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ANSWERS TO
A JEWISH ENQUIRER

BY THE REV.
FATHER THEODORE RATISBONNE

(1814-1884)

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH



LONDON
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INTRODUCTION *

THE "Oxford Movement" still arouses interest in England. What led to it? What forces were at work? Whence came this revival of Catholic feeling, affecting some of the most brilliant minds of the day? The names of the great converts—Newman, Faber, Ward, Oakley, Dalgairns and others—are well known to students of the period.

But comparatively few people have looked as far as another ancient University, that of Strasbourg, where a religious movement was also taking place, also important and significant—the first considerable modern conversion from Judaism to Christianity.

For centuries cruel methods of persecution had thrown the Jews back upon themselves, and there seemed no point of contact with the Christian world. Then, in the year 1791, amongst the thunderbolts from the storm of the French Revolution, came an act which decreed their emancipation. Fifteen years later, the genius of Napoleon ordered the fusion of French and Jewish nationalities, and it was just at this moment that the author of the following *Answers to a Jewish Enquirer* was born. He came of an aristocratic Jewish family. His grandfather on one side obtained a patent of nobility from Louis XVI, and his maternal grandfather, the gentle and much-beloved Theodore Cerfbeer, gave shelter to priests and religious during the Reign of Terror, and was the trusted guardian of many sacred vessels from Catholic churches.

* This short sketch is based on *The Brothers Ratisbonne*, published (price 2d.) by the Catholic Truth Society, to which readers are referred for further particulars.

From this worthy stock came the famous brothers Theodore and Marie Alphonse Ratisbonne, the latter being the hero of that miraculous conversion which was one of Our Lady's most gracious acts.

We are told that the child Theodore longed for the coming of the Messiah, but as he grew older eighteenth-century scepticism laid hold of him. He "complained with Rousseau, he scoffed with Voltaire—it was the sneer of Satan." He hoped that science might solve his doubts, and it was indeed through his love for the silence of Nature and the mysterious beauty of the midnight sky that he began to see the first faint promise of the dawn. After a night spent in contemplation of the stars he realized that an intelligent power must have created them, and regulated their harmonious movement, and he prayed, in bitterness of soul: "O Mysterious Being, Creator, Lord, Adonai, if Thou existest, have pity on Thy creature; show me the way which leads to truth, and I promise to consecrate my life to it."

The way was shown him; it led through the lecture-room of M. Bautain, a young and brilliant personality, suspended at that moment by the Académie Royale of Strasbourg for having dared to pass through scepticism and rationalism to Christianity. Not only Theodore Ratisbonne, but Isidore Goschler,* barrister, philosopher, and finally priest, Jules Lewel, and others of the same high level of intelligence were converted by his clear and luminous teaching, which led them to understand, gradually, how Christianity is the logical development and completion of Judaism. "Become good Israelites," he told them, "and truth will do the rest"; "Works must accompany ideas, if ideas are to become conviction."

For three years the direction of Jewish schools absorbed the greater part of Theodore's time. He was already unconsciously a Christian. The name of Jesus became familiar to him, he spoke it with confidence. He invoked Our Lady; his love for his own mother led him to love Mary. Jesus and Mary together took possession of his heart.

* Biographies of Goschler and Lewel are published for the Catholic Guild of Israel by the Catholic Truth Society, price 1d. each.

At this critical moment in his life, he owed much to the wisdom of a very remarkable woman, a Mademoiselle Humann. She was about sixty at the time, and became a spiritual mother to the young student. She it was who prepared him for his baptism, which took place secretly, "for fear of the Jews," on Holy Saturday, 1827.

In the same year his friend Goschler also became a Christian. As at Oxford, it was a movement amongst intellectuals. The Strasbourg students arrived at the truth through hard and concentrated study, partly philosophic, as in the case of Newman, who was at that time a brilliant member of the philosophic Oriel school and in 1826 a public tutor at that college. In 1827, too, began what his biographer has called the second period of Newman's Oxford career, which culminated in his conversion in 1845, three years after that of Father Alphonse Ratisbonne—memorable years these for Catholicism, both in France and England!

For a short time Father Theodore succeeded in concealing his conversion from his family; but when challenged by his father, he made his confession of faith, which naturally drew down on him indignant displeasure. He therefore left home, and entering the seminary with his teacher, M. Bautain, was in due course ordained priest and celebrated his first Mass on the Feast of the Epiphany, 1831.

Father Theodore began his priestly career very successfully at the Little Seminary, but he longed for pastoral work, and in 1840 became assistant to the Abbé Desguettes of Notre Dame des Victoires, in Paris. Here he found that their Archconfraternity was already praying for the conversion of the Jews. To this encouragement was added that given him by Gregory XVI at an audience: "*Ite potius ad oves quæ perierunt domus Israel*,"* commanded the Vicar of Christ, embracing him with fatherly affection.

The Abbé, like all religious reformers, knew how necessary it is to begin with the children. He therefore decided to procure Christian education for those small Jewish folk whose parents

* "*Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Matt. x. 6).

wished for it. A beginning was made in Paris by Mme. Stouhlen and Mlle. Louise Weywada, who educated twelve Jewish girls and instructed those who desired to be baptized. From this modest start arose the Congregation of Our Lady of Sion which to-day has Houses in every quarter of the globe. In 1858 Father Theodore came to London, and two years later a House was started there. The Congregation, given its canonical existence by the Archbishop of Paris in 1847, received Papal approbation in 1863 and the definite sanction of its Rule in 1874. The Confraternity of Christian Mothers founded in 1852 was raised to the rank of an Archconfraternity in 1856, and has to-day over 1,500,000 associates distributed amongst 2200 Confraternities. There are three Houses in England—Bayswater and Holloway in London, and Worthing in Sussex.

But Father Theodore's ministry was not limited to these two great works, the Congregation of Our Lady of Sion and the Archconfraternity of Christian Mothers. All his life long he carried on besides an active apostleship: Baptism, abjurations, instructions, confessions, retreats to parishes and religious congregations, to say nothing of an enormous correspondence, were all rendered possible by his tremendous zeal and activity. He possessed that eternal youthfulness of spirit which is the secret of the saints. He "drank love at its source" and neither insult, rebuff, nor contempt nor insolence lessened his courage or diminished his faith. God was manifest to him in all human events, as in the beauty of Nature; he enjoyed the "eternal serenity of God." He was a great reader of Holy Scripture; it was to him "God's book, to be read in God's spirit."

His heavenly Father sustained him through his last long illness, and the end, which came on May 6, 1884, was a transfiguration rather than death; for the marks of suffering passed away, and the beautiful and delicate features became again those of a young man.

Father Theodore lies in the cemetery at Grand Bourg, Corbeil: on his tombstone is the inscription: "Our good Father, 1802-1884," and below it the text, which he made most truly his own, "*Super omnia caritatem habete—quod est vinculum perfectionis.*"

ANSWERS TO A JEWISH ENQUIRER

BY THE REV. FATHER THEODORE RATISBONNE

PART I

QUESTION. What is Religion ?

ANSWER. Religion, according to the literal meaning of the word, is the sacred bond which unites man to God, his Creator ; it includes, therefore, all those beliefs and duties by which man ought to glorify and serve God.

Q. What is true Religion ?

A. True Religion is that which God Himself has instituted ; for it belongs to Him to teach us in what manner He ought to be served. Now, God began His revelation of true Religion as soon as the world was created, and He has successively developed it in that order of time which His infinite wisdom prearranged. An architect places first the foundations of the edifice which he is about to build ; then he continues his work, and at the last he puts the finishing touches. So God, according to Holy Scripture, after having spoken with Adam and the Patriarchs, later confirmed and extended these first teachings by the written Law which He gave to Moses.

Q. What is the principal truth taught by this Religion ?

A. This Religion is based upon faith in the Messiah, whom God promised to Abraham and through whom He willed to save the human race which had fallen beneath the yoke of Satan. This promise was often repeated to the Patriarchs, to Moses, and to the Prophets, who all lived believing in a liberator whom God should send, and in the expectation of His coming.

Q. Why does man need to be saved ?

A. Because he deserved the condemnation of his Creator. The first man, in whose will the fate of all his posterity was included, committed a sin of disobedience against God. From that moment he lost the original innocence in which he had been created, and thereby heaven, his home, was shut against him. Thus, too, all the children of Adam are born stained with the sin of their first parent : all bear the weight of this terrible loss. That is what is meant by original sin.

Q. Do the Jews admit the dogma of original sin ?

A. All the peoples of the world attribute the ills and scourges which afflict human nature to some primitive fall, but to the Jews especially the mystery of this fall has been revealed in the Holy Scriptures, for besides the third chapter of Genesis, Job in his fourteenth chapter declares the children of men to lie under some curse—"Who can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed ? Is it not Thou who only art ?" (Job xiv. 4). King David, voicing the lament of the whole human race, cries out in the fiftieth Psalm : "For behold I was conceived in iniquities and in sins did my mother conceive me" (Ps. l. 5).

Q. Can it be proved that man is really fallen ?

A. Only if you accept the teaching of Holy Scripture that man was created in a state of perfection both bodily and spiritual ; from this the actual state of man to-day shows an evident fall. This degradation of human nature is seen in the ignorance, weakness, evil inclinations with which we are all born, and by the ills of every kind to which the human race is heir.

Q. Did God abandon man after his fall ?

A. God in His infinite goodness has not abandoned man. On the contrary He promised him a merciful restoration.

Q. Could not Adam and Eve have become once more holy and pleasing to God by their own efforts, if they had returned into the path of humble submission ?

A. No, it was impossible for man to return to grace by his own efforts, or to establish himself by his own merits in that state of holiness from which he had fallen. Only God who had given him grace at his creation could restore it to him. Besides which how could man offer any sufficient reparation to the Infinite Majesty which he had outraged ? And how could such

a reparation have been acceptable to God from a creature soiled by sin ?

Q. What then are the conditions of salvation ?

A. The salvation of man, then, could only be accomplished by God Himself. This is why the Messiah-Saviour was promised.

Q. When did God make this promise ?

A. The promise of a redeeming Messiah was made immediately after the fall of Adam. God said, " I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed : it shall crush thy head " (Gen. iii. 15). This promise was often repeated in Holy Scripture ; and the greater part of the prophecies refer to it.

Q. What are the principal prophecies which relate to the Messiah ?

A. The whole Bible speaks of the Messiah, and reveals not only His coming into the world, but the time, the place, and small details of His life and sacrifice. Here, however, are some of the principal texts :—

God said to Abraham, " In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed " (Gen. xxii. 18). He also said to Isaac, " In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed " (Gen. xxvi. 4). He said to Jacob, " And in thee and in thy seed all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed " (Gen. xxviii. 14).

Jacob, when dying, blessed his twelve sons, who were destined to become the fathers of the tribes of Israel, but he prophesied that the Messiah should come out of the tribe of Juda—" Juda, thee shall thy brethren praise ; the sons of thy father shall bow down to thee. The sceptre shall not be taken away from him, nor a ruler from his thigh, till He come that is to be sent, and He shall be the expectation of nations " (Gen. xlix. 8, 10).

Moses said in Deuteronomy, " The Lord thy God will raise up to thee a prophet of thy nation and of thy brethren like unto me : Him shalt thou hear " (Deut. xviii. 15).

By these evidences and others, which all Jews have applied to the Messiah, it can be proved that the Patriarchs awaited a Redeemer. Moreover, the institutions and the ceremonies of the law of Moses, and even the events in the history of the Jews, were like prophetic figures of the history of the Messiah, and a preparation for His coming.

Q. Which are the prophets of Israel who predicted the circumstances of the mission of the Messias ?

A. David, Isaias, Daniel, Micheas, Jeremias, and, generally speaking, all the Scriptures tell in clear and solemn tones of the Saviour who is to come. Read specially Psalms ii., xx., xl., lxix., lxxii., cx. : their subject is the Messias. If David and Solomon are mentioned in them it is only because their reigns prefigure His reign, for these prophecies also contain features which could only apply to Him.

Isaias prophesies in these words the birth of the Messias : " For a Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us, and the government is upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the World to come, the Prince of Peace " (Is. ix. 6). " And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. In that day the root of Jesse who standeth for an ensign of the people, Him the Gentiles shall beseech ; and His sepulchre shall be glorious " (Is. xi. 1, 10). In another passage he says, " Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son : and His name shall be called Emmanuel, that is to say ' God with us ' " (Is. xxxv. 4, 5). And, finally, he cries, " Drop down dew, ye heavens from above : and let the clouds rain the just ; let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour, and let justice spring up together " (Is. xlv. 8).

The prophet Micheas names even the town where the Saviour shall be born : " And thou Bethlehem Ephrata art a little one among the thousands of Juda : out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel ; and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity " (Micheas v. 2).

The prophet Ezechiel has these other remarkable sayings, " Thus saith the Lord God : Behold I Myself will seek My sheep and will visit them " ; and again, " And I will set up one shepherd over them : and he shall feed them, even My servant David : he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd " (Ezech. xxxiv. 11, 23). When Ezechiel made this prophecy in the name of God, David had long been dead. There is therefore no question but that they refer to the Messias, of whom David was the type and ancestor.

The prophecy of Daniel (chap. ix.) is famous, for there the very date of the advent of the Saviour seems to be fixed.

One might cite also the books of Jeremias, Zacharias, Mala-

chias, and other prophets, for it will be found in turning to these passages that all, with unanimous voice, hail the day when God shall fulfil His promises.

Q. Has the Divine promise then been actually realised ?

A. It is faithfully realised in Jesus Christ, as can be proved by Old and New Testament alike, and also by the witness of history, both sacred and secular, and the testimony of millions of men and women for the last nineteen hundred years.

Q. But is it not true that insertions have been made in the text of the Old Testament by the disciples of Jesus Christ ?

A. The Sacred Books of the Old Testament have always been in the possession of the Jews, who have kept them intact until the present day with the greatest reverence and care. It is evident that the Jews dispersed all over the world are not likely to have accepted among themselves books which had been falsified by Christians, and which contain their own condemnation. It is in these manuscripts, preserved with religious care in all the synagogues in the world, that the texts which we have quoted are found.

Q. Since these texts are so numerous and so clear, why did not the Jews believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah ?

A. It is not absolutely true to say that the Jews did not recognise Jesus Christ as the Messiah ; for the Apostles and the first thousands of disciples who composed the primitive Church in Jerusalem were all Jews. It is through the Jews that the faith of Jesus Christ has been spread throughout the whole world. But whilst the better part of the nation attached themselves to the Saviour a large number turned against Him, and ceased to be God's chosen people. This also had been foretold by the prophets.

Q. Which prophecies announce the unbelief of the Jews ?

A. Moses pronounced blessings upon the faithful and terrible curses upon the unbelievers. To these last in particular, he said, "The Lord strike thee with madness and blindness and fury of mind. And mayst thou grope at midday, as the blind is wont to grope in the dark, and not make straight thy ways" (Deut. xxviii. 28, 29).

This is how Isaias speaks of the blindness of the faithless Jews : "We looked for light, and behold darkness : brightness and we have walked in the dark. We have groped for the wall and like

the blind we have groped as if we had no eyes. We have stumbled in noonday as in darkness : we are in dark places as dead men, because we have sinned and lied against the Lord : we have turned away so that we went not after our God but spoke calumny and transgression " (Isa. lix. 9, 10, 13).

In chapter liii. the same prophet reveals to us one of the causes of this unbelief. After having announced in the previous chapter the reign of the Messias, he begins thus : " 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. . . . Because His soul hath laboured, He shall see and be filled." It is necessary to read the whole chapter : it is an account, given many centuries before, of the sufferings and death of the Messias, and also of the glory which was to be the fruit of them.

Isaias further declares in chapter fifty the repudiation of the faithless synagogue. " Thus saith the Lord : What is this bill of the divorce of your mother with which I have put her away ? Or who is My creditor, to whom I sold you ? Behold you are sold for your iniquities, and for your wicked deeds have I put your mother away. Because I came and there was not a man : I called and there was none that would hear."

Daniel, after having fixed the time of the coming of the Messias, added that he would be put to death, and that the people (Dan. ix. 26) who rejected Him would be no more God's people.

To sum up, the Prophets foretold the dispersion of the Jews all over the world, without King, sacrifices, altar, or prophets, always waiting for salvation and never finding it. But they also announce their return and their conversion towards the end of time. This is what Osee says, " For the children of Israel shall sit many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without altar, and without ephod, and without theraphim. And after this the children of Israel shall return and shall seek the Lord their God and David their king : and they shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the last days " (Osee iii. 4, 5).

Q. If the greater part of these prophecies have been visibly realised, there is one, however, which seems contradicted by facts ; for it is not correct to say that Jews have no temples. They have temples in many towns, and they even have priests who are called Rabbis and ministers ?

A. It is true that the Jews have built very magnificent synagogues in those countries in which they have been scattered ; but these synagogues have nothing in common with the directions and the ceremonies of the law of Moses. They have a sham altar, but there are no sacrifices offered thereupon ; they have Rabbis, but the Rabbis have no priestly consecration, and are, therefore, not priests.

According to the law of Moses the sons of Aaron alone were admitted to the priestly office, to the exclusion of all the other tribes of Israel : but in the choice of Rabbis no notice is taken of this sacred law. This is the test of the law of Moses : "Thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons over the service of priesthood : the stranger that approacheth to minister shall be put to death " (Num. iii. 10).

You may conclude from this that the Rabbis have no sacred title, and that it would be wrong of them to pose as priests in the eyes of the Jews. As for those men who are called officiating ministers, they are only hired singers who are not to be distinguished from the rest of the faithful except by the quality of their voices. They have only more or less recently been called ministers, originally in order to procure for them some aid from the State.

Q. I admit the fall of the Jews from a religious point of view, but if they are honest and live godly, can they not be saved without believing in Jesus Christ ?

A. There is no salvation possible except through Jesus Christ, because since original sin has deprived all mankind of grace, all need both the remedy and the physician. Besides, the repeated prophecy of the Messiah in the Old Testament would have been vain and superfluous if the Saviour was not absolutely necessary for the salvation of mankind ; consequently a man cannot have true religion nor real happiness in this world and in eternity if he does not believe in the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Q. It is not difficult to believe that Jesus Christ was the holiest of men, and that He taught a divine morality, but I hesitate to admit His Divinity.

A. If Jesus Christ had been merely the holiest of all men He would not have allowed people to adore Him, for this would have been a worse idolatry than any He abolished. And if He taught a Divine morality He could not have founded it on illusions and falsehood. But since Jesus Christ declared positively that His birth was from eternity and His nature divine: since He was solemnly recognised, proclaimed and adored as God by His disciples; and lastly since Christianity, as it has been taught and practised for nineteen centuries, is founded upon the Divinity of Jesus Christ, one must believe either that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, or else that He was a charlatan who deceived the whole world.

Q. Before asking for those words of Jesus Christ which establish His Divinity, I should like to know if the Old Testament taught that the Messiah to come would be God Himself?

A. The Books of the Old Testament, specially the Psalms of David and the Books of the Prophets reveal the Divinity of the Messiah. Texts abound: we will only quote the principal ones.

David speaks thus, "The Lord saith to my Lord: Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool" (Ps. cix. 1).

The passage in Isaias (chap. ix.) which we have already quoted would not apply to a Messiah who was only a man, for the prophet calls Him "God the mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace." It is of Him that Isaias speaks in chapter vii.: "A Virgin shall conceive and bear a son: and his name shall be called Emmanuel, 'God with us.'" This magnificent prophecy agrees with the following, "God Himself will come and will save you" (xxxv. 4). "The voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the wilderness the paths of our God." . . . "Say to the cities of Juda: Behold your God. Behold the Lord God shall come with strength" (xl. 3, 9, 10). "The Lord of Hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, shall be called the God of all the earth" (liv. 5).

The prophet Zacharias reveals the Divinity of the Redeemer of mankind in these terms, "Sing, praise, and rejoice, O daughter of Sion: for behold I come and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord" (iii. 10).

Let us mention also the witness of that strange Book of Job wherein Job declares the firm hope which he has of rising again

and of seeing with his bodily eyes his Redeemer—God made Man. “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another: this my hope is laid up in my bosom” (xix. 25–27). All these passages and many others can only apply to the Messiah.

Q. How do the Jews explain these texts?

A. Jews in general do not read them; and if they read them, they do not understand them; or else they take them to their Rabbis, who will not understand them. But those who have read them and honestly studied them have not been able to misunderstand the clearness of their meaning, and have applied them to the Messiah.

Q. Did those Jews who awaited the Messiah before the coming of Jesus Christ believe that He would be the Son of God?

A. This mystery could not have been loudly proclaimed or openly known by all until the coming of Jesus Christ. However, even before that time, those who amongst the Jews were enlightened by the Holy Spirit, or well versed in the Holy Scriptures, had a more distinct knowledge of it. One sees this in reading those books which contain the ancient traditions.

Q. I have read the Gospel several times and what I find obscure is this: On one side you prove that the texts of the Old Testament and the traditions of the Synagogue teach that the Redeemer would be God Himself; on the other hand, Jesus Christ, who manifests Himself as the Redeemer, always affects the title Son of Man. How do you reconcile these contradictory titles?

A. The Redeemer, Jesus Christ, is truly man, son of Abraham and of David, as the Holy Scriptures foretold, and born of Mary, the immaculate Virgin of Israel. But as we shall explain later, He is God-Man, or rather He is God made Man—Emmanuel.

Q. I see that Jesus everywhere calls Himself Son of Man, but I do not see that He anywhere accepted the name of God.

A. If you read the New Testament attentively you will discover two things. On one side Jesus Christ insisted on the title Son of Man, to link Himself to the prophecy of Daniel (chap. vii.); and on the other He manifestly declared Himself to be Divine.

As for the passages relative to the Divinity of Jesus Christ, they are so numerous that one would have to copy out nearly the whole of the Gospels in order to quote them. Here, however, are some of them : Jesus had just stilled the storm on the lake, "and they that were in the boat came and adored Him saying, ' Indeed Thou art the Son of God ' " (Matt. xiv. 33).

In chapter xvi. the same Evangelist relates the striking profession of faith made by Simon Peter in the presence of Jesus Christ. The Messiah asked His disciples, " Whom do men say that the Son of Man is ? " and they replied that He was generally considered to be one of the old prophets who had risen from the dead. Then Jesus, addressing Himself to His Apostles, asked them, " But whom do ye say that I am ? " Simon Peter answered and said, " Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God." Then Jesus, far from reprimanding St. Peter, made this reply, " Blessed are thou, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in Heaven."

At the Transfiguration when He was transfigured before them and His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow, there came a voice out of the cloud saying, " This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased " (Matt. xvii. 2, 5).

When St. Luke quotes the words which Jesus Christ pronounced at the assembly of judges, he adds that these cried out, " Art Thou then the Son of God ? " And Jesus Christ replied to them, " You have said it : I am He " (xxii. 70).

St. John declares that the Jews sought to put Him to death, not only because He had violated the Sabbath, but because He said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God (v., xviii.). They said to Pilate, " We have a law : and according to the law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God " (xix. 7). " I and the Father are one," said Jesus Christ (x. 30). " He who honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who hath sent Him : " " the hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God " (v. 23, 25). " Jesus said to them Amen, Amen, I say to you before Abraham was made, I am " (viii. 58).

St. Matthew closes his Gospel with these words of Jesus Christ to His apostles, " Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Supported by these formal declarations of Jesus Christ, His Divinity was firmly believed and professed openly by the apostles and disciples.

St. Mark begins his Gospel thus, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God": and relating the baptism of Jesus Christ, he tells of the voice from heaven which rendered the testimony, "Thou art My beloved Son: in Thee I am well pleased" (i. 11).

But it is above all St. John, that sublime Evangelist, who teaches the Divinity of Christ so clearly and dogmatically. These are his first words: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God: and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was made nothing that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness: and the darkness did not comprehend it" (i. 1-5). The same Evangelist teaches us that Jesus Christ is the Word of God, who is Himself God, as we have just read. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us (and we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth" (i. 14). After having related the marvellous works of Jesus Christ he adds: "These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing you may have life in His name" (xx. 31).

* To these texts and many others in the Holy Gospels must be added those in the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Paul, and the other sacred books of the New Testament, as well as those traditional teachings all of which have the faith in Jesus Christ, God made Man, for their foundation.

Q. The texts which you have quoted do not permit one to doubt the Divinity of Jesus Christ. But in that case is it not necessary to admit the plurality of Gods?

A. There is but one God, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; and in that Unity there resides the mystery of the Trinity, which we will next proceed to consider.

* (Translator's note.) It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the teaching on this subject which is to be found in the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Paul: a careful study of these writings will add valuable testimony to that of the Gospels.

PART II

Q. WHAT is the mystery of the Blessed Trinity ?

A. Before approaching this sacred dogma, let us agree at once that it is difficult, indeed impossible, for the limited human mind to comprehend the infinite.

We who are ignorant of the inmost nature of visible creatures, how can we speak of the inmost nature of the Creator ?

Moreover, as our language cannot really explain mysteries which escape the senses, we are obliged to borrow analogies from things of earth which can only give very incomplete ideas of the things of heaven. That is why the august mystery of the Trinity, entrusted by Jesus Christ to the Christian Faith, is above all explanation.

Q. I should not attempt to fathom the Divine Majesty, but I should like to know how the Christian idea of the Trinity can leave the dogma of the Unity of God intact ?

A. We believe in one God, the God of Israel, but we know by Divine revelation that there are three Persons in this one God. But, remember first of all that the word *person* applied to God must not lead us to imagine any bodily or sensible figure, for God is pure Spirit ; and in the second place this same word must not give one an idea of human persons, each of them possessing a body and a soul distinct from all others ; for there is but one God, although there are three Divine Persons, because there is only one infinite Being which is common to the three Persons. But the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, united in the same Divine Nature, having but one essence and but one substance, are but one and the same God, one sole and only God, one sole and infinite Being, creator and Lord of all things.

Q. It appears to me that you complicate the idea of God, which is so simple among the Israelites.

A. The more perfect understanding of this mystery of God will not really complicate our idea of Him, except in so far as the same thing may be said to happen to us when we grow in the

knowledge of some fellow man. When we first know a man we have a very superficial understanding of him, but when he talks to us and reveals himself, although we begin to understand far more about him we may perhaps also say that our ideas are more complicated. It is in this way that the dogma of the Unity of God is complicated and illuminated by the idea of the Trinity.

Q. I am astonished that the Old Testament makes no mention of this mystery.

A. The clear and universal manifestation of this sublime dogma was reserved until the time of the Messias to whom it appertained to reveal to us the hidden mysteries of the Divine nature. Besides which the Jews, surrounded by idolaters and themselves so inclined to idolatry, needed above all to be strengthened in their faith in the one true God: for it might be feared that a too manifest revelation of the Trinity of Divine persons would give them an occasion for adoring several Gods. But always (long before the time when the Divine Messias, through the Jews, had spread the knowledge of the true God throughout the world) the Jewish faith had included the shadowy idea of the Trinity, not yet declared.

Q. Do the Books of the Old Testament speak of the Trinity?

A. The Sacred Books of the Old Testament do not expressly formulate the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, but they speak in many places of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and in several texts, they, to whom it has already been revealed, catch a glimpse of the Trinity of the Divine Persons. This mystery has certainly been caught sight of by the patriarchs and prophets. We read, for instance, in Psalm ii.: "The Lord hath said to me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession": and in Psalm cix, "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit Thou at my right hand . . . from the womb before the day-star I begot Thee."

These texts could certainly not apply to David. "Give, O God," says the Psalmist, "to the king's son Thy justice." Who is this king's son? The same Psalm designates Him manifestly, "He shall continue throughout all generations." "All the kings of the earth shall adore Him; all nations shall serve Him" (Ps. lxxi. 1, 5, 11).

The Psalmist also calls the Son the Word of God, "He sent His Word and healed them" (Ps. cvi. 20).

Solomon in the Book of Proverbs says, "What is His name, and what is the name of His Son, if thou knowest?"

Other texts could be quoted. Those given speak of the Father and of the Son: as to the Holy Spirit, it was He who inspired the Prophets; and from the very first words in the Bible we find Him specially mentioned: "and the Spirit of God moved over the waters" (Gen. i. 2). "His Spirit hath adorned the heavens," says the Book of Job (xxvi. 13).

"Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth" (Ps. ciii. 30).

In those days, saith the Lord by the mouth of the Prophet Joel, "I will pour forth My Spirit on all flesh" (Joel ii. 28).

It is not necessary to multiply texts; those which I have just quoted suffice to prove that the names of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are many times mentioned in the Old Testament. These different titles evidently apply to one and the same God, and yet they imply a distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You will notice that there are three words used in Holy Writ to express the Name of God, and these three words exactly coincide with the meaning of the three Divine Persons. You will also notice that the ineffable name of God is almost always pronounced three times in the Holy Scriptures. Thus God said of Himself to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob."

The Jews of to-day also address a triple invocation to Him. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Sabaoth."

And, still more significant, the dogma of the Unity of God, as it was pronounced by Moses, implies in itself the mystery of the Trinity, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One."

This text employs three expressions to reveal one God to us. But, notice above all two mysterious sayings of God, one at the moment of the Creation of man, and the other after the Fall, which can easily be explained by the mystery of a distinction in the Divine Unity.

At the moment of the Creation of Man, God held in some manner a counsel with Himself, and said, "Let us make man to our image and likeness": and when man had sinned He said, as if in derision, "Behold Adam is become as one of us." From which we may conclude that perhaps the patriarchs, the

prophets, and other holy persons of the ancient law were able to catch a glimpse of this mystery ; and curiously enough this is proved by Jewish traditions, as can be seen in the learned researches of converted Rabbis. The Book called "Zohar," which is, after the Bible, one of the most precious books of Jewish antiquity, constantly calls the Unity of God "a great mystery": and generally speaking, the doctors of the Synagogue who lived before the Advent of the Messias talk of the Trinity in the Divine Unity as a truth which had been known from the most remote times.

This was testified to by Saint Epiphanius amongst others, who, being himself of the Jewish race, perfectly understood the traditions of his nation: here is a passage, from the Greek, of this celebrated writer: "The most eminent doctors amongst the scholars of Israel taught at all times the Trinity in Unity of the Divine essence with firm conviction."

If you had the time to consult the sacred books, and the traditions recorded in the commentaries of the ancient Rabbis, you would become convinced that the theology of the Catholic Church in no point contradicts Hebrew theology. Truth unveils itself gradually as the sun ; but it is always the same, always intact and immovable: "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever."

Q. You said that the mystery of the Trinity is incomprehensible ?

A. Yes, can you be surprised at this ? I repeat that our feeble and limited intellect cannot comprehend the Infinite Majesty of God. Powerless to explain even visible and created things, how can it explain that which is invisible, uncreated, infinite ?

Q. Let me say that in some way the idea of the Trinity begins to dawn upon my mind. I can distinguish the number three in many unities. Thus in matter I distinguish between length, breadth, and height ; in all natural developments the root, the stem, and the crown. In the family there are father, mother, and child. This law is found also in science and art ; logic proceeds by three terms ; grammar sums up the proposition in the subject, the verb, and the predicate ; music requires three notes to compose a perfect harmony ; architecture itself forms a perfect order of three principal parts—the base, the column, and the entablature. I have always admired this universal law

without being able to explain it to myself ; but I begin to suspect that it is a reflection of God in all creation.

A. These comparisons are interesting ; there is some truth in them ; but we cannot use them to demonstrate the fathomless dogma of the Divine Trinity. This dogma presents for our worship one only God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, without confounding the Persons and without distinction of substance.

Q. I should like to know the terms in which this mystery is taught in the New Testament.

A. Attend carefully. We will collect the texts which explicitly reveal the Trinity. Let us begin with the solemn mission which Jesus Christ gave to His Apostles, at the moment when He was about to leave the world : " All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations : baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost " (St. Matt. xxviii. 19).

St. Paul, at the beginning of his Epistle to the Hebrews, says that the Son of God, by whom God had made the world, is the brightness of His glory and the figure of His substance, and that He upholds all things by the word of His power.

The three Persons distinct in God are also indicated in the text of the same Apostle to the Corinthians : " The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Charity of God, and the Communication of the Holy Ghost be with you all " (1 Cor. xiii. 13).

An infinity of other passages in the New Testament speak of the Divinity of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. We have already quoted a good number relating to the Son of God ; here are some others :—

The Apostle St. Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians (ii. 9) says of Jesus Christ, " In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporeally." The same Apostle, in his Epistle to the Romans, talking of the Jews, says that from them has come, " according to the flesh, Jesus Christ, who is over all things, God blessed for ever " (Rom. ix. 5).

Again, let us quote that exclamation of St. Thomas, at the moment when he contemplated the wounds of the risen Saviour. " My Lord and my God ! " Jesus replied, " Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed " (St. John xx. 28, 29). The Holy Scriptures affirm the Divinity of the Holy Ghost just as they do that of the Son. St. Paul says to the Corinthians,

“ Know you not that you are the temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ? ” (1 Cor. iii. 16.)

And that we may not hesitate to believe that this Spirit of God is the Holy Ghost Himself ; he says still more positively in the sixth chapter, “ Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you ? ” and he adds, “ Glorify and bear God in your body ” (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

It is reported in the Acts of the Apostles that Ananias having been guilty of lying, St. Peter said to him, “ Ananias, why hath Satan tempted thy heart, that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost ? Thou hast not lied to men, but to God ” (Acts v. 3, 4).

In the Gospel of St. Mark we read this sentence, which gives us an idea of the Divine Majesty of the Holy Ghost, “ All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men . . . but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost shall never have forgiveness ” (St. Mark iii. 28, 29).

Therefore on one side, there is only one God ; and on the other we see that the Son is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God equally with the Father. What conclusion do we draw from that ? That there is in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, one sole God, Creator of heaven and earth.

Q. This conclusion seems evident to me, and I have no difficulty in admitting that, if there is an explicable mystery at the foundation of each existence, it should be even more reasonable that it should exist in the depths of Divinity. But, since the Trinity dominates all the other mysteries of Christianity, I should like to be further enlightened on this dogma.

A. It is of the highest importance not only to understand but to recognise and believe with firmness the truths which relate to the Trinity ; for the slightest error in this matter involves the most serious consequences. That is why the Trinity must always be spoken of with respect and in those terms sanctioned by theologians. There is but one God, because there is but one single Divine substance common to the three Persons. The Son, therefore, is not another God than the Father, neither is the Holy Ghost another God than the Father and Son ; the three Divine Persons are all equal ; consequently they are all three eternally and infinitely perfect, have the same unique wisdom, the same unique power, the same unique infinite goodness. In this connection there is no distinction between them ; They are the one and the same God,

Creator, and Sovereign Lord of all things. But in reality they are distinct ; there is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The Father is the First Person distinct from the other two ; for He is the Father, He is not the Son, nor the Holy Ghost.

The Son is the Second Person distinct ; He is the Son, He is distinct from the Father and the Holy Ghost ; finally, the Holy Ghost is the Third Person distinct from the Father and the Son.

But in distinguishing these three terms, as Father, Son, Holy Ghost, we must beware, of course, of any dividing of the God-head.

Remember that there is always but one Divine nature, one substance only, one sole Divinity which is indivisible and which is whole and the same in each Person.

God has known and contemplated Himself from all eternity. The interior expression of the knowledge which God has of Himself, the eternal Word by which He tells Himself that He is, is a substantial Word, a Divine Person, to whom the Father who begat Him communicates His nature ; that is to say His full Divinity ; it is His Son, His other Self, God of God, Light of Light. But there is a reciprocal and eternal Love between the Father and the Son, between the Father and Him who is His living, perfect, and substantial image ; this mutual Love, this Divine link which unites them, is the Third Divine Person who proceeds from the other two, equal to them in all things, and eternally God ; He is the Holy Ghost.

Q. If I understand but little of these theological formulas, at least I can perceive their significance. I conceive the idea of God as that of the sun : his shining image is the visible world. The sun is a radiant unity, but one can distinguish in it its source, radiance, and heat.

A. This analogy is fairly correct, as accurate as a comparison can be between a creature and its Creator, and theologians admit these kinds of comparisons so as to give us, to some extent at any rate, the idea of a Trinity in Unity.

The great St. Augustine delighted in explaining these analogies in his different works ; he willingly recognised a symbol of the mystery of the Trinity in the human soul. There is in it, he says, existence, consciousness, and will : three distinct powers in one soul.

Bossuet develops this comparison. "The thought," he says

(Discourse upon Universal History), "which we feel born in us as the germ of our spirit, as the son of our intelligence, gives us some idea of the Son of God, eternally conceived in the intelligence of the Heavenly Father ; that is why this Son of God takes the title of the Word ; so that we should understand that He is born in the bosom of the Father, not as the body is born, but as that interior voice is born in our soul, which we feel there when we contemplate truth.

"But the fruitfulness of our spirit does not stop at this interior voice, at this thought of the intellect, at this image of truth which is found in us. We love this interior voice and the spirit in which it is born, and in loving it we feel within ourselves something which is not less precious than our spirit and our thought, which is the fruit of both, which unites them, which unites with them, and makes with them one single life.

"Thus as far as any connection can be found between God and man, thus, I say, the eternal Love is produced in God, proceeding from the Father who thinks, and from the Son who is His thought, to make with Him and with His thought, one equally happy and perfect nature."

Here is another thought which may appear even more striking to you, although it is, I admit, not a rigid demonstration, for human reason cannot prove absolutely those truths which transcend reason, and which we can only understand through the revelation of God.

This demonstration arises out of that beautiful definition of God which we read in the Epistles of St. John the Apostle—"God is Love." If God is Love, He must love eternally. But, tell me, what was the object of His love before all creation ?

The Creation was not necessary ; it depended upon the free-will of God. But Divine Love is necessary, it is inherent in God's very nature. If then, God could only expend His love upon Himself, must not one distinguish between God loving and God loved ?

But between Him who loves and Him who is loved, there is a vital connection, a link which unites them, a flow of love which proceeds from one to the other ; and thus we are led to conceive, as far as we can, the existence of that substantial Love, which makes of God loving and God loved but one.

This explanation was given by the celebrated Hugh of St. Victor ; but it needs fuller development to become really clear.

Q. I am struck by the mystery which enfolds the word Love, and by that beautiful analogy which you have drawn from the human soul. I have now some idea of the Trinity of persons in the unity of the Divine substance. Besides, I realise that when God reveals a truth to us we are firmly bound to believe it, even if it is incomprehensible.

A. Thanks be to God, you no longer suppose that Christians adore three Gods, as the Jews think they do. This absurd supposition disappears before the most elementary teaching of Christian doctrine.

Hereafter you will better understand the Divine nature of the Messiah, and the work of the Redemption of mankind.

PART III

Q. I THINK that I have grasped the idea of the Trinity fairly well ; but if God came down to earth, my imagination separates Him from the Creator who reigns in Heaven, and in spite of myself, I see two Gods.

A. When the sun floods the landscape it does not therefore cease to be still in the heavens. In the same way the Son of God in incorporating Himself in human nature did not cease to be in heaven ; and we say that the Son of God came down to earth, although He was already there before His Incarnation, because in uniting Himself personally to our nature He manifested Himself in a visible manner upon that earth where He had previously been in an invisible manner only. We say also that He came down from Heaven, so as to make ourselves understand the immensity the love of God, Who is infinitely raised above all creatures, in that He abased Himself as far as to unite Himself to our nature, and even to take upon Himself all our misery, our suffering, and our humiliation.

Q. Please explain to me how the Son of God united Himself to human nature.

A. If you ask why this mystery was accomplished, I reply with the Apostle that God loved us with so ardent a love that He desired to carry this love to its furthest limit by contracting the most intimate of all possible alliances with us. It is the reply of St. John, " God hath first loved us."

But if you ask how the Incarnation of God in human nature was accomplished, I can only reply that here we come into touch with the supernatural. It is a mystery of the Divine order, and remains a mystery. Thus St. John, when he announced the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, only uttered these simple and sublime words, " The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

Q. What is the meaning of that saying ?

A. The mystery of the Word made flesh is called the mystery of the Incarnation, and it signifies the union of the Divine with

human nature. But the Son of God in becoming man did not cease to be God. Jesus Christ is at the same time both God and Man. The contemplation of this mystery of love will make you understand the hopes and the grandeur of the Christian, the disciple of Jesus Christ. All humanity has been ennobled, even in a manner deified, by its union with God.

Q. I am astonished that the Jews have no idea of this mystery.

A. Modern Jews have lost this idea ; they fail to recognise their greatest title to nobility, for God became incarnate in the children of Israel. The mission of the Jews was to prefigure and to prophesy this mystery, to propagate the idea before it was accomplished, to announce it to the world after its accomplishment and to unite to the race of Abraham all nations, so as to form with Israel one single people of God. This mission has been effectively fulfilled by those among the Jews who became the first disciples of Jesus Christ ; there are no more honourable names amongst Christians than those of the Apostles, who were all Israelites. But the Jews do not admit the mystery of the Incarnation, do not know what to think about the Messias, and resist blindly all prophetic, dogmatic, and historical testimony.

Q. How was the Incarnation announced in the Holy Scriptures ?

A. You remember the prophecies which announced that the Messias would be both God and man. I would remind you that the Incarnation of the Son of God is the marvel foretold by the prophet Isaiah to the House of David : "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign : Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son : and His name shall be called Emmanuel"—that is to say "God with us." The fulfilment of this prophecy is told in the Gospel of St. Luke (chap. i.) with admirable simplicity.

"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. And the angel being come in said unto her, 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women. . . . Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. 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 for ever. And of His kingdom there

shall be no end.' And Mary said to the angel, 'How shall this be done, because I know not man?' 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.' . . . And Mary said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.' "

Such, in all its simplicity, is the account of the mystery which inaugurated the new era in human history. It is from the day of the Incarnation that the years of each century have henceforth been reckoned, and the Jews themselves can do no otherwise than to accept this sacred date.

Q. I had never thought that when I dated my letters I was declaring the accomplishment of the promise of the Messiah; and I render homage to that vital force of Christianity which imposes itself even upon its adversaries and its greatest enemies. But I have serious doubts still. The Gospel affirms sometimes that the Mother of Jesus was a virgin, sometimes that she had a husband. I find it all the more difficult to reconcile these contradictory statements when, in several other texts, there is a question of the brothers of Jesus Christ, which permits one to suppose that Mary had had other sons.

A. Nothing is easier than to reply to these two difficulties. The text which we have quoted says that God's angel was sent to a virgin; and Mary replied, "How shall this be done, because I know not man?" This text proves that the marriage with Joseph, the holy patriarch of Nazareth, had in no way been contracted to the prejudice of the virginity which Mary had vowed to the Lord, and which she always preserved. God had willed this alliance in order to give to the birth of Jesus Christ a legitimate character by giving a husband to the Virgin of Israel.

As for the mention of brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, it is well known that in the Hebrew tongue as well as in other Oriental languages, these words denote cousins, male and female, in our language. Mary, according to the Scriptures and according to unanimous tradition, was preserved in her conception from original sin; she lived in virginity with her husband St. Joseph; and it was in her virginal womb that the Son of God clothed Himself with a human nature, by the ineffable and incomprehensible operation of the Holy Ghost.

Q. I conceive that one has to rid oneself of prejudices and

ordinary ways of looking at things, when facing an act which is supernatural and wholly Divine. I find no difficulty in believing that only a virgin-mother would be suitable for the Divine Incarnation.

A. Yes ; truly Providence is wonderful in all its works. I will remind you of another instance of Divine wisdom. See how there were two virgins at the origin of human things. Eve, still a virgin, yielded to the temptation of the fallen angel, fell into sin, involved the man, and with him all their descendants.

Mary, also a virgin, believed the faithful angel and became the instrument of reparation. Eve magnified herself, Mary was humble ; and it is thus, says St. Irenæus that through Eve we received the fruit of death, and through Mary the fruit of life.

Q. The contrast is striking ; and I am no longer astonished that Christians honour the Virgin Mary so highly. But do you not honour her excessively ? Do you not push your veneration as far as adoration ?

A. Mary, being only a most pure creature, adoration offered to her would be idolatry. Christians honour, cherish, and invoke her : how could they have other sentiments towards the most holy Mother of Jesus, the Mother of God made Man, the Mother of the Saviour of the world ? They look upon her as their Mother ; and the veneration which they bestow upon her is a veneration of honour, a grateful and confident and filial love. Who more than the Israelite should bless the daughter of David ? for, with more right to the title than Judith, she is the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel and the honour of the people of God. The homage which has been offered to her by all nations since the early days of Christianity is a striking realisation of that celebrated prophecy uttered by the Blessed Virgin herself : " For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

Q. Under what circumstances did the Blessed Virgin speak those words ?

A. We read in the sacred books of the Gospels the history of the birth of Jesus Christ at Bethlehem, His presentation in the Temple, His flight into Egypt, His return to the Holy Land, His hidden life at Nazareth, His public life, His labours, His teachings, His miracles, His suffering, His sacrifice, His resurrection, and His ascension. Mary was the inseparable witness of all these doings ; she took part in them in the name of the

whole human race ; and it was only a short time after having received the Angel's message that she, in the presence of her sainted relative Elizabeth, celebrated beforehand the mercies which had been promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed, in a wonderful canticle, the promises which were to be accomplished in the person of the Son whom she was to bring into the world ; and she prophesied that she herself would be blessed for all time. This will make you understand how lawful the worship is which Christian piety offers to the creature who is privileged above all others. But the idea of adoring her is far from us ; we adore Jesus Christ, the Son of God, incarnate of the Virgin Mary and become Man to redeem mankind. We unite ourselves with His filial heart, in loving and honouring His Mother : we do not adore her.

PART IV

Q. You have clearly shown me that the Messiah promised to the Patriarchs and expected by our fathers is the Son of God, united to human nature ; that this Messiah is Jesus Christ ; and that at the time foretold by the Prophets of Israel, He came in order to redeem mankind.

I should like now to know precisely in what this Redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ consists ?

A. The true notion of this Redemption is given to us in the first promises recorded in the Bible. The devil, in causing our first parents to fall into sin, closed the way to heaven against them ; he drew down upon them a curse and punishment which without God's mercy would have been eternal ; he reduced them to slavery. God cursed the serpent, and He added, " I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed ; she shall crush thy head and thou shalt lay in wait for her heel " (Gen. iii. 15).

The promised Redeemer was therefore to destroy the work of the serpent. His mission was to overthrow the empire which Satan had usurped, and to re-establish the Kingdom of God upon earth as it was in heaven. Through Him man could obtain forgiveness from his Creator, and recover his heavenly home. All the prophets proclaimed this mission, sometimes openly and in express terms, at other times in figures of speech. But in any case, if one considers the general effect of the prophecies and takes the trouble to compare them carefully in order to interpret those which are less clear by those that are explicit, it is not difficult to discover that the Redemption must be, above all things, spiritual. This is what the Jews did not recognise ; they saw only a national work in the mission of the Saviour ; whereas its chief aim is to reconcile us to our heavenly Father, and to reopen to us the gates of our true native land.

Q. How is the Redemption of mankind accomplished ?

A. We could never by our own efforts have re-established our first relations with God. It is Jesus Christ who has put Himself in our place, and has accomplished the reconciliation, by making full satisfaction for us by His work of expiation. The Son of God became man and delivered Himself unto death for us and as an atoning victim ; His blood has been the price of our deliverance.

Q. The Jews taught that Messias should reign for ever. How can this be reconciled with His sufferings and death ?

A. The Prophets who announced the reign of the Messias predicted also His humiliations and sufferings. It was necessary that He should first destroy sin ; it is by His obedience, by His sufferings, and by His death, voluntarily accepted, that the Divine Saviour had to make amends for the proud independence of fallen man, and deliver him from eternal death. Such is the reply which Jesus Christ Himself made, enforcing the prophecies—"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory ?" (St. Luke xxiv. 26).

The reign of Jesus Christ upon earth began by the establishment of His Church, which from earliest times has spread over all the known world, and tends to grow more and more till it will cover the earth. But since mankind is dowered with free will, there will always be those who will resist His empire in such a manner that the complete realisation of the reign of Jesus Christ will only take place at His last coming.

Q. There will then be two advents of the Messias ? Does the Old Testament justify this belief ?

A. Yes ; and it is because they fail to understand this, that the Jews refuse to recognise the accomplishment of the prophecies in the results which they see before their eyes. Here we touch their chief error. The Old Testament, confirmed by the Gospel, expressly and distinctly mentions the two comings of Jesus Christ.

The first was to be accomplished in most humble conditions ; it would be the birth of the Man of Sorrows, who by His humiliations, His sufferings, and His death, would atone for the sins of the world. The conversion of nations and the establishment of the Church are the fruit of this first advent. The second will take place with great pomp and majesty.

It will not be as a Saviour that the Messias will reappear upon earth, but as the Judge of the living and the dead ; then will be seen the complete accomplishment of all those prophecies which foretold the glory of Jesus Christ ; for His reign and that of His Saints will be absolute and universal in an unmixed peace (chap. iii.).

Hear on what terms the prophet Joel speaks of the glory of the second advent, " I will gather together all nations and will bring them down into the valley of Josaphat ; and I will plead with them there for my people and for my inheritance Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and have parted my land. . . . The sun and the moon are darkened : and the stars have withdrawn their shining. And the Lord shall roar out of Sion and utter His voice from Jerusalem ; and the heavens and the earth shall be moved ; and the Lord shall be the hope of his people and the strength of the children of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Sion my holy mountain ; and Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall pass through it no more. . . . Judea shall be inhabited for ever, and Jerusalem to generation and generation." These last passages show very plainly that it could not be a question of an earthly town or country, and that, under the emblems of Jerusalem and Judea, the Prophet spoke of the heavenly home.

Read among other passages of the Old Testament the vision recorded by Daniel (chap. vii.). The Prophet there describes the reign of Anti-Christ, who will be the most terrible enemy of God's people ; and he foretells at the same time his ruin and the eternal reign of Christ and His Saints. " And lo, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and he came even to the Ancient of days. . . . And he gave Him power and glory and a kingdom ; and all peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve Him. His power is an everlasting power that shall not be taken away ; and His kingdom that shall not be destroyed." All these prophecies have been confirmed by the Gospel ; for Jesus Christ Himself announced, formally that all the peoples of the earth, struck with terror, would " see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty " (Matt. xxiv. 30).

It is the neglect of these prophecies relating to the first coming which blinds the Jews and strengthens their incredulity. Expecting but one Advent, they have confused the double set of

prophecies of the first and second Advents, so as to find contradictions in them. From this principally springs their uncertainty concerning the Messiah. They are scandalised at the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, without recalling the fact that they had been foretold in the Old Testament.

Q. I shall be very glad if you will point out to me those passages in our sacred writings which treat of the sufferings and death of the Messiah, and justify what you have said of the first advent.

A. All the sacrifices of the law of Moses were prophetic figures of the immolation of the real Lamb offered for the salvation of the world ; and these sacrifices have no meaning of value except by their connection with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But besides these figurative ceremonies, the prophets solemnly announced the circumstances of the great sacrifice. Daniel actually said that " Christ shall be slain," and he stated the actual time.

Take again the fifty-third chapter of *Isaias* : one would think that the Prophet was talking about that which had actually happened, whereas he was foretelling the future. " 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 is 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. 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. 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 the shearer, and He shall not open His mouth. He was taken away from distress and from judgement. . . . If he shall lay down His life for sin, He shall see a long-lived seed. . . . 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."

You will see from these last words that the death of the Messiah was to be the condition of the establishment of His Kingdom (that is to say the Church) by the conversion of the people.

Notice that this prophecy was made six hundred years before Jesus Christ, and that the book which contains it has always been in the hands of the Jews. They read it to-day in their synagogues—but there is a veil over their eyes, they will not understand.

Open the Psalms of David. The saintly king shows beforehand the plots which the princes of the people would form against the Messiah: "The princes met together, against the Lord and against His Christ" (Ps. ii.). He foretold the treason of Judas: "For even the man of my peace, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, hath greatly supplanted me" (Ps. xl. 9).

The same Prophet, whose psalms form the liturgy of all synagogues, tells, in a most surprising manner, the principal circumstances of the Passion of Jesus: "I am a worm and no man; the reproach of men and the outcast of the people. All they that saw me have laughed me to scorn: they have spoken with the lips and wagged the head. He hoped in the Lord, let Him deliver him: let Him save him, seeing He delighted in him. They have pierced My hands and feet, they have numbered all my bones. They parted my garments amongst them: and upon my vesture they cast lots" (Ps. xxi.). "And they gave me gall for my food: and to my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Ps. lxviii.).

Does it not seem as if we were reading the Gospel?

Q. You used the word "Passion," which I do not understand.

A. The word "Passion" comes from the Latin word which means to suffer. It therefore implies the sum total of the sufferings of Christ.

Q. I cannot deny that the prophecies are clear and precise on that point; and if the Jews had not scrupulously guarded the deposit in all places and at all times, I should have been tempted to believe that they had been composed after the event. It is most astonishing that the Jews do not see that the Messiah was bound to suffer and die.

A. Your astonishment will increase if you put by the side of the prophecies certain historical facts recorded in the Old Testament : for all the history of God's people is full of symbols which refer to the immolation of the Messias. Isaac carried on his shoulders the wood for his own sacrifice. Does that not indicate in a striking manner the Saviour carrying His Cross ? The sacrifice of Isaac was not accomplished, it was only a type. That of Jesus Christ was consummated on Calvary when His Father delivered Him over to death for the salvation of mankind. Joseph, thrown into a well and sold by his brothers, afterwards becoming their saviour and benefactor, assuredly represents Jesus Christ despised, delivered by the Jews to the Gentiles, sacrificed, and afterwards reigning over the whole earth.

It would need a large book to show you all the symbols, mysteries of the history and religion of Moses ; mysteries which would have no sense if they did not refer to the divine victim Who, out of love for mankind, took upon Himself the sins of the world and expiated them by His sufferings and His death.

Q. But could not the Son of the God of love and mercy have redeemed mankind without submitting to those torments foretold by the prophets of Israel and related in the Gospels ?

A. It is true that on the part of the Son of God the smallest expiation would have sufficed to make amends for our offence and redeem us, but if God willed that He should endure so much suffering, and that He should die, it was to show us the extent of His love, and to obtain ours. It was necessary, says the Evangelist, that the Son of man "suffer many things and be rejected by the ancients and by the chief priests and the scribes : and be killed and after three days rise again" (Mark viii. 31). Not that He was compelled to suffer these pains ; but He was offered as a sacrifice because He willed it, said the prophet Isaias ; He took upon Himself our iniquities ; He delivered Himself voluntarily to death, according to His own words : "No man taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself" (John x. 18).

Q. If Jesus Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice for all mankind, all are then saved ?

A. Truly, Jesus Christ suffered and died for all ; but everyone does not profit by the redemption which is offered to him. We must correspond to the grace which Jesus Christ has merited

for us if we are to be saved ; and by the help of that grace, adhere to Him by faith, and obey His commands. In other words, God could create man without his concurrence, but He cannot save him without the consent of man's will, which is created free. On God's side everything has been done for the rehabilitation of the children of Adam ; but every man is free either to unite himself to God by his union with Jesus Christ or to withdraw from God by remaining distant from the Redeemer. To sum up, the work of Redemption which was accomplished for all mankind must be applied to each man separately.

Q. Does that mean that every man must receive the merits of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ ?

A. Certainly ; but there are not only merits of His sufferings and death ; there are also the glorious fruits of His Resurrection and the Ascension.

Q. Please explain these mysteries to me.

A. When Jesus Christ consummated the Redemption of the world by His death, He rose after three days living and victorious from His tomb. For forty days he showed Himself frequently to His disciples in order to strengthen their faith : on one occasion He showed Himself to more than five hundred men assembled together. On the fortieth day He rose visibly to heaven in the presence of His disciples, thus reopening that path to the heavenly home which had been closed since the original transgression. These two last acts, the Resurrection and the Ascension, must be reproduced, as well as the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ in all souls which have been redeemed. But only those will participate in immortal glory who have shared in the mystery of His sufferings.

Q. Is there any reference to the Resurrection of the Messiah in the Old Testament ?

A. The Resurrection of the Saviour of mankind was prefigured in the history of the Jews, and was foretold by the prophets. But above all, Jesus Christ Himself definitely announced that He would rise again on the third day after His passion and death.

Q. What are the symbols of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament ?

A. The complete restoration of Job after his long sufferings ; the glorious position of Joseph in Egypt after he had

come forth living from the well ; the marvel of Jonah, who, to calm the storm, was thrown into the sea, and after having been swallowed up by a monster, emerged living on the third day ; these are some of the historical facts which prefigure the triumph of Jesus Christ over death.

The Prophets spoke more definitely of the same mystery. Sophonias, amongst others, hails the day of the Resurrection of the Saviour. David prophesies in these words : " My flesh also shall rest in hope, because Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; nor wilt Thou give Thy holy one to see corruption " (Ps. xv.). It is evident that the Psalmist was not speaking of himself ; this the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul both say in their discourse to the Jews on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here are the words of St. Paul, " For David when he had served in his generation, according to the will of God, slept : and was laid unto his fathers and saw corruption."

Several other psalms sing of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ : take, for instance, the third and the thirteenth. The twenty-third psalm refers to the mystery of the Ascension, " Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates : and the King of glory shall enter in. Who is this King of Glory ? The Lord strong and mighty : the Lord mighty in battle." The forty-sixth and the hundred and ninth psalms sing of the same triumph of the Messiah ascended into heaven and sitting at the right hand of God. There is no fact of history more manifestly demonstrated than the accomplishment of these prophecies. Moreover, it was by preaching the Resurrection that the Apostles, who witnessed it, converted the people ; and they sealed their testimony with their blood.

Q. Would it not have been more advantageous if Jesus Christ had remained upon earth ?

A. On the contrary, the Gospel tells us that it was advantageous for mankind that Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. If He had remained visibly upon earth, Christians would have attached themselves to this world, whereas our lasting home is not here below. And further, Jesus Christ in ascending into heaven carried there human nature in His Person ; He draws there our hearts, our desires, and our hopes. He is our Head, we are His members ; through Him we are already in heaven. True Christians live in this world as strangers and travellers ; they live for heaven, and not for earth.

Q. Can man aspire to this high degree of glory ?

A. Not only must those who are redeemed and purified by the Blood of Jesus Christ aspire to this ineffable glory, but they must hold on to it with all their strength by faith, hope, and love ; for the Saviour has said, " I go to prepare a place for you " : and He says also, " Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me."

PART V

Q. IF Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world, it seems to me that even when He ascended into heaven He should not altogether have left this world, and that since then, a means of communication ought to exist between Him and the faithful.

A. Yes, you are right. There do exist living communications between Jesus Christ and the faithful ; sacred mysteries, which in theological language are called Sacraments. But these mysteries are only fully understood by those who have themselves experienced the effects which they produce. In admitting that Jesus Christ, our saving and beneficent God, is the source of peace, of love, of life, we can understand how the man of faith must obtain immense advantages from his union with Him. And this, indeed, was splendidly evident in the Apostles.

Jesus Christ before ascending into heaven gave them the mission of preaching those sublime truths throughout the world, which He came into the world to bring. He said to them, "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations : baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world " (Matt. xxviii. 18).

Little as one may know the state of the world at that period, it is not difficult to imagine that obstacles, humanly speaking insurmountable, must have appeared before the Apostles, who were charged to preach to a pagan and barbaric world a doctrine so holy and so opposed to the natural passions as that of the Gospel. The attempt was no less bold in the case of the Jewish people, who, deceived by their scribes and doctors, saw only an enemy to their law in the person of Jesus Christ, and who had themselves clamoured for His death. However, these twelve sons of Israel, until then so timid that they had at the moment of His Passion fled and forsaken their Divine Master—twelve poor ignorant men, with no human resources—dared to attempt this impossible task ; not fearing to expose themselves

to every kind of opposition and persecution, even to the loss of life itself, that they might spread the Word of the Gospel unto the ends of the earth, and fulfil the command which they had received. What was the secret of their triumph ? It was that their Divine Master was with them, according to His promises ; and He had kindled them with the fire of the Holy Ghost, which had descended upon them after His ascension into heaven ; in fact, this is what Holy Scripture records :

Ten days after the Ascension, on the day of Pentecost, the Apostles being assembled upon Mount Sion, the Holy Ghost descended upon them in the form of tongues of fire, in the midst of a great wind. From that moment they were entirely transformed and changed into absolutely different men ; in such a way that, filled with divine courage, they separated, going to preach the Gospel in all parts of the world. The success which they obtained in the midst of every kind of opposition showed the powerful assistance so marvellously given by Jesus Christ, for these twelve patriarchs of the new union made alliance not with one nation only, but with all mankind led a whole crowd of peoples to the faith of Abraham, and enveloped them all in the same net, so as to incorporate them into the family of Israel. Their mission, transmitted from generation to generation to their successors, has not been discontinued until our day any more than has the effect of that promise of the Saviour, “ And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.”

Q. You say that the mission of the Apostles was to incorporate all nations into the family of Israel. But it seems to me, on the contrary, that the Israelites have remained outside this movement ?

A. Yes, but listen to this. After the Ascension of Jesus Christ, the Israelites were divided into two parties. One party, shocked at the humiliation of the Messiah and blinded by their proud obstinacy, fell under the just judgements of God. They were banished from Jerusalem, and cast forth like the sons of Cain all over the surface of the globe ; and in fact, for eighteen hundred years they have had neither king nor country, nor priesthood, nor sacrifices ; and they no longer know what to think about the Messiah. But all Jews have not suffered this awful punishment. The best among them gathered around the Apostles in Jerusalem and became the first of the faithful of

the Catholic Church ; they formed the original nucleus of Christians, to which all converted people have been attached.

Q. Do we not read in the Gospel that all the Jews arose against Jesus Christ ?

A. Yes, the large population of Jerusalem was stricken with blindness. But after the Ascension the light of truth began to disperse the darkness.

I spoke just now of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. This was accompanied by miracles which drew thousands of Jews to the faith. Then the Apostle Simon Peter made them understand the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, who had declared that God would spread over His servant the abundance of His Spirit. He reminded them of the holiness and the miracles, the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, and told them at the same time that the Saviour had risen from the dead ; that he, Simon Peter and all the other disciples who had seen Him after His resurrection, were ready to witness to the fact. The words of the chief of the Apostles touched them with compunction, and they cried out, "What must we do ?" The Apostle told them, "Do penance, and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ." He further instructed them in other discourses ; and on that same day three thousand Israelites joined themselves to the Apostles.

A few days later the same Simon Peter, the prince of the Apostles, saw himself once more surrounded by a multitude of Jews, on the occasion of a miracle which he had worked in the name of Jesus Christ. He said to them, "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus, whom you indeed delivered and denied before the face of Pilate. You denied the Holy One and the Just . . . the author of life you killed, whom God hath raised from the dead : of which we are witnesses. And now, brethren, I know that you did it through ignorance. But those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled. Be penitent therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out. . . . For Moses said, 'A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me ; him you shall hear according to all things whatsoever he shall speak to you. And it shall be that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people.' And all the

prophets, from Samuel and afterwards, who have spoken, have told of these days. You are the children of the prophets and of the testament which God made to our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed' " (Acts iii. 13-25).

This second sermon produced even more fruit than the first ; it brought about five thousand Jews to the feet of the Apostles.

Thus the newly-born Church was composed of from eight to ten thousand children of Israel who were all of one heart and one mind. Here we have the nucleus of the Catholic Church, which in the course of centuries has grown like a tree of which the branches spread more and more until they reach to the ends of the earth, and whose immortal fruit is reaped in heaven.

Q. What strikes me most in all that you have been teaching me is that the nations which have been converted to Christianity are in a way like branches which have been grafted upon Judaism. They were Jews who announced the Gospel to the world, and they were Jews who composed the first Christian community, to which all the other peoples of the world are successively joining themselves. Evidently, therefore, these Jews in becoming Christians did not change their religion, for they only acknowledged the Messias whom they were expecting ; it was the Greeks, the Romans, and the Egyptians, and all the heathen who, in embracing the faith, renounced the worship of idols.

A. Indeed that is a striking point in the origin of Christianity. Through Christ all nations are incorporated into the people of God, until then composed only of the children of Israel ; and they form with them one fold only, in which they are neither Jews nor heathen, but Christians ; these are the only souls redeemed by Jesus Christ.

Q. If the Christians of all nations form only one fold, there must therefore be a link which unites them ?

A. That is so ; the fold of Christians, which is called the Catholic Church, is a big family, strongly organised like a living body. In the human body there are the head and the members united by bonds which maintain them in unity ; in the same way the Church has her head, her hierarchy, and her laws which unite all the faithful.

Q. I should very much like to have an idea of that organisation.

A. The Catholic Church, like all corporations, has its supreme head. Jesus Christ, in appointing the Apostles to be the chief centres of His life, assigned the primacy to that one amongst them who was to possess full power over all the family of the children of God. This chief of the Apostles is he to whom Jesus Christ said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church" (Matt. xvi. 18). But as the Church was to spread into all places, and for all time, its primitive organisation had to be consolidated and perpetuated. In fact, St. Peter had as his successors the Roman Pontiffs, the Popes: the bishops are the successors of the Apostles; the priests and deacons are subordinate to them—all together form one and the same hierarchy.

Q. Why has the Church been called Catholic?

A. The word Catholic means universal: and that word characterises the family of children of God which is recruited from amongst all peoples, throughout all ages, until the end of the world.

Q. I have sometimes heard it said that outside the Catholic Church there is no salvation. Upon what do you found this assertion?

A. Jesus Christ, when He instituted the Catholic Church, confided to her the deposit of those truths which she should teach the world; it is in her hands that He has placed those sacred mysteries which are the source of sanctification and of salvation and are called Sacraments; and He has also given her authority for the spiritual government of souls. Is it not therefore evident on this account that those who remain voluntarily outside such an organisation exclude themselves from eternal salvation?

I would call your attention at this point to the manifest falsehood which is only too widely spread—the statement that all religions are true. That is as if one were to say that everyone is at liberty to serve God in his own way; but it is clear that it is for God to teach us in what manner He wishes to be served; and that there can be no true religion except that one which He Himself instituted. Everyone is therefore obliged to embrace it as soon as they recognise it, and to abandon that which is false in order to yield to that which is divinely true. To say that all religions are true would be to imagine that truth and error are

the same thing, and that there is no difference between light and darkness.

Q. I now understand the saying "Outside the Church there is no salvation"; for assuredly, as you say, "In order to please God we must serve Him as He wills to be served." But this thought causes distressing thoughts to arise in my mind. It is repugnant to my heart to admit the logical deduction from all this. I think of my parents who did not know Jesus Christ; I think of those Jews who, in good faith, practised the worship of Israel, with the firm conviction that God would have no other; they were good, generous, benevolent, perfectly sincere and faithful to their conscience. Must one consider these men as eternally lost? Does the Church condemn them without any hope?

A. No; please do not misunderstand me. The Church condemns no one and she hopes for the salvation of many men, who, in spite of the uprightness of their heart, have not been able to enter into her bosom for want of sufficient light to recognise her by. Theologians teach that such men belong to the soul of the Church, without being members of her body. It is absolutely true that faith in Jesus Christ is indispensable to salvation; for since Jesus Christ is the only Redeemer and Mediator between God and man, and since one can only be saved through His merits, one must cling to Him so as to have part in the redemption. But the revelation of this fundamental truth may be made by supernatural means, at the hour of death, to those souls, who, in good faith, have lived in invincible ignorance; and upon this point we assign no limit to the power and mercy of God.

Q. This explanation consoles me; one may hope to see one day in heaven those relations and friends whom one has loved on earth.

A. This gentle hope is founded on the infinite goodness of God, who desires the salvation of all men. But, I repeat, there is only one true religion, which it is absolutely necessary to embrace and profess as soon as ever one has the happiness to recognise it. He is unfaithful to God, and excludes himself from His mercy who, being on the wrong road, does not seek the solution of his doubts, and does not take the proper means to understand the truth.

Q. I like to hear you repeat this last assertion, because it furnishes me with an occasion for asking you for some explanations of other churches or religions which call themselves Christian. For instance, I have always heard Jews say that the Protestant faith was the most convenient of all religions.

A. Jesus Christ established one Church only, that one which has always existed from the time of the preaching of the Apostles until to-day ; and that is the Catholic Church. As to Protestantism, it is a human institution ; it had its origin in the rebellion of some faithless Catholics who protested against the authority and teaching of the Church. That happened four hundred years ago. Protestants have as their principle the right of interpreting the Word of God according to their own liking ; that is what they call private judgement, which, in our times has produced freethinkers, and in politics, anarchists. They imagine that this sort of liberty in religious matters is very convenient, but certainly no unity can exist where each individual can accommodate his religion to his point of view ; and from thence it comes that an infinity of dissenting sects has arisen in the great defection which is called Protestantism.

The Catholic Church does not abandon Divine teaching to the judgement of every private individual ; she never makes concessions in doctrinal matters ; she guards the deposit of religious truths exactly as she received them from the Apostles and their successors, so as to transmit them intact and free from all admixture to future generations. She teaches with authority in the name of God, because she has faith in the word of our Lord who gave her this mission and promised her His help, when He said to the Apostles : " Go . . . teach . . . I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world."

Q. I can see that, after your explanations, the Protestant religion appears to be but an ineffectual Christianity. If Jesus Christ came to reveal eternal truths to the world He would not have delivered them up to the risk of human discussions. I recognise the Divine work where I find authority, harmony and perpetuity. It therefore only remains for me to ask you what I must do to become a faithful Catholic.

A. The faithful Catholic is a true Israelite who believes in the realisation of all the promises made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. He believes that the Messiah has come who is our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God made Man by His

Incarnation in the womb of Mary, the immaculate Virgin of Israel.

Belief in Jesus Christ is belief in His love—a belief in His teachings, His promises, His works ; it is, above all, belief in the merits of His blood, which was shed to blot out the sins of the world. This saving faith is a gift of God which is always given in answer to the prayer of a heart which is humble and sincere. If you have the happiness to receive this precious gift, if you believe firmly in Jesus Christ, hear the Church ; for he who listens to her listens to Jesus Christ, and he who hears her not condemns himself, and remains a stranger outside the family of the children of God. This is what the Gospel teaches us in set terms.

Prepare yourself, therefore, by prayer and sorrow for your past sins, to receive baptism. You will find therein not only the purification of your own soul, but an abundance of fresh light which will enable you to enjoy and understand more fully the meaning of Christian doctrine. Whilst awaiting that great day, the minister of the Church will instruct you more thoroughly in those truths which are necessary to salvation ; and he will gradually initiate you into the sweet mysteries of the faith, and of the Christian life.

But it is prayer, above all, which will draw upon you from on high rays of Divine light. Turn then straight to your heavenly Father ; beg for the grace of your Saviour ; pray with confidence and perseverance.

I dare to hope you will not be long in opening your eyes, for God always hears those whose hearts are upright. And then, joyfully tasting the first fruits of the Christian faith, you will imitate that true Israelite whose praise is in the Gospels—you will fall at the feet of Jesus Christ, and you will say to Him, “ Lord, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel ! ”



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