Cornerstone.

“Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God. Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.”—*Ephesians 2:19-20*.

Paul was called to be an apostle to the Gentile world, and Peter to the Jews. If Peter were pope, he would be head over all, both Jew and Gentile.

“But contrariwise, when they had seen that to me was committed the gospel of the uncircumcision, as to Peter was that of the circumcision.

“For he who wrought in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, wrought in me also among the Gentiles.”—*Galatians 2:7-8*.

Paul puts James first as one of the pillars. All three—James, Cephas (who was Peter), and John—were of equal standing.

“And when they had known the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship: that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision.”—*Galatians 2:9*.

Paul reproved Peter before the church. If Peter occupied the pontifical office, Paul did not regard it. Should a subordinate rebuke the pontiff of Rome?

“But when Cephas was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

“For before that some came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them who were of the circumcision.”—*Galatians 2:11-12*.

After the church at Antioch had the experience with Peter which is recorded in Galatians 2, would they have accepted Paul’s teaching if he had declared that Peter was the foundation and the head of their church? Some embarrassing questions could have been asked relative to the stability of that foundation.

Paul addressed a long letter to the Christians at Rome (the Book of Romans). He mentioned many names, but he did not mention a Roman pontiff. The emperor’s name is recorded but not a pope’s, who was supposed to have reigned in the Roman capital. If Christ had established a pontifical office with Peter occupying it, Paul knew nothing of it.

Then there are the two letters written by Peter (First and Second Peter); but neither mentions his viceregal authority, or his supremacy, over his brethren.

In the following passage, Peter declares himself to be

an elder among the elders. He assumed none of the prerogatives of his so-called successors, such as commanding the apostles, issuing bulls, enacting laws, judging and ruling on controversies, summoning councils, transferring kingdoms, wielding the spiritual swords, and dethroning disloyal kings and princes.

“The ancients therefore that are among you, I beseech, who am myself also an ancient, and witness of the sufferings of Christ: as also a partaker of that glory which is to be revealed in time to come:

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it, not by constraint, but willingly, according to God: not for filthy lucre’s sake, but voluntarily:

“Neither as lording it over the clergy, but being made a pattern of the flock from the heart.

“And when the prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never fading crown of glory.

“In like manner, ye young men, be subject to the ancients. And do you all insinuate humility one to another, for God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace.”—*1 Peter 5:1-5*.

The elders were not to function as “lords,” nor to rule by force over the churches. Peter’s language is against papal authority.

“Neither as lording it over the clergy, but being made a pattern of the flock from the heart.”—*1 Peter 5:3*.

The humble fisherman refused the homage of Cornelius. “I myself also am a man,” not a being to be venerated, he said.

“And it came to pass, that when Peter was come in, Cornelius came to meet him, and falling at his feet adored.

“But Peter lifted him up, saying: Arise, I myself also am a man.”—*Acts 10:25-26*.

The subject of authority was an ever-prevailing question with the disciples while Christ was among them in per-

son.

“And there was also a strife amongst them, which of them should seem to be the greater.”—*St. Luke 22:24*.

Here Christ shows that the non-Christian attitude to “exercise authority” is a *Gentile trait*, not a saintly quality.

“And He said to them: The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and they that have power over them, are called beneficent.”—*St. Luke 22:25*.

“But you not so.” By these forceful words, Christ debarred provision for any one man to rule over His church.

“But you not so: but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is the leader, as he that serveth.”—*St. Luke 22:26*.

“I am in the midst of you as he that serveth.” Christ was a servant. He wore no pontifical robes, nor was a jewel-studded crown ever placed upon His brow.

“For which is greater, he that sitteth at table, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at table? But I am in the midst of you, as he that serveth.”—*St. Luke 22:27*.

What kind of foundation would Peter have been? If Christ had built His Church upon Peter, what would have happened to the church when Peter fell on various occasions? What happens when the foundation of a structure, government, or society is based on erring man?

If every pope is the successor of Peter and is supposed to be the head of the Church,—what happened when the antipopes ruled? Here is a list, given by the Church, of some of these antipopes:

Paschal 111—1164
 Callixtus 111—1168
 Nicholas V—1328
 Clement VII—1378
 Benedict XIII—1394
 Felix V—1439
 Clement VIII—1592

During the time of these antipopes two heads were ruling the Church. What happened to the body (church) during these episodes? Then, too, when a pope dies, there is an interim between his death and the election of a new head; what happens in this interval? A church having a human being as its foundation and head was never the plan of our Lord. He never intended that any one of His followers should accept, with blind credulity, teachings not based upon Holy Scriptures.

According to the one-volume *Catholic Encyclopedia* (p. 42), there have been 37 antipopes.

The New Testament is silent upon pontifical supremacy. The Holy Scriptures make no mention of a human vicar-general, but they do reveal the Holy Spirit as Christ's representative in His church.

"If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete [Comforter, Helper] that He may abide with you for ever."—*St. John 14:15-16*.

According to Scripture, it is not the pontiff and the councils which is to teach us; it is God's Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we study it.

"But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, He shall give testimony of Me."—*St. John 15:26*.

Thank God for the heavenly Vicar who alone guides into all truth! Christ has a true church, and He is its head and foundation; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

"Upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—*St. Matthew 16:18*.

Thank God that the Virgin was promised that her Son would, by His grace, enable us to put away our sins and keep the Ten Commandments!

"And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. For He shall save His people from

their sins.”—*St. Matthew 1:21.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

If Peter was not the first pope, who was the first pope? It was Leo I. This is because it was not until A.D. 451—about 380 years after the death of Peter—that the Council of Chalcedon first declared the bishop of Rome to be a “pope.” But the title was given to honor him as the leading bishop. —It did not include giving him authority over all the other churches. Bishop Leo happened to be the Roman bishop at the time. However, the Eastern church never accepted this innovation, that the bishop of Rome was in the slightest degree more to be honored than any other bishop. (On current papal lists, Leo I’s bishopric was from A.D. 440 to 461.)

More centuries passed; and then, in A.D. 604, for the first time in history, the emperor Phocas, decreed that Gregory I was pope—with authority over all the churches. Phocas, the ruler who issued this decree was a corrupt man. He wanted to spite the bishop of Constantinople, who had justly excommunicated him for having caused the assassination of his (Phocas’) predecessor, Emperor Mauritius. So Phocas decreed that the bishop of Rome was pope over all the churches, and therefore superior in authority to the bishop of Constantinople.

But Gregory I refused the title. However, his successor, Boniface III (A.D. 607) liked the idea. So, for the first time—in A.D. 607, 576 years after the resurrection of Christ—there was a bishop in Rome who had accepted a heathen emperor’s commission, making him pope over Christendom. Thanks to Phocas, from that time to the

present, the bishop of Rome has been in charge of all churches which submit to his rule.

John Paul II (October 16, 1978, to the present) is listed as the 262nd pope. Boniface III (February 19-November 12, 607) is listed as the 66th. Yet he is actually the first real pope with full authority. He was given that authority, not by the Bible, but by a heathen prince.

What happened to Peter after the death of Christ? Peter carried on missionary work, primarily in Jerusalem and Judea. It is thought he may have been taken to Rome as a prisoner, jailed, and beheaded. Yet there is no certainty that he ever went to Rome. We do not have one Biblical, secular, or historical record that Peter ever went to the city of Rome.

In reality, it was not until centuries after the last book of the Bible was completed, that the Church of Rome began teaching that Peter traveled to the city of Rome and there reigned as the first pope.

Peter felt that it was his lifework to evangelize the Jews; and, prior to his death, there were not a lot in Rome. But, according to the historian Josephus, there were lots of Jews in the region of Babylon; so it would be understandable that Peter would go there to evangelize them. The ancient city of Babylon was never rebuilt, but a new one had been established several miles away.

“Some Jews gave Hyrcanus, the high priest, a habitation at Babylon, where there were Jews in great numbers.”—*Josephus, Antiquities, Book XV, Ch. II, 2.*

The claim has been made that Peter’s mention of a visit to Babylon referred to the city of Rome (1 St. Peter 5:13). But his letter was not a prophetic book, and there is no reason to suppose that he was using the word as a metaphor.

According to Catholic tradition, which was formulated many centuries later, Peter reigned as the first pope in the city of Rome for 25 years, from A.D. 42 to 67. Yet, when Paul wrote a letter to the Hebrews at Rome (about A.D.

58), he mentioned 27 of its most prominent Christians—and said nothing about Peter being there.

Du Pin, a Roman Catholic historian, acknowledges that “the primacy of Peter is not recorded by the early Christian writers, Justin Martyr (A.D. 139), Irenaeus (178), Clement of Alexandria (190), or others of the most ancient Fathers.”

The word, “Rome,” occurs only nine times in the Bible; and never is Peter mentioned in connection with it. There is no allusion to Rome in either of his epistles. Paul’s journey to that city is recorded in detail (Acts 27-28), but no mention is made of Peter ever being there. If Peter was superior to Paul, why did he receive so little mention in the New Testament after Paul came on the scene of action?

It is official Catholic dogma that the pope holds spiritual authority over every human being, by virtue only of the fact that he is a direct successor of Peter, who was the first pope of Rome.

“This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in union with that Successor.”—*Vatican II, LG8.*

The Catholic Church teaches that our Lord built His church upon Peter and that all who do not accept Peter as the foundation are outside the pale of the true church.

“Jesus, our Lord, founded but one Church, which He was pleased to build on Peter. Therefore, any church that does not recognize Peter as its foundation stone is not the Church of Christ, and therefore cannot stand.”—*James Cardinal Gibbons, Faith of Our Fathers, p. 100.*

The following statement teaches that Peter, and not Christ, is the “central authority” who unifies and protects:

“So the church, the society of the faithful, is founded by Christ upon the rock of a central authority which will hold it together and be the citadel of union and protection. This central authority is established concretely in the person of Simon Peter.”—*Charles Alfred Martin, Catholic Religion, p. 61.*

Each pope who is voted into office is believed to be the successor of St. Peter and the vicar of Christ on earth. This makes a pope, while in office, the "Rock," according to the Catholic belief:

"As the Church of Christ was to last beyond the lifetime of St. Peter, even to the end of the world, and as the Church is not a lifeless, material building, but a living body of men requiring a living head to rule them and to be a foundation to that great society, this promise of Christ, of making Peter a Rock, was meant not only for Peter, but also for his successors.

"Therefore the successors of St. Peter, as the supreme visible rulers of the Church are each like St. Peter, the Rock or the visible foundation of it."—*Joseph Faa di Bruno, Catholic Belief, pp. 64-65.*

Those who reject such claims are not true followers of Christ, according to Cardinal Gibbons, who wrote:

"The Catholic Church teaches also, that our Lord conferred on St. Peter the first place of honor and jurisdiction in the government of His whole Church, and that the same spiritual supremacy has always resided in the Popes, or Bishops of Rome, as being the successors of St. Peter. Consequently, to be true followers of Christ all Christians, both among the clergy and the laity, must be in communion with the See of Rome, where Peter rules in the person of his successor."—*James Cardinal Gibbons, Faith of Our Fathers, p. 95.*

The Catholic Church is established on the doctrine of the primacy of Peter. The unbroken line of succession of popes, the Church holds, is essential to the validity of its being the true and only Church.

If our Lord had made such a significant transfer of divinity by making Peter the foundation and head of His church, would not the New Testament Scriptures declare it? If the office of pope and the papal chair really had been started by God, the Bible would abound with information on such an important innovation. However, the Holy Scriptures are totally silent on this dogma. We must go to the

Holy Word of God, which is the highest authority on earth, to determine if Christ did institute the office of pope.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

The doctrine of the Petrine primacy is alleged to be based on this text.

“And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.”—*St. Matthew 16:19*.

The “keys,” so the Church asserts, were given alone to Peter. Were these instruments given exclusively to the authority of one man? Would the Omnipotent God deliver into the hands of such a capricious character as Peter the right to admit or reject, to decree what is lawful or unlawful?

Here is a parallel text to *St. Matthew 16:19*. In this whole chapter, Jesus is speaking to all His disciples.

“Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.”—*St. Matthew 18:18*.

In this text Jesus is speaking to all the disciples, as He was without a doubt doing in verse 19 also. On the other occasion when He repeated the same statement (*St. Matthew 18:18*), it is clear that He was addressing the group. Keys are for the purpose of opening and shutting. Keys alone without the skilled hand cannot function. Christ gave the keys of the kingdom to all the disciples for a purpose.

“Then He commanded His disciples, that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.”—*St. Matthew 16:20*.

The Bible speaks of the “two witnesses,” the Old and New Testaments, which were kept in obscurity during the Dark Ages. The people were forbidden to read the Holy Scriptures.

“And I will give unto My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks, that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire shall come out of their mouths, and shall devour their enemies. And if any man will hurt them, in this manner must he be slain.”—*The Apocalypse 11:3-6*.

“These,” the Old Testament and New Testaments, have power to “shut heaven.” The Holy Bible, when studied and obeyed, will open heaven. If disregarded or misinterpreted, it will shut heaven. *These were the keys entrusted to all the disciples, including Peter.*

Christ speaks of the key as “the key of knowledge” of how to enter heaven.

“Woe to you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge: you yourselves have not entered in, and those that were entering in, you have hindered.”—*St. Luke 11:52*.

The Holy Scriptures instruct in salvation.

“And because from thy infancy thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which can instruct thee to salvation, by the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”—*2 Timothy 3:15*.

From the Scriptures, we get pure doctrine and instruction in righteousness.

“All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice.”—*2 Timothy 3:16*.

If we want to be children of God, we must not only study but adhere to the instruction laid down in the Holy Bible. Perfection and good works will follow when the Scriptures are obeyed. It is thus that the “keys of the king-

dom” will open heaven. We will no longer be “bound” to the things of earth. Sin will lose its charm. We will be heaven-bound.

“That the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work.”—*2 Timothy 3:17*.

St. Augustine had a deep regard for Holy Scripture. Note what he said:

“As soon as respect for the Holy Scriptures fails, faith totters. In that which stands plainly in Holy Scripture is to be found the whole of faith and morals. I have learnt to bring such reverence to the books of Holy Scripture alone that I firmly believe that their authors were preserved from every error in writing them. Others, however conspicuous they may be for sanctity and learning, I read so that I do not take anything for granted merely because they suppose it true, but because they convince me by means of those canonical writers or on reasonable grounds.”—*St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, De Doctrina Christiana, p. 37 (On Christian Doctrine)*.

Every professing Christian should have this same deep regard for the Holy Bible. St. Augustine believed in the true keys. He refused to follow writers, even those considered saintly, if their writings were not based on the Holy Scriptures.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter taught from the Book of Joel and many were converted as they heard the Word of God preached to them (Joel 2:28-32).

“But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spoke to them: Ye men of Judea, and all you that dwell in Jerusalem, be this known to you, and with your ears receive my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day: But this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel.”—*Acts 2:14-16*.

Peter proved that Christ was the true Messiah from the prophecy which David wrote 1,000 years before.

“For David saith concerning Him: I foresaw the Lord

before my face: because He is at my right hand, that I may not be moved. For this my heart hath been glad, and my tongue hath rejoiced: moreover my flesh also shall rest in hope. Because thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, nor suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption.”—*Acts 2:25-27.*

Peter was a Bible student. He understood these prophecies, which were written many years earlier, revealing the first advent of Christ.

“To Him all the prophets give testimony, that by His name all receive remission of sins, who believe in Him.”—*Acts 10:43.*

The Holy Ghost fell upon them that “heard the Word.” Peter made good use of the keys. The Bible opened the hearts of the Gentiles and converted them to Christ.

“While Peter was yet speaking these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the Word.”—*Acts 10:44.*

It was in the home of Cornelius that Peter refused to accept homage. Had Peter accepted the adoration, Cornelius and his kinsmen would have been drawn to Peter rather than to God. *Peter’s refusal to accept obeisance, and his teaching of the Holy Scriptures, opened the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles.* The proper use of the keys had been made.

“And it came to pass, that when Peter was come in, Cornelius came to meet him, and falling at his feet adored.

“But Peter lifted him up, saying: Arise, I myself also am a man.”—*Acts 10:25-26.*

The rebirth, or conversion, comes through the “in-corruptible seed” of the Word of God—the Bible. Peter knew the power of that Holy Book. When the Bible is taught and accepted, it releases from sin and opens the way to heaven; it reveals Christ to the sinner.

“Being born again not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God who liveth and remaineth for ever.”—*1 St. Peter 1:23.*

Peter preached the gospel based upon the Word. Thus

the keys were used effectively, and the results bore witness to their power.

Peter said it was the Word of God which would endure.

“But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel hath been preached unto you.”—*1 St. Peter 1:25*.

The keys, the Word of God, opened the doors to mission fields for Paul to enter.

“For a great door and evident is opened unto me: and many adversaries.”—*1 Corinthians 16:9*.

Paul’s teaching was based upon what the prophets and Moses wrote.

“But being aided by the help of God, I stand unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other thing than those which the prophets, and Moses did say should come to pass.”—*Acts 26:22*.

St. Paul was accused of heresy because he had left the popular synagogue, or church, of that day. He defended his position by stating that he worshiped according to what the Holy Scriptures taught. The keys had loosed him from error and had opened the way to heaven. This will be the experience of all who, like Paul, will be guided by the Bible.

“But this I confess to thee, that according to the way, which they call a heresy, so do I serve the Father and my God, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets.”—*Acts 24:14*.

“The charge given Timothy, by Paul, was to “preach the Word.” He was given the keys, the use of which would open hearts to prepare for the judgment and the coming of the Lord.

“I charge thee, before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by His coming, and His kingdom: Preach the Word: be instant in season, out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine.”—*2 Timothy 4:1-2*.

In time false teachers would not teach doctrine according to the Word, the Bible. They would turn away from hearing the truth.

“For there shall be a time, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears:

“And will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables.”—2 *Timothy* 4:3-4.

What is the truth that Paul said people would not listen to?

“Sanctify them in truth. Thy Word is truth.”—*St. John* 17:17.

The wrong application of Scripture, Peter states, will mislead; and, consequently, error instead of truth will be cherished. The result will be destruction; thus the kingdom of heaven will be shut. The keys were given the wrong turn.

“And account the longsuffering of our Lord, salvation; as also our most dear brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, hath written to you: As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”—2 *St. Peter* 3:15-16.

The Pharisees had the keys, but their misinterpretation and misapplication shut heaven against them and those whom they taught.

“But woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men, for you yourselves do not enter in; and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter.”—*St. Matthew* 23:13.

This is a fearful indictment, pronounced by our Lord, upon those who are working for converts for their church or synagogue, none of whom will be in the kingdom.

“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you go round about the sea and the land to make

one proselyte; and when he is made, you make him the child of hell twofold more than yourselves.”—*St. Matthew 23:15*.

God does not accept the worship of those who teach the doctrines or traditions instituted by man.

“And in vain do they worship Me, teaching doctrines and commandments of men.”—*St. Matthew 15:9*.

These lawyers had the keys but “hindered” the people from listening to truth. Such religious leaders would probably say, We are the first and only church. We have Father Abraham as the foundation of our church (St. Matthew 3:9). Look at our large membership and our educated priests. Compare the small following this new religion has. It is led by One who has no letters, and those who associate with Him are untutored.

“Woe to you lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge: you yourselves have not entered in, and those that were entering in, you have hindered.”—*St. Luke 11:52*.

The Word gives purity of thought and action. To be taught the Word of God is what the youth of today need.

“By what doth a young man correct his way? by observing Thy words.”—*Psalm 118:9 [Psalm 119:9]*.

Having the Word in His mind kept Christ from sinning, and it will do the same for us.

“Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee.”—*Psalm 118:11 [Psalm 119:11]*.

Christ will ultimately declare who will enter heaven. It will be those who, through the enabling grace of our Lord and only Saviour, have kept the commandments of God, those who made good use of the keys.

“Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb: that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.”—*The Apocalypse 22:14*.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Roman Catholic Church teaches (1) that Peter was the first pope of Rome, and (2) that authority over every Christian was given to him in that conversation when Jesus mentioned that the type of acceptance and confession which Peter made was to be the foundation which Christ's church would be built upon.

Here are three official Church statements which clarify its position on this subject:

“But Peter alone receives the keys of the Church; he alone is the rock on which the Church is built; on the faith of him alone the faith even of the other Apostles depends; he alone is made the shepherd of the whole flock.”—*William E. Addis and Thomas Arnold, A Catholic Dictionary, p. 669.*

It is taught that all must be subordinate to Peter. It is said that he and his successors prescribe dogmatically the laws for the Church, which, if not obeyed, will bring dire results.

“While the Church lasts, Peter (and his successors) will hold its keys . . . Peter is the steward to whom the keys are committed. He admits to and excludes from the Church in his Master's name. In other words, he is the center of the Church's unity. All, from the great Apostle of the Gentiles down to the most obscure of the Church's children, hold their place and exercise their functions in subordination to Peter.

“What he binds and looses on earth is bound and loosed in heaven,— i.e., he is the ultimate earthly judge of what is lawful and unlawful. He is to lay down the laws and conditions on which communion with the Church and participation in its privileges depend, and the decisions of his tribunal here will be ratified in the heavenly court.”—*Ibid.*

It is of interest that Peter never claimed to be the pope. Instead, he called himself an “apostle” and one among many “elders.”

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.”—*1 St. Peter 1:1*.

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ.”—*1 Peter 5:1-3, R.S.V.*

Although the popes expect and demand homage, as mentioned earlier, Peter refused homage from men—as when Cornelius, the Roman centurion, fell down at his feet and would have worshiped him, Peter protested quickly and said, “Arise, I myself also am a man!” (Acts 10:26).

CHAPTER NINE

THE FIRST CHURCH COUNCIL

How did Peter’s contemporaries regard him? He was held in high esteem as an inspired apostle. But was he looked upon as a pope? The record of the Council at Jerusalem (also called the first council) reveals that he was not credited as possessing official supremacy.

In A.D. 31 Christ uttered these words in the hearing of all the disciples: “I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (St. Matthew 16:19-20). If these “keys” were given to Peter as the first pope, then he would have been the acknowledged ruler of all the apostles and every Christian.

The first council was held in A.D. 52, according to the chronological dates of the Bible. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Peter had occupied the papal chair for almost twenty years by the time this first council assembled. Surely, if Peter had been given special authority by Christ, by A.D. 52, everyone in the church would have been bowing in submission to the wishes of Peter for over

twenty years. They would, according to papal teaching, have bowed before his papal chair, kissed his ring, and done obeisance to him.

The first Christian Council reveals that Peter was not acknowledged by anyone as the leader of the Apostles. Here are causes leading up to the convening of this council:

In the church, at Antioch, a controversy arose on the question of circumcision. Certain Pharisees from Judea had gone to Antioch declaring that in order to be saved, the Gentile converts must be circumcised and keep the ceremonial law.

What was the “ceremonial law”? It consisted of Levitical regulations which prefigured the death of Christ, such as the sacrifices of lambs. But, when the Lamb of God died, that law was done away with. Hence it was no longer to be observed. But the Pharisees taught that it must still be obeyed. This resulted in much confusion and contention. The disputed question demanded an authoritative decision. If Peter had been holding the office of pope, would he not have been appealed to for a decision on this vital subject?

Peter, in keeping with his so-called successors, should have been the one with the authority to call for a church council to decide the issue. But Paul, Barnabas, and members from the church in Antioch were the leading figures in this council.

We will examine the record in Acts 15, to see if the Apostle of posthumous fame revealed marks of distinction at this important church council.

There have been many church councils throughout history. But only one church council occurred in the New Testament Church. Because it was the only one which Peter, Paul, and the other Apostles attended,—it is very important to us.

Surely, if Christ appointed Peter as His “successor,” then Peter was not only the chairman at that council, but also the one who announced its decisions.

But we will find that this was not so. Peter was just one Apostle among equals. There is nothing to indicate that he was the leader.

The question of circumcision and other points caused the church at Antioch to call for a general council to be held at the headquarters.

“And some coming down from Judea, taught the brethren: That except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved.”—*Acts 15:1*.

The church sent Paul and Barnabas with a delegation of its members to Jerusalem, to discuss the matter with the “apostles and elders.” Had Peter been functioning as a pope, would they not have brought this vital question to him for a decision? Following his decision would come an encyclical containing an authoritative decree which would forever settle the question. But no, we find Peter submitting the question to the apostles (of whom Peter was one), elders, and church members. This was clearly the established order of the early Christian church.

“And when Paul and Barnabas had no small contest with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of the other side, should go up to the apostles and priests to Jerusalem about this question.

“They therefore being brought on their way by the church, passed through Phenice, and Samaria, relating the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren.”—*Acts 15:2-3*.

When the representatives arrived in Jerusalem, they were received by the church, apostles, and elders. It should be noted that in their reception the church is named first, then the apostles and elders. The laity played a very important part in this council. The church—which is the members, the body of Christ—was the primal source of authority. This was a church council.

“And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church, and by the apostles and ancients, declaring how great things God had done with them.”—

Acts 15:4.

In the council, certain Pharisees who professed the Christian faith rose to defend the doctrine of circumcision.

“But there arose some of the sect of the Pharisees that believed, saying: They must be circumcised, and be commanded to observe the law of Moses.

“And the apostles and ancients assembled to consider of this matter.”—*Acts 15:5-6.*

Peter takes the floor. While his speech was presented with vigor and punctuated with invincible facts, it failed to settle the controversy. Further discussions were necessary. Had Peter been the vicar of Christ, his speech would have settled this doctrinal dispute.

“And when there had been much disputing, Peter, rising up, said to them: Men, brethren, you know, that in former days God made choice among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

“And God, who knoweth the hearts, gave testimony, giving unto them the Holy Ghost, as well as to us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why tempt you God to put a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we believe to be saved, in like manner as they also.”—*Acts 15:7-11.*

Paul and Barnabas also testify to a hushed audience.

These men who had “hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus” could speak with authority. (See verses 25-26.)

“And all the multitude held their peace; and they heard Barnabas and Paul telling what great signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.”—*Acts 15:12.*

But it was the speech given by James, which resolved the doctrinal dispute. He was the chairman of the council. His statement unified the members of the council and

brought a unanimous decision.

“And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying: Men, brethren, hear me.

“Simon hath related how God first visited to take of the Gentiles a people to His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written: After these things I will return, and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and the ruins thereof I will rebuild, and I will set it up: That the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all nations upon whom My name is invoked, saith the Lord, who doth these things. To the Lord was His own work known from the beginning of the world.

“For which cause I judge that they, who from among the Gentiles are converted to God, are not to be disquieted. But that we write unto them, that they refrain themselves from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach Him in the synagogues, where He is read every Sabbath.”—*Acts 15:13-21*.

A united and final decision was rendered, by the “apostles and elders, with the whole church.” Peter obviously was not the pope. He exercised no judicial authority.

Peter, as a man of God, recognized the principle of church authority. All the other apostles did also. The democratic tenets of self-government were featured at this first church council, setting a pattern for all subsequent councils.

“Then it pleased the apostles and ancients, with the whole church, to choose men of their own company, and to send to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas, who was surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren.”—*Acts 15:22*.

This letter, written by the council, gives for its source of authority the “apostles and elders and brethren.” Evidence of a papal chair is lacking. Not one word or act on the part of Peter, nor on the part of those who engaged in the discussion, could be interpreted as giving any official

distinction to Peter.

“Writing by their hands: The apostles and ancients, brethren, to the brethren of the Gentiles that are at Antioch, and in Syria and Cilicia, greeting.”—*Acts 15:23*.

Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas delivered the official church letter to the assembled “multitude,” which comprised the church. The letter was not delivered to a clergyman but rather to the body. So, the principle of church authority was observed even in the delivering of the letters. Any deviation from this principle is a virtual denial of the Scriptures, a departure from Bible precedent which gives rise to a hierarchy.

“Forasmuch as we have heard, that some going out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; to whom we gave no commandment: It hath seemed good to us, being assembled together, to choose out men, and to send them unto you, with our well beloved Barnabas and Paul: Men that have given their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who themselves also will, by word of mouth, tell you the same things. For it hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things: That you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which things keeping yourselves, you shall do well. Fare ye well.

“They therefore being dismissed, went down to Antioch; and gathering together the multitude, delivered the epistle.”—*Acts 15:24-30*.

“Rabbi,” “Master,” “Father” are titles not to be assumed by the true follower of the meek and lowly One. “All ye are brethren.” Let us all, through His divine power, emulate Him.

“But be not you called Rabbi. For One is your master; and all you are brethren.

“And call none your father upon earth; for One is

your father, who is in heaven.”—*St. Matthew 23:8-9.*

CHAPTER TEN

OUR CONFESSION OF SIN

Confessing and forsaking sin was taught in the Old Testament. To whom were sinners to confess? This is important in the life of every Christian. First, let us review some Old Testament Scriptures.

“He that hideth his sins, shall not prosper: but he that shall confess, and forsake them, shall obtain mercy.”—*Proverbs 28:13.*

David confessed to God, but never to human beings.

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy. And according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity.

“Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me.

“To Thee only have I sinned, and have done evil before Thee: that Thou mayst be justified in Thy words, and mayst overcome when Thou art judged . .

“For behold Thou hast loved truth: the uncertain and hidden things of Thy wisdom Thou hast made manifest to me.

“Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow. To my hearing Thou shalt give joy and gladness: and the bones that have been humbled shall rejoice.

“Turn away Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create a clean heart in me, O God: and renew a right spirit within my bowels.

“Cast me not away from Thy face; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of

Thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit.

“I will teach the unjust Thy ways: and the wicked shall be converted to Thee. Deliver me from blood, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall extol Thy justice.

“O Lord, Thou wilt open my lips: and my mouth shall declare Thy praise.”—*Psalm 50:3-17 [Psalm 51:1-15]*.

David did not have to perform penance. A broken and contrite heart is all God requires.

“For if thou hadst desired sacrifice, I would indeed have given it: with burnt offerings Thou wilt not be delighted. A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.”—*Psalm 50:18-19 [Psalm 51:16-17]*.

God says He will blot out our sins, for His own sake. Through the blessed name of Jesus, our sins are forgiven.

“I am, I am he that blot out thy iniquities for My own sake, and I will not remember thy sins.”—*Isaias 43:25*.

The Saviour forgave the sins of a paralytic.

“Whose faith when he saw, he said: Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.”—*St. Luke 5:20*.

God alone can forgive sins. Christ was God; therefore He could forgive sins. *That is why He can forgive sins; because He is God! No one else can!* Were He not God, but only one assuming the prerogatives of God in absolving sinners, He would have been guilty of blasphemy.

“And the scribes and Pharisees began to think, saying: Who is this who speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?”—*St. Luke 5:21*.

We have discovered, in Scripture, that only God is to hear our confession of sin. Did Peter have any knowledge of the idea that we should confess our sins to men? Let us consider several passages of Sacred Scripture which explain this:

Simon, the sorcerer, wanted to purchase with money the gift of the Holy Spirit.

“And when Simon saw, that by the imposition of the hands of the apostles, the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying: Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I shall lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said to him:

“Keep thy money to thyself, to perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast no part nor lot in this matter. For thy heart is not right in the sight of God.”—*Acts 8:18-21*.

Peter told Simon to “repent” and pray to God that his sins would be forgiven.

“Do penance therefore for this thy wickedness; and pray to God, that perhaps this thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee.”—*Acts 8:22*.

Other translations phrase that “Repent of your sins.” In the original Greek of the New Testament, *it does not say*, “Do penance.” Here is how it is worded in another Church-approved version:

“Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.”—*Acts 8:22, R.S.V.*

Peter told Simon to pray to God for forgiveness.

Why did Peter not hear his confession, give him absolution, and impose penance? Peter had no knowledge of the doctrine of *auricular confession* (ear confession to a man), nor of any authority invested in him as a pope or priest to absolve a sinner.

It is also evident he was unaware of, what is called, the *Sacrament Penance*: doing some act, as prescribed by the priest, to atone for your sin.

“What shall we do” to be saved? was the question asked of Peter and the other apostles.

“Now when they had heard these things, they had compunction in their heart, and said to Peter, and to the rest of the apostles: What shall we do, men and brethren?”—*Acts 2:37*.

In Acts 8, Peter told Simon to repent and pray to God to forgive him. In Acts 2, he told the multitude to repent.

Why didn't he tell them to kneel at the apostles' feet and have them forgive their sins and impose the penance? None of this was ever taught by any of the apostles, including Peter.

While the Rheims-Douai translates this imperfectly, other versions translate the Greek correctly.

"But Peter said to them: Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."—*Acts 2:38*.

"And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."—*Acts 2:38, R.S.V.*

The Greek verb, translated "repent" in Acts 8:22 and 2:38, is *metanoeo* (pronounced "meta-naw-EH-oh"). Page 1115, of Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, defines this verb as "to change one's mind," "to repent." Examples are cited from Greek literature which primarily speak of repenting. The concept, "do penance," does not occur.

Metanoeo comes from the noun, *metanoia* ("meta-NOI-ah"), which means "a change of mind," "a change of heart," "repentance."

What did the Apostle John have to say about auricular confession?

The Apostle John, like Peter, knew nothing about confessing to a man. Sins are confessed to God, who then forgives and cleanses. How the heart of our blessed Lord must feel when we resort to a human being instead of going to Him and confessing our sins!

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity."—*1 St. John 1:9*.

Is there no place in Sacred Scripture where our Lord and Saviour instructed us to do penance? No, not one.

There is no record in Holy Writ that Christ ever set up a confessional box to hear confessions, nor that He gave His disciples instruction to do this. This innovation came into the Church in A.D. 1215. No intimation is given, in all of John's writings, that such a dogma was ever to be introduced in the Christian church.

Then there is the matter of *remitting sins*. Is the Church or its priests able to take away your sins? Let us consider this next:

The Catholic Church teaches that, in St. John 20:23, Christ gave the disciples unmitigated, absolute power to sit in judgment on the sins of those who confess.

“Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.”—*St. John 20:23*.

Regarding the above verse, here is a daring declaration:

“God has given him [the priest] the right to sit in judgment on the sins of men and release them from the debt they owe to His [Christ's] offended majesty.

“‘Go, show yourselves to the priest,’ He said, ‘he is My representative on earth, holding in his hands the power of God. No matter what your sins may be, no matter how numerous or repeated times without number, if only he [the priest] forgives you, so shall I. His authority, his right to forgive is absolute, for I have said to him: ‘Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven; and what soever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven.’

“Confident in that promise, for ‘God is faithful and cannot deceive,’ the poor sinner kneels at his confessor's feet . . . He hears the words: ‘I absolve thee from thy sins in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,’ and the hideous load of sin drops from his soul for ever.”—*William Doyle, Shall I Be a Priest? pp. 14-15*.

What did Christ mean by the statement, “Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins

you shall retain, they are retained”?

With a subject of so great importance as releasing and binding human souls, surely Christ would have given instruction about how it was to be accomplished. Never having seen it done before, the disciples surely would have needed advice. Why did they not ask counsel? *The answer is that such rights were not entrusted to them, as we shall see on further study.*

Christ alone has the power to admit to or debar a soul from heaven. Thank God, He has never given to another the jurisdiction over the souls of mankind. Pity us all if that were the case! A king or priest claiming this divine right is not sanctioned by Heaven.

“And to the angel of the church of Philadelphia, write: These things saith the Holy One and the true One, He that hath the key of David; He that openeth, and no man shutteth; shutteth, and no man openeth.”—*The Apocalypse* 3:7.

Christ instructs church members on how to deal with one another when difficulties arise between them.

“But if thy brother shall offend against thee, go, and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother.

“And if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more: that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand.”—*St. Matthew* 18:15-16.

If the offender remains unrepentant—and refuses to go to Christ for forgiveness—after the entreaty of the “witnesses,” then appeal should be made to the entire local church, which is the final court. Christ gave the church membership the official authority to deal with outward unlawful acts committed toward each other. The church was also given authority to deal with all who violate its standards. Should the offender refuse to take the counsel of the church body, then his name is to be dropped from the record.

“And if he will not hear them: tell the church. And if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the

heathen and publican.”—*St. Matthew 18:17.*

When the church follows divine instruction, the course it takes regarding its obstinate and disobedient members will be ratified in heaven by God. The one who refuses the united decision of the church in his behalf must be regarded as a heathen. What attitude should the church assume toward those who are outside the fold? It should work to bring them in. This is Christ’s instruction to His body. What a sacred responsibility!

“Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.”—*St. Matthew 18:18.*

“Tell it unto the church.” He did not say that one should tell it to the priest or to any other clergyman, for that matter. It is the body of believers that God recognizes. The disciplinary acts of binding and loosing were never invested in either the disciples or the clergy. God has a church that follows our Lord’s prescribed method in dealing with its members when difficulty arises. But we must never forget that the one who is dropped from church membership is dear to the heart of God, and that His love should actuate the church body.

“And if he will not hear them; tell the church. And if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican.”—*St. Matthew 18:17.*

God appeals to the backslider to return. “I am married unto you.” This is a tie that God does not want severed. He has a claim on those who were once members but have left the fold, and this is how the church is to regard these former members. May we regard every soul as our Saviour did! He had a deep love for every human soul and was willing to sacrifice for that soul’s salvation.

“Go, and proclaim these words towards the north, and thou shalt say: Return, O rebellious Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not turn away My face from you: for I am holy, saith the Lord, and I will not be angry for ever.

“But yet acknowledge thy iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God: and thou hast scattered thy ways to strangers under every green tree, and hast not heard My voice, saith the Lord.

“Return, O ye revolting children, saith the Lord: for I am your husband: and I will take you, one of a city, and two of a kindred, and will bring you into Sion.”—*Jeremias 3:12-14.*

CHAPTER TEN

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It was not until A.D. 1215,—1,120 years after the Apostle John wrote the last book of the Bible,—that confession to a priest and penance was introduced into the Roman Church! It was the Fourth Lateran Council (A.D. 1215) which started the ceremony called auricular (ear) confession. Confession to a priest occurred at times in earlier centuries, but it was not until the Fourth Lateran Council, that it was declared to be compulsory by Innocent III (1198-1216). “Anyone who does not do so goes to hell.”

According to Church regulations, those who refuse to confess to a priest are violating the third commandment of the Catholic Church. But that “third commandment” is not one of the Ten Commandments. Note what the catechism teaches:

“The third commandment of the Church obliges us to go to confession once a year. This law was enacted at the Fourth Council of Lateran in the year of 1215. The penalty attached to the violation of this law is that the sinner may be interdicted from entering the Church while living, and be deprived of Christian burial when dead.

“The Church leaves us free to choose any confes-

sor who is authorized by the bishop to hear confessions.

“This law of the Church is binding on all who have attained the use of reason. Therefore as soon as children can distinguish between right and wrong, so as to be capable of mortal sin, they ought to be prepared for their first confession.”—*Francis J. Butler, Holy Family Catechism, No. 3, p. 203.*

If auricular confession was ordained by Christ, the Founder of the Christian church, why should almost 1,200 years be allowed to pass before imposing the obligation requiring members to confess to an ordained priest, a mere human being?

Did Christ change the plan of salvation after twelve centuries had elapsed, permitting the institution of the auricular confession, and anathematizing all who should reject it?

He would not be our eternal God if we could not rely upon His character and His unchangeable Word.

“For I am the Lord, and I change not: and you the sons of Jacob are not consumed.”—*Malachias 3:6.*

Our Saviour is always the same. The doctrines in the Sacred Scriptures, and which Christ and His apostles taught, have not changed.

“Jesus Christ, Yesterday, and to day; and the same for ever.”—*Hebrews 13:8.*

God will not alter His Word; but man has presumed to do so by adding dogmas.

“But My mercy I will not take away from him: nor will I suffer My truth to fail.”—*Psalms 88:34 [Psalm 89:34].*

A fearful penalty awaits those who add dogmas.

“For testify to every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book: If any man shall add to these things God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book.”—*The Apocalypse 22:18.*

Divine retribution will be meted also to all who delete any truth from the Scriptures.

“And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from these things that are written in this book.”—*The Apocalypse 22:19*.

According to the rule of the Church, the faithful are not permitted to confess their sins to God; they must confess them to a priest.

“Confession is the telling of our sins to an authorized priest for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness.”—*Baltimore Catechism*.

Why is it not acceptable to go directly to God with our sins? Why must we instead go to an erring, sinful fellow human being?

According to Church law, if the priest does not forgive your sin, God cannot. This is because the priest is said to have “jurisdiction” over you.

“An authorized priest is one who has not only the power to forgive sins by reason of his ordination to the priesthood, but also the power of jurisdiction over the persons who come to him. He has this jurisdiction ordinarily from his bishop.”—*Baltimore Catechism*.

The priest has the power because, according to the Church, he stands as God to the one confessing to him.

“One must receive absolution in feelings of total humility, considering the confessor as Jesus Christ Himself whose place he takes.”—*French Catechism*.

It is said that God has to forgive whoever the priest decides to forgive, even though the priest may make mistakes. The following statement comes from a book for those about to join the Church.

“The priest does not have to ask God to forgive your sins. The priest himself has the power to do so in Christ’s name. Your sins are forgiven by the priest the same as if you knelt before Jesus Christ and told them to Christ

Himself.”—*Instructions for Non-Catholics*.

Do Priests Have Power to Forgive Sins?

The Catholic Church claims that our Lord conferred upon the apostles the power to forgive sins. Supposedly through apostolic succession the popes, cardinals, bishops, and priests are invested with the power to absolve the sinner who confesses, as stated here:

“Question: Does St. Ambrose say that priests have the power to forgive sins? Answer: St. Ambrose says, ‘It seems impossible for sins to be forgiven by penitence, but Christ granted this to His apostles, which has been from the apostles transmitted to the ministry of the priests.’”—*Roderick MacEachen, Complete Catechism of Christian Doctrines, Rev. ed., pp. 120-121*.

“The Church teaches that our Lord conferred on the apostles a true priesthood, when He gave them power to offer the sacrifice of the Mass and the power to forgive sins. By the possession of these two powers the apostles were constituted true priests, or mediators between God and man.”—*Francis J. Butler, Holy Family Catechism, No. 3, p. 277*.

If what the Catholic Church teaches is true, then many of us do not go to Christ for forgiveness of sins, as the Bible teaches.

If what the Catholic Church teaches is true, then what happened to all those souls who had not confessed their sins to a priest for forgiveness during the first 1,200 years of the Christian era? Auricular confession was not made an article of faith until the Fourth Lateran Council (A.D. 1215). How were the sins of those who lived during the 4,000 years before Christ expiated without the confessional, absolution of a priest, and the imposed penance?

According to the Bible, throughout all human history men and woman have been able to go to God for pardon from sin. But, according to the Church, from A.D. 1215 onward, they must instead go to a sinful, fellow human being.

Venial sins are defined as “small and pardonable offenses.” Only mortal sins must be confessed to a priest, but there is no agreement among priests as to which are mortal and which are venial; yet all agree that such a distinction exists. Although some sins are classified as “mortal,” there remains no clarity as to which sins have to be confessed.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

For 1,500 years the slaying of the Passover lamb by the Jews pointed to the death of Christ. The last evening that Christ was with His disciples, He ate the Passover with them.

It was the last Passover to be observed by Christians, for the true Passover Lamb was to die the next afternoon. All sacrifices were to end, and consequently the human priesthood was to cease. Desiring to leave a memorial of His death, one that would ever keep in mind the two great events—His death and His second coming—Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper.

“And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. And He said to them: With desire I have desired to eat this pasch [passover] with you, before I suffer.”—*St. Luke 22:14-15.*

“Jesus took bread.” The unleavened bread was on the table. He took this bread and blessed it, or as St. Luke 22:19 says, “gave thanks,” and then broke it, saying, “Take, eat; this is My body.” This was Thursday night. If this bread were His real body, as the Catholic Church declares, then He died on Thursday night. But we know that is not true.

“And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke: and gave to His disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat. This is My body.”—*St. Matthew*

26:26.

The above verse says, "This is My body." He did not transmute the bread into His real body. Would we charge our Lord with creating Himself out of a literal piece of bread?

Had He not previously used symbols with which to illustrate a specific truth He was teaching? For example, He had referred to Himself as "the door" (St. John 10:9), the "vine" (St. John 15:1), "the light" (St. John 8:12).

If we apply the logic used by some in interpreting Christ's statement "This is My body," is it not possible by the same mode of interpretation to say that Christ is changed into an actual "door," "vine," and "light"? If it holds good in one instance, it must hold good in others.

Christ broke off a chunk of bread, a figure which He left to represent His broken body. He did not give them a whole round wafer. How is a whole round wafer a broken piece of bread? Let us quote that verse again:

"And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke: and gave to His disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat. This is My body."—*St. Matthew 26:26.*

"Take, eat." The disciples took the bread in their hands. Christ did not place the bread on their tongues. The bread was to be eaten, not dissolved on the tongue of the receiver.

Let us next turn to St. Luke 22:19.

"And taking bread, He gave thanks, and brake; and gave to them, saying: This is My body, which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of Me."—*St. Luke 22:19.*

"Commemoration" or "remembrance"—a reminder, or a memorial, of the great sacrifice of our Saviour. Although the Greek word for "remembrance" is given in the Douay Version as "commemoration," in the revised New Testament (N.I.V., 1 Corinthians 11:23-29) the term, "remembrance," is used by the Roman Catholic translators.

Luke 22:19, quoted above, says "gave thanks," while Matthew 26:26, also quoted above, says "blessed." Thus

the words "blessed" and "gave thanks" are synonymous.

The Catholic Church teaches that blessing the bread resulted in it having been changed into His body. But what Christ actually did was to thank God for the food before partaking of it.

Taking the cup, He "gave thanks." Christ left on record an example for every Christian to follow, in thanking God for the food He provides. This is why we offer thanks at our tables and ask Him to bless the food which we are about to eat.

Then Christ told them to drink the grape juice in their cups:

"And taking the chalice, He gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this."—*St. Matthew 26:27*.

The R.S.V. says, "And He took a cup." "Chalice" is an old word for an extremely expensive cup. Jesus did not have an ornate, expensive cup in His hand; He had just a simple, fired-clay cup. Jesus never made pretensions, as though He were a wealthy man, with expensive palaces to live in and hired servants who carried Him around.

He gave the disciples the cup and told "all" to "drink." But the Catholic Church withholds the cup from the laity.—Only the officiating priest drinks the wine.

For 1,400 years, Christ's followers did as He told them to do during the Lord's Supper. Each one drank from his own cup during the Communion Service. —But then, in A.D. 1439 at the Council of Florence, a shocking thing occurred: The cup was "withdrawn" from the laity! From that time to this, over 560 years, the communicant has received only half the sacrament! No longer in the Roman Catholic Church do the followers of Christ drink from their cup, as Christ told them to do in *St. Matthew 26:27*.

Of course it is said, without proof, that a miraculous innovation is wrought by the priest. At the moment of consecration the wafers are supposedly infused with blood. Each round wafer is allegedly a whole Christ, "body and blood, soul and divinity." This doctrine was not taught in

the upper room where this the Communion service was instituted.

The wine was to represent His precious blood, shed for the sins of the world. What a symbol He left to remind us of His supreme sacrifice! The new covenant was ratified, the plan of salvation made secure.

“For this is My blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins.”—*St. Matthew 26:28*.

It was unfermented wine which was in the cup. Fermentation is a type of sin. There was “no sin” in the life of Christ. The wine used on the Roman altars is fermented, but the bread is unleavened.

“And I say to you, I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it with you new in the kingdom of My Father.”—*St. Matthew 26:29*.

Some Protestant churches use leaven in the Communion bread. The symbol is marred and the pure, sinless Christ insulted. How does He feel when He sees His professed followers offering in the holy Communion service emblems which denote sin? This service was designed by Christ to keep before the people His sinless, spotless character. The pure juice of the vine, untouched by fermentation, and bread which contained no leaven, were fitting symbols of His unblemished life.

The Apostle Paul wrote the following passage twenty-eight years after the institution of the Lord’s Supper:

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread. And giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye, and eat: this is My body, which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of Me [“in remembrance of Me,” R.S.V.].

“In like manner also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: This chalice is the New Testament in My blood:

this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of Me ["in remembrance of Me," R.S.V.].

"For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until He come.

"Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord.

"But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice.

"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord."—*1 Corinthians 11:23-29*.

"I have received of the Lord." He received it by inspiration. He outlines how this service was to be conducted. It was to be done in "remembrance" or "commemoration" of our Lord, not as an act or a drama.

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread."—*1 Corinthians 11:23*.

This service was to point back to His death.

"For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord, until He come."—*1 Corinthians 11:26*.

"Let a man examine himself." It does not say to go to any human being and have him examine you.

"But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord."—*1 Corinthians 11:28*.

"But let a man examine himself," is what *1 Corinthians 11:28* says in another Church-approved translation (R.S.V.).

Before one partakes of this Sacrament, there must be

a searching of one's heart before God, confession of all sin to God, and deep repentance in order to be worthy to eat and drink at the Lord's table.

Christ died "once" for all. The Catholic Church teaches that the sacrifice of the Mass repeats Calvary. It is claimed that, each time Mass is offered,—Christ suffers and dies again.

Yet the Holy Scriptures teach exactly the opposite:

"[Christ] needeth not daily . . . to offer sacrifices . . . for this He did once, in offering Himself."—*Hebrews 7:27*.

"By His own blood, [He] entered once into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption."—*Hebrews 9:12*.

"Nor yet that He should offer Himself often . . . for then He ought to have suffered often . . . So also Christ was offered once to exhaust the sins of many."—*Hebrews 9:25-28*.

"In the which will, we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ once."—*Hebrews 10:10*.

"And by that we will have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."—*Hebrews 10:10, R.S.V.*

These verses reveal the utter futility of repetitious sacrifice, which can never take away sin. Christ offered "one sacrifice for sins for ever." He is on the right hand of His Father as our High Priest.

"And every priest indeed standeth daily ministering, and often offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

"But this man offering one sacrifice for sins, for ever sitteth on the right hand of God."—*Hebrews 10:11-12*.

"One sacrifice for sins." The reiteration of Calvary in the Roman Mass is a denial of the full atonement made by Christ. When He died, He said, "It is finished" (St. John 19:30). The price of redemption was paid by that one death. All animal sacrifices were ended, and the human priesthood was forever abolished.

“For by one oblation He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”—*Hebrews 10:14*.

“For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.”—*Hebrews 10:14, R.S.V.*

“Offering” or “sacrifice” is the better word. Although “oblation” comes from the Latin and means “oblatio,” sacrifice; the words “offering” or “sacrifice” are better understood today.

“I am living for ever and ever.” Jesus declared this to John years after He went to heaven. Who would want to put our blessed Lord to death again?

“And alive, and was dead, and behold I am living for ever and ever, and have the keys of death and of hell.”—*The Apocalypse 1:18*.

When the divine Word is followed, the Lord’s Supper is a most beautiful and meaningful service. It is symbolic of the new earth, where all will sit at the table when the marriage supper of the Lamb will be celebrated.

This promise will then be fulfilled. What a blessed hope we have!

“And I say to you, I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it with you new in the kingdom of My Father.”—*St. Matthew 26:29*.

Christ said to His disciples, “This is My body,” and “This is My blood” (Matthew 26:26-28). How can that be taken in a literal sense? At the time those words were spoken the bread and wine were on the table before Him; and, in His body, He was sitting at the table as a living man. The crucifixion had not taken place. They ate the Lord’s supper before it occurred.

Jesus said to do it as a memorial to Him. We do not, and cannot, memorialize someone who is present, as the Church says Christ is present in the Mass. But in the future, in His absence, these things would symbolize His broken body and shed blood. They would then call to mind His

sacrifice, and would then be taken “in remembrance” of Him (1 Corinthians 11:25).

Jesus’ words, “This is in remembrance [commemoration] of Me,” show that the Lord’s supper is not some kind of magical operation; but it is primarily a memorial instituted to call Christians throughout the ages to remember the wondrous sacrifice of the crucified Lord and all its marvelous benefits and lessons for us. A memorial does not present the reality, in this case His true body and blood, but something quite different; this serves only as a reminder of the real thing.

We often show a friend a photograph and say, “This is my wife”; “This is my son”; etc. Such language is readily understood in ordinary conversation. Nobody takes such words literally. The Bible is written in the language of the common people. Hence it is perfectly obvious, to any observant reader, that the Lord’s Supper was intended primarily as a simple memorial gathering; it is in no sense a literal reincarnation of Christ.

The real meaning of Christ’s words can be seen when they are compared with similar figurative language which He used elsewhere.

Jesus said, “I am the door (St. John 10:7)—but of course He did not mean that He was a literal wooden door with lock and hinges. He said, “I am the vine” (St. John 15:5)—but no one understood Him to mean that He was a grapevine. When He said, “Ye are the salt of the earth” (St. Matthew 5:13), He did not mean His followers were actual salt.

The disciples had no trouble understanding what Jesus was saying, and neither did the Roman Church until 800 years after Calvary.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Yes, it was not until 800 years after Jesus met with His disciples in the upper room for that Communion service, that anyone thought of the idea of the “real presence.”

In the first part of the ninth century a man named Paschasius Radbertas, who was a Benedictine monk, began to advocate the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine. In A.D. 831 he wrote a treatise, *Concerning the Body and Blood of Christ*.

Here is a brief summary of the doctrine which Paschasius advanced:

“After the consecration of the bread and wine in the Lord’s supper, nothing remains of these symbols but the outward figure, under which the body and blood of Christ were locally present. While the bread may have the appearance of bread, it is now, after the priest utters the words: ‘This is my body,’ the real body of Christ. The cup, after the priest blesses it, is no longer wine, but the real blood of Christ.”—*Paschasius Radbertas, Concerning the Body and Blood of Christ*.

Paschasius further claimed that the body and blood of Christ—the same body which was born of the virgin Mary, hung and suffered on the cross, and was buried and rose from the dead—was present in the Lord’s Supper.

This new theory, when first advocated, was bitterly opposed by a number of Church leaders. One was Rabanus Maurus, Archbishop of Maiaz, who took definite issue with the new concept. He called it a perversion of the Lord’s Supper. Archbishop Maurus wrote this:

“Some persons, of late, not entertaining a sound opinion respecting the sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord, have actually ventured to declare that this is

the identical body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; the identical body, to wit, which was born of the Virgin Mary, in which Christ suffered on the cross, and in which He arose from the dead. This error we have opposed with all our might!"—*Rabanus Maurus, Epist. Ad. Heribald, c. 33.*

A lengthy battle was fought over this new idea. Opponents of the theory said it was shocking and preposterous.

Interestingly enough, at the time, no mention was made by any of the contenders of the terms, "transubstantiation" and "the worship of the elements" (the bread and wine). Those were additional concepts, which did not develop for another 380 years.

Many fierce arguments were fought by the bishops over the "real presence" theory until early in the thirteenth century. Then, at the Fourth Council of Lateran (A.D. 1215), transubstantiation was made a dogma of the Church. (This was the same council which decreed that the people had to confess to priests instead of to God.)

Pope Innocent III officiated at this Council. The decree issued on the dogma is as follows:

"The body and blood of Christ are contained really in the sacrament of the altar, under the species of bread and wine, the bread being transubstantiated [changed] into the body of Jesus Christ, and the wine into His blood, by the power of God."—*Council Lateran, IX, cap. 1.*

Because transubstantiation—the changing of the bread and wine into the real body and blood of Christ—had been declared an official dogma by the Lateran Council, it could no longer be contested. To oppose or even doubt the theory would be heresy and could cost a person his life.

The alleged power of the clergy, to create God from the elements of bread and wine, has caused credulous worshipers to consider the priest something of a God, since he had power to bring God down into a wafer and a cup. Although it greatly increased the power of the Church, what does it do to our Lord?

The priest is taught that he has power over God, to command Him to come down into the wafer and the cup—any time he, the priest, so decides.

“With regard to the power of the priests over the real body of Christ [the actual body of Christ in heaven], it is of faith that when they pronounce the words of consecration, the incarnate God has obliged Himself to obey and come into their hands under the sacramental appearance of bread and wine.

“We are struck with wonder when we find that, in obedience to the words of His priests—*Hoc est corpus meum* (This is My body)—God Himself descends on the altar, that He comes whenever they call Him, and as often as they call Him, and places Himself in their hands, even though they should be His enemies.

“And after having come He remains, entirely at their disposal and they move Him as they please from one place to another. They may, if they wish, shut Him up in the tabernacle, or expose Him on the altar, or carry Him outside the Church; they may, if they choose, eat His flesh, and give Him for the food of others.

Besides [in addition to such fabulous authority], the power of the priest surpasses that of the Blessed Virgin, because she cannot absolve a Catholic from even the smallest sin.”—*de Liguori, The Dignity and Duties of the Priest.*

The very important Council of Trent (A.D. 1545-1563), in one of its sessions, confirmed the decision of the Fourth Lateran Council on the question of transubstantiation:

“This holy Council declareth: That by the consecration of the bread and wine, there is effected a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord, and of the wine into the substance of His blood; which conversion is fitly and properly termed by the holy Catholic Church, transubstantiation.”—*Council Trident, Sess. XIII, cap. 4.*

The Catholic Church today accepts and practices the doctrine of transubstantiation. The members of the Church

are required to believe it, on pain of mortal sin.

The Roman Catholic Mass is designed to be a dramatic representation of our Lord's suffering and death on Calvary, and just before and after. The priest at the altar performs the part that the Saviour went through from the time He entered the Garden of Gethsemane until He arose from the tomb.

The principal part of the Mass is reached when the officiating priest allegedly transmutes, or changes, the bread and wine into the real "body and blood, soul and divinity of our Lord." When this act is accomplished, it is claimed that transubstantiation occurs.

CHAPTER TWELVE THE BLESSED VIRGIN

In the following verse we find the first promise of our Redeemer. Adam and Eve had turned from obeying God and His Word. They had voluntarily delivered themselves into the hands of Satan and consequently were unable to extricate themselves from his power.

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He [the promised "seed"] shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."—*Genesis 3:15, R.S.V.*

In the hearing of Adam and Eve, our Lord made known to Satan that the "seed"—Christ—would "crush" the head of the enemy and thus enable man to be restored to his former position. The plan of redemption is revealed in this text!

Was it Christ or was it Mary who crushed the head of Satan? The Rheims-Douai Version reads thus:

"I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel."—*Genesis 3:15.*

A later Church-approved version is an example of what you will find in other Bible translations:

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He [the promised “seed”] shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”—*Genesis 3:15, R.S.V.*

The literal translation of the Hebrew Old Testament reads thus: “He shall bruise”—not “she shall bruise.”

Catholic theology does not always go according to the Latin Vulgate’s interpretation on what the Church calls the *ipsa conteret* (the exact meaning of the verse and its context), as referring to Mary. The actual Hebrew word in *Genesis 3:15* for progeny (seed) is masculine—and not feminine. Therefore it should be translated “*He* shall bruise thy head.” It is Christ by His Incarnation, life, sufferings, death, and heavenly mediation—who will crush the head of the deadly serpent, Satan. Satan will be conquered and destroyed because of what Christ has done.

This is clearly shown in Paul’s statement to the Galatians about the promised “seed.”

“To Abraham were the promises made and to his seed.

He saith not, And to his seeds, as of many: but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.”—*Galatians 3:16.*

“And to thy seed, which is Christ,” is how the Rheims-Douai, translated here, says it.

Christ is the promised seed. He alone was the One who would crush the head of Satan. Why should anyone want to take away the glory from our Lord and give it to any mortal being?

The Word declares that God will not give His glory to another, nor His praise to a graven image.

“I the Lord, this is My name: I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven things.”—*Isaias 42:8.*

Man is doing that which God frowns upon—worshipping the creature rather than the Creator.

“Because that, when they knew God, they have not

glorified Him as God, or given thanks, but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened . . . Who changed the truth of God into a lie; and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.”—*Romans 1:21, 25.*

Hundreds of years before the virgin Mary was born, the pagan world had a goddess, a queen. She was known by different names in various countries—

Semiramis, Astarte, Cybele, and Themis, Mother of the Gods, Maker of Investigations, Dove, and Goddess of Justice. These and many other names and titles were given to the “Queen of Heaven.” This great Mother Goddess was mentioned by an Old Testament prophet:

“The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to offer libations to strange gods, and to provoke Me to anger.”—*Jeremias 7:18.*

The people of Judah, in the days of Jeremias, had gone so far back from serving the true God that they gave themselves up to worshiping the Queen of Heaven, Ashtoreth, the Phoenician goddess. The people told the prophet, Jeremias, that they would not obey the Word of the Lord. They felt sure that the Queen of Heaven would intercede with the gods and protect them, as long as they burned “incense,” made “cakes,” and poured out “drink offerings” to her.

“Then all the men that knew that their wives sacrificed to other gods: and all the women of whom there stood by a great multitude, and all the people of them that dwelt in the land of Egypt in Phatures, answered Jeremias, saying:

“As for the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken to thee:

“But we will certainly do every word that shall proceed out of our own mouth, to sacrifice to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings to her, as we and our fathers have done, our kings, and our princes in the cities of Juda, and in the streets of Jerusalem: and we were filled with bread, and it was well with us,

and we saw no evil.

“But since we left off to offer sacrifice to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings to her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword, and by famine.

“And if we offer sacrifice to the queen of heaven, and pour out drink offerings to her: did we make cakes to worship her, to pour out drink offerings to her, without our husbands?”—*Jeremias 44:15-19*.

The enemy of God presented this rival goddess to the people who were thus deceived by her so-called miracles. How did God regard all this? He could no longer bear with them. They were taken captive by Babylon for refusing to obey His voice, His law, and His testimonies.

“And Jeremias spoke to all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him that answer, saying:

“Was it not the sacrifice that you offered in the cities of Juda, and in the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, which the Lord hath remembered, and hath it not entered into His heart?

“So that the Lord could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which you have committed: therefore your land is become a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day.

“Because you have sacrificed to idols, and have sinned against the Lord: and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have not walked in His law, and in His commandments, and in His testimonies: therefore are these evils come upon you, as at this day.”—*Jeremias 44:20-23*.

In the days of the Apostle Paul, all Asia and the then-known world were given over to the worship of “the great goddess Diana.”

St. Paul taught the people of Ephesus that the silver images of Diana which they were worshiping should be destroyed; and, as his enemies charged:

“You see and hear, that this Paul by persuasion hath drawn away a great multitude, not only of Ephesus, but almost of all Asia, saying: They are not gods which are made by hands.”—*Acts 19:26*.

So Paul was calling the people, away from image worship, back to keeping the first and second commandments which they had been breaking.

But the people who made their living by image-making opposed Paul’s doctrine. Demetrius and his craftsmen were being put out of business by Paul’s teaching.

“Now at that time there arose no small disturbance about the way of the Lord. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver temples for Diana, brought no small gain to the craftsmen;

“Whom he calling together, with the workmen of like occupation said: Sirs, you know that our gain is by this trade; and you see and hear, that this Paul by persuasion hath drawn away a great multitude, not only of Ephesus, but almost of all Asia, saying: They are not gods which are made by hands.

“So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought, but also the temple of great Diana shall be reputed for nothing; yea, and her majesty shall begin to be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

“Having heard these things, they were full of anger, and cried out, saying: Great is Diana of the Ephesians.”—*Acts 19:23-28*.

If Paul were living today, what attitude would he assume toward the craft of image-making? Would he not cry out for its destruction as he did in Ephesus?

The prophecy of Isaias was given over seven hundred years before our Lord was born.

“Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and His

name shall be called Emmanuel.”—*Isaias 7:14*.

The sign was that a virgin would give birth to a son, Immanuel, God with us. The young woman chosen by God was the virgin Mary, a pure, noble character. Would that all women would follow her example of purity, and all mothers would train and educate their children according to the Word of God.

Elizabeth’s blessing upon the virgin Mary did not elevate Mary to the status of beatification. The text does not indicate that she would be invoked by her admiring devotees. She was blessed “among” women. She was not the only woman blessed in the Bible.

“And she cried out with a loud voice, and said: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.”—*St. Luke 1:42*.

By the prophetess Deborah, Jael was also “blessed among women.”

“Blessed among women be Jahel the wife of Haber the Cinite, and blessed be she in her tent.”—*Judges 5:24*.

But being blessed “among” women did not make Jael different from any other human being. There is no record in Holy Scripture that Jael was ever venerated following Deborah’s blessing upon her.

The Bible gives no intimation that the virgin Mary was regarded with any reverential respect, either at the time of Elizabeth’s blessing or at any subsequent time. Devotion to Mary was unknown to the early church. The apostles give no suggestion in any of their writings that devotion, or worship, had been given to Mary.

The Scriptures clearly teach that only God should be worshiped. Note the reaction of the angel Gabriel to John’s worship: “See thou do it not . . . worship God.” This experience is left on record for our admonition. If the highest angel refused to be worshiped, why should any of the human family dare to accept such homage?

“And I fell down before his feet, to adore him. And he saith to me: See thou do it not. I am thy fellow

servant, and of thy brethren, who have the testimony of Jesus. Adore God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”—*The Apocalypse 19:10*.

“You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.”—*Revelation 19:10, R.S.V.*

The Catholic Church teaches that there are three forms of worship: *latria* (*cultus latriae*), the worship due alone to God; *dulia* (*cultus duliae*), the veneration or worship given to saints and angels; *hyperdulia* (*cultus hyperduliae*), the worship, adoration, and homage given the virgin Mary. These are Latin terms which the average layman has difficulty in defining and equating.

The “Ave Maria,” better known as the “Hail Mary,” is well-known to every faithful Catholic:

“Literally ‘Hail Mary,’ Ave Maria is the title of the familiar two part prayer:

“‘Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among all women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.’”—*The Catholic Encyclopedia, 59-60*.

—Yet, according to the *Catholic Dictionary*, this did not come into use until “the end of the twelfth century.” Words were added to the prayer by the Franciscans about the middle of the fifteenth century. The whole Ave Maria as it now stands was decreed by Pope Pius V in 1568.

According to the words of Scripture, Mary rejoiced in her Saviour. If she could not sin, what need did she have for a Saviour?

“And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”—*St. Luke 1:46-47*.

Paul evidently knew nothing about the Immaculate Conception of the virgin Mary or of her sinless state, for he said that “all have sinned.”

“For all have sinned, and do need the glory of God.”—*Romans 3:23.*

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”—*Romans 3:23, R.S.V.*

If Mary was what the Catholic Church claims, how could Paul write that “none,” not even “one,” is just, that is, righteous in the sight of God.

“As it is written: There is not any man just.”—*Romans 3:10.*

Christ was made “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” He “condemned sin in the flesh” by living a life in perfect conformity to the Ten Commandments. He never sinned, not even by a thought. What a Saviour we have!

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh; God sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and of sin, hath condemned sin in the flesh.”—*Romans 8:3.*

But the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the virgin Mary gives us a Christ who could not sin. Such teaching strikes at the very heart of the atonement.

Satan claimed that no human being could keep the Ten Commandments. For 4,000 years his charge went unchallenged. Then the Son of God came to this earth in human flesh and demonstrated before Satan and the universe that, through the power of God, the Ten Commandments could be kept.

Christ partook of the same flesh and blood as the human family.

“Therefore because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner hath been partaker of the same: that, through death, He might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil.”—*Hebrews 2:14.*

He did not take the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham.

“For no where doth He take hold of the angels: but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold.”—*Hebrews*

2:16.

“It behoved Him.” In other words, it was necessary for Him to be “made like unto His brethren” in order for Him to be our High Priest.

“Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest before God, that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people.”—*Hebrews 2:17*.

This is a very comforting text. Our Saviour can sympathize with us because He was tempted as we are.

“For in that, wherein He Himself hath suffered and been tempted, He is able to succour them also that are tempted.”—*Hebrews 2:18*.

Had He taken the flesh of an “immaculate mother,” He could not “be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” The teaching of the Immaculate Conception presents us with an entirely different Christ than the One portrayed in the Holy Scriptures.

“For we have not a high priest, who can not have compassion on our infirmities: but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin.”—*Hebrews 4:15*.

How did Christ keep from sinning? He wept and prayed to His heavenly Father for the power to be kept from sin. Satan was constantly pursuing our Lord, to tempt Him. If only he could induce Him to commit just one sin, then the whole world would be lost. But, thank God, our Saviour never once yielded to the enemy. We, too, through His power can be kept from sinning.

“Who in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard.”—*Hebrews 5:7*.

Christ was God while in human flesh, but He never used any of His divine power in combating sin. The power to meet the enemy He received from His Father.

“And whereas indeed He was the Son of God, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

And being consummated, He became, to all that obey Him, the cause of eternal salvation.”—*Hebrews 5:8-9*.

At the age of twelve, Christ attended His first Pass-over. As He watched this service, the mystery of His own mission was revealed to Him.

“And His parents went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the pasch [Passover]. And when He was twelve years old, they going up into Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast.

“And having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and His parents knew it not. And thinking that He was in the company, they came a day’s journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolks and acquaintance. And not finding Him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking Him.

“And it came to pass, that, after three days, they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers.”—*St. Luke 2:41-47*.

It is evident, from the reply Christ gave His mother, that she did not understand His mission as the Messiah. He disclaimed Joseph as His father and stated His Sonship with God.

“And seeing Him, they wondered. And His mother, said to Him: Son, why hast Thou done so to us? behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.

“And He said to them: How is it that you sought Me? did you not know, that I must be about My father’s business?”—*St. Luke 2:48-49*.

Eighteen years later, Christ performed His first miracle at a wedding, to which His mother had also been invited.

A fond mother’s pride hopes for a miracle from her Son on this happy occasion. “They have no wine.” These words were a suggestion for Him to supply the need.

“And the third day, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee: and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus

also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage.

“And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to Him: They have no wine.”—*St. John 2:1-3*.

What was His reply? “Woman, what have I to do with thee?”

“And Jesus saith to her: Woman, what is that to Me and to Thee? My hour is not yet come.”—*St. John 2:4*.

This form of address, “Woman,” was in keeping with the Oriental custom. He added, “Mine hour is not yet come.” Once again we find that even Mary did not have a right conception of Christ’s mission.

Even though Mary did not fully understand the full import of Christ’s mission, yet she had profound regard for His Word.

“His mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.”—*St. John 2:5*.

“His mother said to the servants, Do whatever He tells you.”—*John 2:5, R.S.V.*

Mary did not say, “Whatsoever I say unto you, do it,” but “Whatsoever He saith.”

What “He saith” can be found only in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, Mary says to do what the Scriptures teach. Apart from the Magnificat, this is the only counsel she ever gave. How wonderful if all, both Catholic and Protestant, would adhere to her admonition!

Later, a second incident strengthens our understanding of the fact that the tie of kinship in no way placed Mary on vantage ground with Christ.

The following passage reveals that Mary’s connection with Jesus placed her in no different spiritual relation to Him from that of any other human being. All who receive Christ by faith and do the will of His Father are closer than human kinship could make them.

“As He was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold His mother and His brethren stood without, seeking to speak to Him.

“And one said unto Him: Behold Thy mother and

Thy brethren stand without seeking Thee.

“But He answering him that told him, said: Who is My mother, and who are My brethren?

“And stretching forth His hand towards His disciples, he said: Behold My mother and My brethren.

“For whosoever shall do the will of My Father, that is in heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother.”—*St. Matthew 12:46-50.*

It is those who obey Christ—by obeying His Written Word as given in the Sacred Scriptures—who are His special people!

A third incident says it even more clearly: Those who obey Christ are just as close to Him as any human being can be!

As Christ was speaking, a woman in the audience called out that Christ’s mother must be especially blessed.

Jesus did not reply that those who obey God are as blessed as Mary, but He said that only those who obey God are blessed. In other words, Mary could only be blessed to the degree that she continued to obey God in the future as she had done in the past.

“And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to Him: Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that give Thee suck.

“But He said: Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it.”—*St. Luke 11:27-28.*

His reply clearly states that all who hear and keep the Word of God will be blessed. Mary had no divine merit because of her maternal relationship to the Saviour. She could find salvation only through the Lamb of God and in doing the will of God.

What did Peter say about this? He knew nothing about the virgin and her power to save.

“Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.”—*Acts 4:12.*

What did the Apostle Paul say? Paul says *there is only one mediator* between God and man. It is “the man Christ Jesus,” and not the woman Mary, who stands between God and man to intercede.

“For there is one God, and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus:”—*1 Timothy 2:5*.

The Apostle John said our Advocate with the Father is Jesus Christ.

“My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just.”—*1 St. John 2:1*.

If Mary were the Queen of Heaven, the mediatrix, the advocate of sinners, the co-redemptrix, John would have known; for he took Mary to his own home after the death of the Saviour, and cared for her.

“When Jesus therefore had seen His mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, he saith to His mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own.”—*St. John 19:26-27*.

“From that hour, the disciple took her to his own home.”—*John 19:27, R.S.V.*

As a prophet of God, John mentions the two concepts which would be held regarding the human nature of our Lord, Jesus Christ:

Some would believe what the Scriptures teach: that He came in “the flesh,” that is, not from a so-called immaculate mother. This, the correct position, “is of God.”

Others would teach that He came not in the “likeness of sinful flesh,” but from a sinless mother. This teaching John declares is the “spirit of antichrist.” Here is the passage:

“By this is the spirit of God known. Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: And every spirit that dissolveth [denies the humanity of] Jesus, is not of God: and this is Anti-

christ, of whom you have heard that He cometh, and He is now already in the world.”—1 *St. John* 4:2-3.

When was the last time that Mary’s name is mentioned in Holy Scripture? It is found in the first chapter of the Book of Acts.

All those who were in the upper room were mentioned. The disciples are first mentioned, next the women, then Mary. She evidently did not hold the preeminence at this important gathering.

“And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Jude the brother of James. All these were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.”—*Acts* 1:13-14.

So, in view of all that has been presented in the Inspired Writings about Mary, should we not give Christ His rightful place as the God of both justice and mercy?

“His mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.”—*St. John* 2:5.

“His mother said to the servants, Do whatever He tells you.”—*John* 2:5, *R.S.V.*

CHAPTER TWELVE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Does the Written Word support the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary? Some teach that an immaculate mother had to be provided, alleging that Christ would not consent to become incarnate in flesh defiled by sin. Such teaching strikes at the very heart of the gospel.

If Mary was immaculately conceived, she would not have given Christ a body “in the likeness of sinful flesh”

(Romans 8:3). — Yet Scripture says that is exactly the kind of body that Christ was born with!

Furthermore, if the Church teaching is true, Christ could not have been tempted as we are by Satan; and therefore He could not sympathize fully with us. Let us consider what the Holy Scriptures have to say on this vital subject:

The virgin Mary was a beautiful character. She was the woman entrusted to give birth to our blessed Saviour. She was the one who reared Him and taught Him the Holy Scriptures. She is a model for all womanhood. But was she to be venerated, worshiped, and esteemed as a sinless being? The Catholic believes that Mary never sinned, nor could she have sinned, because, as the Church teaches, she had an immaculate conception. The answer can be found only in the Bible. We must approach this subject with an open mind and in the spirit of prayer.

The Church teaches that the virgin Mary was conceived without original sin. Being thus born without sin, or any tendency toward sinning, places her in a class by herself, superior to the rest of the human family. In fact, the Church declares that she remained without one stain of sin throughout her life.

Here is a brief résumé, or abridgment, of the history which led to her veneration and worship. Here were the gradual steps which led to the Beatification of Mary:

About the close of the third century and the beginning of the fourth, two schools of thought arose over the origin of Christ. These schools were known as Arianism and Orthodoxy.

Arius and his followers believed that Christ had a beginning. The Orthodox believed Christ existed from eternity and was coequal with the Father.

It became apparent that a council would have to decide the matter. In A.D. 325 the Nicaean Council, the first of a series of general councils, was held. The question of Christ's beginning was considered. Was He, while in human flesh, still the Son of God? Was He begotten or was

He self-existing?

Arianism was condemned, and the Orthodox beliefs were adopted. The Council took the position that because Christ had two natures—human and divine—the virgin Mary, in a certain sense, could be said to be the mother of God. She was called, in the Greek, the “Theotokos.” The title means “God-bearing,” that is, the “Mother of God.” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 578).

It was far from the intentions of the Council to beatify, or glorify, Mary. Nothing in authentic church history teaches that, at that time, the title “Mother of God” had any official encyclical confirming the new title of Mary. However, in Egypt, a school of thought developed concerning the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ. Consequently discussions arose regarding the virgin Mary as the “Mother of God.”

During the latter part of the fourth century and the first part of the fifth, violent disputes arose about the nature of Christ. Patriarchal rivalries played an important part, and these could be settled only by political intervention. Cyril and Nestorius were two leading churchmen involved in the much-disputed question on the nature of Christ and over Mary, who gave Christ His human nature.

Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria, took the position that the two natures of Christ before their union were distinct entities, but after the union they became one nature only. It would therefore be accurate to say that the virgin Mary should be given the title, “Mother of God.” The archbishop had quite a following and many loyal supporters.

Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, refused to accept the formula of the Nicaean Council regarding Mary as the “Mother of God.” Finally both parties made an appeal to Emperor Theodosius II, to settle the dispute.

In A.D. 431 the emperor called the Council of Ephesus. The delegates from Egypt and Asia Minor arrived quickly, as they did not have far to come. The Antioch delegates, who were favorable toward Nestorius, were delayed. Even the Roman delegates did not arrive on time. The result was

that Cyril opened the Council without the full delegated body present. For the most part, the opponents of the "Mother of God" concept were not present.

Nestorius refused to appear at the Council and was excommunicated and deposed from his clerical status. The Council lasted only one day. The virgin Mary was honored as the "Mother of God" by the Cyril delegates. A great celebration followed; torches were lighted; and, amid great acclamation, Mary was hailed as the "Mother of God."

It will be remembered that, in this same city of Ephesus, the Apostle Paul had difficulty with the worshipers of the goddess Diana (Acts 19:23-28). The world worshiped Diana as a goddess, in Paul's day; but now the virgin Mary was classified as the "Mother of God." This means she was the mother of her Creator. What higher claims could be made for a mortal human being?

Shortly after the Council of Ephesus ended, the opposition delegation arrived. They learned that, under Cyril's leadership, Nestorius had been excommunicated and Mary had been proclaimed the "Mother of God."

When John, the Patriarch of Antioch, with his delegation learned what had been done by the Council, he proceeded to call for a counter-council. He stated that the work done by the former Council was illegal, inasmuch as some of the involved parties were absent.

John's wish was granted, and another Council convened with all delegates present, including the Roman delegates who were too late for the first Council. The emperor's representative were also in attendance. The Council excommunicated Cyril; but the papal delegates had the first Council reconvene, to reconsider the action relative to the virgin Mary. The first Council's decision was approved, and Mary was declared to be the Theotokos, that is, "The Mother of God." This date, A.D. 431, marks the time when the worship of Mary became much more widespread.

Many erroneous claims were made over the years regarding the life of Mary. According to Jerome, Augustine,

Gregory, Epiphanius, and others, about the middle of the fourth century, stories were spread about virgins who had taken the vows of sanctity and chastity and who devoted their lives to the service of the Temple at Jerusalem.

It was said that, among these virgins, was Mary. The claim was made that she had consecrated her life to God by taking the vow of perpetual virginity. To this was added the theory that her marriage to Joseph was formal, and that she had continued a virgin until her death. The theory was that actual marriage would somehow have been defiling to Mary.

This was the new teaching, and it caused long debated arguments as to whether Mary actually had been a perpetual virgin.

This led to the promulgation of a canon law, which said that all marriage was a low, vile state and best avoided:

“Whoever shall affirm that the conjugal [married] state is to be preferred to a life of virginity or celibacy, and that it is not better and more conducive to happiness to remain in virginity or celibacy, than to be married, let him be accursed.”—*Roman Catholic Canon Law 10.*

The other phase of the new teaching was that Mary was the “Mother of God” and therefore entitled to devotion and honor above all other human beings. These extravagant honors conferred on Mary led to the development of a sect called Collyridian, derived from the word *collyridae*, the cakes which were offered to the virgin. This sect regards Mary as worthy of divine worship. This accelerated the movement to accord her full, divine adulation.

Yet, for centuries, there was an ongoing controversy over the matter before her Immaculate Conception and her Assumption to heaven finally became official dogmas of the Church.

On December 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed Mary immaculately conceived. This is now accepted as an authentic dogma of the Church.

Not until November 1, 1950, did Pope Pius XII declare her Assumption into heaven a dogma. It means that soon

after her death, her resurrection took place and united her body with her soul in heaven.

Of course these doctrines had been taught, to one extent or another, for centuries, but one did not have to believe them. However, after they were proclaimed as dogmas, it would be heresy to disbelieve them.

The Holy Scriptures declare that Jesus is our only Saviour. Christ, the One who died on our behalf, is the only one who can forgive our sins, deliver us from them, and redeem our souls.

Under the Inspiration of God, St. Peter said this:

“Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.”—*Acts 4:12*.

The Apostle Paul declared that Christ was the only Saviour:

“For there is one God, and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”—*1 Timothy 2:5*.

The Apostle John said our Advocate with the Father is Jesus Christ:

“My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just.”—*1 St. John 2:1*.

But uninspired men, in later centuries, have suggested that the only means of salvation is through Mary:

“O Mary, we poor sinners know no other refuge than thee, for thou art our only hope, and on thee we rely for our salvation.’ Thou art our only advocate with Jesus Christ; to thee we all turn ourselves.”—*St. Alphonsus M. de Liguori, The Glories of Mary, p. 121*.

It is said that God only punishes sinners; but Mary alone can help them:

“Mary . . . although a Queen, is not a queen of justice, intent on the punishment of the wicked, but a queen of mercy, intent only on commiserating and pardoning sinners. And this is the reason for which the Church

requires that we should expressly call her 'the Queen of Mercy' . . .

"The kingdom of justice He [God] reserves for Himself, and that of mercy He yielded to Mary, ordaining at the same time that all mercies that are dispensed to men should pass through the hands of Mary, and be disposed of by her at will . . .

" 'The kingdom of God consists in power and mercy; reserving power to Himself, He, in some way, yielded the empire of mercy to his Mother' . . . 'When the Blessed Virgin conceived the Eternal Word in her womb, and brought Him forth, she obtained half the kingdom of God; so that she is Queen of Mercy, as Jesus Christ is King of Justice.' "—*St. Aiphonsus M. de Liguori, The Glories of Mary, pp. 37-38.*

" 'Of the church militant thou art the empress, queen, mistress, protectress, advocate and mother. Thou shalt be the friend, patroness and protectress of all Our friends, the just. Console them, fortify and fill them with every good, if by their devotion they render themselves worthy.

"Thou art the depository of all Our divine benefits, the treasury of all Our graces. Into thy hands We remit the help and favor of Our grace, so that thou mayest dispense them; for We will grant nothing to the world but what shall pass through thy hands, and We will refuse nothing which thou mayest desire to grant.

"Grace shall be spread abroad on thy lips, for all that thou shalt wish and ordain in heaven and on earth; angels and men shall obey thee in all places, because all that is Ours belongs to thee, as thou hast always belonged to Us, and thou shalt reign with Us for all eternity.' "—*Boullan, The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary, pp. 431-432.*

Our only safety is remaining with the Word of God: the Sacred Scriptures, as found in the Old and New Testaments.

- PART EIGHT -

**REMEMBERING
THE BLESSED DAY
OF WORSHIP**

HOW TO DEEPEN
YOUR WORSHIP
MORE LESSONS FROM THE MOST
HOLY GOD, THROUGH
THE HOLY SAINTS OF OLD

- PART EIGHT-

REMEMBERING THE BLESSED DAY OF WORSHIP

HOW TO DEEPEN
YOUR WORSHIP
OF
THE MOST HOLY GOD
AND
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR

It is the earnest cry of every child of God to draw closer to his God, and to know how to worship more deeply. In order to do this, we must open the Holy Scriptures, for only those writings can safely lead us into right paths of holiness.

Oh, our souls cry out: How can we draw closer to our precious Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ?

INTRODUCTION

It is a basic teaching of Holy Scripture that the Bible is the fundamental authority, and takes precedence over the sayings of church leaders or church councils. Those church leaders may be ever so good, yet their teachings do not have the authority that the Inspired Word of God has. The commandments of God rank higher than the commandments of men.

“And when they had brought them, they set them before the council . . . Peter and the other apostles answering, said: We ought to obey God, rather than men.”—*Acts 5:27, 29.*

“In vain do they worship Me, teaching doctrines and commandments of men.”—*St. Matthew 15:9.*

“For there shall be a time, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: and will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables.”—*2 Timothy 4:3-4.*

“But the Pharisees and the lawyers despised the counsel of God against themselves.”—*St. Luke 7:30.*

“And He said to them, Well do you make void the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition.”—*St. Mark 7:9 (Acts 4:19-20).*

“But prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”—*1 Thessalonians 5:21.*

“To the law rather, and to the testimony. And if they speak not according to this Word, they shall not have the morning light.”—*Isaias 8:20.*

“All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man

All Scripture passages quoted in this chapter have been approved by the Church. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are from the Rheims-Douai.

of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work.”—*2 Timothy 3:16-17*.

“Embracing that faithful Word which is according to doctrine, that he may be able to exhort in sound doctrine, and to convince the gainsayers.”—*Titus 1:9*.

How thankful we can be that we have the Holy Scriptures—the precious Word of God! What would we do without the Bible! We dare not leave it for the words of men—especially when those words teach disobedience to the Inspired Word of God. Cling to Jesus and to your Bible all your life, and obey all that it tells you—and you will be safe.

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”—*1 Timothy 2:4*.

“They receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”—*2 Thessalonians 2:10*.

“He hath called you by our gospel, unto the purchasing of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—*2 Thessalonians 2:13 (1 St. Peter 1:2)*.

“Purifying your souls in the obedience of charity.”—*1 St. Peter 1:22*.

“If you continue in My Word, you shall be My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”—*St. John 8:31-32*.

“Sanctify them in truth. Thy Word is truth.”—*St. John 17:17*.

“Open ye the gates, and let the just nation, that keepeth the truth, enter in.”—*Isaias 26:2*.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . . Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.”—*The Apocalypse 21:1; 22:14*.

Here are fourteen Bible facts about God’s holy day of worship. It is quite clear that, according to Scripture, the Bible Sabbath is the only weekly rest day you and I should

keep today:

DEEPENING OUR WORSHIP OF GOD—1

The Sabbath was given to all mankind at the Creation of this world.

The seventh-day Sabbath was given to mankind on the seventh day of Creation Week.

“So the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the furniture of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

“And He blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.”—*Genesis 2:1-3*.

God Himself rested upon the Bible Sabbath. What an honor that is to any day! Second, He blessed it. How many things—all through the Bible—did God bless? Not very many. But He blessed the seventh day. And He made it a rest day. Do we dare do our common labor on a day that He blessed and set aside for rest? Third, He sanctified, or hallowed it. How many things did God hallow in the Bible? Very, very few things. How many things did He bless *and* hallow? Hardly any. Let no man tell you that the seventh-day Bible Sabbath is unimportant. It is important to your Creator; it ought to be important to you also.

The Bible Sabbath was the first divine institution for mankind in the history of the world; and, along with marriage, it is one of the only institutions to come down, past Eden, into human history. The Sabbath is as sacred as is marriage and is to be as sacredly guarded.

God dedicated and set aside the Sabbath as a rest day—2,000 years before the first Jew. Abraham is considered by all to have been the first Jew. He lived about 2000 B.C. Biblical records indicate that the Creation of this world took place about 4000 B.C. So the Bible Sabbath is not Jewish!

It is for mankind; it is for all the world.

“The Sabbath was made for man.”—*St. Mark 2:27*.

DEEPENING OUR WORSHIP OF GOD—2

The Sabbath is a memorial of Creation and our salvation.

First, it is a memorial of Creation.

“It is an everlasting covenant between Me and the children of Israel, and a perpetual sign. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and in the seventh He ceased from work.”—*Exodus 31:16-17*.

As a memorial of the Creation of this world, the Sabbath cannot pass away without first having this world pass away and creating a new one! Our planet could not have a new or different Sabbath day, without having it first hurled into oblivion—and then a new planet created from nothing again. But no such event has occurred.

Second, the Sabbath is a symbol of our salvation. When we keep it, we tell all the world that we belong to God and that we serve and obey Him. The seventh-day Sabbath is a sign of our conversion, sanctification, and salvation:

“See that thou keep My Sabbath: because it is a sign between Me and you in your generations: that you may know that I am the Lord, who sanctify you.”—*Exodus 31:13*.

“Moreover I gave them also My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them: that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.”—*Ezekiel 20:12*.

“And sanctify My Sabbaths, that they may be a sign between Me and you: and that you may know that I am the Lord your God.”—*Ezekiel 20:20*.

But what about Christ’s resurrection? Nowhere in Scripture were we told to keep any day in honor of Christ’s resurrection. To do so is unscriptural. On the contrary, to set aside the Creation and sanctification Sabbath of the

Bible—for another day of the week—and excuse it by saying that we do so “in honor of Christ’s resurrection,”—is indeed to do a very daring thing. Who dare presume to set aside the Memorial of Creation and salvation for any reason! To knowingly do so, flies in the face of repeated, direct, Biblical commands by the God of heaven. To do so denies that He is our Creator and Redeemer.

If we abandon the Bible Sabbath and keep another day holy, in the Judgment what excuse can we offer? There is no Bible reason for keeping the first day of the week holy instead of the seventh day.

DEEPENING OUR WORSHIP OF GOD—3

The seventh-day Sabbath is the Lord’s Day.

On the Lord’s Day, John the Revelator saw Christ in vision.

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.”—*The Apocalypse 1:10*.

There is nothing in the above passage which says the “Lord’s Day” is Sunday. So we must look elsewhere in the Bible—and, as we do, we find that God consistently tells us what it is.

The seventh day Sabbath is the Day of the Lord. It is the day unto the Lord (Exodus 16:23, 25; 31:15; 35:2), the day of the Lord (Exodus 20:10; Leviticus 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:12-14), and His own day (Isaiah 58:13).

“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure in My Holy Day, and call the Sabbath delightful, and the holy of the Lord glorious, and glorify Him, while thou dost not thy own ways, and thy own will is not found to speak a word. Then shalt thou be delighted in the Lord, and I will lift thee up above the high places of the earth, and will feed thee with the inheritance of Jacob thy father. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”—*Isaiah 58:13-14*.

Jesus is the Creator who gave us the Sabbath (Ephesians 3:9; St. John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; Genesis 2:1-3), and John heard Him call Himself, “the LORD of the Sabbath day” (St. Matthew 12:8; St. Mark 2:28).

“The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath also.”—*Mark 2:28.*

John the Revelator well-knew which day was the Lord’s Day. This day is the Memorial Day of the Creator (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 31:17), the Memorial Day of Christ’s redemption of His people (Ezekiel 20:12, 20).

“Keep holy My Sabbaths, as a sign between Me and you to show that I am the Lord, your God.”—*Ezekiel 20:20 (The Catholic Bible; e.g. New American).*

The Bible Sabbath is the Lord’s Day—a day that God wants to share with you. He plans to keep it with you through all eternity to come (Isa 66:22-23). Worship Him on the Best Day—His Day—the only weekly day of worship your God ever gave you.

DEEPENING OUR WORSHIP OF GOD—4

The people of God kept the Bible Sabbath before the Ten Commandments were given at Mount Sinai.

The Sabbath Truth was first given to our race in Eden before the fall of man. It was given before sin existed, and apart from it. It was given to every man to link him to his God. And if Adam needed the Sabbath, we need it all the more today.

When Moses initially returned to Egypt, he told his enslaved people that they must begin keeping the Sabbath again. God was about to do great things for them, and they must identify themselves as His worshipers.

“The king of Egypt said to them: Why do you Moses and Aaron draw off the people from their works? Get you gone to your burdens. And Pharaoh said: The people of the land is numerous: you see that the multitude is

increased: how much more if you give them rest from their works?"—*Exodus 5:4-5*.

Moses had not told them to stop working. But he had told them to keep the weekly Sabbath rest. Pharaoh was angry about this.

And then, four chapters before the Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai, the God of heaven spoke in such a way that it is obvious that the seventh-day Sabbath was already well-known by the people of God—but not always well-kept:

“The Lord said to Moses: Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you: let the people go forth, and gather what is sufficient for every day: that I may prove them whether they will walk in My law, or not. But the sixth day let them provide for to bring in: and let it be double to that they were wont to gather every day . . .

“But on the sixth day they gathered twice as much . . . And he [Moses] said to them: This is that what the Lord hath spoken: To morrow is the rest of the Sabbath sanctified to the Lord . . . Gather it six days: but on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, therefore it shall not be found. And the seventh day came: and some of the people going forth to gather, found none. And the Lord said unto Moses: How long will you refuse to keep My commandments and My law? . . . And the people kept the Sabbath on the seventh day.”—*Exodus 16:4-5, 22-23, 26-28, 30*.

There are those who say that the seventh-day Sabbath was not commanded by God, nor kept by man before it was spoken from Mount Sinai in Exodus 20. But Genesis 2:1-3 and Exodus 16 prove otherwise.

DEEPENING OUR WORSHIP OF GOD—5

The seventh-day Sabbath Commandment lies in the very heart of the Moral Law of Ten Commandments.

“Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour, and shalt do all thy works. But on

the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates.

“For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.”—*Exodus 20:11*.

Here are more Bible facts about this:

(1) The Sabbath Commandment is part of the Moral Law of Ten Commandments. The Apostle James tells us that if we break any part of this law, we have broken it all (James 2:10-12). We cannot tear out the Fourth Commandment without setting aside all the others as well. They all stand together, because the God of Heaven put them all together.

(2) This “Sabbath commandment” is not a any-one-day-a-week holy commandment, but the seventh-day holy commandment. We do not obey this commandment by keeping holy the third day of the week or the first. We only obey the commandment by keeping the seventh day—the Bible Sabbath. Adam and Eve could not select at random any tree in the garden and call it the “tree of life.” They had to go to the one that God had appointed as the Tree of Life. And the same for the “tree of knowledge of good and evil.” God made the decision as to which tree was which. And this He did with the weekly Sabbath;—*He* chose the seventh day, and not any other day with it or in place of it. We do not decide which day of the week is to be kept holy unto God; He alone is to do this. It is for Him to command; it is for us to obey.

(3) Some say that Genesis 2:1-3 is not a command for man to keep the Sabbath, and therefore we do not obey it. But Exodus 16 and 20 clearly show that man *is* commanded to keep it holy. And who dare say that the Ten Commandments were only for the Jewish race? Are the rest of us permitted to lie, steal, cheat, and commit adultery. Are only the Hebrews to observe these ten moral principles?

(4) The reason for the commandment is the Creation of this world: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth." This is not something local, merely for a Semitic race;—it is a commandment for all in the entire world who shall bow down and worship their Creator in humble thankfulness for His plan to save them, through the life and death of Jesus Christ. It was given at the Creation of this world, and was given to every man, woman, and child who shall live on this planet.

(5) The commandment says to "remember." The people of God were not being told of some new concept. They were to keep in mind that which they already knew.

(6) God wrote these ten commandments with His own finger (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10). He wrote them on the most enduring thing in the world, and that is rock (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10). And He wishes to write them also on our hearts.

"This is the testament which I will make unto them after those days, saith the Lord. I will give My laws in their hearts, and on their minds will I write them."—*Hebrews 10:16 (Hebrews 8:10; Jeremiah 31:33)*.

And, if we will let Him, through the New Covenant He will write His holy law upon our hearts. To have the Ten Commandments written on our hearts means two things: First, a willingness to obey them, and, second, letting God enable us to do so by the grace of Jesus, His Son. Obedience to God's law is to become an integral part of our lives.

DEEPENING OUR WORSHIP OF GOD—6

The weekly seventh-day Sabbath is part of the Moral Law contained in the Ten Commandments. It will stand forever. The yearly sabbaths were part of the ceremonial laws that prefigured, or foreshadowed, the death and ministry of Christ.

These "shadow laws," such as Passover and the Wave Sheaf, which were a part of the ceremonial or sacrificial

law, would not endure past the death of Christ.

“For the [ceremonial] law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things; by the selfsame sacrifices which they offer continually every year, can never make the comers thereunto perfect. For then they would have ceased to be offered . . . But in them there is made a commemoration of sins every year. For it is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away.”—*Hebrews 10:1-4*.

These ceremonial laws were not written on rock, but were contained in ordinances, written on parchment. The rock was to endure, but the ordinances that foreshadowed the death of Christ were to pass away at His death. It is for this reason that we do not, today, observe the yearly sabbaths of the Passover and the Wave Sheaf.

“Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross . . . Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a festival day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.”—*Colossians 2:14, 16-17*.

In the Greek it says, “or of the sabbaths.” There is one weekly Sabbath; it comes down to us from the Creation of this world and will be kept in the New Earth (Isaias 66:22-23). But the yearly sabbaths did not begin until Moses. They foreshadowed and explained the coming death of Christ till it happened; and, at His death, they were nailed to His cross.

If the ordinances containing the yearly sabbaths had not been set aside at Calvary, we would need now to sacrifice animals on various occasions throughout the year. But we are not now to slay lambs, for Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.

“Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world.”—*St. John 1:29*

“For Christ our pasch is sacrificed.”—*1 Corinthians 5:7*.

“You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver, from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers: But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled.”—*1 St. Peter 1:18-19.*

DEEPENING OUR WORSHIP OF GOD—7

In the Bible, God repeatedly gave warnings of serious consequences if those who professed to worship Him did not keep His holy Sabbath.

Examples of this can be found in Numbers 15:32-36; 2 Chronicles 36:11-21; Jeremias 17:19-27; 52:7-14.

God also warned against professed Sabbath observers who, at the same time, were engaging in falsehood and wrongdoing. An example of this is given in Isaias 1:2-20. An example of the solution is to be found in Isaias 58:1-14. The answers are clear, aren't they? If we will seek God with all our heart and by the grace of Christ put away our darling sins, He will remold us into loving, obedient children. He will place His Holy Spirit within us and write His laws upon our heart. And then it will be heart-work to obey Him—an act of genuine, unfeigned love.

DEEPENING OUR WORSHIP OF GOD—8

Throughout His earthly life, Jesus always kept the Ten Commandments. By so doing, He gave us an example to follow. We are told to follow His example.

“It is written of Me, that I should do Thy will: O My God, I have desired it, and Thy law in the midst of my heart.”—*Psalms 39:8-9.*

“[He] who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.”—*1 St. Peter 2:22.*

“[He was] tempted in all things like as we are, yet with

out sin.”—*Hebrews 4:15*.

“Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest before God, that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people.”—*Hebrews 2:17*.

“Because I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.”—*St. John 6:38*.

“For unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps.”—*1 St. Peter 2:21*.

“He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also to walk, even as He walked.”—*1 St. John 2:6*.

“As therefore you have received Jesus Christ the Lord, walk in Him.”—*Colossians 2:6*.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”—*Philippians 2:5*.

“I seek not My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.”—*St. John 5:30 (6:38)*.

There were those who feared that Jesus intended to overthrow the Law of God. But He definitely stated His belief in its eternity. The Law of God will never pass away. Its moral precepts are for all men through all time to come. And would we want it any other way?

“Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets . . . till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled.”—*St. Matthew 5:17-18*.

DEEPENING OUR WORSHIP OF GOD—9

Christ’s disciples faithfully kept the Bible Sabbath, not Sunday.

The disciples had been with Jesus for three and a half years, and had listened closely to His teachings. What they did at the time of His death on Calvary shows what He

taught them. The sacred importance of the seventh-day Sabbath was of such concern to them that they would not even prepare the body of Jesus properly for burial on Friday, lest they transgress the Fourth Commandment.

“And when evening was now come, (because it was the parasceve, that is, the day before the Sabbath) . . . Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of Joseph, beheld where He was laid.

“And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought sweet spices, that coming, they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they come to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen. And they said one to another: Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”—*St. Mark 15:42, 47-16:1-3*.

“And taking Him down, he wrapped Him in fine linen, and laid Him in a sepulchre that was hewed in stone, wherein never yet man had been laid . . . And the women that were come with Him from Galilee, following after, saw the sepulchre, and how His body was laid . . .

“And on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.”—*St. Luke 23:53, 55-24:1-2*.

There were others who did not regard the Bible Sabbath sacredly. But we would not wish to be reckoned among that company. Those were the murderers of Jesus, who cared neither for His life of obedience to the Ten Commandments, nor for His teachings to obey the Ten Commandments:

“And there was there Mary Magdalen, and the other Mary sitting over against the sepulchre.

“And the next day [Sabbath], which followed the day of preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying: Sir, we have remembered, that that seducer said, while He was yet alive: After three

days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day: lest perhaps His disciples come and steal Him away, and say to the people: He is risen from the dead; and the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate saith to them: You have a guard [of Roman guards]; go, guard it as you know. And they departing, made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting guards.

“And in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalen and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it.”—*St. Matthew 27:61-28:1-2.*

On Friday, in the presence of the people, the Jewish rulers refused to enter Pilate’s Judgment Hall, lest they be “defiled.” And so Pilate had to come outside and speak with them (St. John 18:28-29, 33, 38). But on the Holy Sabbath, they secretly did business on the Sabbath—and went into the Judgment Hall of Pilate to conduct it! While the evil priests and scribes did weekday business upon the hours of the Sabbath, those who had daily listened to the teachings of Jesus, and loved and obeyed His beliefs, were careful not to work on those holy hours—even though it would lead them to the impossible situation of how to anoint His body two days later after the tomb had been closed and sealed.

And what did Jesus do during those holy hours of that Sabbath? This is also very revealing. God, in His great time clock, had arranged for the exact time when Christ should be born and when He should die. His death took place in AD. 31, in accordance with the prophecy of Daniel 9:25-27. And it came in the spring of the year—at the Passover time when the lamb prefiguring His death was to be slain. And when did the death come? On a Friday afternoon, so that He could keep the Sabbath rest, free from enemies, in the tomb all through those sacred hours.

And then, on the first day of the week, He arose and

began working again: He went all the way to heaven and presented His great sacrifice to His Father and received assurance that it had been accepted on behalf of His faithful ones on earth. Prior to this, He asked Mary not to touch Him, for He had not yet ascended to the Father (St. John 20:17). When He returned to earth that evening, He walked with two disciples to Emmaus (St. Luke 24:13-31) and, then, spoke with many of the others in the upper room (St. John 20:19; St. Luke 24:36). And now He invited them to touch and handle Him, that they might be assured that it was He (St. Luke 24:39-43; St. John 20:20). That was a busy first day. But then, it was just another working day, as Scripture tells us:

At the Creation, God used the first day of the week as a working day (Genesis 1:3-5).

On Mount Sinai, He commanded that it be nothing more than a working day (Exodus 20:8-9).

At the resurrection, it was another working day. Christ went to heaven and came back on that day (St. John 20:17; St. Luke 24:13-31; St. John 20:19-20).

Our God considers it nothing more than a “working day” (Ezekiel 46:1).

Should we consider it anything more than this?

There is no example of Sundaykeeping by the Apostles. The talk that Paul gave on the first day of the week at Troas was on Saturday night because a night meeting on the first day would have to be on Saturday night, since according to the Biblical pattern the day begins and ends at sunset); and the next day—Sunday—he chose to walk 28 miles to Assos while his companions journeyed by ship. This was not Sabbathkeeping (Acts 20:6-14).

That “first day passage” in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 is only a statement by Paul, that the faithful set aside at home each Sunday morning, as they do their weekly accounts and budget-keeping, a donation for the poor in Jerusalem. Paul wanted to obtain it when he later passed through town. They were to set it aside “without gatherings.” Modern translations show that this means to set aside the money at

home.

It is highly significant that Acts 20:6-14 and 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 are the only two first-day passages mentioned in Paul's travels or writings.

DEEPENING OUR WORSHIP OF GOD—10

According to the New Testament, the Apostles of Jesus always kept the Bible Sabbath.

“But they passing through Perge [Perga], came to Antioch in Pisidia: and entering into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, they sat down.”—*Acts 13:14*.

“And as they went out, they desired them, that on the next Sabbath, they would speak unto them these words.”—*Acts 13:42*.

“And upon the Sabbath day, we went forth without the gate by a river side, where it seemed that there was prayer; and sitting down, we spoke to the women that were assembled.”—*Acts 16:13*.

“They came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, according to his custom, went in unto them; and for three Sabbath days he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures.”—*Acts 17:1-2*.

Paul supported himself by tentmaking; and then, on the Sabbath, he would preach the gospel.

“And because he was of the same trade, he remained with them, and wrought (now they were tentmakers by trade). And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, bringing in the name of the Lord Jesus: and he persuaded the Jews and the Greeks . . . He stayed there a year and six months, teaching among them the Word of God.”—*Acts 18:3-4, 11*.

Paul's manner was the same as Christ's custom: to keep the Bible Sabbath (Acts 17:1-2; St. Luke 4:16).

Paul never taught that the Moral Law was, or could be, set aside. Ever will it govern the conduct of mankind.

“Do we, then, destroy the law through faith? God forbid: yea, but we establish the law.”—*Romans 3:31*.

“What shall we say, then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. For we that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?”—*Romans 6:1-2*.

“What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? God forbid. But I do not know sin, but by the law; for I had not known concupiscence, if the law did not say: Thou shalt not covet.”—*Romans 7:7*.

Paul clearly saw that the problem was that we needed to obey the law; there was nothing wrong with the requirements of the law itself.

“Wherefore the law indeed is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”—*Romans 7:12*.

“Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but [that which is important is] the observance of the commandments of God.”—*1 Corinthians 7:19*.

The moral standard that governs mankind was not relaxed or destroyed by the death of Christ; for, indeed, it is through the merits of Christ’s sacrifice that we can be empowered to keep that law.

“Thou shalt call His name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins.”—*St. Matthew 1:21*.

Jesus saves us from our sins, not in our sins. And since sin is the breaking of the Ten Commandments, it is obvious that He saves us by enabling—strengthening—us to keep that law.

“Whosoever committeth sin committeth also iniquity; and sin is iniquity.”—*1 St. John 3:4*.

The other Apostles saw this same great truth, that the moral standard that governs mankind was not relaxed or destroyed by the death of Christ:

“But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if a man be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he shall be compared to a man beholding his own countenance in a glass. For he

beheld himself, and went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was.

“But he that hath looked into the perfect law of liberty, and hath continued therein, not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word; this man shall be blessed in his deed . . . And whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all. For He that said, Thou shalt not commit adultery, said also, Thou shalt not kill. Now if thou do not commit adultery, but shall kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as being to be judged by the law of liberty . . . Faith also, if it have not works, is dead, in itself. But some man will say: Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works; and I will shew thee, by works, my faith.”—*St. James 1:22-25; 2:10-12, 17-18.*

“In this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. For this is the charity of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not heavy.”—*1 St. John 5:2-3.*

DEEPENING OUR WORSHIP OF GOD—11

Sunday sacredness is not in the Bible.

Elsewhere in this study, we have considered most of the Bible passages which mention the first day of the week. If God transferred the sacredness from the seventh to the first day, we would find a clear statement to that effect in one of these “first day texts.” Yet we search for it in vain.

Sunday is never called sacred or holy anywhere in the Bible. It is never called the Sabbath or the Lord’s Day. Indeed, Sunday is only mentioned eight times in the Bible:

The first time is Genesis 1:5, where the first day of Creation Week is spoken of.

The next five times refer to the women taking spices to the sepulche, to embalm Jesus, and Jesus’ appearances

on Sunday to His disciples after His rest in the tomb on the Sabbath (St. Matthew 28:1; St. Mark 16:1-2, 9; St. Luke 24:1; St. John 20:1, 19). Jesus went and told them the good news that He was alive. Nothing here about Sunday sacredness.

The seventh time is in Acts 20:7-8, where Paul speaks to the Ephesian leaders. A few verses later (Acts 20:15-38), he speaks to another group in the middle of the week, but that does not make that day any more sacred than the Sunday (actually Saturday night) preceding it. For only a direct command of God can make a day holy.

Repeatedly, in Acts, Paul kept the Sabbath holy (Acts 13:14-16, 40-46; 16:12-15; 17:1-4), just as His Master had done before him. Acts is silent on Sunday sanctity as is Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The eighth and last text is found in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, where Paul instructs the believers to do their bookkeeping at home on Sunday mornings. The first working day of the week was a good day for this, since Friday they were busy preparing for the Sabbath. This is the only mention in all Paul's writings of the first day of the week.

DEEPENING OUR WORSHIP OF GOD—12

God predicted in Scripture that men would later try to change the Law of God—and especially the “time law.”

The Bible Sabbath is very important—for it is the very center of our worship of God! If men were later to try to change it to another day, we should surely expect a Bible prophecy saying that it would happen.

“And he [the little horn power] shall speak words against the High One, and shall crush the saints of the most High: and he shall think himself able to change times and laws, and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and a half of a time.”—*Daniel 7:25*.

The church of the Dark Ages was to rule the world for 1260 years; and, during this time, they would try to tear

out God's holy Time Law and put a counterfeit in its place. Oh, what blasphemy men can dream up, when they are tempted by Satan to gain religious control of their fellow men!

“Let no man deceive you by any means, for unless there come a revolt first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth, and is lifted up above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself as if he were God.”—*2 Thessalonians 2:3-4*.

“And sanctify My Sabbaths; that they may be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.”—*Ezekiel 20:20*.

But, after the New Testament was finished and the Apostles had died, the Church thought it had the authority to change what God had repeatedly commanded. It tried to transfer the sacredness from the seventh to the first day of the week. This was the predicted attempt to change God's “time law” (*Daniel 7:25*).

“Ques.—Have you any other way of proving that the [Roman Catholic] Church has power to institute festivals of precept?

“Ans.—Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her;—she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority.”—*Stevenan Keenan, A Doctrinal Catechism, 1846 edition, p. 174*.

“Ques.—Which is the Sabbath day?

“Ans.—Saturday is the Sabbath day.

“Ques.—Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?”

“Ans.—We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.”—*Peter Geiermann, The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine, 1957 edition, p. 50*.

How important it is that we obey the commandments of God rather than the commandments of men, even the most respected ones!

“Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are whom you obey?”—*Romans 6:16*.

“It is written, The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve.”—*St. Matthew 4:10*.

“And in vain do they worship Me, teaching doctrines and commandments of men.”—*St. Matthew 15:9*.

“How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.”—*3 Kings 18:21*.

DEEPENING OUR WORSHIP OF GOD—13

The seventh-day Sabbath, instituted by God at the Creation of this world is the seal of His governmental authority.

God’s basic governmental code for mankind is the Ten Commandments. Of those ten, only the Sabbath commandment reveals the name of our Creator and Lawgiver.

Of all the commandments in the Decalogue, only the Fourth Commandment reveals the (1) name, (2) authority, and (3) dominion of the Author of this Law:

In six days, (1) the Lord (name) (2) made (office—the Creator) (3) heaven and earth (dominion or territory over which He rules). This commandment alone contains the seal of God.

Examine the notary seal of a notary public or any other legal seal. Each seal will always contain the above three identifying marks.

“Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour, and shalt do all thy works.

“But on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son,

nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy beast, or the stranger that is within thy gates.

“For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that are in them, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.”—*Exodus 20:8-11*.

The Sabbath commandment contains the seal of God, and the Sabbath itself—given in this commandment—is inseparably connected with this seal. For the Sabbath is the basis of all true worship of our Creator. And this worship lies at the heart of all our acknowledgment of His authority as our Creator and our God. The Sabbath is ever to be kept as a sign that we belong to Him. And the keeping of it brings us within the circle of this seal.

The seal is impressed in order that all may know the authority from whence it comes—and that all may know that it is not to be changed. The seventh-day Sabbath comes from God. Let no man dare to tamper with it—for the seal of God is upon it.

“Now, therefore, O king, confirm the sentence, and sign the decree: that which is decreed by the Medes and Persians may not be altered nor any man be allowed to transgress it.”—*Daniel 6:8*.

“Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples.”—*Isaias 8:16*.

“It [the Sabbath] is an everlasting covenant between Me and the children of Israel, and a perpetual sign. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and in the seventh He ceased from His work.”—*Exodus 31:16-17*.

“And sanctify My Sabbaths, that they may be a sign between Me and you: and that you may know that I am the Lord your God.”—*Ezekiel 20:20*.

The Sabbath is a vivid sign of God’s creative power—not only of this earth, but in our lives as well. It requires the same power to clean our lives and redeem us as it did to create us in the first place.

“Create a clean heart in me, O God.”—*Psalms 50:12*.

“We are . . . created in Christ Jesus in good works.”—
Ephesians 2:10.

But there is to be a special sealing work in these last days, just before the return of Jesus in the clouds of heaven:

“And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the sign of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels . . . saying: Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads?”—*The Apocalypse 7:2-3 (Ezekiel 9:1-6).*

“And I beheld, and lo a Lamb stood upon mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having the name of His Father, written on their foreheads.”—
The Apocalypse 14:1.

The name of the Father is expressive of His character. When Moses asked to see the glory of God, the Lord passed by and told His name—that which He was like: “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, and true” (Exodus 34:6). And as we look at God’s holy law, we see another view of His character. It is a transcript of that character—God’s characteristics written out.

When God writes His name on your forehead and right hand—He has written His law on your heart. This is the work of the new covenant (Hebrews 8:10; 10:16; Jeremiah 31:33), and that work reaches its climax when God “seals in” His own just before He returns the second time in the clouds of heaven. What are those sealed ones like? They are fully obedient to the Law of God:

“And in their mouth there was found no lie; for they are without spot before the throne of God.”—*The Apocalypse 14:5.*

But in the final crisis before His return, there will be those who will yield obedience to the beast instead of to God.

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice: If any man shall adore the beast and his im-

age, and receive his character in his forehead, or in his hand; he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.”—*The Apocalypse 14:9-10*.

“And he [the beast] shall make all, both little and great, rich and poor, freemen and bondmen, to have a character in their right hand, or in their foreheads.”—*The Apocalypse 13:16*.

In contrast with those who serve the beast and receive his mark, are those who in the last days will serve God and receive His seal. How can they be identified? God has told us in His Word. Here is a description of God’s remnant people at the end of time:

“And the dragon [Satan, working through his agents] was angry against the woman [the true church]: and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”—*The Apocalypse 12:17*.

And the third angel of The Apocalypse 14, which warns men not to receive the mark of the beast, at the same time tells them how to avoid receiving it—by keeping the commandments of God through the faith of Jesus Christ:

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice: If any man shall adore the beast and his image, and receive his character in his forehead, or in his hand, he shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God . . . Here is the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”—*The Apocalypse 14:9-10, 12*.

The final crisis will be caused by a decree by the beast, that all men must disobey a commandment of the law of God. The nations and churches of the world will not require men to steal or lie or commit adultery. The growing movement toward national Sunday laws is growing stronger every passing year. It is seen that in this point, and in this alone, will be found the heart of the crisis of The Apocalypse 13 and 14.

The first angel of The Apocalypse 14 calls on all men

every where, today, to reverence God—by returning to the worship of the Creator of all things.

“And I saw another angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the eternal gospel, to preach unto them that sit upon the earth, and over every nation, and tribe, and kindred, and tongue, and people:

“Saying with a loud voice: Fear the Lord, and give Him honour; because the hour of His judgment is come; and adore ye Him, that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”—*The Apocalypse 14:6-7*.

As the crisis nears, we must prepare for it.

“The observance of Sunday by the Protestants is a homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the [Catholic] Church.”—*Monsignor Louis Segur, “Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today,” page 213*.

Already we are facing Sunday closing laws on local levels. Men are prohibited from doing business on the first working day of the week, lest they be fined or imprisoned. And the situation will grow worse in the days just ahead.

“That the image of the beast should speak; and should cause [decree], that whosoever will not adore the image of the beast, should be slain. And he shall make all, both little and great, rich and poor, freemen and bondmen, to have a character in their right hand, or in their foreheads. And that no man might buy or sell, but he that hath the character.”—*The Apocalypse 13:15-17*.

But there is victory for those who will stand true to the God of heaven. There is overcoming power for those who will “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (The Apocalypse 14:12).

“And I saw . . . them that had overcome the beast, and his image, and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.”—*The Apocalypse 15:2*.

How can we know there is overcoming power in Christ? Read again the promise given to the Virgin:

“And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call

His name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins.”—*St. Matthew 1:21*.

Jesus Christ came to our world to take away our sins. He does this by His forgiving and enabling grace. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ not only forgives the sins of the sincerely repentant,—but empowers us to put away our sins, resist temptation, and obey the Ten Commandments—all ten of them, including the Sabbath Commandment (Exodus 20:8-11).

DEEPENING OUR WORSHIP OF GOD—14

God’s remnant people will keep the Bible Sabbath, and that holy day will be kept throughout eternity.

Even though there are over two thousand denominations today, the remnant people of God, living at the end of time, can be identified. God has identified them for us. After speaking about how the antichrist power in the Dark Ages tried for centuries to destroy the people of God, we are told how to identify them in these last days, just before Christ returns in the clouds for His own:

“And the dragon was angry against the woman: and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”—*The Apocalypse 12:17*.

And the third angel, after warning all men against receiving the mark of the beast, tells us clearly who will be the little group that will stand apart from this almost universal apostasy:

“Here is the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”—*The Apocalypse 14:12*.

And it will be an almost universal apostasy. All around us can be seen a rising tide of rebellion against the Ten Commandments. The colleges and universities teach that man is but an animal descended from worms and amoeba.

The churches teach that God destroyed the Ten Commandments at Calvary, and that Jesus died to take sinners to heaven just as they are. Governmental agencies are relaxing moral restrictions and permitting gambling, abortion, homosexuality, and other vices.

This world is becoming a curse, but soon God will intervene. Prophecy tells us that, before the end, there will be a small company who will stand true to the commandments of God, by faith in Jesus Christ.

And soon this present evil world will be ended suddenly by the return of Jesus Christ—and heaven will begin for the faithful.

And in that heaven the seventh-day Sabbath will be kept forever. God's people suffered and died for it down here, and they will worship God on that holy day through all ages to come.

The Apocalypse 21 and 22 tells us about this new life with Jesus, when sin has come to an end and the wicked are no longer alive.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth was gone, and the sea is now no more . . . And he showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.” —*The Apocalypse 21:1; 22:1*.

And then we are told who will enter that beautiful new world:

“Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the lamb: that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”—*The Apocalypse 22:14*.

But more: There is the promise that they will keep the holy Sabbath through all eternity:

“For, behold, I create a new heavens, and a new earth: and the former things shall not be in remembrance, and they shall not come upon the heart . . . And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruits of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and

another eat: for as the days of a tree, so shall the days of My people, and the works of their hands shall be of long continuance. Mine elect shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth in trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord and their posterity with them . . . The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion and the ox shall eat straw; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor kill in all My holy mountain, saith the Lord .

“For as the new heavens, and the new earth, which I will make to stand before Me, saith the Lord: so shall your seed stand, and your name. And there shall be month after month, and Sabbath after Sabbath.”—*Isaias 65:17, 21-22, 25; 66:22-23.*

Now you have seen God's plan for His people. And it is a wonderful one. It can begin for you right now. And it will continue on throughout eternity. Why not begin today—this very week? Ask God to forgive you for the past, and tell Him that, by His grace, you will worship your Creator on His day! This is the best decision you can make. Go to Him just now. He will help you make it.

And next Sabbath—begin that holy walk with God on His day, the holy day of *Isaias 58*. Read that chapter and see the blessings He will add, if you will but let Him take over your life.

But think not that there will be no problems or trials. Satan will bring many upon you. He hates the Sabbath and all who will stand loyal to it. Yet if you will determine to be true to God and His Word, you will have strength from above to go through all that lies ahead.

And one day soon, if faithful to the end, you with the redeemed of all ages will rejoice on the sea of glass and will receive from the hand of Jesus the overcomer's crown. And you will be given that new name, expressive of a new character. And you will begin a walk with Jesus that will last through all eternity to come.

“And one of the ancients answered, and said to me: These that are clothed in white robes, who are they?”

and whence came they?

“And I said unto Him: My Lord, thou knowest. And he said to me: These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell over them.

“They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat.

“For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”—*The Apocalypse 7:13-17.*

SUPPLEMENT

OFFICIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Church leaders acknowledge that the seventh-day Sabbath is the only true Sabbath which God gave to mankind, and that it was the Church (the Roman Catholic Church) which attempted to transfer the sacredness to Sunday.

In the Fourth Commandment, the God of heaven gave a direct command to mankind. It is recorded in Exodus 20:8-11.

“Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour, and shalt do all thy works.

“But on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, or the stranger that is within thy gates.

“For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that are in them, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh

day, and sanctified it.”—*Exodus 20:8-11*.

Here are several additional statements confirming the unfortunate fact that an attempt was made to change the commandment,—to cancel the sacredness which God applied to the seventh-day, and, in its place, make the first day of the week sacred.

“It is well to remind the Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and all other Christians, that the Bible does not support them anywhere in their observance of Sunday. Sunday is an institution of the Roman Catholic Church, and those who observe the day observe a commandment of the Catholic Church.”—*Priest Brady, in an address at Elizabeth, N.J., March 17, 1903, reported in the Elizabeth, N.J. News of March 18, 1903.*

“You may search the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify.”—*James Cardinal Gibbon, The Faith of Our Fathers, chapter 8.*

“Reason and common sense demand the acceptance of one or the other of these alternatives: either Protestantism and the keeping holy of Saturday, or Catholicity and the keeping holy of Sunday. Compromise is impossible.”—*The Catholic Mirror, Dec. 23, 1893.*

“The observance of Sunday by the Protestants is a homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the [Catholic] Church.”—*Monsignor Louis Segur, Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today, 1868, p. 213.*

“Ques.—How prove you that the Church hath power to command feasts and holydays?”

“Ans.—By the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday, which Protestants allow of [by observing it]; and therefore they fondly contradict themselves, by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other feasts commanded by the same Church.”—*Henry Tuberville, An Abridge-*

ment of the Christian Doctrine (1833 papal approbation), p. 58.

“The Catholic Church . . . by viture of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday.”—*Catholic Mirror, official organ of Cardinal Gibbons, September 23, 1893.* “The Pope Can Modify [change] the Divine Law.”—*Ferraris, Ecclesiastical Dictionary.*

“We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty.”—*Pope Leo XIII, in an encyclical letter, dated June 20, 1894, The Great Encyclical Letters of Leo XIII, p. 304.*

“If Protestants would follow the Bible, they should worship God on the Sabbath day. In keeping the Sunday they are following a law of the Catholic Church.”—*Albert Smith, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, replying for the Cardinal, in a letter of February 10, 1920.*

“Prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound to keep Sunday holy. There is no such law in the Bible. It is a law of the holy Catholic Church alone. The Bible says ‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.’ The Catholic Church says, No. By my divine power I abolish the Sabbath day and command you to keep holy the first day of the week. And lo! The entire civilized world bows down in reverent obedience to the command of the Holy Catholic Church.”—*Priest Thomas Enright, CSSR, President of Redemptorist College, Kansas City, Mo., in a lecture at Hartford, Kansas Weekly Call, February 22, 1884, and the American Sentinel, a New York Roman Catholic journal, in June 1893, p. 173.*

“Of course the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act . . . AND THE ACT IS A MARK of her ecclesiastical power.”—*From the office of cardinal Gibbons, through Chancellor H.F. Thomas, November 11, 1895.*

“And when they had brought them, they set them before the council . . . Peter and the other apostles answering, said: We ought to obey God, rather than men.”—*Acts 5:27, 29.*

- PART NINE-

**OUR
BELOVED DEAD**

ANOTHER ENCOURAGING TRUTH
FROM THE MOST HOLY GOD,
AS GIVEN THROUGH
THE HOLY SAINTS OF OLD

- PART NINE-

**OUR
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ANOTHER ENCOURAGING TRUTH
FROM THE MOST HOLY GOD,
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THE HOLY SAINTS OF OLD

This is an important chapter, for it helps us to better understand the teaching of Holy Scripture on this important subject.

What is the truth from God's throne in this matter? It is to be found within the pages of Sacred Scripture.

With the earliest history of man, Satan began his efforts to deceive our race. He who had incited rebellion in Heaven desired to bring the inhabitants of the earth to unite with him in his warfare against the government of God. Adam and Even had been perfectly happy in obedience to the law of God, and this fact was a constant testimony against the claim which Satan had urged in Heaven, that God's law was oppressive and opposed to the good of His creatures. And, furthermore, Satan's envy was excited as

he looked upon the beautiful home prepared for the sinless pair. He determined to cause their fall, that, having separated them from God and brought them under his own power, he might gain possession of the earth and here establish his kingdom, in opposition to the Most High.

Had Satan revealed himself in his real character, he would have been repulsed at once, for Adam and Eve had been warned against this dangerous foe; but he worked in the dark, concealing his purpose, that he might more effectually accomplish his object. Employing as his medium the serpent, then a creature of fascinating appearance, he addressed himself to Eve, "Why hath God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?" Genesis 3:1. Had Eve refrained from entering into argument with the tempter, she would have been safe; but she ventured to parley with him, and fell a victim to his wiles. It is thus that many are still overcome. They doubt and argue concerning the requirements of God and, instead of obeying the divine commands, they accept human theories, which but disguise the devices of Satan.

"And the woman answered him saying: Of the fruit of the trees that are in paradise we do eat: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not eat; and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die. And the serpent said to the woman: No you shall not die the death. For God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:2-5. He declared that they would become like God, possessing greater wisdom than before and being capable of a higher state of existence. Eve yielded to temptation; and, through her influence, Adam was led into sin. They accepted the words of the serpent, that God did not mean what He said; they distrusted their Creator, and

Scripture passages in this chapter are from the Rheims-Douay. Exceptions are from other Church-approved versions.

imagined that He was restricting their liberty, and that they might obtain great wisdom and exaltation by transgressing His law.

But what did Adam, after his sin, find to be the meaning of the words, "that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die"? Did he find them to mean, as Satan had led him to believe, that he was to be ushered into a more exalted state of existence? Then indeed there was great good to be gained by transgression, and Satan was proved to be a benefactor of the race. But Adam did not find this to be the meaning of the divine sentence. God declared that, as a penalty for his sin, man should return to the ground whence he was taken: "Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return." Genesis 3:19. The words of Satan, "Your eyes shall be opened," proved to be true in this sense only: After Adam and Eve had disobeyed God, their eyes were opened to discern their folly; they did know evil, and they tasted the bitter fruit of transgression.

In the midst of Eden grew the tree of life, whose fruit had the power of perpetuating life. Had Adam remained obedient to God, he would have continued to enjoy free access to this tree, and would have lived forever. But when he sinned, he was cut off from partaking of the tree of life, and he became subject to death. The divine sentence, "Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return," points to the utter extinction of life.

Immortality, promised to man on condition of obedience, had been forfeited by transgression. Adam could not transmit to his posterity that which he did not possess; and there could have been no hope for the fallen race, had not God, by the sacrifice of His Son, brought immortality within their reach. While "death spread to all men, because all men sinned" (Romans 5:12, R.S.V.), Christ "hath brought to light life and incorruption through the gospel." 2 Timothy 1:10. And only through Christ can immortality be obtained. Said Jesus, "He that believeth in the Son, hath life everlasting; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life." St. John 3:36. Every man may come in possession of this price-

less blessing if he will comply with the conditions. All "who according to patience in good work, seek glory and honor and incorruption," will receive eternal life. Romans 2:7.

The only one who promised Adam life in disobedience was the great deceiver. And the declaration of the serpent to Eve in Eden,—“You shall not die,”—was the first sermon ever preached upon the immortality of the soul. Yet this declaration, resting solely upon the authority of Satan, is echoed from the pulpits of Christendom, and is received by the majority of mankind as readily as it was received by our first parents. The divine sentence, “The soul that sinneth, the same shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20) is made to mean, The soul that sinneth, it shall not die, but live eternally. We cannot but wonder at the strange infatuation which renders men so credulous concerning the words of Satan, and so unbelieving in regard to the words of God.

Had man, after his fall, been allowed free access to the tree of life, he would have lived forever, and thus sin would have been immortalized. But cherubim and a flaming sword kept “the way of the tree of life” (Genesis 3:24), and not one of the family of Adam has been permitted to pass that barrier and partake of the life-giving fruit. Therefore there is not an immortal sinner.

But after the fall, Satan bade his angels make a special effort to inculcate the belief in man’s natural immortality; and having induced the people to receive this error, they were to lead them on to conclude that the sinner would live in eternal misery. Now the prince of darkness, working through his agents, represents God as a revengeful tyrant, declaring that He plunges into hell all those who do not please Him, and causes them ever to feel His wrath; and that while they suffer unutterable anguish, and writhe in the eternal flames, their Creator looks down upon them with satisfaction.

Thus the arch-fiend clothes with his own attributes the Creator and Benefactor of mankind. Cruelty is Satanic. God is love; and all that He created was pure, holy, and lovely, until sin was brought in by the first great rebel. Satan him-

self is the enemy who tempts man to sin, and then destroys him if he can; and when he has made sure of his victim, then he exults in the ruin he has wrought. If permitted, he would sweep the entire race into his net. Were it not for the interposition of divine power, not one son or daughter of Adam would escape.

He is seeking to overcome men today, as he overcame our first parents, by shaking their confidence in their Creator, and leading them to doubt the wisdom of His government and the justice of His laws. Satan and his emissaries represent God as even worse than themselves, in order to justify their own malignity and rebellion. The great deceiver endeavors to shift his own horrible cruelty of character upon our heavenly Father, that he may cause himself to appear as one greatly wronged by his expulsion from Heaven because he would not submit to so unjust a governor. He presents before the world the liberty which they may enjoy under his mild sway, in contrast with the bondage imposed by the stern decrees of Jehovah. Thus he succeeds in luring souls away from their allegiance to God.

How repugnant to every emotion of love and mercy, and even to our sense of justice, is the doctrine that the wicked dead are tormented with fire and brimstone in an eternally burning hell; that for the sins of a brief, earthly life they are to suffer torture as long as God shall live. Yet this doctrine has been widely taught, and is still embodied in many of the creeds of Christendom. Said a learned doctor of divinity: "The sight of hell-torments will exalt the happiness of the saints forever. When they see others who are of the same nature and born under the same circumstances, plunged in such misery, and they so distinguished, it will make them sensible of how happy they are." Another used these words: "While the decree of reprobation is eternally executing on the vessels of wrath, the smoke of their torment will be eternally ascending in view of the vessels of mercy, who, instead of taking the part of these miserable objects, will say, Amen, Alleluia! praise ye the Lord!"

Where, in the pages of God's Word, is such teaching to

be found? Will the redeemed in Heaven be lost to all emotions of pity and compassion, and even to feelings of common humanity? Are these to be exchanged for the indifference of the stoic or the cruelty of the savage?—No, no; such is not the teaching of the Book of God. Those who present the views expressed in the quotations given above may be learned and even honest men; but they are deluded by the sophistry of Satan. He leads them to misconstrue strong expressions of Scripture, giving to the language the coloring of bitterness and malignity which pertains to himself, but not to our Creator. “As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: and why will you die?” Ezechiel 33:11.

What would be gained to God should we admit that He delights in witnessing unceasing tortures, that He is regaled with the groans and shrieks and imprecations of the suffering creatures whom He holds in the flames of hell? Can these horrid sounds be music in the ear of Infinite Love? It is urged that the infliction of endless misery upon the wicked would show God’s hatred of sin as an evil which is ruinous to the peace and order of the universe. Oh, dreadful blasphemy! As if God’s hatred of sin is the reason why He perpetuates sin. For, according to the teachings of these theologians, continued torture without hope of mercy maddens its wretched victims and as they pour out their rage in curses and blasphemy, they are forever augmenting their load of guilt. God’s glory is not enhanced by thus perpetuating sin through ceaseless ages.

It is beyond the power of the human mind to estimate the evil which has been wrought by the heresy of eternal torment. The religion of the Bible, full of love and goodness, and abounding in compassion, is darkened by superstition and clothed with terror. When we consider in what false colors Satan has painted the character of God, can we wonder that our merciful Creator is feared, dreaded, and even hated? The appalling views of God which have spread over the world from the teachings of the pulpit have made

thousands, yes, millions, of skeptics and infidels.

The theory of eternal torment is one of the false doctrines that constitute the wine of the abominations of Babylon, of which she makes all nations drink. The Apocalypse 14:8; 17:2. That ministers of Christ have accepted this heresy and proclaimed it from the sacred desk, is indeed a mystery. They received it from the church of the dark ages, as they received the false sabbath. True, it has been taught by great and good men; but the light on this subject had not come to them as it has come to us. They were responsible only for the light which shone in their time; we are accountable for that which shines in our day. If we turn from the testimony of God's Word, and accept false doctrines because our fathers taught them, we fall under the condemnation pronounced upon Babylon; we are drinking of the wine of her abominations.

A large class to whom the doctrine of eternal torment is revolting are driven to the opposite error. They see that the Scriptures represent God as a being of love and compassion, and they cannot believe that He will consign His creatures to the fires of an eternally burning hell. But, holding that the soul is naturally immortal, they see no alternative but to conclude that all mankind will finally be saved. Many regard the threatenings of the Bible as designed merely to frighten men into obedience, and not to be literally fulfilled. Thus the sinner can live in selfish pleasure, disregarding the requirements of God and yet expect to be finally received into His favor. Such a doctrine [Universalism], presuming upon God's mercy, but ignoring His justice, pleases the carnal heart and emboldens the wicked in their iniquity.

A few words of Scripture are separated from the context, which would, in many cases, show their meaning to be exactly opposite to the interpretation put upon them; and such disjointed passages are perverted and used in proof of doctrines that have no foundation in the Word of God. It is thus that doubters, unbelievers, and skeptics turn the truth into a lie. And multitudes have been deceived by their sophistry, and rocked to sleep in the cradle of carnal security.

If it were true that the souls of all men passed directly to Heaven at the hour of dissolution, then we might well covet death rather than life. Many have been led by this belief to put an end to their existence. When overwhelmed with trouble, perplexity, and disappointment, it seems an easy thing to break the brittle thread of life and soar away into the bliss of the eternal world.

God has given in His Word decisive evidence that He will punish the transgressors of His law. Those who flatter themselves that He is too merciful to execute justice upon the sinner have only to look to the cross of Calvary. The death of the spotless Son of God testifies that "the wages of sin is death," that every violation of God's law must receive its just retribution. Christ the sinless became sin for man. He bore the guilt of transgression, and the hiding of His Father's face, until His heart was broken and His life crushed out. All this sacrifice was made that sinners might be redeemed. In no other way could man be freed from the penalty of sin. And every soul that refuses to become a partaker of the atonement, provided at such a cost, must bear, in his own person, the guilt and punishment of transgression.

Let us consider what the Bible teaches further concerning the ungodly and unrepentant, whom the Universalist places in Heaven as holy, happy angels.

"To him that thirsteth, I will give of the fountain of the water of life, freely." The Apocalypse 21:6. This promise is only to those that thirst. None but those who feel their need of the water of life, and seek it at the loss of all things else, will be supplied. "He that shall overcome shall possess these things, and I will be his God; and he shall be My son." The Apocalypse 21:7. Here, also, conditions are specified. In order to inherit all things, we must resist and overcome sin.

The Lord declares by the prophet Isaias, "Say to the just man that it is well." "Woe to the wicked unto evil: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Isaias 3:10-11. "Though a sinner does evil a hundred times," says the wise man, "and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well

with those who fear God, because they fear before Him; but it will not be well with the wicked" (Ecclesiastes 8:12, 13, R.S.V.). And Paul testifies that the sinner is treasuring up unto himself "wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the just judgment of God. Who will render to every man according to his works," "tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil." Romans 2:5, 6, 9.

"No fornicator, or unclean person, or covetous person (who is serving idols), hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Ephesians 5:5. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness: without which no man shall see God." Hebrews 12:14. "Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. Without are dogs, and unchaste, and murderers, and servers of idols, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie." The Apocalypse 22:14, 15.

God has given to men a declaration of His character, and of His method of dealing with sin. "O the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion, and true, who keepest mercy unto thousands: who takest away iniquity, and wickedness, and sin, and no man of himself is innocent before Thee." Exodus 34:6, 7. "All the wicked He will destroy." "The unjust shall be destroyed together; the remnants of the wicked shall perish." Psalms 144:20; 36:38. The power and authority of the divine government will be employed to put down rebellion; yet all the manifestations of retributive justice will be perfectly consistent with the character of God as a merciful, long-suffering, benevolent being.

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence. And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him

in admiration of His attributes.

The principles of kindness, mercy, and love, taught and exemplified by our Saviour, are a transcript of the will and character of God. Christ declared that He taught nothing except that which He had received from His Father. The principles of the divine government are in perfect harmony with the Saviour's precept, "Love your enemies." God executes justice upon the wicked, for the good of the universe, and even for the good of those upon whom His judgments are visited. He would make them happy if He could do so in accordance with the laws of His government and the justice of His character. He surrounds them with the tokens of His love, He grants them a knowledge of His law, and follows them with the offers of His mercy; but they despise His love, make void His law, and reject His mercy. While constantly receiving His gifts, they dishonor the Giver; they hate God because they know that He abhors their sins. The Lord bears long with their perversity; but the decisive hour will come at last, when their destiny is to be decided. Will He then chain these rebels to His side? Will He force them to do His will?

Those who have chosen Satan as their leader, and have been controlled by his power, are not prepared to enter the presence of God. Pride, deception, licentiousness, cruelty, have become fixed in their characters. Can they enter Heaven, to dwell forever with those whom they despised and hated on earth? Truth will never be agreeable to a liar; meekness will not satisfy self-esteem and pride; purity is not acceptable to the corrupt; disinterested love does not appear attractive to the selfish. What source of enjoyment could Heaven offer to those who are wholly absorbed in earthly and selfish interests?

Could those whose lives have been spent in rebellion against God be suddenly transported to Heaven, and witness the high, the holy state of perfection that ever exists there,—every soul filled with love; every countenance beaming with joy; enrapturing music in melodious strains rising in honor of God and the Lamb; and ceaseless streams

of light flowing upon the redeemed from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,—could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb?—No, no; years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for Heaven; but they have never trained the mind to love purity; they have never learned the language of Heaven, and now it is too late. A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for Heaven. Its purity, holiness, and peace would be torture to them; the glory of God would be a consuming fire. They would long to flee from that holy place. They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from Heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God.

Like the waters of the flood, the fires of the great day declare God's verdict that the wicked are incurable. They have no disposition to submit to divine authority. Their will has been exercised in revolt; and when life is ended, it is too late to turn the current of their thoughts in the opposite direction,—too late to turn from transgression to obedience, from hatred to love.

In sparing the life of Cain the murderer, God gave the world an example of what would be the result of permitting the sinner to live, to continue a course of unbridled iniquity. Through the influence of Cain's teaching and example, multitudes of his descendants were led into sin, until "the wickedness of men was great on the earth, and . . . all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times." "The earth was corrupted before God, and was filled with iniquity." Genesis 6:5, 11.

In mercy to the world, God blotted out its wicked inhabitants in Noah's time. In mercy He destroyed the corrupt dwellers in Sodom. Through the deceptive power of Satan, the workers of iniquity obtain sympathy and admiration, and are thus constantly leading others to rebellion. It

was so in Cain's and in Noah's day, and in the time of Abraham and Lot; it is so in our time. It is in mercy to the universe that God will finally destroy the rejecters of His grace.

"The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23, R.S.V.). While life is the inheritance of the righteous, death is the portion of the wicked. Moses declared to Israel, "I have set before thee this day life and good, and on the other hand death and evil." Deuteronomy 30:15. The death referred to in these Scriptures is not that pronounced upon Adam, for all mankind suffer the penalty of his transgression. It is the "second death" that is placed in contrast with everlasting life.

In consequence of Adam's sin, death passed upon the whole human race. All alike go down into the grave. And through the provisions of the plan of salvation, all are to be brought forth from their graves. "There shall be a resurrection of the just and unjust." Acts 24:15. "And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive." 1 Corinthians 15:22. But a distinction is made between the two classes that are brought forth. "All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." St. John 5:28, 29. They who have been "accounted worthy" of the resurrection of life are "blessed and holy." "In these the second death hath no power." The Apocalypse 20:6. But those who have not, through repentance and faith, secured pardon, must receive the penalty of transgression,— "the wages of sin." They suffer punishment varying in duration and intensity, "according to their works," but finally ending in the second death. Since it is impossible for God, consistently with His justice and mercy, to save the sinner in his sins, He deprives him of the existence which his transgressions have forfeited, and of which he has proved himself unworthy. Says an inspired writer, "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: and thou

shalt seek his place, and shalt not find it." And another declares, "They shall be as though they were not." Psalm 36:10; Abdias 16. Covered with infamy, they sink into hopeless, eternal oblivion.

Thus will be made an end of sin, with all the woe and ruin which have resulted from it. Says the psalmist: "The wicked one hath perished: thou hast blotted out their name forever and ever. The swords of the enemy have failed unto the end." Psalm 9:6-7. St. John, in the Apocalypse, looking forward to the eternal state, hears a universal anthem of praise, undisturbed by one note of discord. Every creature in Heaven and earth was heard ascribing glory to God. The Apocalypse 5:13. There will then be no lost souls to blaspheme God, as they writhe in never-ending torment; no wretched beings in hell will mingle their shrieks with the songs of the saved.

Upon the fundamental error of natural immortality rests the doctrine of consciousness in death, a doctrine, like eternal torment, opposed to the teachings of the Scriptures, to the dictates of reason, and to our feelings of humanity. According to the popular belief, the redeemed in Heaven are acquainted with all that takes place on the earth, and especially with the lives of the friends whom they have left behind. But how could it be a source of happiness to the dead to know the troubles of the living, to witness the sins committed by their own loved ones, and to see them enduring all the sorrows, disappointments, and anguish of life? How much of Heaven's bliss would be enjoyed by those who were hovering over their friends on earth? And how utterly revolting is the belief that as soon as the breath leaves the body, the soul of the impenitent is consigned to the flames of hell! To what depths of anguish must those be plunged who see their friends passing to the grave unprepared, to enter upon an eternity of woe and sin! Many have been driven to insanity by this harrowing thought.

What say the Scriptures concerning these things? David declares that man is not conscious in death. "His spirit shall

go forth, and he shall return into his earth: in that day all their thoughts shall perish." Psalm 145:4. Solomon bears the same testimony: "The living know that they are to die, but the dead no longer know nothing." There is no future recompense for them, because all memory of them is lost. For them, love and hatred and rivalry have long since perished. They never again have part in anything that is done under the sun. " Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6; The Catholic Bible, New American. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going." Ecclesiastes 9:10, R.S.V.

When, in answer to his prayer, Hezekiah's life was prolonged fifteen years, the grateful king rendered to God a tribute of praise for His great mercy. In this song he tells the reason why he thus rejoices: "For hell shall not confess to Thee, neither shall death praise Thee: nor shall they that go down into the pit look for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall give praise to Thee, as I do this day." Isaias 38:18-19. Popular theology represents the righteous dead as in Heaven, entered into bliss, and praising God with an immortal tongue; but Hezekiah could see no such glorious prospect in death. With his words agrees the testimony of the psalmist: "For there is no one in death, that is mindful of Thee: and who shall confess to Thee in hell?" "The dead shall not praise Thee, O Lord: nor any of them that go down to hell." Psalms 6:6; 113:17.

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declared that the patriarch David "died and was buried, and his sepulcher is with us to this present day." "For David ascended not into Heaven." Acts 2:29, 34. The fact that David remains in the grave until the resurrection, proves that the righteous do not go to Heaven at death. It is only through the resurrection, and by virtue of the fact that Christ has risen, that David can at last sit at the right hand of God.

And said Paul: "If the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. Then they also

that are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished.” 1 Corinthians 15:16-18. If for four thousand years the righteous had gone directly to Heaven at death, how could Paul have said that if there is no resurrection, “they that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished”? No resurrection would be necessary.

The martyr Tyndale, defending the doctrine that the dead sleep, declared to his papist opponent: “Ye, in putting them (departed souls) in Heaven, hell, and purgatory, destroy the argument wherewith Christ and Paul prove the resurrection.” “If the souls be in Heaven, tell me why they be not in as good case as the angels be? And then what cause is there of the resurrection?”

It is an undeniable fact that the hope of immortal blessedness at death has led to widespread neglect of the Bible doctrine of the resurrection. This tendency was remarked by Dr. Adam Clarke, who, early in the present century, said: “The doctrine of the resurrection appears to have been thought of much more consequence among the primitive Christians than it is now! How is this? The apostles were continually insisting on it, and exciting the followers of God to diligence, obedience, and cheerfulness through it. And their successors in the present day seldom mention it! So apostles preached, and so primitive Christians believed; so we preach, and so our hearers believe. There is not a doctrine in the gospel on which more stress is laid; and there is not a doctrine in the present system of preaching which is treated with more neglect!”

This has continued until the glorious truth of the resurrection has been almost wholly obscured, and lost sight of by the Christian world. Thus a leading religious writer, commenting on the words of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, says: “For all practical purposes of comfort the doctrine of the blessed immortality of the righteous takes the place for us of any doubtful doctrine of the Lord’s second coming. At our death the Lord comes for us. That is what we are to wait and watch for. The dead are already passed into glory. They do not wait for the trump for their judgment and blessedness.”

But when about to leave His disciples, Jesus did not tell them that they would soon come to Him. "I go to prepare a place for you," He said. "And if I shall go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to Myself." St. John 14:2, 3. And Paul tells us, further, that "the Lord Himself shall come down from Heaven with commandment, and with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in who are in Christ, shall rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ, into the air; and so shall we be always with the Lord." And he adds, "Comfort ye one another with these words." 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17. How wide the contrast between these words of comfort and those of the Universalist minister previously quoted. The latter consoled the bereaved friends with the assurance, that, however sinful the dead might have been, when he breathed out his life here he was to be received among the angels. Paul points his brethren to the future coming of the Lord, when the fetters of the tomb shall be broken, and the "dead who are in Christ" shall be raised to eternal life.

Before any can enter the mansions of the blest, their cases must be investigated, and their characters and their deeds must pass in review before God. All are to be judged according to the things written in the books, and to be rewarded as their works have been. This Judgment does not take place at death. Mark the words of Paul: "He hath appointed a day wherein He will judge the world in equity, by the man whom He hath appointed; giving faith to all, by raising Him up from the dead." Acts 17:31. Here the apostle plainly stated that a specified time, then future, had been fixed upon for the Judgment of the world.

Jude refers to the same period: "The angels who kept not their principality, but forsook their own habitation, He hath reserved under darkness in everlasting chains, unto the judgment of the great day." And again he quotes the words of Enoch: "Behold, the Lord cometh with thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all." St. Jude 6, 14,

15. John declares that he “saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened;” “and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books.” The Apocalypse 20:12.

But if the dead are already enjoying the bliss of Heaven or writhing in the flames of hell, what need of a future Judgment? The teachings of God’s Word on these important points are neither obscure nor contradictory; they may be understood by common minds. But what candid mind can see either wisdom or justice in the current theory? Will the righteous, after the investigation of their cases at the Judgment, receive the commendation, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” “enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (St. Matthew 25:23) when they have been dwelling in His presence, perhaps for long ages? Are the wicked summoned from the place of torment to receive the sentence from the Judge of all the earth, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire”? St. Matthew 25:41. Oh, solemn mockery! shameful impeachment of the wisdom and justice of God!

The theory of the immortality of the soul was one of those false doctrines that was borrowed from paganism and incorporated into the religion of Christendom. Martin Luther classed it with “the numberless prodigies of the Romish dunghill of decretals.” Commenting on the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes (R.S.V.), that the dead know not anything, the reformer says: “Another proof that the dead are insensible. Solomon thinks therefore, that the dead are altogether asleep, and think of nothing. They lie, not reckoning days or years, but when awakened, will seem to themselves to have slept scarcely a moment.”

Nowhere in the Sacred Scriptures is found the statement that the righteous go to their reward or the wicked to their punishment at death. The patriarchs and prophets have left no such assurance. Christ and His apostles have given no hint of it. The Bible clearly teaches that the dead do not go immediately to Heaven. They are represented as sleeping until the resurrection. 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 1 Corinthians 15:16. In the very day when the silver cord is

loosed and the golden bowl broken, (Ecclesiastes 12:6, R.S.V.) man's thoughts perish. They that go down to the grave are in silence. They know no more of anything that is done under the sun. Job 14:21, R.S.V. Blessed rest for the weary righteous! Time, be it long or short, is but a moment to them. They sleep, they are awakened by the trump of God to a glorious immortality. "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible . . . and when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory." 1 Corinthians 15:52-54. As they are called forth from their deep slumber, they begin to think just where they ceased. The last sensation was the pang of death, the last thought that they were falling beneath the power of the grave. When they arise from the tomb, their first glad thought will be echoed in the triumphal shout, "O death, where is thy victory? O grave, where is thy sting?" 1 Corinthians 15:55.

This chapter was adapted from the book, *Great Controversy*.

"All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work."

—2 *Timothy 3:16-17*

"Embracing that faithful Word which is according to doctrine, that he may be able to exhort in sound doctrine, and to convince the gainsayers."

—*Titus 1:9*

- PART TEN -

**PRECIOUS
SCRIPTURE
PROMISES**

SWEET ENCOURAGEMENT,
FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES,
TO HELP YOU IN THE DAYS AHEAD

- PART TEN -

PRECIOUS SCRIPTURE PROMISES

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How thankful we can be that we have the precious Bible! Trust in God and earnest prayer to Him, along with daily study of the Sacred Scriptures, can provide us with the hope and courage we need for the day's need, and for the difficult times ahead.

We will conclude this book with encouraging promises from those Scriptures:

PSALM 1

Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel

of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the chair of pestilence. But his will is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he shall meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit, in due season. And his leaf shall not fall off: and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper.

Not so the wicked, not so: but like the dust, which the wind driveth from the face of the earth. Therefore the wicked shall not rise again in judgment: nor sinners in the council of the just.

For the Lord knoweth the way of the just: and the way of the wicked shall perish.

PSALM 33 [34]

I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be always in my mouth. In the Lord shall my soul be praised: let the meek hear and rejoice. O magnify the Lord with me; and let us extol His name together.

I sought the Lord, and He heard me; and He delivered me from all my troubles. Come ye to Him and be enlightened: and your faces shall not be confounded.

This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him: and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him: and shall deliver them.

O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet: blessed is the man that hopeth in Him. Fear [reverence] the Lord, all ye His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him. The rich have wanted, and have suffered hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good.

Scripture passages in this chapter are from the Rheims-Douay Version of the Holy Scriptures. Chapter numbers within brackets indicate the chapter number in most other versions.

Come, children, hearken to Me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Who is the man that desireth life: who liveth to see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Turn away from evil and do good: seek after peace and pursue it.

The eyes of the Lord are upon the just: and His ears unto their prayers. But the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things: to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

The just cried, and the Lord heard them: and delivered them out of all their troubles. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart: and He will save the humble of spirit. Many are the afflictions of the just; but out of them all will the Lord deliver them. The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken.

The death of the wicked is very evil: and they that hate the just shall be guilty. The Lord will redeem the souls of His servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall offend.

PSALM 90 [91]

He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of Jacob. He shall say to the Lord: Thou art my Protector, and my Refuge: my God.

In Him will I trust. For He hath delivered me from the snare of the hunters: and from the sharp word. He will overshadow thee with His shoulders: and under His wings thou shalt trust. His truth shall compass thee with a shield: thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night. Of the arrow that flieth in the day, of the business that walketh about in the dark: of invasion, or of the noonday devil.

A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh thee. But thou shalt consider with thy eyes: and shalt see the reward of

the wicked. Because Thou, O Lord, art my hope.

Thou hast made the Most High thy refuge. There shall no evil come to thee: nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling. For He hath given His angels charge over thee; to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up: lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk [poisonous snake]: and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon.

Because he hoped in Me I will deliver him: I will protect him because he hath known My name. He shall cry to Me, and I will hear him: I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him, and I will glorify him. I will fill him with length of days; and I will shew him My salvation.

ISAIAH 53

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

And He shall grow up as a tender plant before Him, and as a root out of a thirsty ground: there is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness: and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of Him:

Despised, and the most abject of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity: and His look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed Him not.

Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought Him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted.

But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way: and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

He was offered because it was His own will, and He

opened not His mouth:

He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth.

He was taken away from distress, and from judgment: who shall declare His generation? because He is cut off out of the land of the living: for the wickedness of My people have I struck Him.

And He shall give the ungodly for His burial, and the rich for His death: because He hath done no iniquity, neither was there deceit in His mouth.

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, and the will of the Lord shall be prosperous in His hand. Because His soul hath laboured, He shall see and be filled: by His knowledge shall this My just servant justify many, and He shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore will I distribute to Him very many, and He shall divide the spoils of the strong, because He hath delivered His soul unto death, and was reputed with the wicked: and He hath borne the sins of many, and hath prayed for the transgressors.

ST. JOHN 3

And there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night, and said to Him:

Rabbi, we know that Thou art come a teacher from God; for no man can do these signs which Thou dost, unless God be with him.

Jesus answered, and said to him: Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus saith to Him: How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter a second time into his mother's

womb, and be born again?

Jesus answered: Amen, amen I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Wonder not, that I said to thee, you must be born again.

The Spirit breatheth where He will; and thou hearest His voice, but thou knowest not whence He cometh, and whither He goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus answered, and said to Him: How can these things be done?

Jesus answered, and said to him: Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things? Amen, amen I say to thee, that we speak what we know, and we testify what we have seen, and you receive not our testimony. If I have spoken to you earthly things, and you believe not; how will you believe, if I shall speak to you heavenly things?

And no man hath ascended into heaven, but He that descended from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish; but may have life everlasting.

For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting. For God sent not His Son into the world, to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him.

He that believeth in Him is not judged. But he that doth not believe, is already judged: because he believeth not in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And this is the judgment: because the light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light: for their works were evil. For every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved.

But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God.

After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea: and there He abode with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Ennon near Salim; because there was much water there; and they came and were baptized. For John was not yet cast into prison.

And there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews concerning purification: And they came to John, and said to him: Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond the Jordan, to whom thou gavest testimony, behold He baptizeth, and all men come to Him.

John answered, and said: A man cannot receive any thing, unless it be given him from heaven. You yourselves do bear me witness, that I said, I am not Christ, but that I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.

He that cometh from above, is above all. He that is of the earth, of the earth he is, and of the earth he speaketh. He that cometh from heaven, is above all. And what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth: and no man receiveth His testimony.

He that hath received His testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true. For He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God: for God doth not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loveth the Son: and He hath given all things into His hand. He that believeth in the Son, hath life everlasting; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

ST. JOHN 17

These things Jesus spoke, and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said: Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee. As Thou hast given

Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him.

Now this is eternal life: That they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with Thee.

I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given Me out of the world. Thine they were, and to Me Thou gavest them; and they have kept Thy word.

Now they have known, that all things which Thou hast given Me, are from Thee: Because the words which Thou gavest Me, I have given to them; and they have received them, and have known in very deed that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me.

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me: because they are Thine: And all My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them.

And now I am not in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou has given Me; that they may be one, as We also are.

While I was with them, I kept them in Thy name. Those whom Thou gavest Me have I kept; and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture may be fulfilled.

And now I come to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy filled in themselves. I have given them Thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world; as I also am not of the world.

I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from evil. They are not of the world, as I also am not of the world.

Sanctify them in truth. Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the

world. And for them do I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me; 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.

And the glory which thou hast given Me, I have given to them; that they may be one, as We also are one: I in them, and Thou in Me; that they may be made perfect in one: and the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast also loved Me.

Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me; that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me, because Thou hast loved Me before the creation of the world.

Just Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee: and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have made known Thy name to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me, may be in them, and I in them.

ST. JOHN 18

When Jesus had said these things, He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where there was a garden, into which He entered with His disciples. And Judas also, who betrayed Him, knew the place; because Jesus had often resorted thither together with His disciples.

Judas therefore having received a band of soldiers and servants from the chief priests and the Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said to them: Whom seek ye? They answered Him: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith to them: I am He. And Judas also, who betrayed Him, stood with

them.

As soon therefore as He had said to them: I am He; they went backward, and fell to the ground. Again therefore He asked them: Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He. If therefore you seek Me, let these go their way. That the word might be fulfilled which He said: Of them whom Thou hast given Me, I have not lost any one.

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And the name of the servant was Malchus.

Jesus therefore said to Peter: Put up thy sword into the scabbard. The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?

Then the band and the tribune, and the servants of the Jews, took Jesus, and bound Him: And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was father in law to Caiphas, who was the high priest of that year. Now Caiphas was he who had given the counsel to the Jews: That it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. And that disciple was known to the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the court of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. The other disciple therefore, who was known to the high priest, went out, and spoke to the portress, and brought in Peter.

The maid therefore that was portress, saith to Peter: Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith: I am not.

Now the servants and ministers stood at a fire of coals, because it was cold, and warmed themselves. And with them was Peter also, standing, and warming himself. The high priest therefore asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His doctrine.

Jesus answered him: I have spoken openly to the world: I have always taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither all the Jews resort; and in secret I have spoken

nothing. Why asketh thou Me? ask them who have heard what I have spoken unto them: behold they know what things I have said.

And when He had said these things, one of the servants standing by, gave Jesus a blow, saying: Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him: If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou Me?

And Annas sent him bound to Caiphaz the high priest. And Simon Peter was standing, and warming himself. They said therefore to him: Art not thou also one of His disciples? He denied it, and said: I am not. One of the servants of the high priest (a kinsman to him whose ear Peter cut off) saith to him: Did I not see thee in the garden with Him?

Again therefore Peter denied; and immediately the cock crew. Then they led Jesus from Caiphaz to the governor's hall. And it was morning; and they went not into the hall, that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the pasch [passover].

Pilate therefore went out to them, and said: What accusation bring you against this man? They answered, and said to him: If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to thee.

Pilate therefore said to them: Take Him you, and judge Him according to your law. The Jews therefore said to him: It is not lawful for us to put any man to death; that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He said, signifying what death He should die.

Pilate therefore went into the hall again, and called Jesus, and said to Him: Art thou the king of the Jews? Jesus answered: Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or have others told it thee of Me?

Pilate answered: Am I a Jew? Thy own nation, and the chief priests, have delivered thee up to me: what hast Thou done?

Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would cer-

tainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now My kingdom is not from hence.

Pilate therefore said to Him: Art thou a king then?

Jesus answered: Thou sayest that I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth My voice.

Pilate saith to him: What is truth? And when he said this, he went out again to the Jews, and saith to them: I find no cause in Him. But you have a custom that I should release one unto you at the pasch: will you, therefore, that I release unto you the king of the Jews?

Then cried they all again, saying: Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

ST. JOHN 19

Then therefore Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers plating a crown of thorns, put it upon His head: and they put on Him a purple garment. And they came to Him and said: Hail, king of the Jews. And they gave Him blows.

Pilate therefore went forth again and saith to them: Behold, I bring Him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in Him. (Jesus therefore came forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment.)

And he saith to them: Behold the Man! When the chief priests, therefore, and the servants had seen Him, they cried out, saying: Crucify Him, Crucify Him.

Pilate saith to them: Take Him you, and crucify Him: for I find no cause in Him. The Jews answered him: We have a law; and according to the law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.

When Pilate therefore had heard this saying, he feared the more. And he entered into the hall again; and he said to Jesus: Whence art Thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

Pilate therefore saith to Him: Speakest Thou not to me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and I have power to release Thee? Jesus answered: Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above.

Therefore, he that hath delivered Me to thee hath the greater sin. And from henceforth Pilate sought to release Him.

But the Jews cried out, saying: If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar's friend. For whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

Now when Pilate had heard these words, he brought Jesus forth and sat down in the judgment seat, in the place that is called Lithostrotos, and in Hebrew Gabbatha. And it was the parasceve [preparation] of the pasch [passover], about the sixth hour:

And he saith to the Jews: Behold your king. But they cried out: Away with Him: Away with Him: Crucify Him.

Pilate saith to them: shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered: We have no king but Caesar. Then therefore he delivered Him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led Him forth. And bearing His own cross, He went forth to the place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha. Where they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst.

And Pilate wrote a title also: and he put it upon the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title therefore many of the Jews did read: because the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city. And it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin.

Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate: Write not: The King of the Jews. But that He said: I am the King of the Jews. Pilate answered: What I have written, I have written.

The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Him, took His garments, (and they made four parts, to every

soldier a part) and also His coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said then one to another: Let us not cut it but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be; that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saying: They have parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture they have cast lots. And the soldiers indeed did these things.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother and His mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen. When Jesus therefore had seen His mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He saith to His mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own.

Afterwards, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said: I thirst. Now there was a vessel set there, full of vinegar. And they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to His mouth. Jesus therefore, when He had taken the vinegar, said: It is consummated.

And bowing His head, He gave up the ghost. Then the Jews (because it was the parasceve [preparation day for the Sabbath]), that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day (for that was a great Sabbath day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken: and that they might be taken away.

The soldiers therefore came: and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with Him. But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.

But one of the soldiers with a spear opened His side: and immediately there came out blood and water. And he that saw it hath given testimony: and his testimony is true. And he knoweth that he saith true; that you also may believe.

For these things were done that the Scripture might be fulfilled: You shall not break a bone of Him. And again another Scripture saith: They shall look on Him whom they

pierced.

And after these things, Joseph of Arimathea (because he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews), besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate gave leave.

He came therefore and took away the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus also came (he who at the first came to Jesus by night), bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. They took therefore the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

Now there was in the place where He was crucified a garden: and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein no man yet had been laid. There, therefore, because of the parascave of the Jews, they laid Jesus: because the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

ST. LUKE 24

And on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled back from the sepulchre. And going in, they found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

And it came to pass, as they were astonished in their mind at this, behold, two men stood by them, in shining apparel. And as they were afraid and bowed down their countenance towards the ground, they said unto them:

Why seek you the living with the dead? He is not here, but is risen. Remember how He spoke unto you, when He was yet in Galilee, Saying: The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and the third day rise again. And they remembered His words.

And going back from the sepulchre, they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. And it was Mary Magdalen and Joanna and Mary of James and the other

women that were with them, who told these things to the apostles.

And these words seemed to them as idle tales: and they did not believe them. But Peter rising up, ran to the sepulchre and, stooping down, he saw the linen cloths laid by themselves: and went away wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

And behold, two of them went, the same day, to a town which was sixty furlongs from Jerusalem, named Emmaus. And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

And it came to pass that while they talked and reasoned with themselves, Jesus Himself also, drawing near, went with them. But their eyes were held, that they should not know Him.

And He said to them: What are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk and are sad?

And the one of them, whose name was Cleophas, answering, said to Him: Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that have been done there in these days.

To whom he said: What things? And they said: Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people. And how our chief priests and princes delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him. But we hoped that it was He that should have redeemed Israel.

And now besides all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea and certain women also of our company affrighted us who, before it was light, were at the sepulchre. And not finding His body, came, saying that they had all seen a vision of angels, who say that He is alive. And some of our people went to the sepulchre and found it so as the women had said: but Him they found not.

Then He said to them: O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things, which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter

into His glory?

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning Him. And they drew nigh to the town whither they were going: and He made as though He would go farther.

But they constrained Him, saying: Stay with us, because it is towards evening and the day is now far spent.

And He went in with them. And it came to pass, whilst He was at table with them, He took bread and blessed and brake and gave to them. And their eyes were opened: and they knew Him. And He vanished out of their sight.

And they said one to the other: Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way and opened to us the Scriptures?

And rising up, the same hour, they went back to Jerusalem: and they found the eleven gathered together, and those that were with them, Saying: The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon!

And they told what things were done in the way: and how they knew Him in the breaking of bread.

Now, whilst they were speaking these things, Jesus stood in the midst of them and saith to them: Peace be to you. It is I, Fear not.

But they being troubled and frightened, supposed that they saw a spirit. And He said to them: Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? See My hands and feet, that it is I Myself. Handle, and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have.

And when He had said this, He shewed them His hands and feet.

But while they yet believed not and wondered for joy, He said: Have you here any thing to eat?

And they offered him a piece of a broiled fish and a honeycomb. And when He had eaten before them, taking the remains, He gave to them.

And He said to them: These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must

needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the psalms, concerning Me. Then He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.

And He said to them: Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, the third day: And that penance [Greek: repentance] and remission of sins should be preached in His name, unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

And you are witnesses of these things. And I send the promise of My Father upon you: but stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high.

And He led them out as far as Bethania: and lifting up His hands, He blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them and was carried up to heaven.

And they adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy. And they were always in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

1 CORINTHIANS 15

Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand; by which also you are saved, if you hold fast after what manner I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain.

For I delivered unto you first of all, which I also received: how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures: And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures: And that He was seen by Cephas; and after that by the eleven. Then He was seen by more than five hundred brethren at once: of whom many remain until this present, and some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

And last of all, he was seen also by me, as by one born

out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God, I am what I am; and His grace in me hath not been void, but I have laboured more abundantly than all they: yet not I, but the grace of God with me. For whether I, or they, so we preach, and so you have believed.

Now if Christ be preached, that He arose again from the dead, how do some among you say, that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again.

And if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because we have given testimony against God, that He hath raised up Christ; whom He hath not raised up, if the dead rise not again.

For if the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, the firstfruits of them that sleep:

For by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But every one in his own order: the firstfruits Christ, then they that are of Christ, who have believed in His coming. Afterwards the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father, when He shall have brought to nought all principality, and power, and virtue.

For He must reign, until He hath put all His enemies under His feet. And the enemy death shall be destroyed last: For He hath put all things under His feet. And whereas He saith, All things are put under Him; undoubtedly, He is excepted, who put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then the Son also Himself shall

be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Otherwise what shall they do that are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not again at all? Why are they then baptized for them? Why also are we in danger every hour? I die daily.

I protest by your glory, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord. If (according to man) I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what doth it profit me, if the dead rise not again? Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we shall die. Be not seduced: Evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake, ye just, and sin not.

For some have not the knowledge of God, I speak it to your shame. But some man will say: How do the dead rise again? or with what manner of body shall they come? Senseless man, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die first. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be; but bare grain, as of wheat, or of some of the rest.

But God giveth it a body as He will: and to every seed its proper body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but one is the flesh of men, another of beasts, another of birds, another of fishes. And there are bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial: but, one is the glory of the celestial, and another of the terrestrial. One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars. For star differeth from star in glory.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body.

If there be a natural body, there is also a spiritual body, as it is written: The first man Adam was made into a living soul; the last Adam into a quickening spirit. Yet that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; afterwards that which is spiritual.

The first man was of the earth, earthly: the second

man, from heaven, heavenly. Such as is the earthly, such also are the earthly: and such as is the heavenly, such also are they that are heavenly. Therefore as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us bear also the image of the heavenly.

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God: neither shall corruption possess incorruption.

Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall all indeed rise again: but we shall not all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible: and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality.

And when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? Now the sting of death is sin: and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmoveable; always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

EPHESIANS 1

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to all the saints who are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ: As He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity. Who hath predestinated us unto the

adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto Himself: according to the purpose of His will: Unto the praise of the glory of His grace, in which He hath graced us in His beloved Son.

In whom we have redemption through His blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace, which hath superabounded in us in all wisdom and prudence, that He might make known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Him, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, to reestablish all things in Christ, that are in heaven and on earth, in Him.

In whom we also are called by lot, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of His will. That we may be unto the praise of His glory, we who before hoped in Christ:

In whom you also, after you had heard the Word of truth, (the gospel of your salvation;) in whom also believing, you were signed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance, unto the redemption of acquisition, unto the praise of His glory.

Wherefore I also, hearing of your faith that is in the Lord Jesus, and of your love towards all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making commemoration of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation, in the knowledge of Him: The eyes of your heart enlightened, that you may know what the hope is of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

And what is the exceeding greatness of His power towards us, who believe according to the operation of the might of His power, Which He wrought in Christ, raising Him up from the dead, and setting Him on His right hand in the heavenly places. 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.

And He hath subjected all things under His feet, and

hath made Him head over all the church, Which is His body, and the fulness of Him who is filled all in all.

APOCALYPSE 22

And he showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In the midst of the street thereof, and on both sides of the river, was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

And there shall be no curse any more; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. And they shall see His face: and His name shall be on their foreheads.

And night shall be no more: and they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever. And he said to me: These words are most faithful and true. And the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets sent His angel to shew His servants the things which must be done shortly.

And, Behold I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book. And I, John, who have heard and seen these things. And after I had heard and seen, I fell down to adore before the feet of the angel, who shewed me these things.

And he said to me: See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them that keep the words of the prophecy of this book. Adore God.

And he saith to me: Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that hurteth, let him hurt still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is just, let him be justified still: and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still.

Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to his works. I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb: that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and unchaste, and murderers, and servers of idols, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie.

I Jesus have sent My angel, to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the root and stock of David, the bright and morning star. And the spirit and the bride say: Come. And he that heareth, let him say: Come. And he that thirsteth, let him come: and he that will, let him take the water of life, freely.

For I testify to every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book: If any man shall add to these things, God shall add unto him the plagues written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from these things that are written in this book.

He that giveth testimony of these things, saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

“I sought the Lord, and He heard me; and He delivered me from all my troubles . . . The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him, and shall deliver them. O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet; blessed is the man that hopeth in Him . . . The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart; and He will save the humble of spirit.” —*Psalm 33:5, 8-9, 19*
[*Psalm 34:4, 7-8, 18*]

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain, and when He was set down, His disciples came unto him.

“And opening His mouth, He taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

“Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

“Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake:

“Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they cuted

the prophets that were before you.

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out, and to be trodden on by men.

“You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid.

“Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house.

“So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

“Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

“For amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled.

“He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he that shall do and teach he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

— *Matthew 5:1-19*