

# BASIC CHRISTIANITY

## Lecture Number 9

### SALVATION

#### THE ATONEMENT

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#### INTRODUCTION

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During World War II and for the next few years afterwards, three kinds of signs could be seen along the side of the road.

One kind said things like, “When passing school zones, please go slow; let our little shavers grow. Burma Shave!”

Another kind advertised a patent remedy for the common cold known as “666.”

The third kind said simply, “**Jesus saves!**”

“Jesus saves.” This is a dogma which all kinds of Christians hold. Often they take it for granted that what it means is obvious. But is it? From what does Jesus save? How does Jesus save? What does it mean to be saved?

During the two thousand years of her history, the Church has developed several doctrines to answer these questions.

Our most basic problem is that we know that things are not the way they ought to be. We know that we are separated from God, separated from our neighbor, and from the natural world, and from our selves. No one of us, in our natural state, is at one with any of these aspects of reality.

Christians believe that Jesus is the answer to this basic problem. He makes the separated parties to be *at one* with each other. That is to say he makes *atonement*.

Just how one diagnoses the basic human problem has a lot to do with what he hopes for from Jesus. And if one does not expect enough from Jesus — all that he offers — he will have trouble accepting just what it is that Jesus does want to do for him.

So how one thinks about the basic human problem determines how he understands salvation.

In different places and at different times, Christians have perceived the problem in different ways. And so they have developed different doctrines to explain how it is that Jesus saves.

But no matter how they have perceived the problem, Christians have seen the answer in Christ. And furthermore, they have been able to find support for that belief in the New Testament.

## EVIL SPIRITS

In our Lord's day, it seemed to the Jews that the world was swarming with evil spirits; if they failed to do all the things which the Law of the Old Testament required, the demons would get them in both this world and the next. So they kept the Law to keep the goblins at bay.

If a person was on good terms with God he was safe. But if he was not, then he felt vulnerable. And he blamed the goblins for all of the bad things which happened to people: things like blindness, deafness, and disease. Mental disorder was considered to be the result of being inhabited by devils.

They believed that when they failed to do all the things the law required, that is, when they sinned, those bad things would happen to them or to their children.

Then Jesus came along and cured sickness by declaring people forgiven, and drove demons out of the mentally ill. As you can imagine, the people saw it as the defeat of Satan, whom the devils worked for. It was a great liberation! It was salvation!

Furthermore, since such sickness was a sign that a person had broken God's Law, the Jewish community would not allow the sick person to take part in the community's worship, and he was ostracized.

When a Jew sinned, he could be kept out for a set period of time, depending on the particular offense. Then to be let back in to the cultic life of the community he would have to go through a ritual bathing. The Greek word for such a bath was *baptism* (Greek: *baptizo*, bathe).

In the Church of the first century, when a Jew was converted, the first step was exorcism in which the devil was told that this one was now off limits to him. Then the convert went through a ritual bathing — baptism — and was admitted to the sacrifice of the New Covenant — the Eucharist.

As long as he was allowed to take part in the Eucharist he was guaranteed that the demons would not get him. So he could thumb his nose at the devil. And he was safe!

## THE AGE TO COME

In the time of Jesus, many gentiles, especially Greeks, believed that history moved in cycles, which were referred to as "ages" (in Greek: *aeons*).

The theory was that each aeon began with a great burst of vitality and with everything in order and in harmony. Then after some thousands of years, it would all run down and fall to pieces. And finally, it would end in a great cataclysm of earthquakes and tidal waves and fire.

Cities would be destroyed. The population would be decimated or worse. Only a small number of people would survive the end of the old aeon and make it into the beginning of the new aeon, the "age to come."

In the first century, because of the state of the world and the state of human affairs, it seemed that the present age must be rapidly approaching its end. In the New Testament, there are many

references to the “age to come.” In fact, “Everlasting life” in Greek is literally “life of the age to come”.

Many people worried about how they could manage to survive the end of the present age and make it into the age to come. How could they be saved from the cataclysm? This is exactly the way people felt back in the 1960’s and 70’s, at the height of the cold war when all the fall-out shelters were being built. Everybody just knew that nuclear war was going to happen — and soon!

So, for example, when St. Paul was in prison at Philippi, at midnight, there was a great earthquake. The cell doors came open and the chains came loose. And when that happened, the jailer panicked and started to commit suicide, because the prisoners could escape. But Paul stopped him and told him not to because they were all still there.

And then the jailer said, “What must I do to be saved?” He probably meant, “What must I do to escape the cataclysm and make it into the age to come?” [Acts 16:25-30]

As a matter of fact, that age did come to an end. And what survived it was the Christian Church. The Book of Revelation clearly reflects this sense of the approach of the end of the age.

## THE GREEK TRAGEDY

Besides the notion that history moved in cycles, there was another important factor which affected the way Greeks thought about salvation. That was the *tragic view of life*, and it was expressed in classical Greek tragic drama.

Greek tragedy had started out more than a thousand years before Christ as an animal sacrifice. As the priest slew the sacrificial animal, he recited a story to explain its meaning. The action was watched by a number of witnesses who chanted a response to the words of the priest.

So originally, Greek tragedy was the chanted ritual that accompanied the sacrifice of a goat. So the story form of Greek tragedy developed as a commentary on the human condition.

In its classical form, tragedy has four parts, four stages, or “acts:”

- The **first act** presents a situation of stability and equilibrium, a scene of peace.
- Then in the **second act**, an alien factor is introduced into the tranquil situation. At first it seems harmless, but then it begins to cause stress. And by the end of the act, it is clear that something will have to give—the tension mounts.
- The **third act** is the act of suffering. In it the implicit conflict becomes explicit and violence erupts. In this act, the harmony and equilibrium with which the drama began is destroyed.
- Finally, in the **fourth act**, a new harmony rises up out of the fragments of the old. And the new state of affairs is higher and better than the old.

In classical tragedy, the conflict is between good and greater good. On the other hand in melodrama the conflict is usually between good and evil. Nevertheless, we can get an idea of

tragedy from the following melodrama:

The **first act** opens on a quiet Sunday afternoon in 1895. The scene is the parlor of a Methodist parsonage somewhere in the midwest. The parson, his wife, and his two daughters are gathered around the piano singing hymns. Everything is calm and serene.

In the **second act**, a traveling salesman comes to the door and rents the guest room. And then he begins making advances to both of the daughters.

In the **third act**, the act of suffering, one of the daughters turns up pregnant. And when the traveling salesman flees town, she commits suicide.

Finally, in the **fourth act**, the other daughter goes off to Africa to be a missionary.

In classical tragedy, one good is destroyed in order that a greater good can come into being.

The Greeks did not say that that is what always happens. They said that is what *ought* to happen, what *might* happen.

## THE GOSPEL AS TRAGEDY

In the first century, when a Greek became a Christian, before he was baptized, he was given three or more years of instruction. His studies concentrated on the Old Testament and the life of Jesus in the light of the Old Testament. And in that study what he saw was a tragedy:

**Act one:** The scene is the small Jewish province of the Roman Empire which had brought peace and stability and order to the entire world around the Mediterranean Sea. That empire, as established by Augustus, was considered by the gentile world to be the best thing that had ever happened to it.

**Act two:** A little baby is introduced. And when Jesus grows to maturity, it becomes clear that he is a disruptive influence. Tension mounts. Something will have to give.

**Act three:** Good Friday, the act of suffering: Jesus is crucified.

**Act four:** Easter: Jesus rises from the dead and brings in the new age.

## THE EUCHARIST AS TRAGEDY

When the instruction of the Greek convert was finished, he was baptized and confirmed. And it was then that he saw the Eucharist for the first time. And what he saw in the Eucharist was an abstract drama in four acts — a tragedy:

At the last supper, Jesus did **four things**: he **took** bread and wine; he **gave thanks** over them; he **broke** the bread; and he **gave** the bread and wine to be eaten and drunk.

At the Eucharist, each family brings a little biscuit and about two ounces of wine, and the drama begins.

**Act one:** The Offertory. The deacon collects the biscuits on a plate and the wine in a big cup. He brings them to the celebrant [bishop/priest] and they are placed on the altar.

**Act two:** The Consecration. The priest says the prayer of thanksgiving over the bread and wine and calls down upon them a new factor, the Holy Spirit.

**Act three:** the act of suffering: The Fraction. The priest takes all the little biscuits and breaks them in pieces so that one can no longer tell them apart – he can't say, "That's the one I brought." The little biscuits lose their identities. And so do the people—

I give up my self will, my self-centeredness. I am immersed in the whole. The Body of Christ, mystical and sacramental, is broken.

**Act four:** Communion. I receive back bread and wine which is no longer *mine* but *ours*. And it is no longer merely bread and wine; now it is Jesus. And Jesus is now the new factor in me, which will cause the old me to die and the new me to come out of the remains of the old.

The drama of the Eucharist was not simply something the Greek convert watched. It was something that happened to him. He was a participant.

Because of his tragic view of life, the first century Greek could understand salvation in those terms. But you and I do not think that way.

## ROMAN LAW

Next we are going to consider the way the *medieval* Church in the west thought about the human condition and salvation.

During the two centuries before the time of Christ, Rome had conquered all of the lands which surround the Mediterranean Sea. At first, each of the peoples resisted the conquest vigorously. But once conquered, they came to consider themselves fortunate indeed to be part of the Empire.

The only ones who did not share this attitude were the Jews.

The Romans had brought a kind of order to human existence which had never been known before (except by the Jews). What was new was this. Until that time, monarchs imposed their wills by whim and caprice. But under the Romans, a person knew where he stood. Those who administered the law were also bound to obey the same law.

But then, along in the fifth century AD, the western half of the empire was overrun by the barbarian Goths. The result was the collapse of civilization. Law and order disappeared. It was no longer possible to travel in safety from one end of the empire to the other. And Europe entered the *Dark Ages*.

In the movie *A Man for All Seasons*, Thomas More confronted a would-be reformer who wanted to tear down all the institutions of England. More told him that if he were to succeed, a wind would sweep across that island against which no man would be able to stand.

The point is that the one thing worse than having bad laws is having *no laws at all*. Even more important than living under good rules is knowing what the rules are.

Chinese brainwashing during the Korean War illustrated this principle. The technique involved changing all the rules for the prisoners every day and not telling them what the new rules were, so that no one would know what to expect or where he stood. The prisoners were totally demoralized, and no one tried to escape.

The Romans talked about something called the *natural law*, which was simply the way things worked in the natural order. For example, “Water runs down hill.”

After the empire had been converted, Christian Romans said that the natural law was the expression of the divine law. That is, “Water runs downhill because God tells it to.” So obviously, the natural law has to be respected and obeyed or tragic consequences will result.

For example, if I were falling from a cliff and asked God to suspend the law of gravity, and if he were to do it, then everybody would fall off the earth, etc.

The *moral* law was also understood to be part of the divine law, and when it is disregarded, bad things happen.

## THE JURIDICAL THEORY OF THE ATONEMENT

The Gothic conquerors of the western part of the Roman Empire had a peculiar notion of law. For them the seriousness of an offense was in proportion to the dignity of the person who had been offended.

For example, if you stole the chicken of a poor man, you might be whipped. But if you stole the chicken of the king, you might be whipped and also have your ox seized by the king.

The Roman conquest of Europe followed by the Goths taking over the western part of the empire had an important result: it led to the combining of the *Gothic* and the *Roman* notions of law. And that led to a new way of thinking about salvation.

At the end of the eleventh century, the Norman conquest of England led to a man becoming Archbishop of Canterbury who represented that combination. His name was Anselm. Before that, in France, St. Anselm had been abbot of a Norman – that is Gothic – monastery.

In his book, *Cur Deus Homo*, St. Anselm combined the Roman and Gothic notions of law and explained salvation in this way:

God’s *dignity*, he said, is infinite, so man’s debt to him is infinite. That is a *Gothic* idea.

God wants to restore Man to fellowship with himself, but not even God can set aside his own law. That is a *Roman* idea.

So he sends his Son, who also is of infinite dignity, to become Man. Then the man Jesus, whose worth is infinite, gives himself to the Father, and thus Man’s infinite debt to God is paid.

At first, this medieval explanation seems foreign to us and perhaps even offensive. But a little later on we will see how it makes sense and even “speaks to our condition”.

## CAPITALISM AND BALANCING THE BOOKS

By the end of the 15th century, a number of new cities had developed in Europe. This was the result of the increase of the wool trade and other expressions of early capital capitalism.

People left the villages where they had belonged to close knit parish communities. They moved into the new cities in large numbers. They got lost in the shuffle, and never got integrated into the city parishes. When Lutheranism came along in the 16th century, many, if not most, of its converts would come from this group of relatively *unchurched* people. Migrant Mexican farm workers in the United States are in a similar fix.

At any rate, for the new middle-class shopkeepers of these new cities, the basic frame of reference was that set of account books “down at the office,” which, of course needed to be balanced, or “justified,” an accounting term.

And that led to a debased version of St. Anselm’s theory. And that in turn produced one of the big controversies that set off the Protestant Reformation.

According to that version, the *merits* of Christ, which were infinite, had been deposited to the Church’s account. This infinite account was adequate to make up for everybody’s arrears with God. And if only a person would observe his Christian duties, transfers would be made to his account with God out of the “treasury of merits.” And thus his account with God would be “justified.”

The problem was that the control of such transfers was in the hands of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. And one could actually buy a certificate of transfer, called an *indulgence*. It was this system of *selling indulgences* that Martin Luther rebelled against.

On the other hand, Bishop N. T. Wright has shown that at the time of the New Testament the ordinary language used about *court trials* would lead to confusion by the time of the later middle ages and especially the Renaissance, because it sounded like *accounting* language.

In New Testament times, if a judge was fair and honest he was said to be righteous or “just;” otherwise he was “unjust.” And whichever of the parties appearing before him he judged to be in the right was said to be “justified.” The one who lost went away “unjustified.”

And a Jew of that day considered the *most* important thing for him was for God, the “righteous,” or “just,” fair, judge, to judge him to be within the The Covenant. That, for him, was ultimate “justification.”

Thus St. Paul, in his letters, is talking about who is accounted by God to be within his Covenant or, in other words, who is “justified.” And, of course, he is talking about the role faith plays in that kind of justification.

So to the Reformers it seemed that St. Paul is referring to bookkeeping when he is actually using

law court language.

Martin Luther was a priest of the 1500s who was tormented by a sense of his own guiltiness, a conviction that his books were not balanced with God. And nothing relieved him of that *feeling*, not even absolution when he made his confession. He only discovered relief when he hit upon a “magic formula.”

His solution was to say that anyone who had faith that Christ had balanced his books with God would have the transfer made to his account directly, and thus his books with God would be balanced. So Luther’s doctrine was called *Justification by Faith*. And he believed that he could find a basis for it in the language of St. Paul.

For Luther this meant that one didn’t have to go through the Pope or the Church’s bureaucracy.

Luther seemed to be right — *if* the question is “How does one get his books with God balanced?” Both Luther and the Pope took it for granted that that was the question, because the outlook of the times put the question that way.

And the Pope seemed to be right also, because he knew that there was no salvation apart from the Body of Christ, the Church.

And so to get around the Pope, Luther developed the doctrine of the *invisible* Church which, he said, included all those who had gotten justified *in spite of* the Pope.

However, even if St. Paul had been talking about accounting, there is more to the human problem than Man’s indebtedness to God; there is more to the Atonement than simply balancing one’s books with God. That treats salvation as an *external* problem. But the real problem is *internal* as well. The problem is inside of us, in our *hearts!* And that problem is still with us today.

## THE PROBLEM IN PSYCHOLOGICAL TERMS

So now we come to a theory which deals with the problem in our hearts: In the early twenty-first century, we tend to think of all our problems in terms of psychology. So we don’t say someone is *wrong*; we say he is “confused” or “disturbed” or “under stress,” etc. We don’t say, “I *believe*;” we say, “I *feel*.”

In psychological terms, the basic human problem can be defined as a chronic, low-grade *Oedipus Complex*. Let me explain:

On his first day at kindergarten, a five year-old child is terrified. He does not know what the rules are. He does not know what will bring pleasant responses from the teacher and what will not. And he does not know what to expect from the other children.

When Adam and Eve wake up in the Garden of Eden, they look around and find themselves in a strange place. And they say, “Oh, if only someone would tell us what the rules are!”

And God says, “All right, I will. Do what you like, except do not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

And then Adam and Eve say, “Nobody is going to tell us what to do!”

Most of us are raised by dog law. That is to say, we get corrected or punished *after* doing the forbidden thing. Beforehand it is just an abstraction to the child. For example, you tell your child to stop playing in the street or he will get run over. And he says, “Mama, what’s ‘runover?’” And since you can’t explain, you give him a sample when he disobeys — you spank him.

All of God’s commandments are actually *prescriptions* for our happiness, but we don’t see it that way. And parents who love their children discipline them. But the child only knows that if he plays out in the street, where it’s “more fun,” “mean old Daddy” or “mean old Mommy” will beat him with a stick.

Most of what we learn, we learn the hard way. We do something innocently and only then discover that there are undesirable consequences.

Small children have a strong sense of justice. They resent being punished when they have not done something wrong on purpose. We all grow up thinking of our parents as unreasonable tyrants. The fact that sometimes they are only makes matters worse.

The child’s point of view is something like this: “Grown-ups are free, and children are not. Grown-ups are always telling us what to do. Freedom is my most valuable possession. In the face of all those grown-ups telling me to do this and do that, the only way to assert my freedom is to rebel.”

Even nature treats us the same way. By the time I understand why I should not over-eat, the habit is firmly established. “But,” I say, “I didn’t develop habitual sin on purpose. It ain’t fair!” And so when I get fat, I feel like I am being unfairly punished, especially when someone else who over-eats does not get fat. I feel rebellious.

So in rebellion, I over-eat. And the more I over-eat, the more I’m punished by getting fatter, and then, the more rebellious I feel. It is a vicious circle. The powers-that-be are against me!

Even though I have learned to behave myself, deep down inside there is that resentment. Daddy deserves killing. “Daddy” translates into any authority figure. That is the *Oedipus Complex*.

The result is that people are always jockeying for positions of authority. “I don’t want anyone over me telling me what to do!”

If I am going to be saved, — if what is really wrong with me is going to get fixed, — then I will have to discover what I am really like. I will have to discover that I am a killer of Daddy, that is, a killer of God. But that is so horrible that, if it is true then I am cut off from God — damned!

There is only one way I could ever face that fact. I would have to know *at the very same moment* that God loved me anyway, in spite of the truth about myself. Without that assurance, I could never accept the fact.

And if I do not accept the truth about myself, it cannot be dealt with. God and I will remain separated as long as I hide from the truth, because I will also be hiding from God the way Adam

and Eve did.

I'm in a double bind. Only God can get me out of it. And that is what He has done in Jesus Christ.

So now let us consider a psychological doctrine of the Atonement.

## THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

What was the offense of Jesus? His offense was that he was not offensive. He was really righteous. And that was intolerable to the Pharisees. They were in the habit of thinking of themselves as the righteous ones and having everyone else do the same.

To illustrate: Imagine you are at a cocktail party. There is a young, newly graduated naval aviator at the party also. And he is impressing all the young ladies with tales of his flying exploits: "There I was at ten thousand feet, flat on my back, and the wings fell off!" And the young ladies cry, "Oh, were you hurt?"

There comes a lull in the conversation, and the hostess speaks. "Oh, Ensign Jones, I would like to introduce you to Captain Neil Armstrong —!"

The goodness of Jesus was authentic, and it showed up the superficial righteousness of the Pharisees. They could not stand him!

There are only two ways to react to a saint: follow his example, or throw rocks at him. Jesus could have escaped the cross if only he had been slightly unrighteous — if only once he had returned evil for evil.

If, as the Pharisees were harassing him, he had said, "Damn you; why don't you leave me alone!" maybe they would have. Then they could have said, "See, he is not any better than we are after all."

But he did not accommodate them. So the keepers of righteousness, the Scribes and the Pharisees, set out to trip him up. At first they seem to be sincere. But it soon becomes clear that they are not. And every time they try it, Jesus turns the tables on them, and they are shown up.

For example, in the case of the woman taken in adultery, Jesus says to her accusers, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

The more they fail, the more desperate they become to show him up. They can't stand the thought that they may have been heckling the real Messiah. They have to prove that he is a fake. Finally, there is nothing left to do but get rid of him. So they get him executed by the Roman authorities.

As he hangs dying on the cross, they make a final attempt to get themselves off the hook. They jeer at him, hoping against hope that he will retaliate. "Oh, if only he would say, 'Damn you! Go to hell!' then we could sleep easy tonight."

But he does not. Instead, he dies forgiving them, returning good for evil. And the Roman officer

in charge of the execution says, “Surely this was a righteous man!”

Practically the whole nation is assembled in Jerusalem and are parties to his crucifixion. Even his own disciples abandon him. Peter denies him three times. So all of them have the chance to see themselves killing righteousness himself. And then Jesus rises from the dead!

He appears to his disciples and forgives them. And notice, it is only *after* he has said to them, “*Shalom, peace*” that they are glad to see him. And if Judas had not out of despair already committed suicide, he would have been forgiven also.

Then he sends them out to declare his forgiveness to all the rest of the participants — to all people everywhere — to you and to me.

“Then said Jesus to them again, ‘Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.’ And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.’”

For many of them, carrying out that commission to declare his forgiveness means dying. Dying at the hands of those they try to forgive. And that adds to the message of forgiveness. For there is nothing which so powerfully strips the mask from sin as does the voluntary suffering of the innocent in love.

## THE THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

In his life on earth, Jesus accomplished *five things*:

*First:* He united Man to God. Jesus is himself both God and Man, the New Adam, the New Human Race. God and Man are united in the person of Jesus Christ.

*Second:* He defeated Satan and conquered sin. He did that by rejecting Satan’s temptations in the wilderness. And he did that further by absorbing the effects of sin in himself, returning good for evil and forgiving even as he was dying.

*Third:* He revealed God’s nature in terms of human nature. He demonstrated with his life that God is love.

*Fourth:* He revealed God’s will for Man. Before Jesus, there was no way to tell in advance whether a prophet was authentic or not. One had to wait to see if what he said came true or not. But in Jesus, God is himself telling us what he wants us to do. Jesus is the final revelation of divine truth.

*Fifth:* Jesus has given us an adequate sacrifice to offer to the Father which matches the gravity of Man’s sin. (Anselm’s theory)

A note about sacrifice: Sacrifice is necessary, *not* because God requires it, but because **we** do. God does tell us to do it, but that’s because he knows it is essential for us.

Let me illustrate: If you lend me a book, and I leave it out in the rain, you know what it will look

like. It will be ruined. I won't return that copy to you; I will buy you a new one. But what if you lent me a rare, irreplaceable first edition, and so I can't replace it? I will hate to face you. I will avoid you.

Well, each sinner is just such a ruined and irreplaceable first edition. I am. You are. And I want something to give to God to make up for my spoiled soul, so that I will be able to face him. Jesus is the only thing we have to offer to God. But he is enough. He is an adequate sacrifice.

Remember — the essence of sacrifice is in the gift. It's not in the deprivation suffered by the giver. So the sacrifice of Jesus was his whole life which he offered to the Father. And it was completed at the Ascension when he was received into Heaven.

But that was all a long time ago on the other side of the world. The skeptic will say, "It looks like the only one who got saved was a Jew named Jesus. How can I be united to God? How can I conquer sin? How can I see God's nature in terms of human nature? How can I know God's will? How can I offer an adequate sacrifice to God?"

## THE SALVATION WHICH JESUS GIVES

The answer Jesus gives to the skeptic is the Church. He has founded it to make his salvation available to you and me. Through the Church, he does those same *five things* in *our* lives. To be specific:

*First:* A person is united to God by means of Baptism together with Confirmation. Through it the Holy Spirit comes to live within the person.

*Second:* Sin is conquered through the sacraments and disciplines of the Church.

To illustrate: When I am baptized and confirmed, the Holy Ghost knocks on the door of my life. I answer the door. There he is in his top hat and cut-away coat standing on my doorstep. He says, "Hello, I'm the Holy Ghost, and I have come to live with you. May I come in?"

And I say, "Oh, of course! I'm so glad to have you in my life. Please come in and make yourself at home."

So he comes in and sits down. After he has looked around the parlor for a few minutes, he says, "Say, I notice that your furniture looks pretty run-down. Now, it just happens that I have all my fine antiques in storage. If you would like, I would be happy to move them in so we both could enjoy them."

Of course, I reply at once, "Why that would be wonderful!"

So the Holy Ghost stands up and says, "Well there's no time like the present." And he turns around and starts to pick up the chair he has been sitting in.

Then I ask, "What are you doing? Why are you picking up that chair?"

The Holy Ghost replies, "Well, if I am going to bring in my good things, we will have to move out your old stuff in order to have room for mine."

Now I get alarmed. I say, “Well, that chair was given to me by my grandparents. Can’t you start with something else?”

And he answers, “All right, if you prefer.” And he starts to pick up another piece of furniture.

But I object to that one also. And before long, it is clear that I am not willing to give up any of my old things. I am just too attached to them.

Finally, he tells me that I will have to choose whether I really want his things in my life or not.

The Church has two teams of furniture movers. One team specializes in moving out the old stuff, the vices. The members of that team are the negative disciplines like fasting and abstinence. The foreman is the sacrament of Confession.

The team of positive disciplines, such as almsgiving, specializes in moving in the virtues. The foreman of that team is the sacrament of the Eucharist.

So that is the way sin is conquered in the Church.

*Third:* God’s nature is revealed in terms of human nature in the lives of the saints in every age and culture. If we will look, we can see at least a glimmer of the life of Christ in each of the other members of the Church. And we can verify it by checking what we see in them with what we see of Christ in the New Testament.

*Fourth:* God’s will is revealed to us in the teaching of the whole Catholic Church, which has preserved Christ’s teaching down through the ages. By the power of the Holy Spirit, it makes his teaching available to us here and now.

Our Lord said to the Apostles, “He that heareth you, heareth me.” and “As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” In spite of the sin and foolishness of individual bishops, the Apostolic College as a whole has maintained the teaching of Christ intact—*The Great Tradition*. This fact itself is evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

*Fifth:* The adequate sacrifice which you and I can offer is Christ himself, whom we offer in every Eucharist. To repeat, the essence of sacrifice is in the *offering*, in the giving.

In eternity, the Father begets the Son who gives himself totally back to the Father. That is what goes on in Heaven.

And on earth, at every moment, somewhere the Church, which is the mystical Body of Christ, is offering the sacramental Body of Christ to the Father. We offer him, and he offers us. Thus we participate in his one, eternal sacrifice.

Christ is doing these five things in the Church to make us one with the Father. They will be the subject of the rest of the classes in this series.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Are you saved?

If not, will you make your bet on Jesus to save you?

If you are saved, from what are you saved?

If you are saved from that, does that leave anything else from which you are not saved?

What is it?

Cannot Jesus save you from that also?